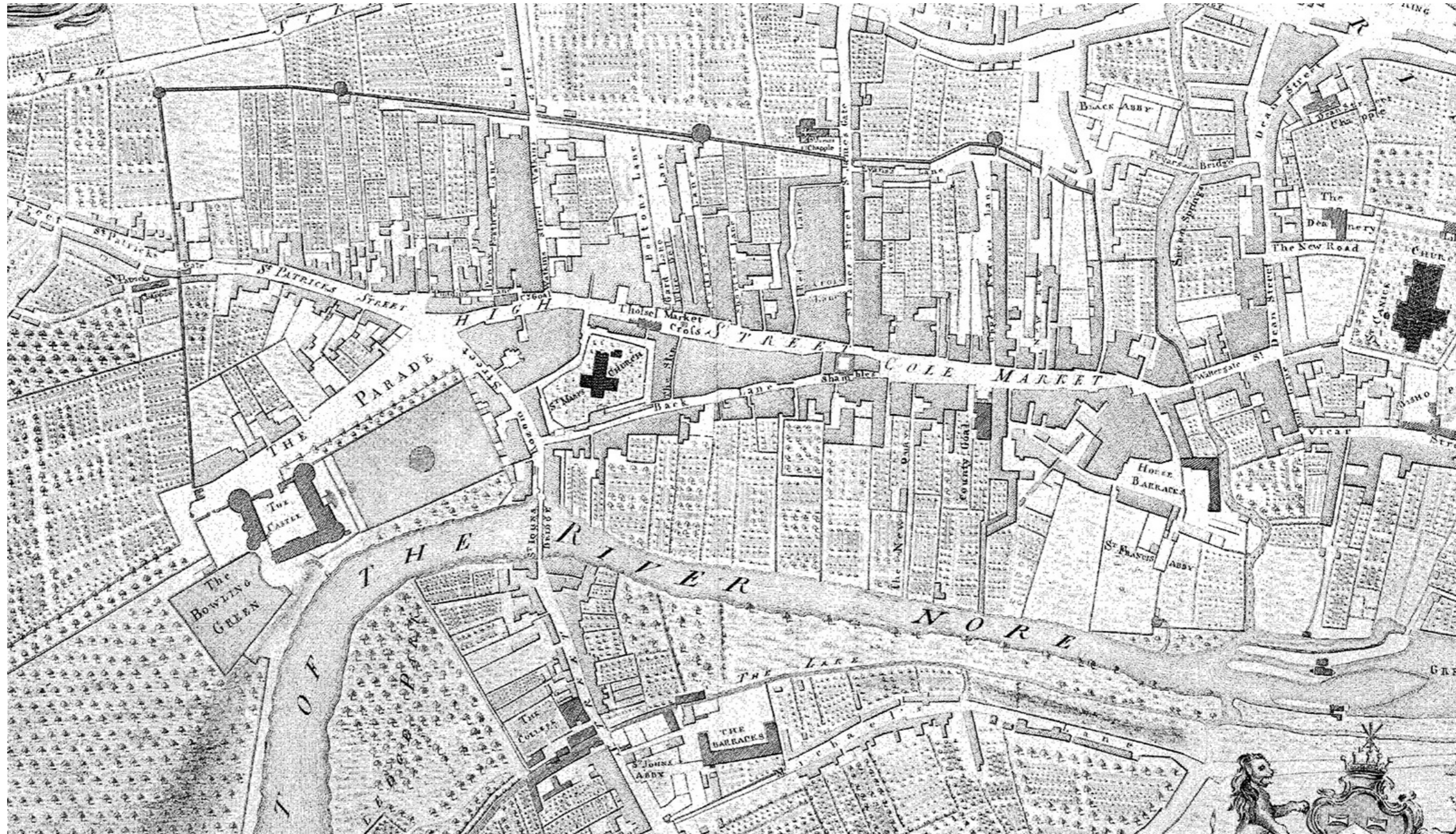


Kilkenny Laneways

Public Consultation

Kilkenny County Council

June 2023



Project Team

Conservation Architect
John Mc Laughlin Architects

John McLaughlin
Architects

Historic Context

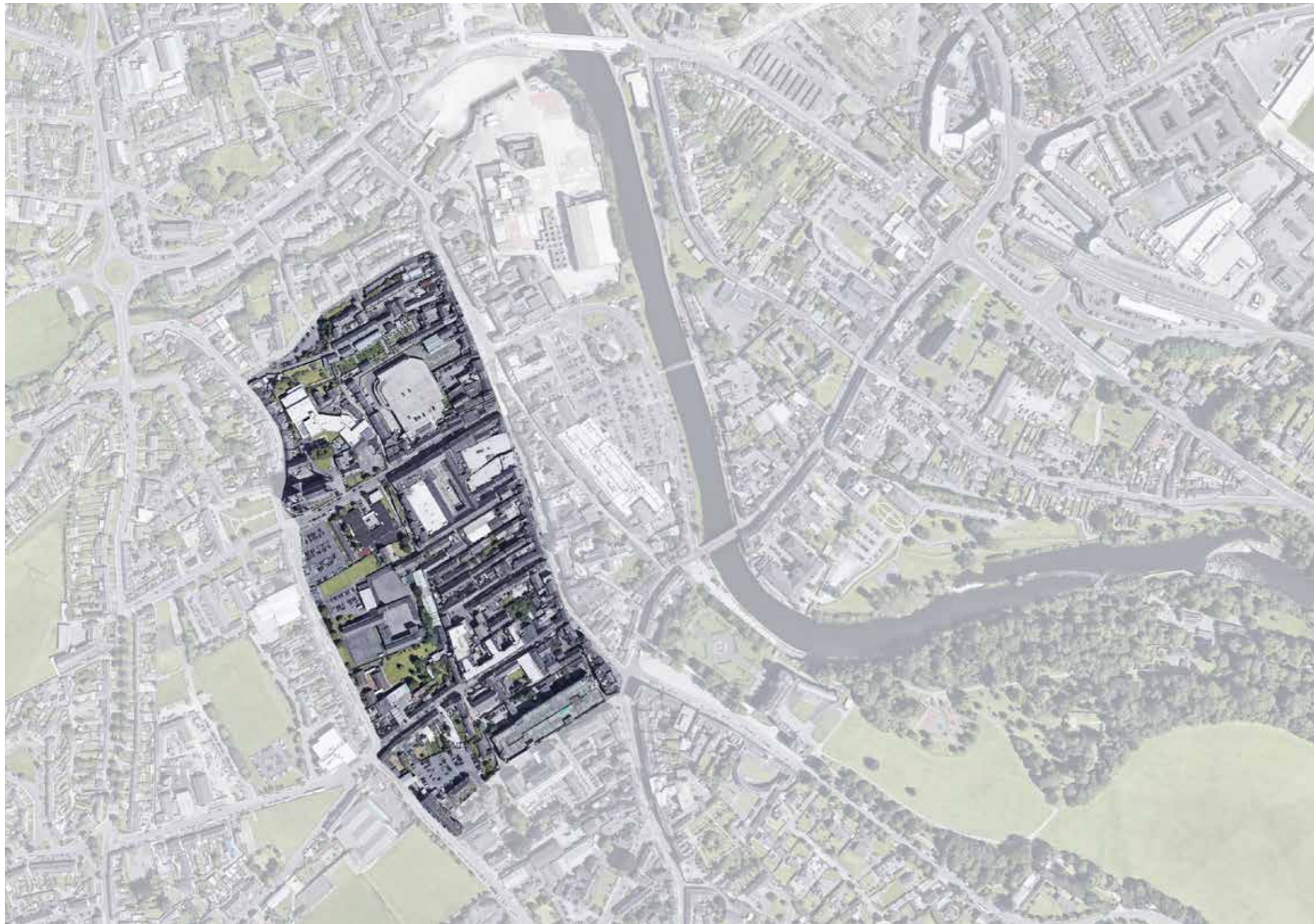
Physical Context

The geographical context of Kilkenny is a city built on limestone within a fertile plain on the River Nore:

“The city straddles the River Nore and is the nodal point of a small plain, the ancient Mag Roigne, which forms the fertile heartland of Co. Kilkenny. This plain developed on Carboniferous limestone overlain by several metres of glacial till and it stretches east and north to the Castlecomer Uplands, south to the Walsh Mountains, and west to the Slieveardagh Hills and the boggy zone that constitutes the boundary between the provinces of Munster and Leinster. The city itself is sited on a bend in the south-flowing Nore, where the ground rises gradually on both sides to a height of just over 60m.”

