



**COMBINED REPORTS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EXCAVATION WORK AT EVAN'S HOME, JOHN STREET,  
KILKENNY**

**C414, REG.E4109**

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SEPTEMBER 2016**

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## CONTENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	2
REPORT DATED 2010: GENERAL SITE TESTING	
INTRODUCTION .....	5
PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK ON THE SITE .....	5
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	5
THE PLAN OF THE ABBEY (SEE FIG 3) .....	6
WHAT IS THE LINE OF THE TOWN WALL? .....	8
THE LATER HISTORY OF THE SITE .....	11
THE TEST TRENCHING .....	11
RESULTS: DISCUSSION .....	19
IMPACT OF THE NEW BUILDING .....	20
MITIGATION.....	21
REPORT DATED 2011: TEST EXCAVATION AT BACK LANE AND REPORT ON BOUNDARY WALLS	
INTRODUCTION .....	30
THE LINE OF THE TOWN WALL .....	30
THE EXCAVATION (FIGS 4-7) .....	32
DISCUSSION .....	36
ASSESSMENT OF THE SITE BOUNDARY WALLS .....	37
THE WALL ALONG THE MILL RACE (PLATES 17, 18, 19, 20).....	41
REFERENCES .....	46
REPORT ON DEMOLITION OF GREENHOUSE AND TREE ROOT REMOVAL	
INTRODUCTION .....	59
FOUNDATIONS .....	59
APPENDIX 1	
EXCAVATION REPORT 2013 ARCHER HERITAGE .....	64

## General Introduction

This is a summary report on archaeological test trenching and full excavation of the site of the proposed Butler Gallery at Evan's Home, Kilkenny. Four phases of excavation have been undertaken to date, by Claire Walsh (reports 1-3) and latterly the larger excavation by Archer Heritage (report 4).

The reports combined are as follows:

Test Excavation by Claire Walsh, August 2010. This includes excavation of test trenches within Evan's Home, and monitoring of bore holes and trial holes within Evan's Home.

Test excavation at Back Lane, Claire Walsh February 2011. This includes excavation of test trenches outside the site, to attempt to date the boundary walls. It also includes a description of the building fabric within the site.

Archaeological monitoring of greenhouse and treeroot removal, Claire Walsh June 2012. Monitoring of initial groundworks by KCC in advance of archaeological excavation.

Archaeological excavation of footprint of new Butler Gallery, and associated works. Archer Heritage 2013. Contains account of structures excavated, edited to remove specialist and small finds reports.

The reports have been edited to avoid duplication.



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST EXCAVATION AT EVAN'S HOME, BARRACK  
LANE, KILKENNY**

**FOR MC CULLOUGH MULVIN AND KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MINISTERIAL CONSENT C414; registration number E4109; metal  
detection R217.**

**CLAIRE WALSH  
AUGUST 2010**

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## **Introduction**

Archaeological test excavation at the site of the Evan's Home, Barrack Lane, St John's Parish, Kilkenny City, was undertaken from 21st July 2010 to 26th July 2010. The work was carried out under the following Consents from National Monuments, Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government: C414; registration number E4109; metal detection R217.

The test excavation and attendant boreholes/ engineer's trial pits were requested to provide information in advance of a submission to construct a new building on the northern perimeter of the Evan's Home lands, and to renovate the existing building for use as a public art gallery. The location of the new building was chosen to minimise impact on the underlying archaeological deposits.

Two boreholes and eight trial pits were also excavated and recorded. The results are detailed in the report.

## **Previous archaeological work on the site**

Test excavation to the east of the Evan's Home was carried out by Stevens in 1999 (published on line at KKAP.ie, 2005, 2006). Summary accounts of monitoring of broadband trenches in 2001 and 2004 are taken from excavations.ie. The results of these works are integrated into the report below, where relevant.

## **Archaeological and historical background**

St John's Priory

The historic dating and references for the succession of buildings on this site are taken from Bradley (2000). Other sources, including previous test excavation in the immediate vicinity, have given differing dates for the construction and usage of the standing buildings.

The site of the 19th century Evans Home is located on the medieval Augustinian foundation of St Johns (RMP KK 019 026068) dated to c. 1211. It is located on the north west edge of the medieval town of Kilkenny, enclosed by stone walls of uncertain antiquity, and with a mill race on the western side. The location of the medieval or post-medieval town defences in this quarter of the historic city is uncertain (see below).

Bradley (2000, 13) summarises the history of the abbey as follows: 'Augustinian Priory founded by William Marshal the elder to replace former St John the Evangelist's Hospital in 1211. Lady Chapel built in 1290; new building works begun in 1325. Bell tower collapsed in 1329; priory: church, belfry, cemetery, 6 chambers, dormitory, 3 gardens, granary, hall, kitchen, 2 orchards, (Prior's orchard) store, dissolved in 1540; priory and portion of property granted to mayor and citizens in c. 1541. Nave and chancel in ruins 1615. Bake house, cart gate, 'castle', chapter house, cloister, garden, great kitchen, orchard, out stall, prior's

chambers 1628. Granted to Jesuits in 1645. St John's church c. 1655. Unroofed c. 1698 (drawing by Francis Place). Part assigned as site of barracks 1698. Nave and domestic buildings demolished, replaced by infantry barracks in c. 1700. St John's Abbey is shown on Pratt's map of 1708, and Rocque's map of 1756. Two chancels, and church are noted in 1815. The ruins of the Lady Chapel were incorporated into the church in 1817. St John's Abbey is annotated on the Ordnance Survey map of 1841 'in ruins'.

### **The plan of the abbey (see fig 3)**

While the south transept- the Lady Chapel, and the chancel of the Priory church survive, the remainder of the priory complex lies below ground. It is likely that this complex is one of the few where the cloister lies to the north of the church, as there are remains of a claustral building on the western boundary wall of the Evans Home. The graveyard of the parish church of St John's lies to the south of the chancel/ Lady Chapel.

The standard plan of monasteries in the late 12th- early 13th century was to have the cloister on the south side of the church, with the ranges on the remaining three sides. The east range generally housed the chapter house, the most significant building bar the church. Few cases as at Errew, Co. Mayo and Innisfallen, Co. Kerry, have the cloister to the north of the church. At Kells, Co. Kilkenny, the west range originally projected beyond the north side of the nave of the church- this may have been the case at St Johns. This is also known at Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny, and Molana, Co. Waterford.

The Lady Chapel in Kells Priory was built onto the northern side of the church, as was common in English foundations (Kells was founded by priors from Bodmin). However, at St John's, it is located on the south side of the chancel.

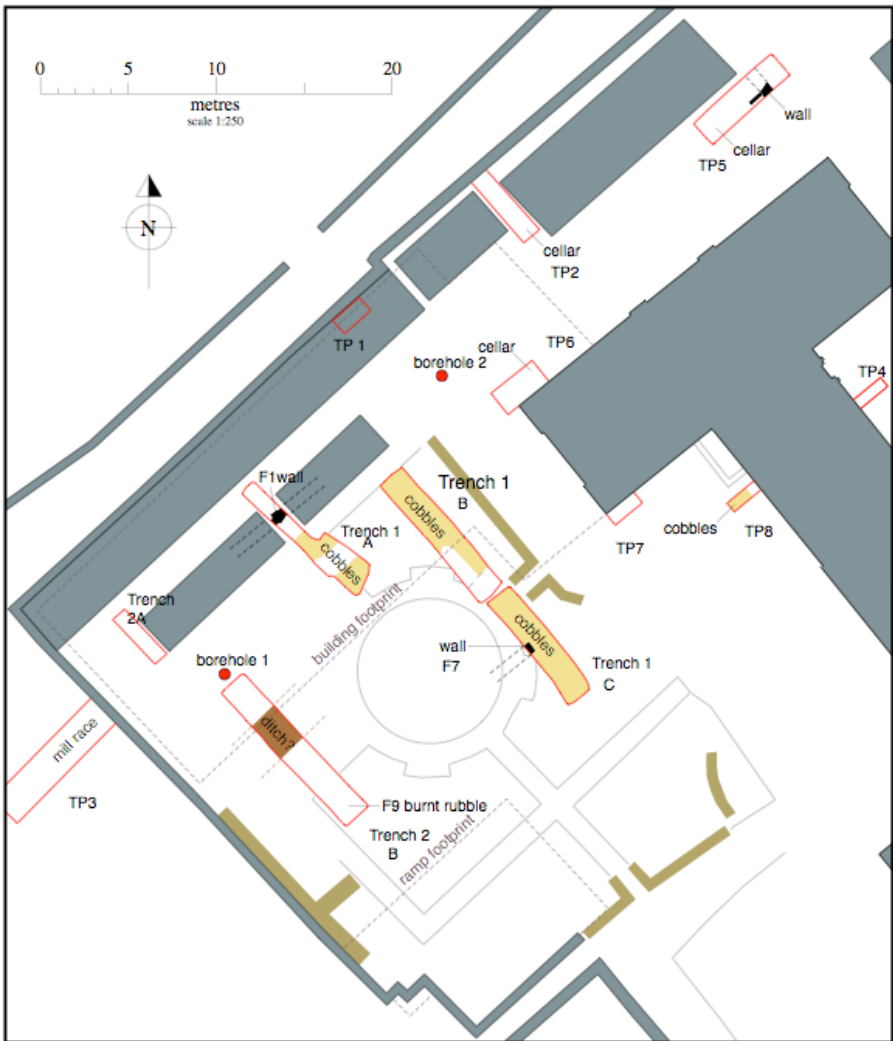


Fig. 1. Trench and trial pit location with overlay of building line.

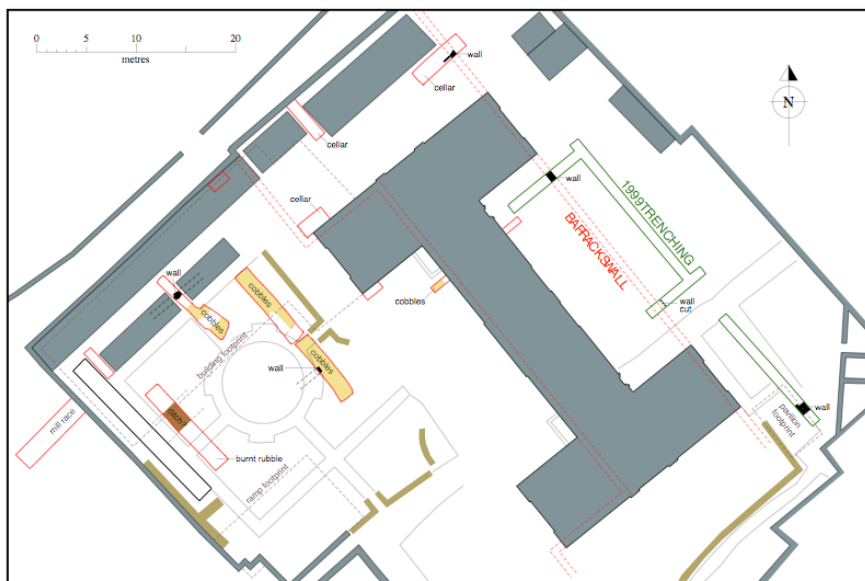


Fig. 2. Site plan, showing 1700s Barracks outline, existing Evans Home, 1999 and 2010 trenches, and new build footprint.

Overlying and reversing the plan of Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny, onto the chancel and Lady Chapel of St John's has indicated that the site boundary wall to the west is probably part of the west range, and that the 1700 infantry barracks, and later Evan's Home, are probably built on the east range. Similarly, the wall uncovered by Stevens (2005, 2006) lies neatly on that of the transept of St John's.

Overlying the plan of Kells Priory onto St John's, and placing the cloister on the south side, shows no correlation between the line of John St, Barrack Lane, or the mill race with the priory.

### What is the line of the town wall?

The town defences of Kilkenny are classified as a National Monument (RMP KK 019 026020), the protection of which are detailed in the National Policy on Town Defences (2008, Archaeology.ie). However the line of the town defences along the northern suburb of St John's has not been uncovered through excavation. The line of the wall on the south side of the suburb has been uncovered in several test excavations, and at 68- 69 John St, it stood below present ground level to a height of 3m, with a significant basal batter (96E131, excavations.ie).

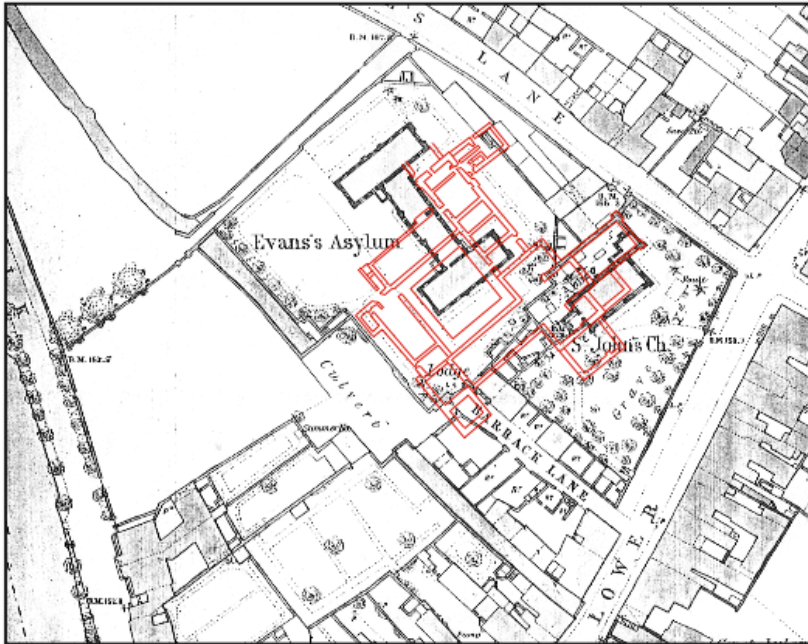
There is a difference of opinion between several authors, including Thomas 1992 and Bradley 2000, as to where the town wall or town defences lie in relation to St John's Priory. Although burgesses were noted here in the early 13th century, it has been suggested by one authority that the suburb of St John's may not have been enclosed until perhaps the 16th century. However, Thomas (1992, 130)

suggests that 'St John's may be viewed as a walled suburb of Kilkenny, possibly always enclosed by a ditch and bank and initially defended by the priory, with its defences upgraded in the early 16th century at the latest'. She has placed the town wall along the north end of Barrack Lane, whereas if the priory were to defend the suburb, the wall should enclose the back of the priory, along Back Lane, and not extend across the entrance to the priory. In 1307, an inquisition giving the burgage rent of St John's at £4 13s 11dm suggests there were 94 burgesses and a population of between 400 and 650 (Bradley 2000, 4). St John's Outer Gate, first mentioned in 1351, was sited on the corner of the Abbey site with John Street.

Bradley (2000, 4) states that 'the small fragment of the claustral buildings north-west of the church indicates that the town wall was located further to the north than has generally been supposed'. However, the Historic Atlas of Kilkenny has depicted the wall on a line with the northern field boundary on Rocque's map of c. 1758, while the more recent Conservation Plan of Kilkenny Town Walls (Oxford Archaeology 2005) has placed the town wall on the rear of the John St plots on Rocque. This latter line has reverted to that on the historic Ordnance Survey maps.

Previous test trenching on the site (Stevens 2000, 2006) uncovered a medieval wall, most likely relating to the chancel, as it lies parallel with it, at a depth less than 1.50m below present ground level. No evidence for a town wall on the site was uncovered, and he therefore, following Bradley, reasonably suggested that it may lie further north- indeed be the present northern boundary of the Evans Home site.

The most recent publication on the town by the Kilkenny Archaeological Project (2008) depicts the line of the town wall enclosing the northern side of the precinct of St Johns, but also returning along the western boundary, along the mill race, and continuing on the rear of the plots south of the Carnegie Library. While there is strong evidence that the town wall lies along Back Lane, there is little evidence to suggest that it would extend along the inside of the mill race, and the most recent testing indicates that the west wall of the present precinct is of much more recent date (see below). Also, no wall is indicated on Rocque extending along this line.



1871 Fig. 3. Overlay of plan of Kells Priory, Co. Kilkenny, with cloister reversed to north, on St John's Priory remains, base map 1871.

The present programme of test excavation did not uncover any evidence for the presence of the town wall/ defences on the site, and it appears very unlikely that

the construction of the infantry barracks in 1700 should have cut across such a long standing boundary. It also seems unlikely that the priory should have chosen to cut off access from its millrace, and it seems most logical that the line of the town wall extended from Back Lane directly to the river, as appears indicated from the Down Survey of 1655 (fig. 4).

## **The later history of the site**

In 1540, the Priory along with the other monasteries was suppressed by Henry VIII. The Priory itself and some of its property was transferred to the Corporation of Kilkenny. During the Confederation period, the site was granted to the Jesuits and part of it was also occupied by the Capuchins. The College, for 18 Jesuits, had an oratory, library, refectory, dormitory, large and small parlour, kitchen, orchard, and arboretum, and was opened in 1645. (It appears largely to have utilized the existing priory buildings). It was closed, and converted to a military hospital in 1650 (Bradley 2000, 22).

The hospital was for wounded soldiers and maternity use, and was burnt in 1650. It was closed by 1654.

The first infantry barracks in the town were constructed here c. 1700. It is referred to as the old infantry barracks by 1768. It is recorded that the stone of the barracks was taken from the priory. It is suggested (fig. 3) that the line of the barracks overlay the existing east range of the priory.

Around 1780, the nave of the main Chapel, its two towers and attendant buildings were demolished. Robertson (1851, 434) quotes an anonymous tour through Ireland, 'the tower of St John's abbey, is described as then standing, and is noticed for its lightness and beauty' 'these ruins, says the tourist, stand upon a large extent of ground, bordering on the river'. In 1817 the medieval Lady Chapel was part demolished, rebuilt, re-roofed and consecrated as the Church of Ireland Church of St. John's.

Evan's Asylum was built on the site of the former barracks in 1818. This was a non-denominational home, founded by Joseph Evans for 12 male and 12 female 'decayed servants'. By 1861, the building housed an infant's school.

## **The test trenching**

Trenches were excavated as indicated on Figs.1 and 2 with a mechanical excavator fitted with a grading bucket. Limited hand excavation of archaeological layers was carried out, to attempt to identify the nature, extent and date of any features or deposits uncovered. The soils, which were carefully graded down to archaeological levels, were scanned with a metal detector (Minelab Quattro 1050), however no finds were recovered through this mechanism.

Monitoring of boreholes and machine- supervised excavation of slit trenches around the foundations of the existing buildings and walls, the latter instigated by the the engineering team, was undertaken. The records of these are presented below, and have also been forwarded to the engineers, O' Connor Sutton Cronin.



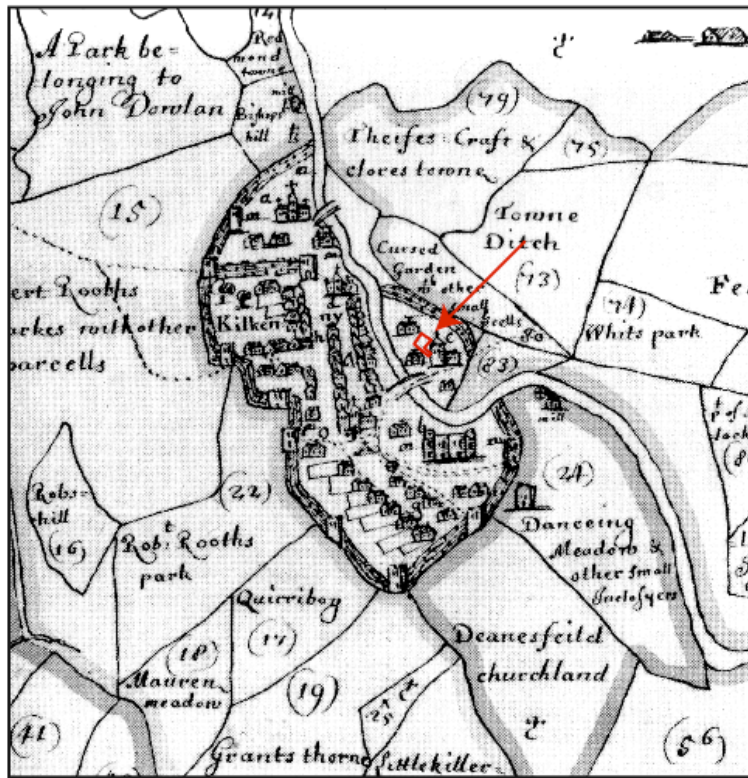


Fig. 4. Site location on Down Survey 1655.

### Constraints

The test excavation was limited by the presence of glasshouses along the northern boundary of the site. However, a single hand excavated trench (TP 1) uncovered the base of the existing boundary wall at a depth of 1100mm below present ground level (see below, trial pits).

Excavation of test trench 2 had to be stopped at the northern end (2A) at a depth of 1300mm below present ground level, as the block walls of the cold frames were at risk of collapse. It was not possible to enter trench 2 at all, as the depth at which archaeological strata were encountered exceeded safety limits. Generally, the ground excavated was extremely soft, with loose sides to the trenches, and limited space to stockpile soil. This prohibited section drawing- the sides are recorded photographically, and any examination in situ of deposits in trench 2.

An attempt to locate the western wall of the Infantry Barracks in trial pit 6 was abandoned as a manhole and live sewer was present along this line.

A neighbouring training scheme used part of the garden for planting, so trench 1 was split into two parts, a and b, to avoid disturbance of the large circular planted area. A further break in trench 1 was necessitated to allow the bore rig access to the second location.

#### Trench 1 A (Figs 1, 2, plates 1, 2)

This measured 1m in width at the northern end, widening to 2m at the southern end, and was 8m in overall length. The upper level of concrete paving slabs were removed. A layer of modern cement mortar overlay soft black topsoil of recent date.

A deposit of lime mortar with small stones F2 extended over the trench, but was thinner at the northern end. Lumps of lime render were present. The mortar contained angular stone chips, rare fragments of red brick, and several pieces of disarticulated human bone, including ribs, a tooth, and parts of humerus, radius and ulna. The mortar deposit filled a hollow at the central part of trench 1A, and overlay a wall footing F1, which was exposed at a depth of 750mm below present ground level. This wall footing extended east west across the trench, and was composed of smallish stones, with a white lime mortar capping and large lumps of thick lime render. There does not appear to be more than one course remaining to the wall, which was 750mm in width. The yellow/ brown gravel F6 on the northern side of the wall footing contained several pieces of human bone. This orange gravel overlay a lime mortar layer which is probably continuous with F2. Excavation was halted at this level.

An extensive cobbled layer F3 was exposed at the southern end of trench 1A. This was uncovered at 1000mm below present ground level. The surface was composed of closely set almost polished limestones, of very well fitted stones, which formed a level surface. The cobbles were overlain in trench 1A by a thin deposit of greenish soil with occasional lime mortar flecks F4, which was brick

free, but had a fragment of medieval floor tile 2:1 (see finds catalogue below). This suggested initially that the cobbled surface may be medieval in origin.

The cobbled surface and green soil layer F4 were cut away to the north by a possible robber cut F5, which was continuous with F2 mortar. The cobbled surface did not extend as far north as wall footing F2.

#### Trenches 1B, 1c (figs 1, 2, plates 3, 4, 5, 6)

This was excavated in two episodes, to allow the boring rig to be moved to another location. The trenches measured overall 16.5m in length, and 2m in width. The profile uncovered throughout this trench was continuous for the length of the trench.

Cobbled surface F3 was uncovered at a depth of 1100mm below present ground level. The surface of the cobbles was extremely well finished, and polished. A sherd of yellow glazed earthenware, of probable late 17th century or early 18th century, was recovered from the surface of the cobbles.

The cobbles were overlain by a thick (300- 400mm) deposit of lime mortar, small spalls, and occasional red brick, which is equivalent to F2 in Trench 1A. This in turn was sealed by discreet dumps of yellow brown gravel, similar to F6 in trench 1A.

A deposit of garden soil F8 overlay the mortar and demolition material. The lower horizon of garden soil contained several sherds of black glazed ware, generally dated to the 18th century. A localised area of loosely set stones at the north end of this trench, which were only 600mm below present ground level, probably relate to a garden path of the Evan's Home.

The extension of trench 1 to the south uncovered a continuation of the horizons in trench 1B. However, a large flat limestone (F7) which was embedded in the cobbled surface, was uncovered towards the southern part of this trench (see fig.1, plates 4, 6). It is probable that this stone represents the remains of a wall. A sherd of tin glazed earthenware, late 17th- early 18th century, was recovered from F6, the yellow/ brown soil over the mortar layer.

The profile of this section of the trench is as follows:

PGI to 400mm	soft black topsoil
400mm to 700mm	paler grittier topsoil
700mm to 900mm	yellow/ brown gravel and soil, tipping to south, dips over possible wall
900mm to 1100mm	mortar and demolition matter, but no red brick present.

Cobbled surface and wall excavation halted.

#### Trench 2 (Figs. 1, 2, plates 7, 8, 9, 10).

The northern part of trench 2 was less than 1m in width, and 3.50m in length. It was excavated to a depth of 1.60m, when excavation was halted. Loose rubble,

mortar, red brick and roof slates were present. This material was of relatively recent date.

The trench further south avoided borehole 1, and was widened to 1.70m, with a length of 10m. It was excavated to a maximum depth of c. 1.50m below present ground level. The comparison with soils uncovered in the borehole was informative. The lowest level uncovered was a spread of oxidised (red) clay soil with stone F9, which was present towards the southern end of the trench. It was not possible to state whether the deposit represents the upper, demolished level of in situ masonry, which is loose and voided, or dumped material. A fragment of line impressed floor tile and a piece of worked sandstone were recovered from F9. This suggests strongly that the deposit is of priory origin.

To the north of the burnt deposits F9, a band of darker silt F10 in the underlying soils may be a ditch-like cut, with darker fill. The possible cut measured approx. 2.50m in width, but no further detail of this feature could be obtained.

The overlying soils were as follows: soft mid brown garden type soils with charcoal tip lines, which contained a sherd of North Devon Slip Ware, and other sherds of late 17th – early 18th century wares. This was overlain by a deposit of thick yellow/ brown clay and gravel, which was in turn overlain by a mortar deposit.

#### Borehole 1.

Located in western part of garden.

PGI- 300mm	black loam topsoil.
300- 700mm	mortar flecked loam with many stones.
700- 800mm	lime mortar and small stones, including roofslates-demolition layer?
800- 1100mm	orange / brown clay and gravel. Two sherds of glazed earthenware tiles, late 17th- 18th century, also lumps of black charcoal enriched silt.
1400mm flecked.	pale brown gritty silt, mortar and charcoal
2300mm	yellow/ brown clay silt.
3100mm	grey gravel subsoil.

#### Borehole 2

Located to west of 1700s Infantry Barracks wall.

Red brick rubble to 1.60m below pgl.

1.60m void- service pipe?

Depth to subsoil less than 2.5m.

No archaeological significance recorded.

Test pit 1 (fig. 1, plate 11).

Inside the glasshouse against the northern boundary of the Evans Home, excavated by hand through the raised bed of the greenhouse.

The limestone wall is of fairly loosely jointed masonry, badly faced and poorly coursed. Deposits against this contained modern debris to 700mm, in garden soil. Below this a deposit of loose lime mortar flecked loam with red brick and transfer patterned plate sherds. At a depth of approximately 900mm below pgl, there was a projecting plinth to the wall. There was an accretion of lime mortar on the wall at this point (visible in plate 1). The base of this wall was reached at 1100mm below pgl.

Present ground level is 46.22 MOD. The ground level at Back Lane is approx. 45.50. The test pit could not establish whether there is an earlier wall beneath the existing wall at Back Lane. However, this is likely as a wall is shown here on Rocque's 1758 map, which continued as far west as the mill race (see fig. 5). The external face of this wall has not been examined in any detail by this writer, however the eastern part was clearly the gable wall of the 1700 barracks. There is potential for an earlier wall beneath the present standing boundary wall, which may well be the town defences.

Test pit 2 (Fig. 1, plate 12).

This was moved from the western end of the glasshouses, as due to the drop in ground levels, there was little chance of reaching the base of the wall. The relocated trench exposed the internal wall of the cellar of the 1700s Infantry Barracks. This projected slightly from the rising boundary wall, and was thickly rendered with a lime mortar, which had a superficial yellow/ brown stain-distemper?

The cellar had been infilled with very loose rubble, stone spalls, and lime mortar fragments, with red brick, a material similar to the mortar level which extended over the site (F2). The cellar wall was uncovered to a depth of 2.00m, when excavation was halted, without reaching either the base of the wall or the cellar floor.

It should be noted that the kink in the north wall of the Evan's home boundary is the north-west corner of the 1700s Infantry Barracks.

Test pit 3 (fig. 1, 2, plate 13).

This was excavated in the car park of the Carnegie Library, against the western face of the boundary wall of the Evan's Home. Beneath tarmac, there is a layer of concrete rubble and hardcore, with large slabs of voided concrete lying up against the outer face of the wall. This seals loose rooted soil which contains a plastic (Perri's ) crisp bag, Bovril jar, and other modern debris to a depth of 1800mm. The standing wall was sitting on an earlier wall, which extended to a depth of over 2m below present ground level. The face of the upper wall, where concealed beneath carpark deposits, is open, and appears unbonded, or perhaps the mortar has leached out. The masonry of the lower wall appeared to be of better quality than the upper wall. Water ingress occurred at 2.05m, at which level modern rubbish was still present. Below the water level, the lower fill of the

millrace is grey laminated silts, which did not contain finds. The base of the mill race is pebbled grey marl.

The Kilkenny Archaeological Survey (2008, 217, fig. 87) have indicated this wall line as the town wall. In my opinion, the line of the town wall is much more likely to have continued straight down to the river. There is no wall here indicated on Rocque's 1758 map, but there is a mill race here, annotated 'the Lake' leading to an innamed mill on the meeting with the Nore. While several mill sites in Kilkenny are shown and annotated on the 1655 Down Survey map, none is shown on this site. Bradley (2000, 16) attributes this mill race to the Maudlin mills, mentioned first in 1223AD. The Maudlin Mill, mentioned in 1435, was granted to St John's Priory in 1434. It is listed in the 1541 Extents. It continued in use throughout the centuries in various forms, when it was closed by 1874. There is no evidence for any medieval date in the test pit, and the earlier mill race may lie to either east or west of this line.

Test pit 4 (Fig. 1, plate 14).

Located on the east side of the Evan's Home, this trench exposed a slight projecting plinth to the wall one course below present ground level. At a depth of 1m below the paving slab at the doorway, the wall appears to be sitting on an earlier wall, which appears to be very well faced. This is possibly the spine wall of the 1700s barracks. The soil which was banked up against the wall is redeposited yellow/ brown boulder clay. The base of the wall was not reached when excavation halted at a depth of 1600mm.

Test pit 5 (Fig. 1, plate 15).

This trench was sited to locate the east wall of the 1700s Infantry Barracks. The wall here was badly damaged, and appeared to slope inwards. The cellar fill here was extremely loose, excavated to a depth of c. 2.85m below pgl, and the sides of the trench collapsed. It appeared initially that there may have been a window ope, or perhaps even a door- but no details of the wall construction could be taken.

Test pit 6 (Fig. 1, plate 16).

Located at the corner of the Evan's Home, where it should sit on the earlier Barracks wall. The base of the north wall of the Evan's Home was located at 1.80m below pgl. Two plinths or footings were noted, again here the inner face of the Barracks should lie beneath the later building. The fill against the wall was loose mortar and rubble. The machine bucket struck a live sewer manhole, and it was not possible to fix the location of the Barracks wall.

Test pit 7 (Fig. 1, plate 17).

At the south- west corner of the Evan's Home. The wall here stood on a plinth, and the footing extended to a depth of 2.00m. Redeposited subsoil was banked up against the masonry here.

Test pit 8 (Figs 1, 2, plate 18).

This was located against the west wall of the Evan's Home. At a depth of less than 1m below present ground level, a cobbled surface was encountered. This resembles in all matters cobbled surface F3, and was clearly cut by the foundation trench for the Evan's Home. Excavation was halted at this level. The Evan's Home wall is sited on the earlier Barracks wall in this location.

## Results: discussion

The 1700 Infantry Barracks

Trial pits 2,4,5,6,7 uncovered the wall foundations of the Evan's Home, and in at least 2 trial pits, the walls of the former Infantry Barracks were exposed. The lines fall exactly where indicated from Rocque's 1756 map (fig. 2), and the lines concur with those uncovered in 1999 trenching on the site by Stevens (trenches indicated on fig. 2).

Unmapped wall footings and cobbled surface

The wall footings F1 and F7 uncovered in trenches 1A and 1C do not align with any known walls. Both are probably associated with the extensive cobbled surface F3, uncovered in trenches 1A, B and C, and also in trial pit 8. The dating of the cobbled surface is not however conclusive. The evidence from trench 1A suggests that it is medieval, as the surface was overlain by a greenish soil with a fragment of medieval floor tile. Similar greenish soil overlay the surface in trial pit 8, however no finds were recovered from it. The foundation cut for the Evan's Home clearly cut through the cobbled surface, but (see fig 2) it is not clear whether this is also the foundation trench for the 1700 Barracks wall.

The cobbled surface in trench 1B was directly overlain by mortar and redbrick, a demolition horizon which it is suggested originated from the levelling of the Infantry Barracks, prior to construction of the Evan's Home. Fragments of wall render, indicative of an internal structural wall, were recovered from the area around wall F2 in trench 1A, suggesting that this was the wall of a building. It does not however feature on any map.

It is possible that the cobbled surface is the parade ground of the Infantry Barracks. The small quantity of domestic debris from the 1700s occupation and the Victorian asylum and later school is curious; in light of the almost continuous occupation of the site from dissolution onwards, the dating evidence is scant.

The plan of the priory (fig. 3).

The rubble and burnt clay deposit F9 is of medieval origin. Records show that the hospital, which occupied the site post-dissolution, was burnt in 1650. An overlay of the late 15th century plan of Kells Priory, Co Kilkenny, also an Augustinian foundation probably dating to 1193 (Empey 2007, 3), indicates the probable scale and extent of the cloister on the northern side of the church. Indeed the overlay of the chancel, and placing the Lady Chapel to the south, is a remarkably good fit, and establishes that the medieval wall uncovered by Stevens (1999) is part of the transept. (William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, founded St John's, and his

distinguished knight, Geoffry Fitzrobert, founded Kells Priory). It is interesting how the projected line of the medieval cloister was maintained by the 1700s Infantry Barracks, and again how the east wall of the Evan's Home may have reused a spine wall of the earlier barracks. The close alignment of barracks and east range indicates strongly that the east range was still standing by 1700.