The roads and laneways forming part of this study are located to the west of Kilkenny City Centre, between Parnell Street and High Street. This part of the city retains the urban grain and street patterns dating back to the medieval development of Kilkenny. The laneways undulate and reveal long distance views of the surrounding hills and spires to the east and north.

Kilkenny City Wall defenses were built by the Anglo Normans in the 13th century, and are now largely gone. The street network still retains the evidence of the City Wall in the street and plot patterns, in the remains of the upstanding sections on the city wall, and in the naming of the streets, with the streets nearest to the inner line of the city wall referred to as a ‘Sconce’- a term possibly used in the past to describe the earthen rampart inside the walls.



Historic Context

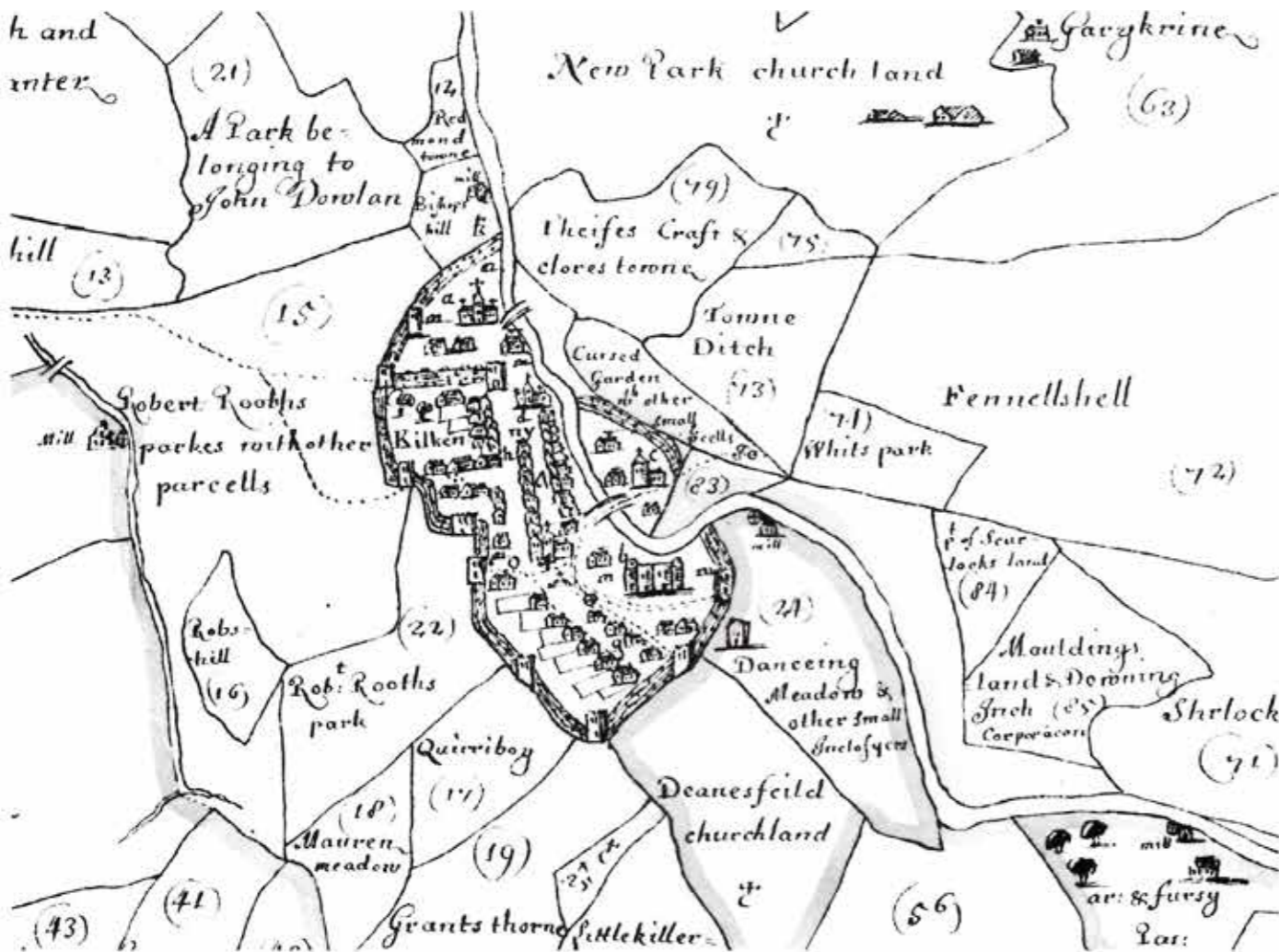
Burgage Plots

Burgage is a 13th century medieval land term used in Great Britain and Ireland, to describe long and narrow plots of land within settlements owned by a king or lord, with a narrow street frontage to the central main street.