#### The Mill Race and the line of the town wall

There is no evidence of medieval deposits from trial pit 3, and the standing wall post-dates 1758. This section of the mill race is shown walled on the 1838 and later Ordnance Survey maps. Likewise, without excavation in Back Lane, it cannot be stated whether the northern boundary wall is on the line of the town wall. However, it appears most likely as the location would enclose the priory, and thus protect the town. The most likely direction for the town wall is to continue directly west to the river. This was the enclosure of the Evan's Home (see fig. 3).

#### Other features

There is no apparent function for the 'ditch' feature in trench 2, except that it is of probable 17th or 18th century date. It may indeed merely be layers of dumped soil tipping to either north or south, that can give the impression of a cut. It was not possible due to safety constraints, to enter this trench.

Disarticulated human bone is present beneath the garden soil deposits of recent date. Fragments of recognisable human bone were also noted in the flower bed on the southern side of the garden.

## Impact of the new building

The footprint of the proposed new build, located on the north side of the Evan's Home, is indicated on figs 1 and 2. It lies beyond the predicted extent of claustral buildings, as indicated on fig. 3. The absence of a basement to the new building allows for the preservation in situ of any features of significance.

A preliminary piling layout has a series of 450mm diameter piles placed around the perimeter of the building. A greater concentration is given through the cellar of the 1700s barracks, where the new build links into the existing Evans Home, and inevitably, at the lift shaft. The pile lines avoid the walls of the Barracks, and extend through rubble cellar fill. The underside of the pile caps have been placed at existing ground level- 46.40 M OD. This represents minimal impact on the area of the new building. The piles are set in from the existing northern site wall. There will be no physical impact on this wall.

A large holding tank for water is required on site, it is proposed to locate this on the south side of the new building, adjacent to the western perimeter wall. This will result in the excavation of deposits to the base of the tank.

A ramped entrance is proposed through the western wall of the Evans Home. This will remove a section of the wall, which post-dates 1758, and was probably constructed at the same time as the Evans Home. Sections of this wall are in poor



repair. There is an underlying wall to the mill race, this lies below present ground level, and will not be disturbed in these works.

Within the garden of the Evans Home, the ground level rises considerably. Much of this is due to levelling of what was a fairly steep natural slope, westwards towards the river. At a depth of 1500mm below present ground level, a horizon of either dumped or in situ masonry, relating to the priory, was exposed in trench 2B. Ramping the ground in this area will probably impact on this deposit. Other features relating to the priory may also be uncovered by the reduction of ground level here. Kitchens and other utilitarian buildings are likely to be located close to the mill race. Therefore this area will require archaeological excavation. Any medieval fabric uncovered should be conserved within the new design.

The 'Pavilion' is located on the north transept of the church wall. (fig. 2). However, this light structure will have no foundations, and therefore there is no impact on the underlying deposits.

The disabled parking is located on a level area, presently used informally for parking. There is no intended ground reduction in this area, and therefore there is no impact on underlying deposits.

#### Drainage and services: Impact

All existing services are carried into the site through the arched entrance at Barrack Lane. It is intended to continue this route, utilising wherever possible the existing service trenches.

Information on the depth of existing services, specifically Broadband, is available from previous archaeological monitoring on the site (Channing 2001: 703). The broadband trench was narrower and not as deep as standard service trenches. Disarticulated human bone, probably disturbed from earlier service trenches, was uncovered in Barrack Lane. A wall foundation was uncovered. The required service trenches will not exceed 1000mm in depth, however material relating to the priory is likely to be uncovered, albeit previously disturbed. A wider trench, to encompass all services into the site, could result in maximising information from this sensitive location. Archaeological monitoring and/or excavation of sections of these service trenches will be required.

## Mitigation

The design allows for the preservation in situ of any masonry or other features relating to the priory and later barracks. The location of the new building minimises impact on either the priory buildings or the possible town wall. The location of both holding tank and ramp is flexible if significant features are uncovered in the course of excavation.

The extent of archaeological excavation required on this site will be determined by DOE, H and LG. However, the following areas should be considered for excavation:

The holding tank for water

The entrance ramp through the western boundary wall

Selected areas of the new building, including the entrance and lift shaft, where the concentration of piles is greatest.

A combined wider trench for upgraded services to the site should be considered, to allow for an understanding of the fragmentary remains which will be uncovered on this route.



Plate 1. Cobbled surface F2 in trench 1A, looking north.



Plate 2. Wall footing F1 in trench 1A, looking north.



Plate 3. Trench 1B, showing cobbled surface F2, looking north.



Plate 4. Trench 1C, showing cobbled surface F2, and wall footing F7, looking north.



Plate 5. Section of soils in trench 1, C, looking east.



Plate 6. Wall footing F7, bedded in cobbled surface F2.



Plate 7. Base of trench 2A, looking west.



Plate 8. Burnt clay and stones in trench 2B, looking north. Note thick deposit of yellow clay/ gravel in sections.



Plate 9. North end of trench 2, B, note mortar in sections.



Plate 10. Soils in section of trench 2, B, north end.





Plate 11. Trial pit 1, shovel at base of wall.



Plate 12. Trial pit 2, inside wall of barracks cellar.



Plate 13. Trial pit 3 in mill race.



Plate 14. Trial pit 4.



Plate 15. Trial pit 5, masonry of 1700s barracks just evident through cellar fill.



Plate 16. Trial pit 6, wall of Evans Home on 2 plinths.

Plate 17. Trial pit 7, wall of Evans Home on plinth footing.



Plate 18. Construction cut for Evans Home wall cuts cobbled surface.







ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST EXCAVATION AT BACK LANE, KILKENNY

FOR KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL

MINISTERIAL CONSENT C414; registration number E4109; metal detection  
R217.

CLAIRE WALSH  
FEBRUARY 2011

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## Introduction

Further information regarding the location of the town wall at St John's Abbey, Kilkenny, was requested by National Monuments, on foot of an application to develop a section of the site as the new Butler Gallery, and refurbish the 19th century Evan's Home. The site has a long period of occupation, with at least three discreet phases of building, at least two of which are reflected in the boundary wall to Back Lane.

Because of the presence of lean-to greenhouses along the inner wall boundary, only limited test excavation could be undertaken here in August 2010, and the results were inconclusive regarding the earliest date for the boundary wall.

At a site meeting in December 2010, National Monuments staff requested that a single trench be excavated on Back Lane to attempt to determine the date of a section of the lowest wall. This was carried out on 29/ 1/2011, in tandem with a measured drawing of the external face of the wall (FIGS 5,6,7) and a visual analysis and description of the masonry. A further visual analysis of the all the boundaries of the site was undertaken on 11/2/2011. The results are described below.

## The line of the town wall

The town defences of Kilkenny are classified as a National Monument (RMP KK 019 026020), the protection of which is detailed in the National Policy on Town Defences (2008, Archaeology.ie). However the line of the town defences along the northern and western part of the suburb of St John's has not been uncovered through excavation. The line of the wall on the south side of the suburb has been uncovered in several test excavations, and at 68- 69 John St, it stood below present ground level to a depth of 3m, with a significant basal batter (96E131, excavations.ie). Elsewhere in Kilkenny, some sections of the wall where uncovered had a plinth, and all descriptions indicate a significant basal batter. None of these descriptions tally with the lower section of the wall F12 uncovered in the test pit at Back Lane. Insufficient of the lower masonry F13 could be uncovered within the limits of this trench.

An external ditch has been located at most excavated sections, however the limitations of the work at Back Lane did not allow for uncovering such a feature here.

There is a difference of opinion between several authors, including Thomas (1992) and Bradley (2000), as to where the town wall or town defences lie in relation to St John's Priory. Although burgesses were noted here in the early 13th century, it has been suggested by one authority that the suburb of St John's may not have been enclosed until perhaps the 16th century. However, Thomas (1992, 130) suggests that 'St John's may be viewed as a walled suburb of Kilkenny, possibly always enclosed by a ditch and bank and initially defended by the priory, with its defences upgraded in the early 16th century at the latest'. Thomas placed

the town wall along the north end of Barrack Lane, where the arch is. whereas if the priory were to defend the suburb, the wall should enclose the back of the priory, along Back Lane, and not extend across the entrance to the priory. In 1307, an inquisition giving the burgage rent of St John's at £4 13s 11dm suggests there were 94 burgesses and a population of between 400 and 650 (Bradley 2000, 4). St John's Outer Gate, first mentioned in 1351, was sited on the corner of the Abbey site with John Street.

Bradley (2000, 4) states that 'the small fragment of the claustral buildings north-west of the church indicates that the town wall was located further to the north than has generally been supposed'. However, the Historic Atlas of Kilkenny has depicted the wall on a line with the northern field boundary on Rocque's map of c. 1758, while the Conservation Plan of Kilkenny Town Walls (Oxford Archaeology 2005) has placed the town wall on the rear of the John St plots on Rocque.

Previous test trenching on the site (Stevens 2000, 2006) uncovered a medieval wall, most likely relating to the chancel, as it lies parallel with it, at a depth less than 1.50m below present ground level. This wall is actually featured on Rocque's map, indicating the north transept of the church was still standing in the mid 18th century. No evidence for a town wall on the site was uncovered in this test trench, and he therefore, following Bradley, reasonably suggested that it may lie further north- indeed be the present northern boundary of the Evans Home site.

The most recent publication on the town by the Kilkenny Archaeological Project (2008) depicts the line of the town wall enclosing the north side of the Evan's Home site, along Back Lane, but returning along the west site boundary, at the mill race, and continuing on the rear of the plots south of the Carnegie Library. This map of the line of the town walls is reused in a submission to the Irish Walled Towns Network Conference in September 2010 by Coilin O' Drisceoil of Kilkenny Archaeology.

While there is reasonable evidence that the town wall lies along Back Lane, there is less evidence to suggest that it extended along the inside of the mill race, and testing in August 2010 indicates that the west wall of the present precinct is of much more recent date. Rocque's map of 1758 does not indicate a wall along the mill race, whereas a boundary wall to the Barracks along Back Lane is shown (FIG.2).

As it appears unlikely that the construction of the infantry barracks in 1700 should have cut across such a long standing boundary as the town wall, it seems most probable that the line of the town wall extended from Back Lane directly to the mill race, with the defences probably continuing to the river. The Kilkenny Down Survey (1655) indicates a ditched enclosure to the north and west of the abbey church and ancillary buildings (FIG 1). This section of the town may have been walled by the Cromwellian period, when it was described as 'another walled town on the other side of the river' but 'the suburb of St John's was taken without serious resistance' (Doyle 2005). Rocque, however, does not depict any town walls in the suburb of St Johns.

The first infantry barracks in the town were constructed here c. 1700. The site is referred to as the old infantry barracks by 1768. It is recorded that the stone of the barracks was taken from the priory. It is suggested that the line of the barracks overlay the existing east range of the priory. The gable wall of the 1700 Barracks is extant in the boundary wall on Back Lane. The gable wall projects north of the line of the boundary wall along Back Lane, and trenches inside the Barracks footprint here have indicated that a deep basement is present. There is no apparent reason why the line of the gable wall of the Barracks projects beyond the possible line of the town wall.

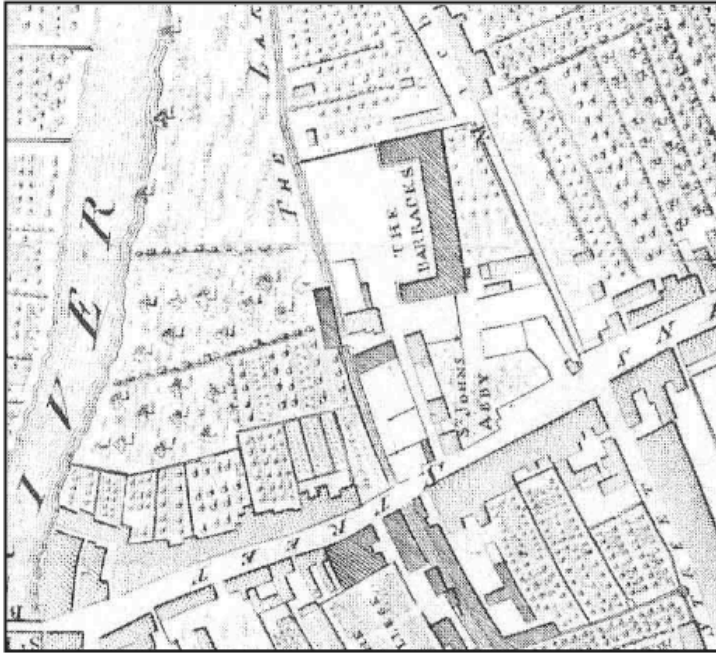
Around 1780, the nave of the main Chapel, its two towers and attendant buildings were demolished. Robertson (1851, 434) quotes an anonymous tour through Ireland, 'the tower of St John's abbey, is described as then standing, and is noticed for its lightness and beauty' 'these ruins, says the tourist, stand upon a large extent of ground, bordering on the river'.

Evan's Asylum was built on the site of the former barracks in 1818 (FIG 3). This was a non-denominational home, founded by Joseph Evans for 12 male and 12 female 'decayed servants'. By 1861, the building housed an infant's school. The gate piers at the north east end of Back Lane are not present on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map, but are present on the 1871 edition. They do not appear to relate to the Evans Home, but to buildings on the east side of the block. Likewise, the continuation of the wall to the river is not present on the first edition, but present by 1871. The first edition shows a small bridge over the millrace, but there was a laneway along the side of the Barracks, shown on the 1758 Rocque map.

### **The excavation (FIGS 4-7)**

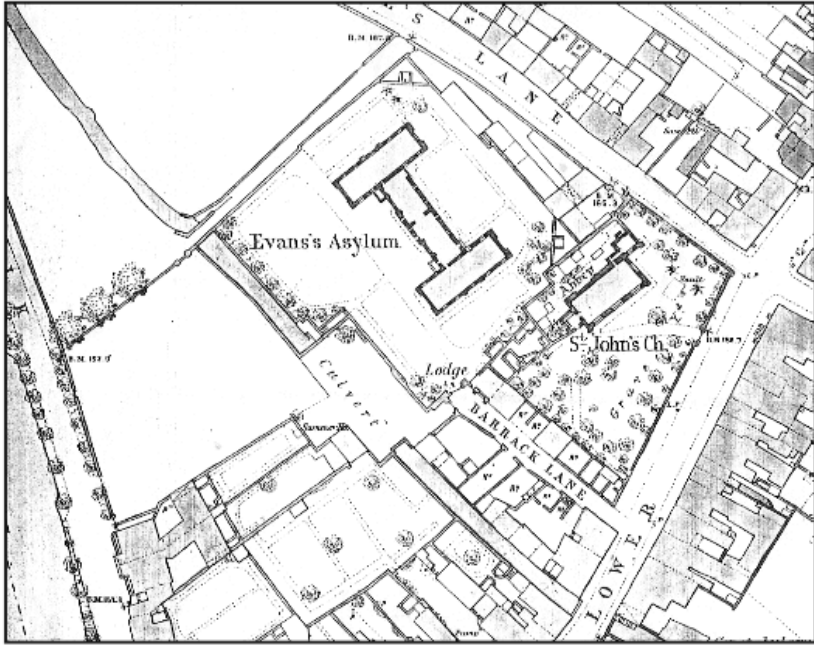
The work was licensed by a modification to the original ministerial consent C414, and a road closure licence permitted by Kilkenny County Council (R.O (002) 2011). The size of the excavation trench was restricted by the Borough Council for Health & Safety & Structural Stability reasons Kilkenny Borough Council to a maximum width of 3 feet, and 1000mm in depth. It was limited in length by the presence of a broadband cable at a distance of c. 1000mm from the wall. This meant that there was no chance of determining whether or not an external ditch exists along Back Lane, which would be conclusive evidence for the defensive function of a medieval wall in this area.

The existing wall at Back Lane stands to a height in excess of 4.80m towards the western end of Back Lane, but it is clearly composed of several different structures and builds (see below).



1758

Fig. 2. Barracks on Rocque's 1758 map of Kilkenny.



1871

Fig. 3. Evan's Asylum on site of former Barracks, 1871 Ordnance Survey map.

The trench was placed towards the western end of Back Lane, east of the mill race, where the lowest course of masonry visible was distinct from overlying builds, and resembled potentially medieval masonry (Plate 1).

The road surface was saw cut, and excavation was carried out with a narrow grading bucket. The upper level consisted of compacted hardcore to a depth of c. 300mm, at which point the concrete capping of a broadband cable was identified. This runs along Back Lane, at a distance of approx. 1000mm from the boundary wall of the Evan's Home, at a depth of 800mm. The cable was laid in a bedding of fine pea gravel. The placing of the cable had been archaeologically monitored in 2004 (licence 04E0057), when the arch of the bridge over the mill race to the west of the priory had been exposed.

All of the soils were removed by mechanical excavator, and examined for finds in the machine bucket. Due to safety requirements, no meaningful *in situ* examination could be carried out in such a small trench.

The removal of the mixed deposit in the trench exposed the face of the wall, which extended to a depth of 1.32m, where it stood on a plinth or an earlier wall (plates 2, 3). The wall face was fair, and composed of mainly rectangular blocks, laid on their long side, and brought roughly to courses. The face of the wall was abutted by a very mixed deposit of grey/brown gritty clay silt F11, which contained frequent small fragments of red brick, and several pottery sherds. These were of mixed date, and included a sherd of vividly coloured delft ware, brown glazed earthenware, tin glazed earthenware, white glazed stoneware, and a small sherd of unglazed wheel thrown earthenware, the latter probably late medieval in date. A small decorative copper alloy button, with traces of surface gilding, was also recovered from this mixed deposit. This button is probably late medieval in date. The date of the deposition of this material is no earlier than the 18th century. This suggests strongly that the lower wall F12 on Back Lane is not of medieval date, and probably dates to the construction of the Barracks c. 1700.

At the base of the wall, a masonry structure F13 that is interpreted as possibly an earlier wall projected for approx. 300m from the face of the overlying structure. The small section that was exposed was composed of two or more rectangular blocks, laid on their long side. This lower stretch of masonry was sealed by a deposit of quite soft very white lime mortar, which had a very high lime content, and no stone or pebbles. This was capped by a thin layer of yellow/ brown clay silt, which did not contain any red brick, and had few small stones. No finds were recovered from the mortar and the yellow clay, which could only be examined in the machine bucket. A deposit of grey/brown silt and small stones was apparent beneath the yellow silt. No pottery was recovered from this lowest deposit, but oyster shell and a fragment of butchered animal bone were noted. Excavation was halted at this level.

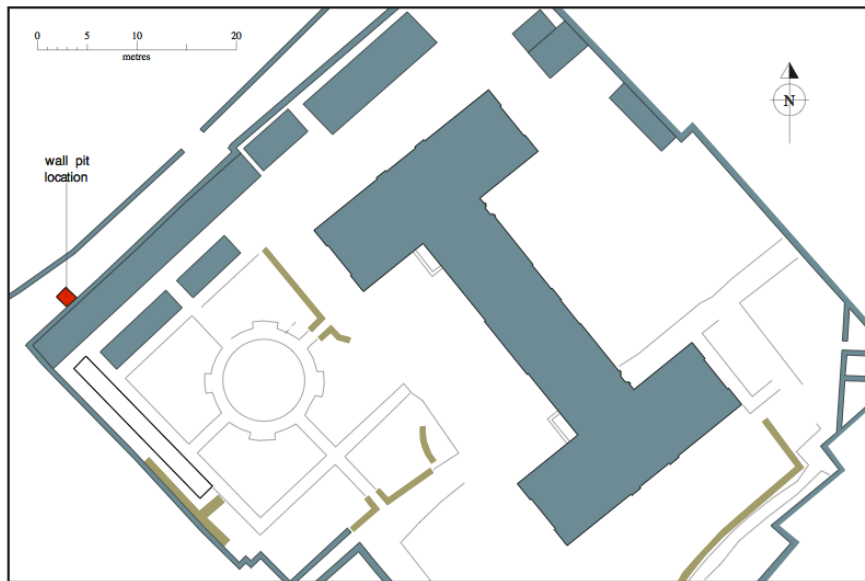


Fig. 4. Test pit location, January 2011.

## Discussion

The lowest masonry F13 is very likely be medieval in date. It is present at a depth of 1.32m below the present ground level, which lies at approx 44.85MOD (FIG 7).

At the western end of Back Lane, subsoil occurs at approx. 41.90m (evidence from test pit 3, August 2010). The lowest deposits in test pit 3 were of comparatively modern date, suggesting that the mill race had been dug out in recent time. In contrast, the base of the deposits reached in January 2011 contained no modern material, and appear on that basis to be medieval in date.

The upper wall uncovered in test pit 3 was 19th century or later in date, but it sat on an earlier wall of better masonry, which may be continuous with wall F12 on Back Lane- this is certainly suggested by comparison of the levels. The soils which about the lower levels of wall F12 in the test pit on Back Lane are 18th century or later in date; this indicates a similar date or slightly earlier for the wall F12.

Trial pit 1, excavated in August 2010, uncovered the plinth of the middle, rebuilt wall F14 at 900mm below ground level in the glass house (depth 45.32MOD), and the base of the plinth at 1.100mm below ground level in the glasshouse (45.12MOD). The deposits abutting the upper wall were 19th century in date. The



evidence indicates that the standing wall adjacent to the western gable of the Barracks is comparatively late in date, of 19th century.

Limited evidence for a medieval wall on the line was recovered from the test pit. It is possible that the lowest masonry uncovered in the small trial pit excavated on Back Lane is the upper level of a boundary wall to the priory. If the wall continues to subsoil, it stands below ground to a height of less than 1.50m. The masonry was bonded by loose white lime mortar, and a layer of this was apparent- typical profile for a demolition level. This was overlain by a clean, brick free

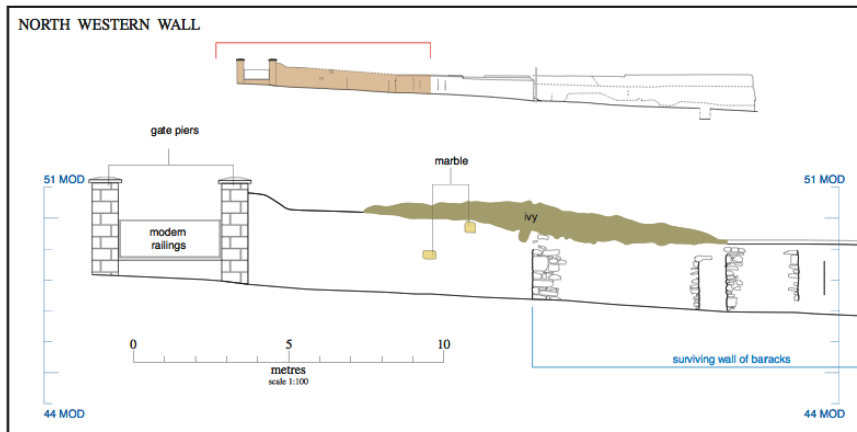


Fig. 5

yellow silt, which was the building level for another wall F12. Brick-free silty deposits with marine shell and butchered animal bone about this lower wall.

It is not possible, within the limits of the test trench, to state whether this lower masonry functioned as the town wall.

## Assessment of the site boundary walls

The following account of the walls was compiled from a series of sources, including scaled drawings of selected walls, photographs, a visual assessment, and cartographic sources. The survey should be viewed as a preliminary study. Archaeological trenches at Back Lane, and at the mill race, provided confirmation of the date of those walls. Walls of most interest to this writer are the south

western present boundary wall, and the entire southern wall, which appears to be of relatively recent construction.

An overlay of the Ordnance Survey map of 1871 (a clearer survey than the 1842 edition) on Rocque's map of 1758 indicates the shifting boundary on the west, south and the east side of the site (FIG. 10). The sole consistent boundary is that on the north side. The assessment concludes that the current west wall of the site, at the south end, is not the boundary wall of the priory, but is composed of a series of building walls, including an internal wall of a large steeply gabled building (on Rocque), and the east wall of the 'claustral building' with original sandstone doorjambs.

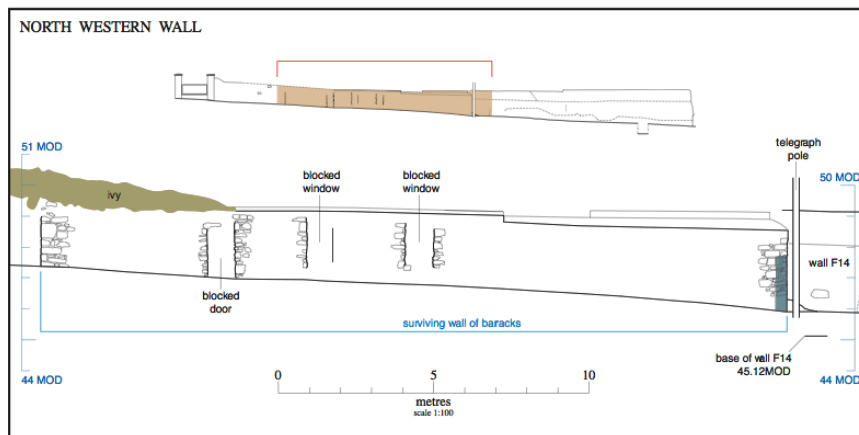


Fig. 6

The south boundary wall and arch is not depicted as a continuous wall on Rocque's map, and while further analysis is required, this wall and arch appears to be a relatively recent fabrication. The original boundary to the priory appears to have been a short distance further south towards John Street.

The visual assessment included a subjective identification of the stone used. This included grey limestone, black fossiliferous limestone ('Kilkenny Marble'), pale grey/ white sandstone, red sandstone and very rare small blocks of white quartzite/ marble. According to sources (KAP 2008, Unitt 2007) all of the building stone is available locally.

The survey was restricted by lack of access to St John's church and grounds, which forms the boundary on the south side, and by the height and growth on the walls at the corner of the west and south walls.

#### The wall at Back Lane (FIGS 5-7)

North-eastern section, gate piers to barracks quoins: the lowest masonry is of random limestone rubble, brought to rough courses. Patches of lime render with characteristic pebble gritting are present. Two large rectangular marble blocks are notable in this build. No apparent differences in build, except for the uppermost courses of most recent date. This structure abuts the quoins of the barracks (plates 5, 6).

The Barracks quoins are large blocks of surface dressed stone measuring 550mm by 400mm and longer. The surface of the stonework is weathered. Patchy lime render with pebbles is present on the exterior of the Barracks. The masonry is of mixed rectangular blocks and less regular blocks. The gable wall incorporated several stones from the abbey, identifiable as weathered pale sandstone blocks. The corner at the western end of the barracks was bevelled (plate 9).

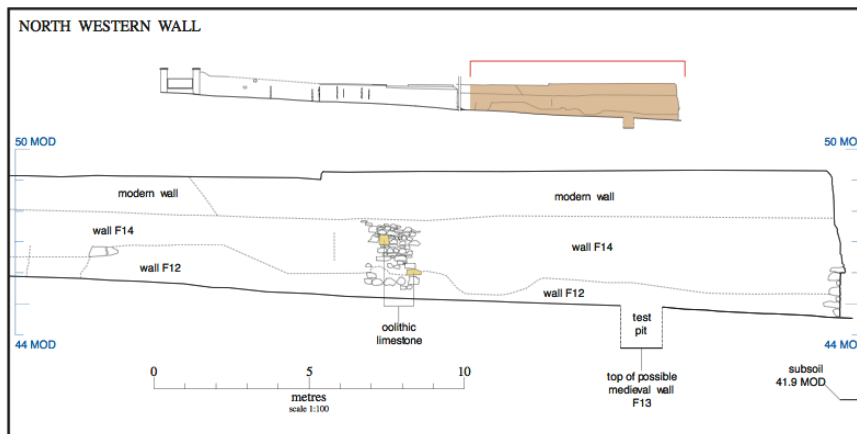


Fig. 7

At least three blocked opes are apparent on the gable wall of the Barracks (Plates 7, 8). One is a doorway, while the other two are windows. The blockage was mortared stone, with smaller chipped fragments and occasional red brick (plate 7).

The masonry at the western end of the wall abutted the quoins of the Barracks. The chamfered corner at the west end suggests that there may have been at one time an entrance onto Back Lane.

Several distinct builds on the wall are apparent (plates 10, 13).

The lowest build, F12, stands not much higher than 1000mm above the road surface. It is distinct from the higher builds by the weathered and smooth face of the stones (plates 4, 11). Where the test pit is located, there are not more than three courses of stonework remaining above ground. The masonry is generally of rectangular blocks which measure at most 500mm by 200mm, laid on the long side and brought to courses. Lime mortar is evident. A section of the wall is composed of more rounded blacker calp, but there is no distinct vertical break in the masonry. No surface render or mortar is evident on the sections of blacker stone. It is not well constructed nor are the stones closely fitted. Elsewhere, the lower F12 and middle masonry F14 have patchy pebbled lime render, indicating this dates to the Evans Home period. Some of the surface also has modern cement repointing (plate 16).

The corner at the mill race projects out, and larger stones are present here—possibly the remains of a parapet on the small bridge which spanned the mill race. An iron hinge pivot is set into the masonry here (plate 15).

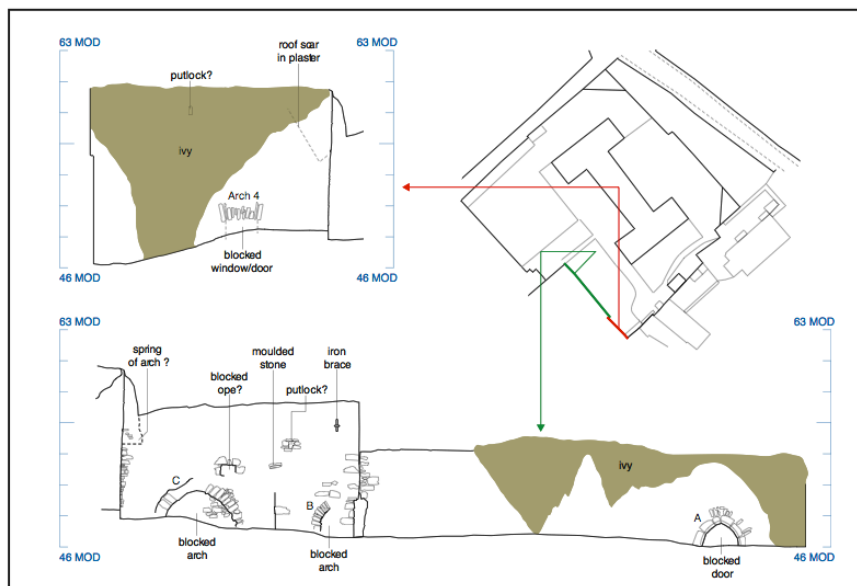


Fig.09

The middle section of wall F14 has several oolitic limestone blocks from the abbey (plate 13). The lower courses of this wall form a distinct horizon. In general the stonework of this wall is poor, with smaller triangular stones, roughly coursed, and notable chipped surface on the stone.

The uppermost wall incorporates several layers of river rolled cobbles and small rectangular slabs in the base, and is built of chipped limestone.

### **The wall along the mill race (plates 17, 18, 19, 20)**

A single test trench excavated in August 2010 shows that there are two walls at the northern end of this boundary. The uppermost wall, of very poor construction, sits on a lower wall, which is of better masonry. Walls along this boundary are first indicated on the first edition (1842) of the Ordnance Survey.

The northern end has a blocked flat headed ope (plate 17). Several discreet builds are evident at this point, and in general they are all poor masonry. Most of the stone is blocks of calp, which is coursed and lime bonded. The face of the blocks are chipped. The masonry incorporates some re used stones.

Towards the southern end of the wall, the enclosure shown on the Ordnance Survey second edition is evident in the wall where the later wall to the north abuts the earlier build (plate 18). The earlier masonry projects westwards beyond the addition. The stonework is weathered, however of poor build, and there is a noticeable bulge in the wall here.

The stepped boundary is not shown on Rocque, but is on the 1871 map. On the 6 inch historic map, there is a different walled enclosure at this location. Several walls end along this stretch, and are not tied into one another- there is a gap between the walls (plate 19). The end of the

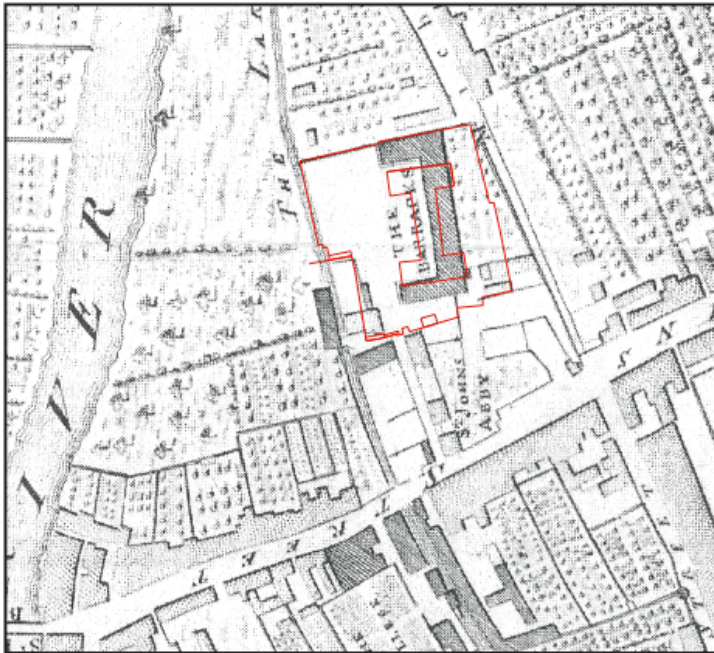


Fig.10 1758

middle wall includes red brick. The innermost stretch of walling is of weathered limestones of mixed sizes. The corner has large quoins. The entire section of walling above ground here is of relatively recent date.

The north wall of the Claustral building (fig. 8)

This wall is shown on Rocque's map, and aligns reasonably well with the later 1871 OS map (fig. 10). The building of which this forms the north wall appears to be relatively intact, at least at the east end, where the plaster render over the groined and vaulted ceiling is extant (see plates 25, 26).

The pointed arched north doorway appears intact, with chamfered limestone jambs with surface marks of axed diagonal tooling (plate 21). This is probably 15th century in date.

The lower courses of the wall contain many rectangular blocks, with frequent irregular stones. There are no evident rebuilds in this wall face, apart from the upper levels where a course or two of water rolled cobbles occurs. The masonry is not regularly coursed. There are frequent small spalls/ infill stones. There is however no evidence for reused stone in the wall face.

At the east end, there is a wall spout with a flat drip stone, the wall below is stained by moisture. Near the top of the wall, there is a course of coping stones, which appears to be limestone flags. (inside this building there is a suggestion of a stairwell on this wall).