Until recently, many of the properties along the laneways west of High Street and Parliament Street preserved the long, narrow burgage plots characteristic of medieval towns and seen on the early maps of Kilkenny, including the Down Survey map. These regularly arranged plots were the backbone of the Anglo-Norman town plan of Kilkenny, as described in the Irish Historic Towns Atlas:

“William Marshal’s 1207 charter stipulated that the property of free tenants had to be 20 feet (6.1 m) wide, which presumably records what was perceived as a minimum burgage width. The relatively small number of plots along High Street conforming to this measurement today may indicate that few free tenants or poor burgesses lived within the town, but it may also be attributable to the amalgamation of neighbouring plots over the years.

Each plot was held by a burgess and on it he built a house for his family, usually with a shop on the street frontage, and behind it there was space for outhouses, sheds, yards, gardens or orchards. ... The problem of providing light to the interior was solved by creating an alleyway on one side and, doubtless, it is to this mode of construction that the large number of lanes that still characterise the medieval core of Kilkenny may be attributed.”



Down Survey Map of Kilkenny, c.1655, not to scale, showing the burgess plots laid out between the City Wall and the central High Street National Archives of Ireland, from Irish Towns Atlas of Kilkenny, John Bradley, 2000



Plate 1. Part of view of Kilkenny, looking north-west, c. 1698, by Francis Place, pen and ink wash (National Gallery of Ireland); size 27.5 x 64 cm. reduced by approximately half. Irish Historic Towns Atlas

Medieval Origins- Irish Historic Towns Atlas

The Irish Historic Towns Atlas on Kilkenny, edited by John Brady, describes the historic development of Kilkenny.

The Anglo-Normans established a castle at Kilkenny by 1173; at least one burgess had settled near it by 1176. They settled upon an existing established settlement on land belonging to the Bishop of Ossory:

“By 1169, when the first Anglo-Normans arrived and were put up in its inns or ‘ostels’, Kilkenny had already become the largest and most important inland settlement in south-east Ireland. The land on which much of the new town of Kilkenny was to be built belonged to the bishop of Ossory and this gave him an influential say in events. The land had to be acquired legally, a new parish had to be established with his permission, and potential market rights had to be accommodated.”

The Diocese of Ossory is a Latin Church diocese of the Catholic Church in eastern Ireland and to this day maintains a strong presence in Kilkenny. The Diocese of Ossory is the landowner of the three schools within the area subject of this report, as well as the Blessed Felix House on Tilbury Place. The Cathedral church is St. Mary of the Assumption Ossory and the Diocesan Offices are located on James’ Street.

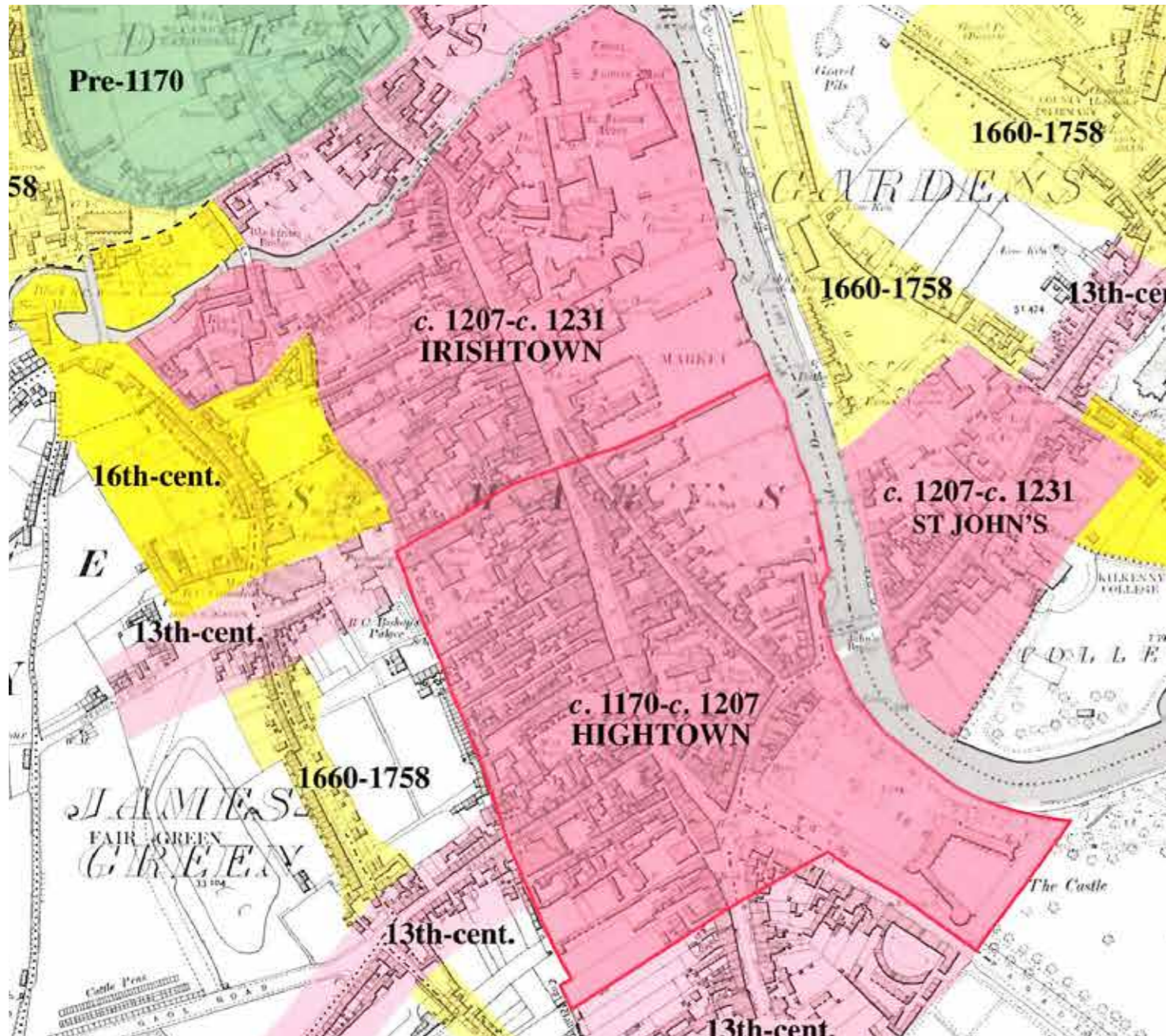
William Marshall, Lord of Leinster, had given Kilkenny a charter setting out the rights of its burgesses and freemen in 1207.