The western end of the wall is late, and has a face of weathered limestone/ sandstone, and a narrow brick dressed window (plate 22). The wall face bulges where the two phases of building have been stitched together. The masonry of the later building has frequent characteristic small squared blocks of limestone, and includes some brick.

The mill race is shown open on Rocque's map. Clearly the walling which abuts the west face of the medieval room is late, as it spans the culverted mill race. The building here is not shown on the Ordnance Survey first edition (1842), when the mill race is still open, but by the second edition (1871) the culvert has been constructed, and the building is shown on the 1946 map.

Interior of the claustral building

Much of the visible stonework is of fossiliferous limestone, probably from the Black Quarry. The building has two extant doorways, both are pointed arches, of limestone, however the exterior of the eastern doorway is of red sandstone. The original plaster remains on some of the voussoirs of the columns (plate 27) and on sections of the vaulted ceiling. The northern capital is ornate, with several human heads, however the columns and capitals to either side of the doorway on the east wall are of differing heights and mismatched (plate 25). This queries the extent of reconstruction of this building. Much of the vaulting is studded with red brick, and small cobble type stonework, evidently patched.

There is some evidence of a stairwell on the northern wall. It appears to have been a two storey building.

The east face of the party wall

This is in private ownership, however the owner kindly allowed access. A large amount of decorative stonework, both sandstone and limestone, from the abbey is incorporated into the wall. The steep gabled pitch of a building shown on Rocque's map is sketched in red brick on this side of the wall- the plaster/ render

print of the gable is visible on the interior of the wall also. This section of the party wall is therefore formed by an internal wall of the building shown on Rocque's map.

The main west wall (fig 9)

The sandstone doorway (A) to the claustral building to the west appears to be in situ (plate 29). The dressed jambs of the doorway are set into a round headed arch. The use of sandstone contrasts with the inner door jambs, which are of limestone, as are the jambs of the north doorway. This suggests at minimum a two phased construction. The east doorway is also wider than the north doorway. The chamfered jambs are of red sandstone, with diagonal surface dressing. The round arch into which the door is set is well constructed. Much of the wall is repointed. It is composed mainly of quite weathered gray limestone, with render on the lower courses of the wall in the vicinity of arch A. Red brick is included in the door blockage. The upper levels of the wall appear to be rebuilt, with the use of darker and less weathered limestone. The soil is banked up quite high against this wall, and several sycamore trees are growing up against the wall.

There is an irregular section of red brick and small stone in the central part of the wall (plate 30) however there are no stones here that suggest a formal breach.

The central section of the wall has two blocked arches, B and C. Arch B (plate 31) is cut through by a vertical join. The arch is of well set keystones, of angular grey limestone. The infill is composed of both large and small limestones. Next to arch B, a rectangular section of walling is evident at the lower courses (plate 32). The surface of the large blocks is laminating. A blocked ope, a probable putlock hole, and a reused sculptured sandstone are evident in the walling here. A third blocked arch, C, is higher than the adjacent arch, and is a large round headed ope, with weathered limestone keystones (plate 33). The wall here is of horizontally set regularly coursed blocks.

The projecting brick dressed corner of the boundary wall corresponds to the end wall of the long building on Rocque (plate 34). The adjoining building to the south on Rocque's map extends across the present boundary wall of the Evans' Home, and is evident here as a steep roof scar in plaster (plate 36). It is also visible in the adjacent property to the west, and it appears that an internal wall of this building forms the boundary. The lower section of walling here has several stones of a flattish headed arch, suggesting a blocked doorway with sandstone quoins (plate 35,4). The soil is mounded very high in this area, but there are indications of the return wall (of either structure) extending into the site here.

This brief study of the present boundary wall of the 19th century Evans Home indicates that the south end of the west boundary is composed of at least three separate elements, and is not a continuous wall of one build. It is probable that the original west wall of the priory lay further west, closer to the mill race, as at least two blocked opes, B and C, are likely to be of medieval date.



#### The south wall

The corner and end wall is obscured with growth, but there is the scar here of a possible stairwell, which reuses dressed stone (plate 37). There appears to be a significant amount of reconstruction here- the lower courses are of large rectangular stone, while the middle and upper levels are collapsing. The end wall of the steeply roofed building on Rocque probably forms part of this wall. No detailed examination was possible on this survey.

#### The entrance to Barrack Lane (plate 39)

Barrack Lane is shown on Rocque, and is doubtless the original entrance to the priory complex from the town. The entrance arch is 3.05m in width, and the wall to the west is 1.60m in width while that on the east is 900mm in width. The entrance jambs are large chamfered limestones, and the stones of the segmented arch are fine sandstone; these are similar to the sandstone quoins in the chancel of the church, and are probably reused from the church. The inside of this arch is concrete.

Interestingly, the west side of the wall is not shown on Rocque; the gable of the building is printed on the wall (but the walling to either side appears later, and added to the gable. This suggests that the wall and arch are of recent construction.

The masonry of the exterior of the wall to Barrack Lane suggests three phases of building.

#### The wall from the lodge to the church and East Boundary wall

All of this walling appears to be of recent date, and much is obscured with growth. The north wall of the chancel is accessible from within the south closet: the masonry of the chancel is patched and infilled, but a line of sandstone quoins on the north- west wall of the chancel appears in situ (plate 40). Interestingly, Rocque's map shows a building to the north of the church, which appears to be the north transept of the church. Part of this wall may be extant in the east boundary wall of the site.

An overlay of the 1871 Ordnance Survey map on Rocque's 1758 map shows that the line of the east wall of the Evan's Home is of relatively recent build. Despite this, there are some interesting features, including a series of round headed arches, now blocked (plates 42, 43). Two are visible only from the exterior, in the small carpark on St Michael's Lane, and occur at different heights.

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Plate 1. Lower course of wall F12, showing calp masonry.



Plate 2. Lower courses of wall F12 in testpit, base of ranging rod sits on earlier masonry.



Plate 3. Wall F12 sits on earlier masonry which projects from the base of the wall. Depth 1.32m below street level. Red brick rubble abuts lower face of wall F12.



Plate 4. Location of trench at wall F12, note coursed rectangular blocks.

Plate 5. Gate pier and boundary wall of Barracks at east end, Back Lane.



Plate 6. Large dressed quoins of Barracks, boundary wall abuts.



Plate 7. Barracks gable wall with infilled opes.







Plate 8. infilled ope in gable wall of barracks.



Plate 9. Chamfered corner and quoins of barracks. Masonry as in boundary wall F12.



Plate 10. Boundary wall showing at least three phases of building. Upper and middle build are 19th century, lower wall F12 is probably 18th century in date.



Plate 11. Lower courses of boundary wall, weathered black calciferous limestone with few trace of render extant.



Plate 12. Render of 19th century wall F14 with distinctive pebbles, and later repointing. Many chipped faced stones used.



Plate 13. Levels of rebuilding, with reused stone from abbey.



Plate 14. Western end of boundary wall to Evans Home,



Plate 15. Projecting stones , possibly part of bridge parapet, with iron hinge pivot.



Plate 16. Chipped stone face of 19th century wall.





Plate 17. Wall along millrace with flat headed blocked ope.



Plate 18. Wall along millrace, showing join of two builds.



Plate 19. Untied walls at boundary at millrace.



Plate 20. Wall at stepped entrance to site at west.



Plate 21. North door, ext, to claustral building.



Plate 22. North wall claustral building, with added masonry to west, with brick dressed window.



Plate 23. Drip spout in north wall, claustral building.



Plate 24. Ext, upper level, claustral building.



Plate 25. Int, east doorway, claustral building, note differing columns.



Plate 26. Column and capital with heads.



Plate 27. Voussoirs above capital.



Plate 28. Detail of masonry, int north wall.





Plate 29. Ext east doorway, red sandstone, of claustral building.



Plate 30. Red brick infill/ repair of boundary wall.



Plate 31. Blocked arch, cut /abuted by later wall.



Plate 32. Join/ abutment of walls, west boundary wall.



Plate 33. Blocked arch C, west boundary.



Plate 34. Brick trimmed projection where walls of two buildings on Rocque meet.



Plate 36. Scar of steeply pitched gable in plaster visible in western boundary wall.



Plate 35. Voussoirs of arch over blocked opening 4.



Plate 37. Internal end wall of building on Rocque, south west boundary. Scar of possible stairwell in wall.



Plate 39. Gate arch at Barrack Lane, three phases of construction evident.



Plate 40. Sandstone quoins in north wall at south end of chancel.



Plate 42. Round headed arch in late 18th or 19th century east site boundary wall.



Plate 43. Blocked round headed arch in exterior of east boundary wall.



Plate 41. Patched wall of chancel, where it forms site boundary. Upper levels appear intact.





ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF GREENHOUSE AND TREEROOT  
REMOVAL AT EVAN'S HOME, JOHN STREET, KILKENNY

C414, REG.E4109

CLAIRE WALSH  
JUNE 2012

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## Introduction

Monitoring of mechanical clearance of the foundations of greenhouse at the site of the new Butler Gallery at Evan's Home was undertaken over a four day period from 23/4/2012 to 26/4/2012. Several features of interest were noted in the clearance, and are detailed below.

## Foundations

The greenhouse foundations were of cast *in situ* concrete, laid in shallow trenches. Interim walls were of poorly bonded concrete blocks. The foundations were easily removed by machine.



Plate 1. Removal of foundations.

### Floor slab

The floor slab at the eastern line of greenhouses directly overlay a well. The well is of dry stone construction, and a decayed timber overlies it. No attempt had been made to backfill the well, although it had been covered with timbers, now decayed, and topped with pale brown gravel, which was an underfloor to the greenhouse slab floor in this area.



Plate 2. Well, covered by floorslab of greenhouse.



Plate 3. Well.

The well is located 6500mm west of the end of the Barracks wall (kink in the boundary wall of Evan's Home), and 2000mm from the boundary wall. It is at least 3000mm deep, and c. 1000mm wide. It is likely to belong to the Evan's Home phase of the site, while it is not marked on any of the Ordnance Survey maps, there is a walled structure shown in this location on the 19th century maps. Every attempt should be made to locate a contemporary surface and context for the well, along with a full record of the feature. It has been covered with a metal plate and soil prior to full excavation.

#### Re- used stone

The east wall of the greenhouse was removed, where it abutted the kink in the north boundary wall of the Evan's Home. The bonded blocks were pulled off the older masonry very cleanly, revealing a probable window reveal of the Barracks, which incorporated an inscribed stone, with lettering upside down. The position



and detail of the stone (plate 4), and that of another worked stone uncovered (plate 5) should be recorded.



Plate 4. Inscribed stone, shown upside down.



Plate 5. Worked stone in gable wall of Barracks.

#### Tree roots

The boles and roots of the conifers were removed. These had wide lateral roots, but were shallow. No disturbance to archaeological horizons was caused by their removal.



Plate 6. Removal of tree roots.

Evans' Home, Barrack Lane, Kilkenny City  
Archaeological Excavation

Client: Kilkenny County Council  
John Street  
Kilkenny

Architect: McCullough Mulvin  
Molesworth Street  
Dublin 2

Site: Evans' Home, Kilkenny

Consent No: C414

Excavation No: E4109

Detection No: R217

Archaeologist: Orla Scully

Authors: Orla Scully & Rob O' Hara

Report Date: September 2013

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Our Ref: 2012\_18

CONTENTS .....	2
SUMMARY .....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....	1
1.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL REQUIREMENT .....	1
<b>2. SITE DESCRIPTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 SITE LOCATION .....	2
2.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PROTECTION .....	3
2.3 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS .....	4
2.3.1 Evans' Home (1999).....	4
2.3.2 Kilkenny Broadband (2004).....	4
2.3.3 Evans' Home (2010/11) .....	5
<b>3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL &amp; HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 GENERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND .....	7
3.2 ST JOHN'S PRIORY.....	8
3.3 INFANTRY BARRACKS.....	11
3.4 EVANS' HOME .....	12
<b>4. EXCAVATION RESULTS.....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 13TH–17TH CENTURY (ST JOHN'S PRIORY) .....	15
4.1.1 Eastern structure.....	15
4.1.2 Western structure.....	17
4.1.3 Southern structure.....	18
4.1.4 Rubble deposits.....	19
4.1.5 Cloister walls and surfaces.....	19
4.1.6 Priory walls and surfaces.....	21
4.1.7 Isolated masonry features.....	21
4.2 18TH CENTURY (INFANTRY BARRACKS) .....	22
4.3 19TH–20TH CENTURY (EVANS' HOME) .....	24
<b>7. DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>26</b>
7.1 13TH–16TH CENTURY (ST JOHN'S PRIORY) .....	26
7.1.1 Introduction .....	26
7.1.2 Ancillary Buildings.....	27
7.1.3 Priory Walls.....	30
7.1.4 Cloister.....	30
7.2 18TH CENTURY (INFANTRY BARRACKS) .....	31
7.3 CONCLUSIONS.....	34
<b>8. INVENTORY .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>9. DISSEMINATION .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>10. REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>35</b>
10.1 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	35
10.2 UNPUBLISHED REPORTS .....	37
10.3 OTHER SOURCES .....	38
10.4 WEB REFERENCES.....	38

#### LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 7 MEDIEVAL BUILDINGS

FIGURE 8 MEDIEVAL WALL F81 AND F98

FIGURE 9 MEDIEVAL WALLS WITHIN PRECINCT OF EVANS' HOME

FIGURE 10 BARRACKS & EVANS' HOME FEATURES

FIGURE 11 OLD BARRACKS, BELFAST

FIGURE 12 CARLOW BARRACKS

FIGURE 13 SECTIONS A

FIGURE 14 SECTIONS B

#### LIST OF PLATES

PLATE 1: AERIAL VIEW OF EXCAVATION AREA

PLATE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF MEDIEVAL REMAINS FROM NORTHWEST

## SUMMARY

This Final Excavation Report has been prepared by Archer Heritage Planning Ltd for Kilkenny County Council. It presents the results of an archaeological excavation at the site of the proposed new Butler Gallery, Evans' Home, Barrack Lane, Kilkenny. The report outlines the historical background to the site, its archaeological stratigraphy and artefacts, and the survival of features belonging to the medieval Priory of St. John's and later buildings.

Archaeological excavation (E4109; R217) was undertaken in July and August 2012 by Orla Scully for Archer Heritage Planning Ltd with Ministerial Consent (C414) under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (amended) from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland (NMI).

Previous archaeological assessments of the site (Stevens 1999; Walsh 2010 & 2011) had identified archaeological deposits within the site, which is adjacent to two RMP sites, KK019-026068 (Religious House– Augustinian Canons) and KK019-026024 (House 16th/17th century). The site was formerly occupied by St John's Priory, and was subsequently occupied by an eighteenth century infantry barracks before Evans' Home, which currently occupies the site, was built in the early nineteenth century. This long history resulted in a significant build-up of soils within the site, comprising largely demolition deposits. This main excavation area was 67m north-south x 55 m east-west and was located in front of Evans' Home, adjacent to the boundary wall of the Carnegie Library car park (Figures 1, 2; Plates 1, 2). Though extensive in area, the excavation depth only occasionally extended below 1.5m in depth, with much of this upper 1.5m of material modern or post-medieval in origin (either reclamation or demolition deposits). Natural deposits within the site comprised coarse riverine sand and gravels (F24) which were generally encountered at 43.90m OD.

Three broad phases of occupation and development were observed within the site boundary:

- 13th–16th century (St John's Priory)
- 18th century (Infantry Barracks)
- 19th– 20th century (Evans' Home)

The results of these excavations complement current research into the original layout of the priory (see Bradley 2013) and reveal something of the

early modern history of the site, in particular the infantry barracks, a substantial portion of which survives in the make-up of the Back Lane wall.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Final Excavation Report has been prepared by Órla Scully and Rob O'Hara of Archer Heritage Planning Ltd for Kilkenny County Council. It presents the results of an archaeological excavation at the site of the proposed new Butler Gallery, at Evans' Home, Barrack Lane, Kilkenny (Figures 1–2). Archaeological excavation (E4109; R217) was undertaken in July and August 2012 by Orla Scully for Archer Heritage Planning Ltd with Ministerial Consent (C414) under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (amended) from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland (NMI).

### 1.1 Proposed Development

The excavation was undertaken in the grounds of Evans' Home (a protected structure NIAH Ref: 12000216/ RPS ref: B3), Barrack Lane, Kilkenny City, where the Butler Gallery is proposed to be relocated, with a contemporary addition to house the art collection and facilitate exhibition and education programmes. The excavation proceeded to the levels required for the new building and its associated services. The remaining area will remain undisturbed by the building proposals.

### 1.2 Archaeological Requirement

Development Applications Unit (DAHG)

DAU-2011-KK-KC-Part 8 (10/004)

11 May 2011

Prior to the commencement of development work on site the proposed piling layout shall be agreed in discussions with the Planning and Licensing Unit, National Monuments Service, Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht. When the piling (or any alternative foundation format as agreed) the applicant shall engage a suitably qualified archaeologist to carry out full open area archaeological excavation to the base of archaeological deposits (preservation by record) which are due to be impacted by the development.