The land between Evans Lane and Ormonde Street formed part as of the Hightown parish, established during the Anglo-Norman settlement in Kilkenny.

The Hightown was based along a single north-south street, High Street, with two others, Walkin Street [Friary St today] and James’s Street, running from it at right angles towards the west

Historic Context

The City Wall Conservation Plan



Extracts from City Wall Conservation Plan by Oxford Archaeology

Significance

As a medieval town, Kilkenny is of exceptional significance, both nationally and as a representative Irish medieval town internationally. The defences of Kilkenny are of considerable significance as a component of the medieval town, and by comparison with other Irish medieval towns. The topography of the medieval town, and the relationship of components within the planned arrangement of streets and plots, are of considerable significance. The surviving elements of the walls are of considerable significance, with some elements (e.g. Evans Tower, Black Rath Castle and Talbot Castle) of exceptional significance, and others (e.g. buried remains) of uncertain significance.

Relevant City Wall Conservation Plan Policies

Policy 1 Protection To place the conservation of Kilkenny City Walls and the protection of their significance at the heart of future planning and management of the monument.

Policy 4 Enhancement and Improvement. To enhance the historic character and visual qualities of the monument, where appropriate, by restoring eroded elements and removing intrusive elements.

Policy 5 Access and Interpretation To encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the monument, promoting a high degree of physical and intellectual access and meeting the needs of a broad variety of users.

Policy 6 To protect the historic fabric and character of the City Walls and their setting within Kilkenny, and the surviving evidence for former use and functions. Ensure the recognition of the City Walls, whether standing or buried, as a separate component of the overall monument that is Kilkenny City.

Policy 7 To minimise risk to the historic fabric of the monument from normal public use and administrative operations.

Policy 9 To protect the ecological value of the monument and its immediate environs, and to resolve any conflict on a basis of knowledge, advice and agreement. Encourage to an appropriate extent the growth of wall plants and nondamaging species. Agree the removal of damaging woody species and the appropriate treatment of ivy growth.

Policy 10 To meet all statutory and legal requirements for the protection of the monument, the health and safety of individuals, and the requirements of disabilities legislation. Enforce the laws for the protection of monuments. Investigate the need for repairs on unsafe parts of the walls. Ensure equal opportunities for access in the creation of new visitor facilities.

Policy 12 To ensure that all works, whether new works, conservation or repair, are informed by a clear and detailed understanding of the monument, are preceded by appropriate investigations of the historic fabric, and are fully recorded.

Policy 13 To carry out all works in accordance with the highest standards of conservation, retaining significance, avoiding loss of fabric, and adhering to historical accuracy in design, materials and workmanship.

Policy 16 To improve public access so as to minimise impact on the monument. Maintain good and equal means of access for visitors... Seek provision of a walkway between New Buildings Lane and Evans Lane.

Policy 17 To enhance public appreciation of the City Walls and their setting, wherever possible, by removing or ameliorating visually intrusive elements, or those which conceal or confuse understanding.

Policy 18 To enhance understanding of the historic monument, where appropriate, by repairing past damage, and seeking to re-create key elements which have been lost.

Policy 20 To extend public access and enjoyment to the whole monument and its significant features. Link the surviving features of the walls in a walk/linear park. Highlight lost stretches of wall and gates in e.g. paving. Adopt the gate sign as the logo for a walls walk.

Policy 21 To develop interpretation which encourages understanding of the principal features of the monument and facilitates access to information. Mark the line of the defences on town maps and tourist literature. Provide modest signage to identify sites.

Historic Context

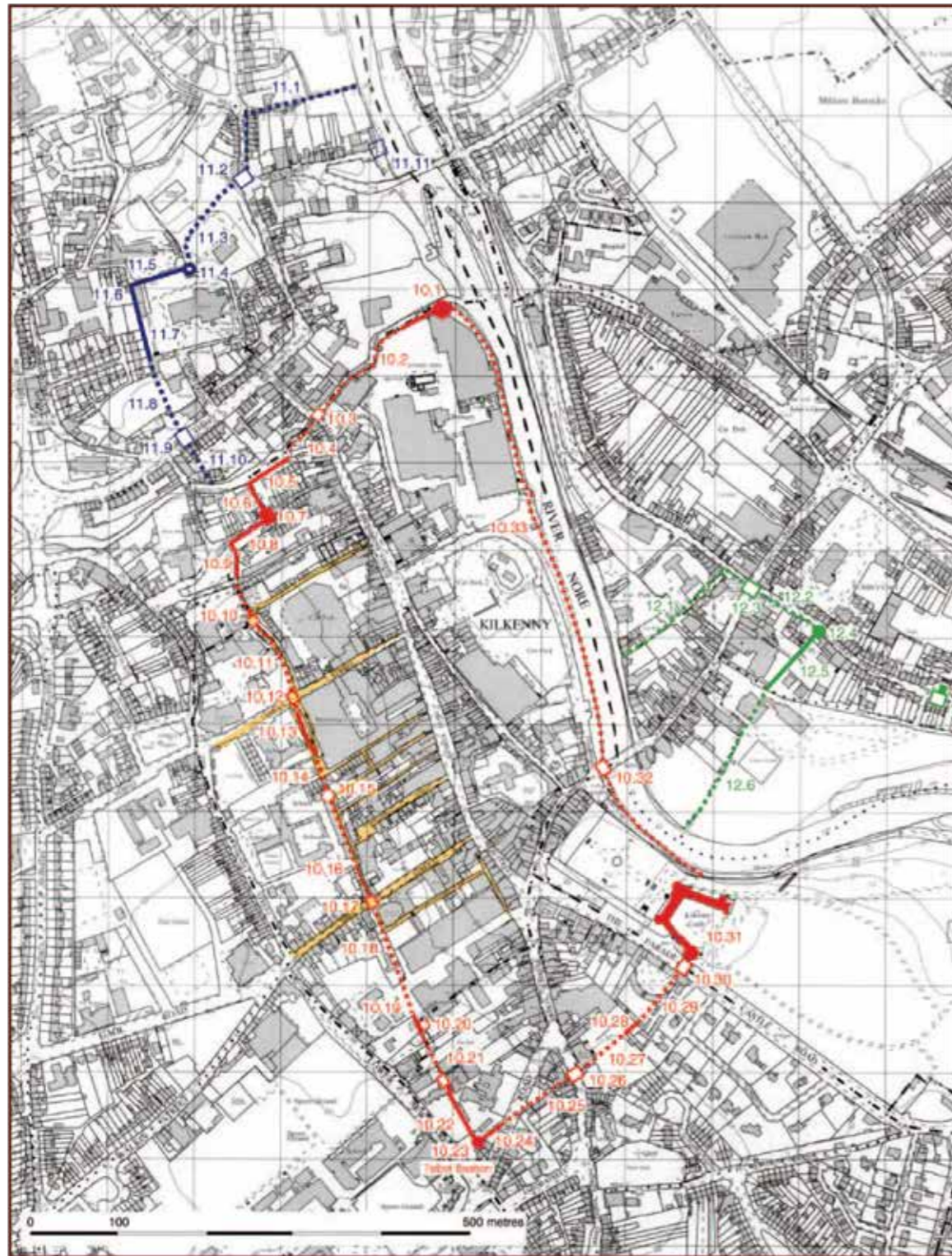


Figure 3: Key Map of the walls of Kilkenny: Hightown, Irishtown and St John's City Walls

The City Wall

The Hightown City Wall surrounded Hightown, the medieval part of the settlement of Kilkenny. The City Wall is an intrinsic part of the urban fabric of Kilkenny- it orders the medieval grain of the centre and has exceptional significance to the character and identity of the city.

Status

The Kilkenny City Walls are part of the overall Recorded Monument 'City of Kilkenny', and three upstanding sections of the wall are subject to Preservation Orders. The City Walls are of national importance. The whole of the defensive circuit lies within the City of Kilkenny, and within the Kilkenny 'Zone of Archaeological Potential' defined in the Urban Archaeological Survey County Kilkenny (1993). Although the city of Kilkenny was included as a single item in the 1996 'Record of Monuments and Places' — under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 — the defences are not separately recorded as a monument. Individual features of the defences are on Kilkenny City and County Record of Protected Structures.

The Kilkenny City Walls Conservation Plan confirms that *"the physical remains of the walls comprise both the walls and their setting, and there is a need to protect the setting of the monument more vigorously from inappropriate development nearby (while recognising that they are an urban monument in a changing built environment)"*

The line of the City Wall forms the western boundary of the scope of this feasibility study. The wall broadly followed the eastern part of Pennyfeather Lane, Garden Row and Tilbury Place. Its above ground freestanding section survives between Wellington Square and James Street. A possible section survives within a boundary wall between New Building Lane and Blessed Felix House.

Below ground remains of the City Wall have been demarcated on the pavement of Friary Street and Ormonde Road in the recent years by Kilkenny County Council.

The Kilkenny Conservation Plan by Oxford Archaeology, dated 2015, covers the extant sections of the City Wall and its parts which have been demolished.

The Kilkenny City Walls Conservation Plan lists the following phases relevant to the construction, use and destruction of the City Walls:

1. Early Medieval Settlement in Kilkenny, possibly undefended
2. The Anglo-Norman Castle and its Settlement
3. The Walling of Hightown and Irishtown
4. 16th and 17th Century Maintenance and Decay
5. 18th to 20th Century decay

The area covered by this feasibility study was developed during Phase 3. The features of this phase relevant to the project are:

- The circuit of walls around Hightown is significant in that it defines the extent of the plot layout of the planned Anglo-Norman borough, and expresses the limit of the built-up area.
- The documentation for the funding and maintenance of the defence in the 13th to 15th centuries is an unusual and important element of their history. There is potential for discovering more about the lost elements of the defences (e.g. gates and demolished sections of curtain wall). This significance is primarily with regard to buried archaeological remains.

Section 8.6 of the Conservation Management Plan for the Implementation of Repair and Enhancement outlines the Policies for longer-term improvements of the City Wall. In relation to the provision of a walkway between New Buildings Lane and Evans Lane [Policy 16], the Conservation Plan recommends acquisition of land strip by the local authorities to make the pathway.

Historic Context



Extract from the Map of Kilkenny, 1758, by John Rocque (Trinity College Dublin), reproduced from Irish Historic Towns Atlas

Historic Context



Present-day OS Map of Kilkenny (in blue) overlaid over Rocque Map
Area subject of this feasibility study highlighted in orange

John Rocque Map of Kilkenny, 1758

John Rocque's map of Kilkenny is the earliest source documenting the route of the City Wall, showing the wall encircling Hightown making three sides of a rectangle, with the River Nore to the east of the city acting as the fourth side. The wall was built by the Anglo Normans in the 1300's for the purposes of defense, as a means of collecting tolls from its gates and also as a status symbol for the city of Kilkenny. The wall initially had four mural towers, all facing to the west, and seven gateways.

John Rocque Map of Kilkenny shows the intact City Wall, with the two primary entrances to the city from the west at the two gates at Walkin Street (Friary Street today), and James's Street. The medieval urban grain is still present, with long burgage plots extending west from Patrick Street and High Street towards the City Wall and the River Nore.

1654 Civic Survey of Kilkenny showed stone houses mainly along High Street, with wattle and clay houses on laneways, and it is likely that by mid-1700's, the houses on the laneways were still subservient to those on the surrounding streets.

Gardens to the rears of the plots can be seen to the north of James's Street and to the south of Pennyfeather Lane. The area to the west of the City Wall is largely undeveloped.

St. James's Gate ran across James Street at Tilbury Place. Outside the walls was a suburb where the poorer Irish craftworkers lived and traded. It was also a meeting place for Irish pilgrims to gather before they set off to the shrine of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. In the 1880's this area developed into a centre for education and religion with the construction of St. Mary's Cathedral, the CBS and the Presentation Convent.