Excavation levels should proceed to the base of any proposed pile caps or edge beams with a further clearance of a minimum of 500mm buffer to protect any underlying deposits as exposed by excavations. The upper surface of any surviving archaeological deposits should be covered with a layer of terram, overlain by a suitable buffer material as agreed with the National Monuments Service. Should significant in situ masonry or human remains be encountered, the foundation design may need to be revised in order to avoid impacts. The archaeologist engaged shall consult all previous test excavations on the site and prepare and submit an appropriate method statement to be agreed with the Planning and Licensing Unit, National Monuments Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht at least 6 weeks in advance of the commencement of excavation as these works will require Ministerial Consent. No ground preparation works or engineering investigations may take place until the excavation and conservation requirements of the Department have been fully met. Having completed the work, the archaeologist shall submit a written report to the Planning Authority and to the National Monuments Service. The results of these excavations should be published (in a suitable forum depending upon the results) as soon as possible, to allow for the dissemination of the results of excavations within this important urban and monastic precinct.

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 Site location

The site is in the medieval suburb of St. John's, Gardens Td, Co. Kilkenny (St. John's Parish, Municipal Borough of Kilkenny; ITM 650775, 656105; 45m OD; Figures 1–2; Plates 1-2), within the precinct of Evans' Home, a nineteenth century charitable home, built on the former site of the eighteenth century 'Barracks' noted on Rocque's 1758 map of the city, as well as the late medieval St John's Priory, depicted on the 1655 Down Survey map, upstanding portions of which survive adjacent to the site (see Figures 3–5). This area of the city was originally on the edge of the flood plain of the Nore river (Ó'Drisceoil 2003; Ó'Drisceoil 2008, 72 & figure 36), with settlement and

industry developing along a mill stream flowing through this area from the thirteenth century AD. The site today has been raised, the original thirteenth century ground level being at the upper level of the mill race (now below ground), which flowed along the southwest boundary wall against Carnegie Library car park (see Figures 4–5; see Section 2.3.2 below).

## 2.2 Archaeological and architectural protection

Evans' Home (NIAH ref: 12000216; RPS ref: B3) and its gate lodge (NIAH ref: 12000215; RPS ref: B4) are both Protected Structures. The site is located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Kilkenny City and borders two Recorded Monuments listed in the Record of Monuments and Places: KK019-026068 (Religious House– Augustinian Canons) and KK019-026024 (House 16th/17th century). The medieval priory of St. John (KK019-026068) is a National Monument in the guardianship of the State (National Monument No's 344 & 331), extant portions of which have been incorporated into the current St. John's Church (NIAH 12000213; RPS B114), a Gothic-style Church of Ireland church built in 1817 incorporating fabric of the medieval late thirteenth century Lady Chapel.

### 2.3 Previous archaeological investigations

There have been three previous archaeological investigations within the current site boundary (Stevens 1999, Scully 2004; Walsh 2010; 2011), including an assessment of the current proposed development. The findings of these investigations are outlined below.

#### 2.3.1 Evans' Home (1999)

An assessment to the rear of Evans' Home (99E662; Stevens 1999; see Figure 2) produced a large assemblage of artefacts, including post-medieval/early modern ceramics and tiles, building material (daub and slate), corroded metal objects, as well as fragments of medieval pottery and floor tile. A portion of medieval wall including a chamfered, sandstone door jamb, was recorded close to the remains of the thirteenth century Lady Chapel. Portions of Infantry Barrack walls were identified at a location that corresponded to information provided by Rocque (1758) and Byron (1780; Figure 4). A 1m-wide, limestone wall, presumably part of the cloister, was rendered on both faces and built within a foundation trench backfilled with medieval pottery, iron fragments and animal bone.

#### 2.3.2 Kilkenny Broadband (2004)

Archaeological monitoring of broadband infrastructure installation required limited excavations at Back Lane, Barrack Lane and within Evans' Home (04E0057; Scully 2004). At the western end of Back Lane, a stone archway was uncovered below the modern surface. The archway was constructed of cut limestone blocks bonded with a lime-rich mortar, forming a single span bridge (4.30m long east-west). The bridge and its underlying watercourse (a mill race) had been in-filled in the early modern period. The fill contained concrete, seventeenth century clay pipe, brownware, and glazed red earthenware. The mill stream was medieval in date, and there are sixteenth century references to a laneway along the northern boundary of the precinct (Back Lane; Bradley 2013, 336), so presumably some manner of crossing the race existed. While no bridge is evident on Rocque (1758) or Byron (1780), it

is depicted on the 'Kilkenny circa 1842' map reprinted in the Irish Historic Towns Atlas (Figure 5).

Within Evans' Home, an east-west orientated white lime bonded, limestone wall (1.40m wide) was exposed. A further wall (0.6m wide) was exposed to the south, while a third wall was exposed 2.5m from the arched gateway leading to Barrack Lane. On Barrack Lane, approximately 2m south of the gate, a further wall (1.5m wide) was partially exposed 0.28m below the lane surface. The feature appeared to have been deliberately truncated and sealed with a layer of lime mortar. An east-west orientated limestone wall (1.1m wide) was exposed 7.5m south of the gateway, at a depth of 30cm below the road surface. Some of these walls are likely to be part of the demolished priory of St. John (see Figure 6).

### [2.3.3 Evans' Home \(2010/11\)](#)

An assessment of the current project in 2010/11 investigated the potential of grounds surrounding Evans' Home (Walsh 2010) and the potential of the wall abutting Back Lane (Walsh 2011). A number of trenches were excavated within the site, and site investigation boreholes were also monitored. Walls from the Infantry Barracks were recorded as well as a number of previously unrecorded walls and cobbled surfaces, which are discussed in Section 4 below. Finds from the site included disarticulated human bone, a fragment of architectural stone (sandstone), two medieval line-impressed floor tiles and medieval and post-medieval pottery.

The assessment addressed the issue of the line of the medieval town wall (K019-026020) surrounding the suburb of St. John's. Defences are indicated on the Down Survey map (1655; Figure 3). The 2010/11 assessments examined the wall along Back Lane to assess its history, and determine whether it incorporated or overlay medieval town defences. A medieval wall of unknown function, but unlikely to be a town wall, was identified beneath the existing eighteenth/ nineteenth century wall. The eighteenth/nineteenth century wall also incorporated a significant, extant section of masonry

belonging to the eighteenth century infantry barracks (see Sections 2.3.3 & 7.2 below).

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 General archaeological background

Richard de Clare constructed a motte castle in Kilkenny in 1173, which was burnt and rebuilt before the end of the century (Stokes 1895-7, 433) when William Marshall began construction of a large quadrangular stone castle, which led to the development of the city and liberty of Kilkenny (Crouch 1990, 92-106). The borough flourished and prospered during the 13th – mid-14th centuries, becoming the chief market place for the hinterland, resulting in the emergence of a wealthy merchant class. The success of the town led to a steep rise in its population and the rapid expansion of the urban area, into the flood-plains of the rivers Nore and Breagagh and then into a series of suburban developments. At least five suburbs are documented; Irishtown, Donaghmore, linear extensions along Walkin's Gate and St. James's Gate, Flemingstown (south of the castle), and St. John's. The earliest reference to town walls is in the thirteenth century under the reign of Henry III (Thomas 1992, 128) and probably after 1288 (Bradley 2000, 8). There were also several murage grants or references to the wall into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (these dates probably referring to the completion of the wall circuit or the enclosure of the suburb of St Johns), with on-going maintenance and improvement through sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Thomas *ibid*).

There was a general decline in population from the mid-fourteenth century, a result of the cumulative effects of poor harvests, the Bruce invasions and the 'Black Death' which resulted in the desertion of some suburbs and the abandonment of the wider countryside (Neeley 1989, 15-16). The fifteenth century was however, a period of consolidation and economic revival (*ibid*).

### 3.2 St John's Priory

St. John's Priory, also known as the Priory of St. John the Baptist, was an Augustinian foundation. 'Following a common code known as the Rule of St Augustine, from which they derived their name, because of their robes they were also called the Black Canons.... [who] became especially popular in the twelfth century, for quasi-monastic community life, without the rigours of strict monastic discipline, [which] assured for the clergy a more dignified existence than hitherto, and won them general respect and support' (Zarnecki 1972, 89).

The Augustinians came to Ireland in the twelfth century, and were established in Kilkenny during the episcopacy of Felix O'Dullany between 1178 and 1202 'at the eastern end (caput) of the bridge of Kilkenny' (Bradley 2013, 318). The bridge was Green's Bridge, further upriver from the later St. John's, near St Maul's graveyard. 'The arrival of William Marshall in 1207 as lord of Kilkenny following the death of Strongbow, led to a re-organisation and expansion of Kilkenny...the eastern bank of the river Nore was developed as an ecclesiastical suburb.... The ownership of the greater part of this suburb was granted to the Augustinians who moved to a larger, flatter, and more suitable site. According to late fourteenth-century annals preserved in the Liber primus Kilkenniensis this occurred in 1211' (ibid). Bradley believes this may have been later. In a charter of c. 1223 AD, the Augustinian brothers of St John were granted a site by William Marshall the Younger, together with sixteen acres of land between the river Nore and the watercourse which bounded the Priory. It may well be that land was provisionally allocated in 1211, entered into about 1220 and confirmed c.1223' (ibid, 319). Bradley (2013) refers to further construction works during the fourteenth century The Marshall charter included the right to tithes in the Parish of St John (Archdall 1876). In 1211, the parish of Loughmerans was united with St. John (Corrigan 1905, 241) with the parishes of Fennel and Kilmallogga subsumed in the sixteenth century (ibid, 263).



The chancel of the priory church (KK019-026068) and the south transept, or Lady Chapel, survive, along with further remains of an additional building (KK019-026024) along the southern boundary of the site, probably the Prior's Chamber (Bradley 2013), a two-storey building that housed the Prior (on the ground floor) and the remainder of the community (on the missing upper floor). At the time of its dissolution (19 March 1540 AD), it housed a likely community of five brothers, all of whom gained financially, in the form of subsequent appointments and pensions, from the break-up of the monastery (Bradley 2013, 323). At this time, the St. John's property portfolio included 'a church, belfry and cemetery, a hall, dormitory, six chambers, a kitchen, store, granary, two orchards, three gardens and sundry other closes, containing four acres within the precinct of the abbey, also...24 messuages [stone houses], 33 gardens, 100 acres of arable land, 20 of pasture, 10 of meadow, 10 of wood, a water-mill [and] a pigeon house' (Bradley 2013, 324-5). In real terms, these extensive holdings were substantially more than the three other religious houses in Kilkenny combined (ibid). The lands passed initially to Walter Cowley for 21 years at an annual rent of £66 6s 8d (about £20,000 in current monetary value). Walter's father Robert was chief solicitor of Ireland, master of the rolls, a privy counsellor and a commissioner of inquiry into the dissolution of the monasteries, including St. John's. Both were close to Thomas Cromwell and Piers Butler, and the grant of St. John's and other properties were reward for these close ties. The grant was short-lived; the Cowleys became embroiled in a political plot to remove the Lord Deputy and were imprisoned in London. The priory lands passed to the burgesses of Kilkenny in 1552 on Walter Cowley's death (Bradley 2013) and were later leased to the Jesuit and Capuchin Orders in the mid-seventeenth century (O'Fearghail 1990, 241).

The nave and chancel were ruinous in 1615, although a substantial portion of the former complex (bake house, cart gate, castle, chapter house, cloister, garden, great kitchen, orchard, out stall, prior's chambers) were extant in 1628 (Bradley 2002; Bradley 2013). The ruins of St John's were depicted on Pratt's

view of Kilkenny (1708) and in later eighteenth century maps and engravings (see Figures 3-4). Two chancels and a church are recorded in 1815, and the ruins of Lady Chapel were incorporated into the existing church in 1817 (see Figure 6). St John's Abbey is annotated on the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1842; Figure 5) as 'in ruins'. Robertson (1851, 433-4) notes earlier descriptions of the ruins of St. John's Abbey, which described its 'great elegance and amazing lightness in the style of building', and continues to note 'the remains of several old monuments almost buried in the ruins'. In another anonymous tour through Ireland (published in 1780), the tower of St. John's Abbey is described as then standing and was again noted for its lightness and beauty.

Details of over 200 leases relating to St. John's survive for the period 1553–1653; these legal documents often retain pre-suppression names such as the Prior's Orchard or the Infirmary Garden. These leases were the basis for current research into the layout of priory buildings (Bradley 2013), which has divided the priory precinct into four major complexes; the church, church grounds and cloister, the bake-house close, the hospital and the gardens/orchards. Within the cloister, the leases mention a Chapter House adjoining the church on its northeast side, and Sir Guy's Chamber immediately north of the chapter house. The Prior's Stable was located at the corner of the eastern and northern side of the cloister and stretched as far as the Refractory and Kitchen on the west side. The west side also included a two storey building housing the Prior's Chamber and Darter house, the living quarters of the monastery and the hospital. These areas abutted the millstream on the west side, which would have provided water for the kitchen and lavabo basins. To the west of these was the Prior's Orchard.

The Bake-house Close, north of the cloister could be entered from Michael Street, which included an oven for the use of the community and the tenants of the priory. Lime-kiln Close was a separate enclosure within the Bake-house Close, which also included the Brew-house and Sir David Mulroney's Chamber. A great barn and old stone wall are also mentioned.

The hospital was on the south side of the monastic complex, between John Street and the mill stream and continued in use until the mid-seventeenth century. The leases mention an Infirmary Garden, presumably for growing herbs and medicinal plants. Three gardens were located within the precinct, two around St. Michaels Gate and a further one attached to the kitchen.

### 3.3 Infantry Barracks

Fears of political disruption following the death of William III in 1702 caused repairs to be made to the town's walls and gates, while the 'mayors and citizens petitioned the Lords Justices to hasten the work in the barracks' (Neely 1989, 138). At the same time the Kilkenny Militia were asked to provide a garrison, to comprise 6 companies of foot, grenadiers and dragoons (ibid). The Clasp'd Book of the Corporation of Kilkenny records that the Franciscan Abbey was assigned for the building of a military barracks in 1698 with further grounds made available in 1700 (Bradley 2002, 51). The Franciscan Abbey became the Horse Barracks (Hansbrow 1835, 274–5), while St John's became the Infantry Barracks. References to the construction of the barracks in the later eighteenth century perhaps refer to extensions or refits of existing structures (Farrelly et al 1993, 54; Clohessy 1946, 61-2).

Nineteenth century notes (Robertson 1851) on St. John's Priory included a description by two local men of the belfry, 'a plain square tower without ornament', the destruction of which was attributed to 'Mr Colles', almost certainly William Colles (1702–1780), a building contractor and entrepreneur responsible for many of Kilkenny's eighteenth century public works, and who served as both alderman and mayor of Kilkenny Corporation. Colles worked on the horse barracks between 1753–1755<sup>1</sup>, with a record of a payment from Thomas Eyre<sup>2</sup>, Surveyor General of Ireland, in 1754, whose role included the surveying, design and construction of military barracks (McPartland 1995, 91–

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dia.ie/works/view/4180/building/CO.+KILKENNY%2C+KILKENNY%2C+HORSE+BARRACKS> [accessed 1 February 2013].

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dia.ie/architects/view/1807> [accessed 1 February 2013].

101). There are references to construction of the horse barracks in 1708<sup>3</sup>, so perhaps Colles' work was repairs. From the evidence to hand, it is most likely that the infantry barracks was built at the beginning of the eighteenth century, with on-going repairs over the following century. It is very likely that William Colles undertook works on the site in the early 1750's which resulted in the destruction of the church tower.

There are occasional contemporary references to the barracks or soldiers stationed there. In 1780, in retaliation for the death of a comrade, the garrison ran amok in the town, killing animals, breaking windows and stabbing at passers-by. In 1770, John Quin, a teacher, was arrested and detained in the 'black hole of the Foot Barracks' for his part in Whiteboy violence of the late eighteenth century (Neely 1989, 157). 'Black-hole' was the name given to a dark or windowless detention cell. In 1783, the garrison commander, Lt. Col. Talbot led troops through the town with bayonets fixed and fired a volley of shot, narrowly missing John Butler, 17th Earl of Ormond (ibid, 163).

The infantry barracks was replaced in the early nineteenth century by the large barracks on the Castlecomer road (now James Stephens Barracks).

### 3.4 Evans' Home

Evans' Home, originally Evans' Asylum, was a charitable home for poor and destitute servants in the city of Kilkenny, preferably of the Protestant faith. It was built at the bequest of Joseph Evans who died in 1818, thereafter conveying £3500 to purchase and construct a servant's asylum, and also conveyed 1,102 acres of land at Belevan (which had an annual rent of £1323), as well as a number of other properties (totalling £16,000) with a further sum of £6000 to distribute between a number of charities within the city (this included £500 for the upkeep of the asylum when built; House of Commons, Vol. 28, 1835). The charity was incorporated in 1819 (Journal of the House of Lords, Vol. 52, 1819). Evans' Home was built c. 1818 and appears on the early Ordnance Survey maps of the town, with no indication of the previous

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/L100011.html> [accessed 5 February 2013]

infantry barracks, although some elements of the original priory are labelled. By 1861, the building housed an infant's school and later would house collections of the county library service.

#### 4. EXCAVATION RESULTS

The site has been built on since the early thirteenth century. This has resulted in a significant build-up of soils within the site, comprising largely demolition deposits associated with the priory in the sixteenth century, and subsequently the infantry barracks in the early nineteenth century. The main excavation area was 67m north-south x 55m east-west. It was located in front of Evans' Home, adjacent to the boundary wall of the Carnegie Library car park (Figures 1-2; Plates 1-2). Though extensive in area, the excavation depth only occasionally extended below 1.5m in depth, with much of this upper 1.5m of material modern or post-medieval in origin (either reclamation or demolition deposits). Natural deposits within the site comprised coarse riverine sand and gravels (F24) which were generally encountered at 43.90m OD. The excavation was stepped to accommodate various foundation and service trenches, with the deepest level being in the area of the proposed water tank c.1.75m below present ground level. It was at this depth that the most substantial medieval remains were recorded. The exposed remains were left in situ on the request of the National Monuments Service. Further excavation against the Carnegie Library car park boundary wall was stopped on the request of the client's architects as a safety precaution. These late medieval layers were the earliest layers constructed over the natural horizon. Three broad phases of occupation and development were observed within the site boundary:

- 13th–16th century (St John's Priory)
- 18th century (Infantry Barracks)
- 19th– 20th century (Evans' Home)

The main results of the excavation are outlined below in chronological order. The orientation of buildings is described in relation to cardinal compass points (e.g. the northwestern priory wall is referred to as the northern wall). Orientations of individual walls are given as literal compass points. A single radiocarbon date was returned from the excavation (SUERC-43718, Appendix 10.10). This is quoted in the report in the form recommended by Mook (1986)

with the end points rounded out to ten years if the error term is greater than or equal to 25 radiocarbon years or to five years if it is less.

#### 4.1 13th–17th century (St John's Priory)

Numerous features dating to the medieval occupation of the site were identified in the course of the excavation. These were mainly located in the area of the proposed water tank (see Figures 7-9). This area was topographically lower than the more eastern side of the site and originally bordered the flood plain of the River Nore (O'Drisceoil, 2008). The recorded medieval remains comprised various walls and wall foundations, rubble deposits, cobbled surfaces and a single poorly preserved infant skeleton, which was preserved in-situ. By combining the excavation results with cartographic records and Bradley's (2013) study into the original layout of the priory, it has been possible to identify parts of the church and elements of Bradley's 'Bake-house Close' (the production centre of the priory and its tenants that included ovens, a lime-kiln, barn and brew-house). The ancillary buildings are termed the 'eastern structure', the 'western structure' and the 'southern structure'. All three were located in relatively close proximity to each other towards the northwest of the excavation area (see Figures 7 & 9). The church elements consist of parts of the cloister and priory walls with associated surfaces (Figure 8-10).

##### 4.1.1 Eastern structure

The eastern structure comprised 2 separate parallel stretches of northwest-southeast aligned walls, each with an associated western return. The outer wall foundation (F18: 8.4m long x 0.45m wide x 0.34m high) was revetted against subsoil (F24). At the southeast end of F18, a 1.12m gap marked a possible entrance/threshold; it was overlain by a larger boulder which had fallen from wall F17 (5.25m x 0.60m wide x 0.93m high) returning to the southwest. It is not possible to definitively state whether F17 is a western return to F18 due to its truncation by a separate stretch of wall (F28) albeit one on the same alignment with F18.



The inner (wider) wall foundation (F20: 9.4m long (min) x 0.80m wide x 0.44m high; see Plates 3–5) was coterminous with F18 for a length of c.5.9m, but was picked up further south, where a further section (2.1m long) was exposed. The southern end of this wall also returned to the west (F57), though only vestiges of it survived in the ground. A northwest-southeast orientated wall foundation (F62: 5.5m long x 0.32m wide x 0.49m high; Plates 5-6), which was revetted against subsoil may be a northern return to F57, defining the western limit of the inner wall. This portion of the building (F62) had suffered intense burning.

The parallel walls in this eastern structure formed a 0.90m wide trough or channel (F21), which tapered to 0.54m wide at the south. A stone projection or footing (F29: 2.78 x 0.30m) set into the ground at the base of F18 could be the remains of flooring to this channel. The channel was filled with loose dark clay with angular stones and fragments of 14th – 15th century medieval relief-decorated floor tile (see Appendix 10.5). The kitchen at Kells also had an internal drain, which exited beneath the south wall (Clyne 2007, fig 5.4). The return of both walls marked a continuation of the channel, framing an area of either domestic or industrial activity.

The area defined by these walls measured 9.80m north-south x 3.50 east-west internally, within which a cobbled surface (F19: 3.30m north-south x 1.40 east-west; Plate 5) formed a level surface with the top of wall F20. Immediately east of the cobbled surface, but at a slightly lower level, was a patchy yellow clay floor deposit (F65: 3m north-south x 2m east-west) into which two sub-circular pits (F69 & F70) were cut (approximately 0.48m diameter x 0.17m deep; Plate 6). F69 had a highly oxidised basal fill (F64) which produced a radiocarbon date in the thirteenth or fourteenth century AD (cal. AD 1290–1400; SUERC-43718, 620±29 BP; see Appendix 10.10). The pit had multiple charred seeds within it, including wheat; oat, barley, cabbage,

pea, parsley and chives, which were likely to represent the result of floor-sweepings associated with food-processing (see Appendix 10.9).

An area of intense burning (F23: 1.66m north-south x 0.75m east-west) directly southwest of the wall F62 had been exposed to high temperature. The northwest limit of this area was defined by a narrow clay-bonded wall (F22: 8.40m long (min.) x 0.24m wide x c 0.20m high) which blocked the northern end of channel F21, and extended towards the southwest, beyond the limits of the excavated area, stepping down with the terrace created by the north-south wall F62. This wall only survived to a maximum of two courses and had the appearance of a drain wall (but no evidence of any other part of it remained to the north).

#### 4.1.2 Western structure

The primary feature of the more westerly 'room' was a segmented stone wall (F63: 4.2m long (min.) x 1.16m wide x max 0.58m high; Plate 7). It extended northeast-southwest from wall F62 -which it abutted- to the southwest limit of excavation. At this point, a return wall (F73), evident in the baulk at the limit of excavation, extended towards the southwest, indicating the limit of the structure. This western structure was associated with a large spread of lime, which sealed dark charcoal-rich silty deposits (F78 and F79). Its best preserved 'wall' (F63) was in three parts with 2 well-faced opes incorporated into the structure. These interstices contained two separate semi-circular declivities lined with hardened lime (F76 & F77; see Figures 7 & 13; Section E-F and Plate 7). The longitudinal sections of the ellipses of lime measured 1.16m at the east and 1.64m at the west and sealed medieval deposits (F78 & F79). The central segment of the wall (F63) was a single course high at the southeastern face. By contrast, two courses survived at the northwestern side, where it was the same height as the eastern component. The most easterly block was built at a higher level, which extended from a step in the terraced site, where the north-south wall (F62) revetted the land at the east. The breaks between the segments of the stone feature (F63) corresponded with

the underlying concave deposits of mortar and were interpreted as relating to it, though the latter were stratigraphically earlier. Deposits of hard lime spread out on either side of the structure (F59 to the north, also named F76/F77 to the south; see Figures 10, 13). A possible posthole (F75: 0.09m diameter) cut through the lime deposit north of the feature (F59).

The internal area defined by these walls measured 4.5m north-south x 3.7m east-west internally as defined by walls F22, F63, F66 and F73. Above this floor level (43.54m OD) defined by the spreads of lime (F76 & 77), was a substantial deposit of burnt stone (F56; Plates 8-9) in a loose matrix of bright orange oxidised clay and sand. Some stones had been exposed to such intense heat that they had vitrified surfaces (Plate 10). Vitrified stones such as these have been previously recovered from features such as lime kilns (M. Hurley, pers. comm.; see Appendix 10.4.5).

#### 4.1.3 Southern structure

A possible structure may be represented by the remains of two walls and limited evidence for a third wall which extended southeast from F17, the outer wall of the western return of the channel in the western structure, (see Figure 7; Plates 2 & 5). A scar which may represent a removed wall was noted at the southern face of the southwestern terminal of the wall F17, in addition to a linear spread of mortar (F17a) extending to the south, suggesting the possibility of an erstwhile 3rd wall returning to the south. East of, and parallel to this tentative feature were walls F27 (2.2m (min.) x 0.60m wide x 0.68m high) and F28 (1.1m long (min.) x 0.40m wide x 0.48m high). It was not possible to state if wall F27 abutted F17 or if it was incorporated into it as a single integrated structure. However, the two northwest-southeast orientated walls (F27 & F28) along with the mortared wall-scar (F17a) defined two rectangular areas filled with fine, light brown, sandy silt (F32 and F34), which yielded iron objects, 13th/14th century pottery and 14th/15th century floor tile. Overlying these silts, deposit F33 contained animal bone and 14th/15th century floor tile. This may have been a small refuse area; a similar feature to

the south of a large kitchen area was excavated at Kells, Co. Kilkenny (see Clyne 2007, 142).

A site visit from M. Keane, Officer of the National Monuments Service recommended retention of all structures, which remain in-situ under the protection of geotextile layer, backfilled with earth. No further excavation was permitted beyond what was excavated, due to concerns for the stability of the boundary wall and having reached the depth required to house the proposed water tank.

#### 4.1.4 Rubble deposits

The medieval layers and structures outlined above were sealed beneath deposits of stone rubble which generally sloped from east to west. The rubble deposits were in turn sealed beneath a layer of sandy silt (F26), which in places, also extended directly over the medieval structures. This sandy silt layer contained animal bone, ceramic building materials and pottery dating from the 13th /14th centuries. A ridge tile of 17th century date was also recovered and may be intrusive. This demolition deposit, defining the final layer associated with the priory was overlain by a mixed rubble layer (F16) that covered the entire excavation area and was equivalent of rubble layers F6, F7 & F121 deposited elsewhere within the site. Over this layer, more recent deposits included a concentrated deposit of brick, rubble and crushed slate (F50) indicating the demolition of a building in this area (see Figure 13, Section A – B, Plate 11).

#### 4.1.5 Cloister walls and surfaces

Excavation inside the present entrance gates to Evans' Home, on the northwest end of Barrack Lane, was required to facilitate services entering and exiting the site. Excavation in this area identified a group of features located roughly 35m from the medieval buildings. They comprised the foundation of a north-south wall or kerb F81 (2.64m long (min.) x 0.18m wide x 0.13m high), abutting a cobbled surface associated with the medieval priory

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(F96; see Figure 8; Plate 12). This surface was preserved in-situ. While it is unlikely that it was laid directly on subsoil, the cessation of archaeological excavation at its upper surface precluded further detailed examination. A linear concave drain or gutter (F82) was noted within the cobbles alongside the wall/kerb (0.18m wide and 0.22m below the level of the associated cobbles F96). These are interpreted as the possible remains of the eastern arcade wall of the cloister and the floor surface of the ambulatory.

The cobbled surface F96 may be the ambulatory surface within the cloister, which extended up to the northwest face of wall F98, the probable extension of the northern wall of the original priory church (see below section 4.1.6). On current evidence, however, there is some difficulty in tracing the remainder of the arcade wall of the cloister (see below Section 7.1).

Wall F81 is quite dissimilar to the 1m-wide limestone wall identified by Stevens to the northeast and interpreted as part of the cloister (1999; see Section 2.3.1 above). It may form part of other associated buildings, such as the Chapter House, which Bradley (2013) suggests is in this area. This wall (F81) is also unlike the sparse wall remains (F36) further to the north, a single course of mortar bonded stone which appears to be on the likely alignment of a corresponding wall to it (see Figure 9). No cobbles were associated with F36; however a significant amount of disturbance had occurred in this area from later planting and service trenches.

A small area of cobbling (F93) was found northwest of wall F98. The limited area available for excavation in this area did not allow extensive investigation of this surface, and there was significant disturbance in the general vicinity from the infantry barracks and later services trenches. This may explain the disturbed juvenile skeletal remains noted below the level of cobbles in this area (left in-situ). Burials are often found in the cloister as demonstrated at Sherkin Island (Lynch, *ibid*), where burials were recorded in the north, east and south ambulatories and were simple grave-pits and without goods, while

over 50 burials were identified within the cloister of the Dominican Priory of St. Mary's of the Isle, Crosses Green, Cork (Hurley 1995, 61). At the Cistercian Dunbrody Abbey, substantial quantities of disarticulated human bone were found in the ambulatory, five burials were also recorded (Moloney 2010).

A dark silt deposit (F109a) had accumulated over the cobbled surface, which contained pieces of 14th/15th century relief decorated floor tiles and a 14th century ridge tile which was likely to have roofed some of the original priory buildings (see Appendix 10.5). Both types of tile appear to be a product of the Highways kiln, a production site located approximately 200m north of the priory (see Wren; see Appendix 10.5).

#### 4.1.6 Priory walls and surfaces

A large northeast-southwest aligned wall (F98: 3.58m long (min.) x 1.1m wide x 0.60m deep; Figure 8; Plates 13–15) was exposed 5.57m inside the current entrance gates to the site. The wall had been breached in the nineteenth or early twentieth century by a ceramic foul pipe (F99). It was aligned with the north wall of the medieval church, which survives beyond the site boundary at the east of the site. This implies a minimum length of 56m for the church. The wall was only uncovered in a small area and a full interpretation is not possible at present, particularly as the area was extensively disturbed by the later barracks (see Section 4.2 below) and the excavation of service trenches. A juvenile skeleton (noted and left in-situ) was sealed by a silty deposit (F109), above which was a substantial build-up of mixed rubble (F95; Plate 15), containing animal bone and relief decorated floor tiles from the 14/15th century, together with pottery from the 18th century, indicating the disturbance that has taken place in this area.

#### 4.1.7 Isolated masonry features

Additional portions of walls around the area were probably remnants of other priory buildings. These were identified in narrow or isolated cuttings and could not be aligned with more robust or extensive remains. Attempts to follow the

isolated walls in small sondages in-line with more extensive remains proved unsuccessful. This implies the walls were totally removed in places by the building of the barracks. Further remains northwest of the possible kitchen buildings may represent part of what is mentioned in leases as the Lime-kiln Close or perhaps the stables (Bradley 2013, 336). These included a partially extant wall F119 (3.56m x 0.78m; Plate 16) c.0.15m of which was exposed. A second wall (F39; 3.2m x 0.38m x 58m) was at right angles to the wall F119, but was higher and stratigraphically later than it (Plate 16). Another short discontinued stretch of wall F48 (1.2m long (min.) x 0.60m wide x 0.30m high; Figure 7) was excavated 4.9m to the north of these walls. It extended from the northwest baulk.

A partial wall F110 (1.90m x 0.84 x 0.70m) was exposed below barrack cobbles (F9). It ended abruptly with a faced terminal (Plate 17; Figures 7, 13; see Section J-K). A return to the west (F111: 1.60m long) only partially survived but presented a straight edge to the south, and could be interpreted as an unspecified priory building. A north-south orientated wall (F37) was a mortar-bonded, poorly preserved wall overlain by garden soils and not associated with any further surfaces (Figures 7, 14).

A final isolated stretch of wall F106 was the partially exposed remains of a mortar-bonded wall at the northern limit of excavation, against Back Lane (1.12m x 1.75m). One course only remained and a full investigation was not possible due to adjacent safety measures against the Back Lane wall. Its date is unclear but is potentially medieval.

#### 4.2 18th century (Infantry Barracks)

Following the destruction of the remaining priory buildings, a deposit of rubble (F16) built up over the site sealing earlier walls and features (see Plate 18). The artefacts from this phase of demolition generally date to the 18th century and included pottery (see Appendix 10.4.1), clay pipe fragments (see Appendix 10.4.4), but also fragments of worked stone belonging to the medieval phase (see Appendix 10.4.5). The levelling of the site and the



associated raising of ground level preceded the construction of the large U-shaped Infantry barracks, the foundations of which were observed in several areas around the site. Based on cartographic sources and on the archaeological evidence, the barrack building had a floor area of 741m<sup>2</sup>, with an overall length of 65m (northwest-southeast), including two expanded wings to the northwest and southeast (c.23m wide; see Figures 4 & 9).

The excavation indicated a cellared building, with walls investigated to a maximum depth of 3.5m on the northwestern wing and 1.5m on the southeastern wing, no internal cellar floor was recorded. The main exterior wall (F12: 0.5m–0.8m wide; Figure 10; Plate 19-20) was a heavily mortared limestone wall, rendered on both faces, and presumably constructed of stone reused from the medieval priory (reused cut stone was observed in-situ in some places (see finds E4109:104:1-3; Plates 21–22; see Appendix 10.4.5). The interior of the entire building was backfilled with a loose demolition deposit (F8) which comprised mortar, rubble, brick, window glass and plaster, as well as a range of eighteenth and early nineteenth century artefacts (see Appendix 10.4.1).

A number of internal walls was recorded, which may have supported stairwells (e.g. F11: 1.12m east-west x 0.3m wide; or F105: 1.6m north-south x 0.70m east-west), or were internal dividing walls (e.g. F53:1m east-west x 0.40m x 0.44m; F54: 1.60 east-west x 0.55m x 0.82m; F55:1.22m east-west x 0.50m x 0.59m high; F100: 1.50m east-west x 1.08 x 0.68; see Figure 10). These walls abutted the rear foundation wall of Evans' Home. They were spaced 5m apart. A stone lined drain F97: 3m east-west x 0.80m wide (see Plate 20) exiting the southeastern wing of the barracks and running to the southwest, possibly emptied into the former mill race along the southern boundary of the site.

Externally, the barracks was associated with significant areas of cobbling (F15; see Figure 10; Plates 23–24), which had been extensively disturbed by

later activity, but nevertheless survived well in places. Kerbed gutters were observed throughout the cobbled area. In places, disarticulated human bone was recovered from below this layer (see Plate 25; Appendix 10.8). The cobbling was repaired and resurfaced on occasion in areas, by the application of thick, hard lime mortar (F14). The cobbles appeared to be associated with a stone wall F10 (Plate 26) which had been significantly disturbed but appeared to delimit the southern extent of cobbles F15/ F14 (see Figure 10). The wall F10 survived as a heavily mortared, L-shaped, double-faced limestone wall, the front of which denoted a step in the landscaped garden as it was terraced to the west. It was not clear what element of previous buildings were represented by this feature.