Older street names can be seen on the map: Walkins Street is Friary Street today, Bolton Lane is today's William Street, Shortsels Lane is Chapel Lane, Bluebell Lane is now Poyntz Lane, and Evan's Lane and Upper Evan's Lane are today Tilbury Place and Evan's Lane. Cross Lane appears between Red Lane and James's Street on Rocque Map, whereas today the name is given to the laneway between Collier's Lane and Shortsels Lane. Red Lane, seen to the west of High Street, is no longer in place today, replaced with Market Cross Shopping Centre.

St James Chapple, located at St James's Gate, was established during the Restoration, when Catholic chapels were built outside of the City walls at the order of the Duke of Ormonde who encouraged extra mural development, which is beginning to take shape along Walkin Street and St James's Street.

Tilbury Tower can be seen to the west of Evan's Lane, and a second tower at the western end of Collier's Lane.

Pennyfeather Lane can be seen extending southwards along the City Wall. It was constructed circa 1700 by John Pennyfeather, a local landowner, and then known as Penney Lane. Originally it had 20 dwellings on either side.

Passageway, or 'sconces', run parallel to the City Wall, with narrow linear structures built up against the wall ramparts.

Historic Context

1842 OS Map

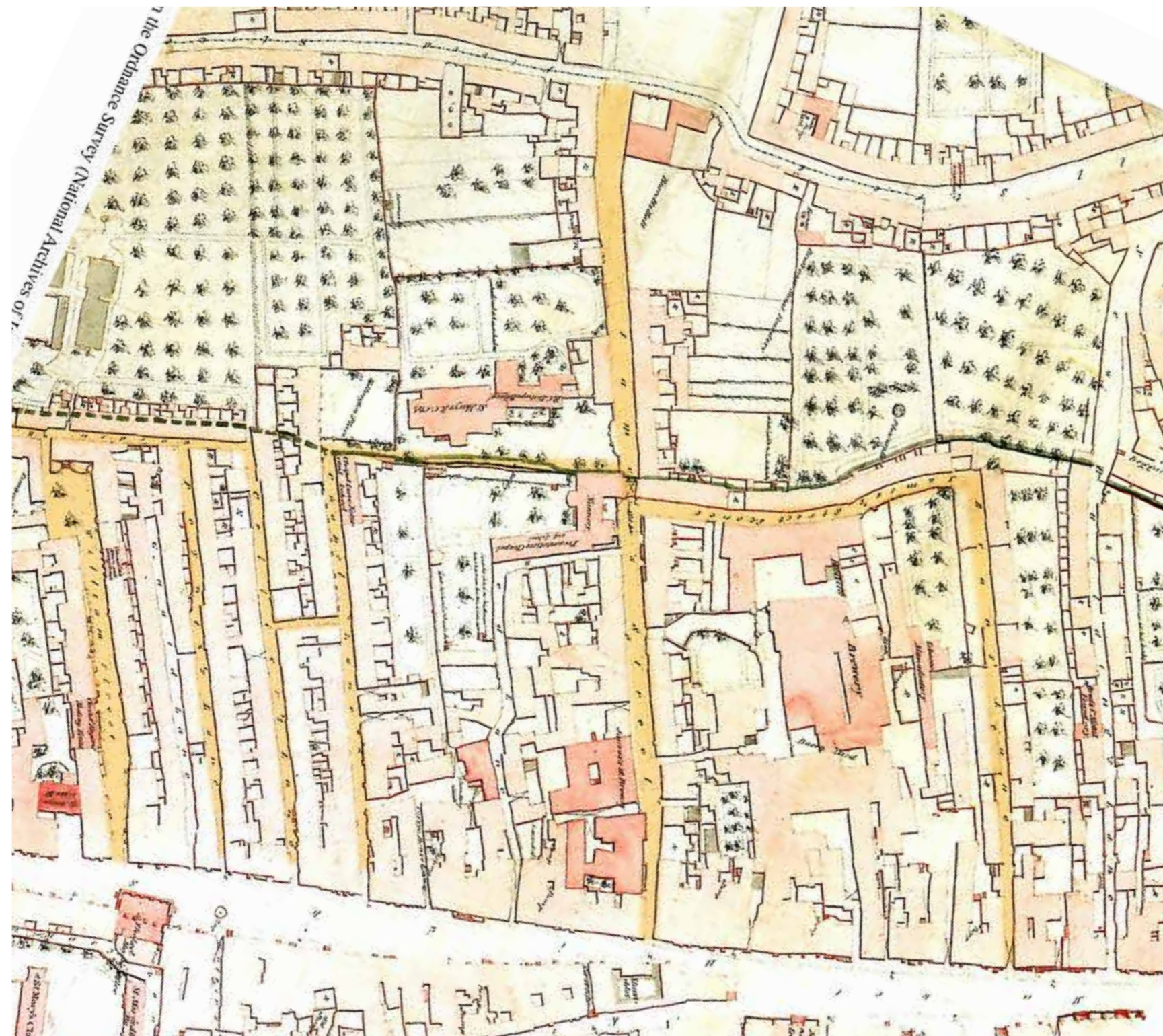
The 1842 OS Map of Kilkenny shows the sections of the City Wall demolished by this date south of Chapel Lane, with houses of Garden Row built over its line. The streets and lanes have mostly assumed their present-day names, with the exception of James's Street Sconce (present day Tilbury Place). Industrial, civic and educational buildings are identified on the map, with two breweries, tobacco manufacturers, lumber yards, and a chandlery.

The burgage plots of the laneways mostly survive, with the exception of the plots to the north of James's Street, which have been eroded and amalgamated by industrial buildings. The gardens of the burgage plots survive to the rears of Chapel Lane, as well as to the rear of the Rothe House plot north of Evan's Lane.

A line of buildings runs almost continuously along the inner eastern side of the City Wall along James's Street Sconce. A structure can be seen on the outer western side of the wall at the junction with New Building Lane.

A grouping of ecclesiastical buildings is shown around James's Street Gate. 1774 two free schools, catering for poorer Catholics, were set up in Chapel Lane, in 1800 the Presentation Convent was established. This group of schools was located in the same area as the later Christian Brothers' schools at Tilbury Place and James's Street.

St James's Gate is indicated on the map. The tower over the gate has been demolished to archway level and turned into a dwelling house in the early 1800's, to be demolished in 1860. Walkin Gate at the City entrance to Friary Street was removed circa 1809.



Extract from the 1841 OS Map of Kilkenny, not to scale reproduced from Irish Historic Towns Atlas

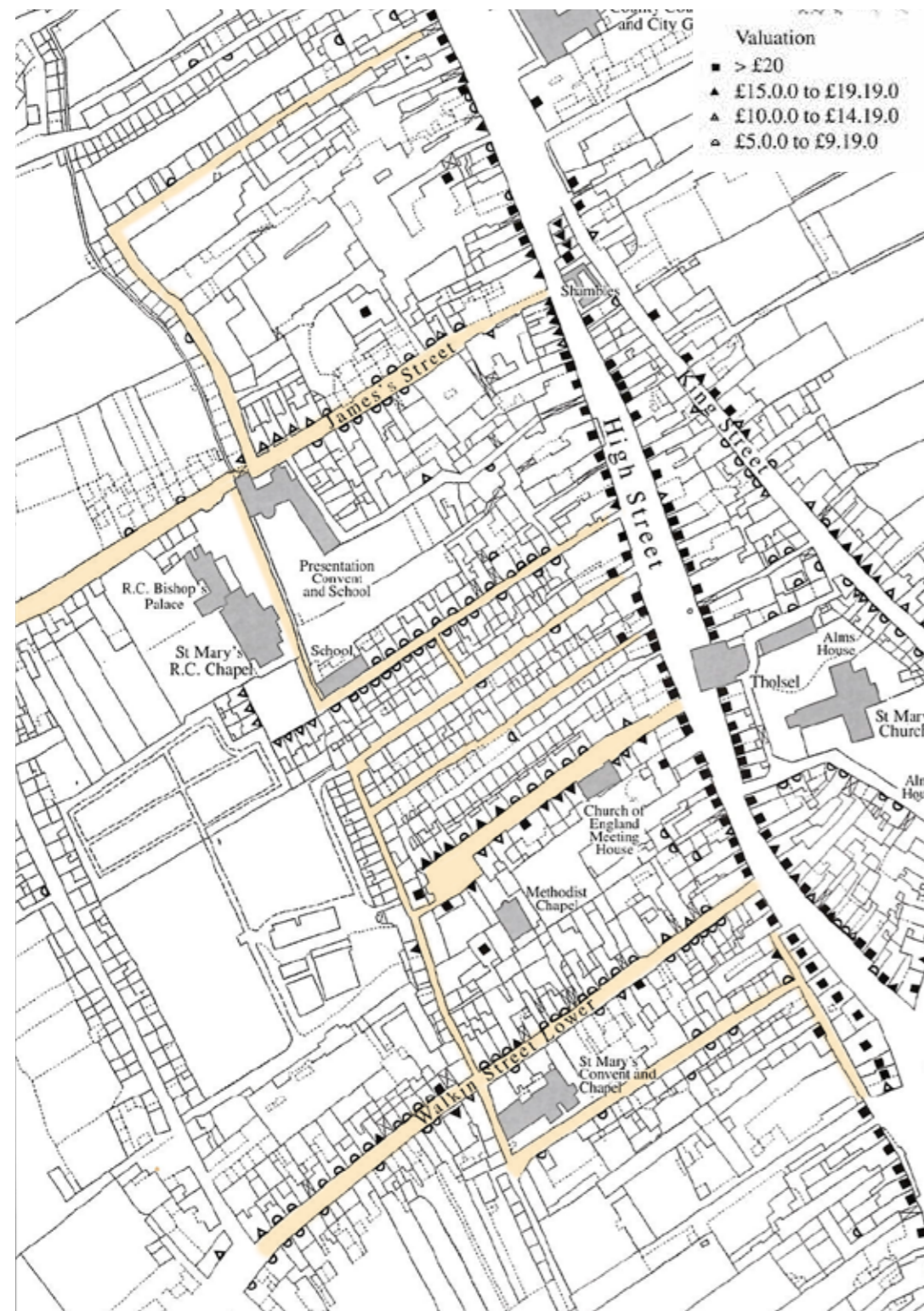
Historic Context

1850 Valuation Survey Map

The 1850 house valuation survey, shown as an overlay on 1842 OS Map of Kilkenny in the Irish Historic Towns Atlas, shows the make-up of the building stock of Kilkenny at the time.

The highest valued properties in the laneways west of the High Street mainly face High Street. William Street and Wellington Square contain a range of medium-to high value properties, with houses along Walkin Street, Chapel Lane, and James's Street at the lower end of the scale. The remainder of the building stock is presumed to be valued below 5 pounds.

A sconce is seen to the south of Pennyfeather Lane with no valuations on its structures.



Extract from the 1842 OS Map of Kilkenny, not to scale reproduced from Irish Historic Towns Atlas