A small sample of animal bone was recovered in layers (F16, F95 and F97) connected with the construction and occupation of the barracks, all of which were identified as sheep (Appendix 10.7). The bulk of the remains came from the drain F97. An examination of the composition of the assemblage showed that a mixture of food and butchery waste was present although analysis of the range of skeletal elements indicated a considerably higher proportion of primary waste including metapodials and phalanges (feet) and suggests the primary butchery of young animals to be supplied to the barracks. Some remains of cut scapulae were found which had been utilised to make buttons (see Section 10.4.2)

#### 4.3 19th–20th century (Evans' Home)

Evans' Home is a standing structure; however a number of buried features were recorded which were associated with this most recent phase of activity.

Sealing the infantry barracks demolition deposit F6 and immediately below the modern tarmac surface (F1) was a compact, mortar bonded, cobbled surface (F2), surviving as a courtyard in front of Evans' Home. The average size of the cobbles was 0.1m x 0.05m. A decorative, linear arrangement of squared limestone blocks (F3) were arranged within the cobble layer, which was widely

disturbed by a series of service trenches (F4) related to later occupation of the home (Figure 10, Plate 27).

The cobbles abutted garden soil (F5), which extended from the end of the cobble yard to the boundary wall against the Carnegie Library car park. This layer comprised mixed deposits from within the site and imported soil when the grounds housed the Council's landscaping division. The layer contained a range of post-medieval roof and floor tiles, post-medieval pottery, clay pipe fragments, window glass, button-making debris (Plate 28) and assorted metal objects (see Appendices 10.3–10.6).

A large heavily mortared, stone and brick lined drain (F30), capped with limestone flagstones and containing a silty black sterile clay was recorded for a distance of c 22m east-west at the northwestern side of the site (see Figure 7) and observed to extend to the boundary wall with the Carnegie Library car park, perhaps draining into the former mill race, which Scully (2004) observed contained eighteenth and nineteenth century debris. The east end of Back Lane led to a small bridge over the former millrace (ibid).

## 7. DISCUSSION

The current excavation, and earlier excavations within the precinct of Evans' Home, has highlighted the degree to which the remains of St. John's Priory were extensively disturbed since the mid sixteenth century. The majority of the artefacts from the site were post-medieval in date, and a significant portion of the medieval precinct was subsequently developed as a Georgian-era infantry barracks and Victorian-era charitable home. The surviving remains of the medieval priory were generally located at the deepest areas of excavation, or as isolated, disturbed features. They included a portion of the priory church wall, associated buildings and cobbled surfaces and paths, which when combined with the results of previous excavations within the site, augmented by study of extant post-Dissolution leases, provide a great deal of information on the layout of the medieval priory of St. John's.

### 7.1 13th–16th century (St John's Priory)

#### 7.1.1 Introduction

Several Augustinian houses have been excavated in recent years, but generally excavations have been conservation driven, limited in size and, often focusing on the cloistral range. This excavation has highlighted the extent to which the medieval priory of St Johns was destroyed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, probably for use in subsequent structures or elsewhere within the town. It has uncovered evidence of church and ancillary building. The evidence for these buildings comprised various walls which were generally not more than one or two courses high, sealed in demolition deposits. Evidence of floor and roof tiles and carved stone features, (including a fragment of a limestone pillar; E4109:56:3) which may be derived from the original cloister arcade or colonettes, was also recorded during the excavation. A number of tiles also belonged to the foundation of the priory, the most significant being floor tiles decorated with relief motifs and

ridge tiles some manufactured in the nearby Highhays kiln site (see Appendix 10.5).

A recently published article on St John's Priory (Bradley 2013) examines previously unpublished documentary sources relating to the Priory and its assets, at the time of its dissolution in the mid-sixteenth century. An examination of the leases allowed Bradley to propose a reconstruction of the layout of the priory. Although the basic layout is paralleled in medieval monasteries in Britain, deriving ultimately from the early Benedictine arrangements, 'one unusual feature of St John's, ... is the location of the cloister on the north side of the church' (Bradley *ibid*, 344). The area defined by Bradley as the Bake-house Close would broadly correspond to the medieval buildings excavated at Evans' Home. Bradley's research identifies a kitchen on the west side of the priory, with an adjoining lime kiln (recorded as being at the northeast of the close).

#### 7.1.2 Ancillary Buildings

The ancillary priory buildings encountered during the excavation consisted of an eastern structure, a western structure and a southern structure. Below thick reclamation and demolition deposits, the remains of these medieval buildings undoubtedly represent the surviving elements of various industrial areas alluded to by Bradley. Their fortuitous survival is largely due to their position at the bottom of a terraced site, above which successive layers of demolition debris accrued in order to level a previously terraced site.

Taken together, the Evans' Home buildings would appear to comprise an oven or lime kiln (western structure) and an adjacent kitchen area (eastern and southern structures). Based on Bradley's study of the priory layout and the identification of a similar internal drain at Kells Priory, the eastern structure is interpreted as a kitchen. The southern structure may have been integrated into this building, or perhaps, a later addition. The western structure with its segmented stone walls and underlying mortar-lined opes, poses some

problems of interpretation. High concentrations of charcoal, along with oxidised clay and vitrified stones, clearly indicates intense heat. The association of the building and opes with spreads of lime may further indicate its function as a lime kiln, although if this were the case, one might expect more lime than was present. However the location of the building at the northwest of a proposed kitchen area (the eastern and southern structures) could indicate that it was a large oven, perhaps one later used as a lime kiln.

The St. John's bakery was a thriving concern throughout the lifetime of the priory and even after the Dissolution, 'the tenants of St John's were obliged to bring their bread for baking' (Bradley 2013, 335). It may be that the western structure is the remains of an oven in the Bakehouse Close. In medieval documents the 'term 'chimney' in variant spellings and both French and Latin forms was used 'for the whole fireplace, comprising hearth, mantel, flue and chimney, or for any of its parts. An English record from 1530 instructed a carpenter; that he should build two houses in Shoreditch, 'twoo kechyns in the backside wt. two chymneys substancyall for the same' (Salzman 1997, 98). An earlier document from Launceston dating from 1462 records payment for making 'a great fireplace called mantel and 2 ovens within the said fireplace in the castle kitchen called constabills kechyn' (ibid). The use of plaster of Paris in the repair of chimneys is documented, but this seems to refer to pipes, or flues within the chimneys. In 'The Earl of Richmond's hall in London in 1317...' [the] mason repaired two fireplaces in the king's chamber and [the] plasterer made the four pipes of the same fireplaces with plaster of Paris' (ibid). The need for four flues for two fireplaces perhaps indicates they were back-to-back or side-by-side features. A monastic kitchen at Durham, an octagonal building built in the mid-fourteenth century, had several fireplaces set laterally in the walls (Woods, 1996, 250). The Abbot's Kitchen at Glastonbury, also from the mid-fourteenth century was a square feature with fireplaces set in the angles at each corner (ibid). Typical manor houses of this period would have food storage departments, a brew-house and a bakery grouped around it' (ibid, 252). Bradley's examination of later leases of the

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Priory buildings in St Johns, Kilkenny establishes the location of the Bakehouse and Brewhouse to the north of the Priors Chamber (the visible vaulted remains of which survive within a private garden adjacent to Evans' Home). This putative location strengthens the interpretation of the excavated remains as those of a kitchen/bakery.

There are few published parallels for these structures. The closest parallel for the ancillary structure is a free-standing stone structure north of Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway (Sweetman 1987, 1-12) which consisted of two structures butted against the other (see inset Figure 7). A layer of charcoal and burnt clay beneath rubble within the building suggested it had burnt down. A post-seventeenth century date was proposed but there was no firm dating evidence. Three stone walls were found butting the east wall of the structure, in a form reminiscent of the arrangement of walls F27, F28 and F17a in Evans' Home and Sweetman (1987) suggested these may represent the remains of medieval, perhaps domestic buildings. Although lacking diagnostic features, and subject to a rudimentary investigation, these structures at Abbeyknockmoy may, in their form and in the presence of extensive deposits of charcoal and burnt clay, represent the remains of a bake house similar to St. John's. This could explain the absence of a definite entrance at Abbeyknockmoy.

The post-Dissolution leases of Priory buildings mention a Brew House south of the kitchen, which could be represented by the rectangular structure returning south from the bake-house, F27 & F28 or perhaps the more southerly wall F37, were part of this complex. Unfortunately, the partial nature of the excavation and the extent of later disturbance did not facilitate a complete investigation of some walls or features.

The paucity of other walls of the monastic complex attests to the ferocity with which the priory was robbed of building materials. This re-use of medieval masonry was seen first-hand in the cellar area of the southern wing of the



barracks (see Section 4.2; Plates 21-22), and was also re-used in the fabric of Evans' Home (Plate 29) most obviously the tomb or ledger slab fragment which bears Latin text in Gothic miniscule script and the date 1547, suggesting it was carved no earlier than this. Such script was used on Kilkenny slabs until the middle of the seventeenth century (Cockerham 2009), and the script, form and stone in the Evans' Home example closely matches sixteenth century slabs on display in St. Canice's Cathedral.

### 7.1.3 Priory Walls

A substantial wall F98 was found west of the upstanding medieval church remains, inside the current entrance from Barrack Lane. It was aligned with the surviving north wall of the church remains (see Figure 9), and may be considered along with further walls found in Evans' Home and Barrack Lane during archaeological monitoring in 2004 (Scully 2004). This suggests an overall internal length of c. 56.2m for the church, or an estimated 59.8m external length. This is shorter than the church at Athassel Priory (Leask 1990, 95 & plate 48) which had a maximum length of 65m and less than that of Kells Priory, which has an overall length 68.6m (Clyne, 2007, 75, fig 3.1). The nearby St. Canice's Cathedral has an overall length of 68m (Leask *ibid*). The limited area of investigation in the vicinity of this wall did not allow an extensive investigation of the wall. The wall was abutted by disturbed rubble deposits and had no distinctive stonework.

### 7.1.4 Cloister

The evidence for the cloister arcade wall and ambulatory is a significant addition to the archaeology of the site. As noted above, the surfaces of ambulatories could vary between friaries, with shattered stone, beaten earth and cobbles known from other sites. The ambulatory at St. Mary's of the Isle, Crosses Green, Cork was formed with limestone chippings (Hurley 1995,22), while the 15th century Franciscan friary on Sherkin Island, Cork had a beaten clay surface (Lynch 1991). The Augustinian Priory at Kells, Co. Kilkenny had

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similar cobbled drains and wall footings in the cloistral area, while the ambulatory consisted of 'hard-packed pebbles set in yellow mortar with flecks of lime' (Clyne 2007, 129).

The outer arcade wall from St. John's may survive further north in F36, (Fig 7), a badly preserved structure noted briefly in a service trench in front of Evans' Home. This would give an overall width of the ambulatory of approximately 4m, comparable to Mellifont Abbey, Co. Louth (Barry 1987, 146, fig. 31). The width of the ambulatory depended on the size of the monastery, and a number of examples between 2–3m are known (St. Mary's, Co. Cork; Hurley 1995; Muckamore, Co. Antrim; Lynn 1973).

A small area of cobbling F93 was found southwest of wall F98. The limited area available for excavation in this area did not allow extensive investigation of this surface, and there was significant disturbance in the general vicinity from the infantry barracks and later services trenches. Very disturbed child or juvenile skeletal remains were noted (below the level of the adjacent cobbles, which did not survive in the area of the burial) in an area of disturbance inside the gate. These were below the level of excavation required and left undisturbed). Burials are often found in the area of the cloister as demonstrated at Sherkin Island (Lynch, *ibid*), where burials were recorded in the north, east and south ambulatories and were simple grave-pits and without goods, while over 50 burials were identified within the cloister of the Dominican Priory of St. Mary's of the Isle, Crosses Green, Cork (Hurley 1995, 61). At the Cistercian Dunbrody Abbey, substantial quantities of disarticulated human bone were found in the ambulatory, five burials were also recorded (Moloney 2010).

## 7.2 18th century (Infantry Barracks)

The likely origins for the barracks are outlined above (see Section 4.2 above). Increased security and social order in the town after the Williamite wars in the late seventeenth century was attained by the construction of two new military

barracks and a gaol in Kilkenny, both on the site of former monasteries. This followed a major scheme for barracks construction, inaugurated by an act of parliament in 1696 (McPartland 2001, 123) that saw 100 barracks built before 1710 (ibid, 126). William Robinson (1672–1700) and Thomas Burgh (1700–1730) were the principal Surveyors General in the early eighteenth century with initial responsibility for the design and construction of the barracks programme. There was a general acceptance among nineteenth century historians that the abbey was demolished ‘in the early part of the last century’ (Hogan 1884, 405), most likely at the same time the former Franciscan abbey was converted to a horse barracks c. AD 1700 (Bradley 2002, 51).

The location of the 18th century building on this site corroborates the cartographic evidence of Rocque (1758) and Byron (1780; Figure 4), and supported the identification of walls in earlier assessments within the site (Stevens 1999; Walsh 2010). A substantial portion of the northwest barrack wing survives in the boundary wall along Back Lane and which is discussed in Walsh (2011 Fig. 6, Plates 6–9), with the full width of the northwest gable surviving within the standing wall. The corner quoins were large blocks of surface dressed limestone. The wall incorporated several stones reused from the priory, generally identifiable as paler sandstone, or as decorated/ carved pieces. At least three blocked opes are apparent, including a door and two windows.

The U- or C-shaped structure is common to barracks of this period, and parallels can be found in former structures at Belfast (Bigger 1911, 74; see Figure 11), Carlow (Figure 12), Drogheda and Loughrea, all of which are broadly comparable, in size or shape, to the Kilkenny barracks. The design, probably the work of William Robinson was a stock design, and appears on the seal of The Trustees of the Barrack (McPartland 2001, 132, fig. 160; see Figure 11) in the early eighteenth century. The crowned monogram to the rear of the building on the seal bears the initials WR (William Rex), dating the seal to pre-1702 (when William III died). The barrack design closely resembles the

ground plan of the Kilkenny barracks, and photographs of the Belfast and Carlow structures (see Figures 8, 9). The design is described by McPartland (2001,131) as ‘standard [Restoration] domestic formula for institutional buildings’, and it contains many of the same features we may have expected to see on Kilkenny Barracks, a U-shaped plan, two storeys of equal height (perhaps over a basement), hipped roof, separate entrances to wings, probably leading to separate quarters.

Despite the significant money spent on the barrack building programme (£120,000 spent between 1698–1703, equating to approximately €18 million<sup>4</sup> in today’s currency), a report in 1759 cited many barracks had fallen into significant disrepair through ‘negligence and fraud’ (McPartland 2001, 125). Arthur Jones-Neville, Surveyor General between 1743–1752 was actually dismissed from his post for mal-administration and fraud in relation to repairs (McPartland 1995, 91–101), which was the responsibility of the Commissioners and Overseers of the Barracks (otherwise the Barrack Board). The architect William Robertson noted an early nineteenth century account of the demolition of St. John’s by William Colles (1702–1780), which probably related to repairs of the barracks in the middle of the century.

The nineteenth century record of the internal layout of the Carlow Barracks may approximate the internal divisions recorded in the Kilkenny barracks, while an early twentieth century photograph of the Belfast barracks provides a pictorial representation of the possible appearance of the Kilkenny barracks (Figure 11). While the artefacts from the site attest to some of the everyday materials used within the barracks (pottery, glass, clay pipe etc.; see various appendices below), there are written records for barrack furnishings in this period. The Rules, orders, powers, and directions, for the good government and preservation of the barracks and redoubts for quartering the army in Ireland, published in 1726 records that officers slept in pillared bedsteads, a

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white mattress, feather bolster, quilt, blankets and sheets. Soldiers had straw filled beds and bolsters. In addition officers had an oak table and two chairs (McPartland 2001, 125).

### 7.3 Conclusions

While the excavations at Evans' Home were spatially quite extensive, medieval horizons were only encountered below depths of c.1.50m, which were excavated in a limited number of areas. The excavation revealed a number of buildings and surfaces belonging to St. John's Priory, including a portion of the nave, portions of the cloister ambulatory and ancillary buildings at various locations within the Evans' Home grounds. The demolition of the monastery was represented in the various rubble deposits at the site, and in the make-up of subsequent buildings at the site, including the infantry barracks and the upstanding Evans' Home. The results of these excavations will complement current research into the original layout of the priory (see Bradley 2013) and reveal something of the early modern history of the site, in particular the infantry barracks, a substantial portion of which survives in the make-up of the Back Lane wall.

### 8. INVENTORY

See Appendices 10.1–10.6 below.

### 9. DISSEMINATION

A summary account of the excavation was submitted to the Excavations Bulletin for 2012. A short article will be prepared for Archaeology Ireland or a similar popular magazine. The results of the excavation may also be made available through an article in the Old Kilkenny Review.

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Map of Carlow Town Centre (1844)  
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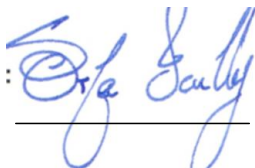
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September 2013

The final report will constitute the main archive source for the archaeological services for Evans' Home, excavation. The remaining site archives (i.e. context sheets, drawings, field notes/ sketches) will be held in the offices of Archer Heritage Planning Ltd. Balbriggan, Co. Dublin until they are deposited with the NMS archives.