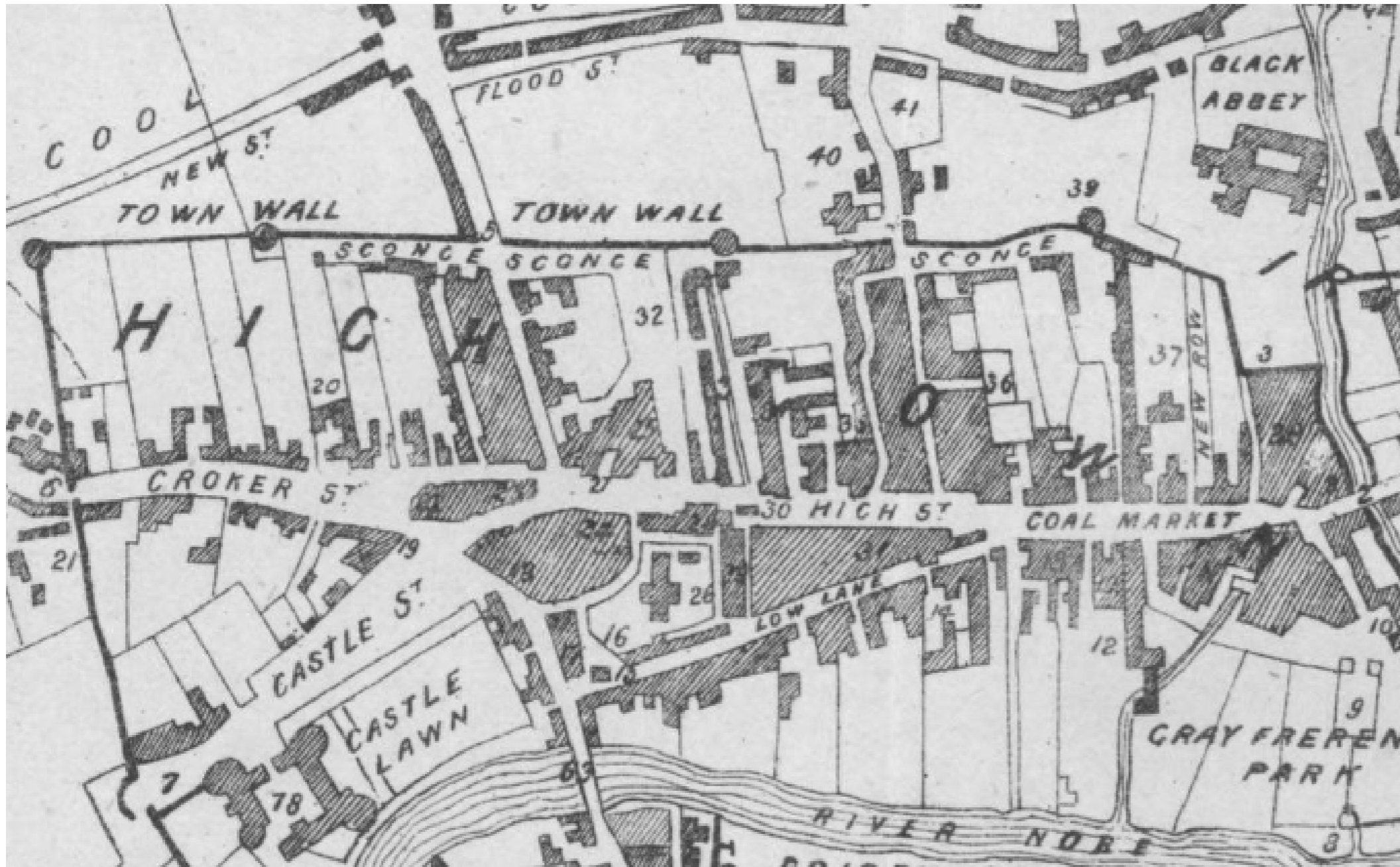
Historic Context

1861 Hogan's Map

The 1861 Map by the Mayor of Kilkenny John Hogan, reproduced in *The Journal of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*, 1861, New Series, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1861), pp. 350-355 and published by the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, is largely based on John Roque map discussed above.

The naming of the streets is assumed to date to 1861 and the continued line of the passageways named sconces along the inner line of the city wall is relevant.

Capucin Friary on Walkin Street was built circa 1848, lending its name to the street. It has been much altered over time.



Hogan's Map of Kilkenny, 1861 reproduced from que's Survey, 1757, the Ordnance Survey, 1841, and from Personal Inspection of the Respective Localities

Historic Context

1872 25" OS Map

The section of the City Wall between Pennyfeather Lane and Chapel Lane disappears on the 1872 OS Map of Kilkenny. The remains of the upstanding sections of the City Wall can be seen north of Evan's Lane.

The short laneway can be seen south of Pennyfeather Lane, with small buildings on each side.

Schools and ecclesiastical buildings continue to dominate the area around James's Street. St Mary's Chapel, seen to the south of R.C. Bishop's Palace on James's Street has disappeared and St. Mary's Cathedral, constructed 1857, can be seen at the western end of James's Street.

Small building plots dominate the laneways.



Historic Context

Lawrence Collection Photographs

Lawrence Collection photographs of Kilkenny, taken between 1870 and 1914, provide an insight into the character of the city of Kilkenny before the gradual decline of its centre in the 20th century.

Lawrence Collection photographs mainly favour the main streets, the churches, St Mary's Cathedral and the Castle.

The views from St Canice's towards the south show St Mary's Cathedral in the distance with the garden of present-day Blessed Felix House in front, New Building Lane and the buildings of Evan's Lane.

A view of Capucin Friary on Friary Street shows the street lined with cobbled drains, and a glimpse of the river-cobbled paving to Pennyfeather Lane

James's Street features in several photographs, showcasing St Mary's Cathedral, completed 1857 and the Presentation Convent, demolished in the 20th century. the public realm at that time showed a restrained palette of materials- stone paviors to footpaths, likely limestone, cut stone walls and railings with gardens behind, cast iron street lanterns.



View from St Canice's Looking South, from Lawrence Collection photographs, National Library



Capucin Friary on Friary Street, from Lawrence Collection photographs, National Library

Historic Context

Lawrence Collection Photographs

James's Street features in several photographs, showcasing St Mary's Cathedral, completed 1857 and the Presentation Convent, demolished in the 20th century. The public realm at that time showed a restrained palette of materials- stone paviors to footpaths, likely limestone, cut stone walls and railings with gardens behind, cast iron street lanterns.



Presentation Convent on James's Street, from Lawrence Collection photographs, National Library



St Mary's Cathedral on James's Street, from Lawrence Collection photographs, National Library



St Mary's Cathedral on James's Street, from Lawrence Collection photographs, National Library



High Street looking south, from Lawrence Collection photographs, National Library

Historic Context



Streetscape, Evan's Lane

Photographs from Crawford Collection photographs, Kilkenny Archives



Ruined House, Evan's Lane

Historic Context

Early 20th Century

20th Century brought with it the deterioration of the Kilkenny City Core. The manufacturing industries of the late 19th century have left the laneways, and the ecclesiastical buildings demolished or repurposed. The laneways deteriorated well into the 1950's.

The Crawford photograph collection dates to 1946, was assembled to the acclaimed archaeologist Osbert Guy Stanhope Crawford. The collection documents the streets and the laneways of Kilkenny, and offers an insight into the deteriorating fabric of the laneways, before their large scale clearance.

While the photographs of High Street show a lively streetscapes with vibrant shopfronts and no visible signs of dereliction and ruin, the laneways show a different picture. The houses along the laneways appear ruinous and abandoned,

Evan's Lane features prominently in the collection, recording its streetscape and features. The laneway is still lined with modest two storey houses on both sides, with rubble and rendered stone walls, cut stone and brick reveals to openings. The photographs relay the character of the laneway and a sense of scale and intimacy which is no longer there today.

Putdng Lane and Garden Row photographs from the collection show river cobbled laneway paving.

Crawford Collection photographs also show the archway to Poyntz Lane, which forms part of the early 20th century Ulster Bank facade and has changed little to present day.



Garden Row



Putdng Lane, House at the back of Hibernian Bank



Doorway to a ruined House, Evan's Lane

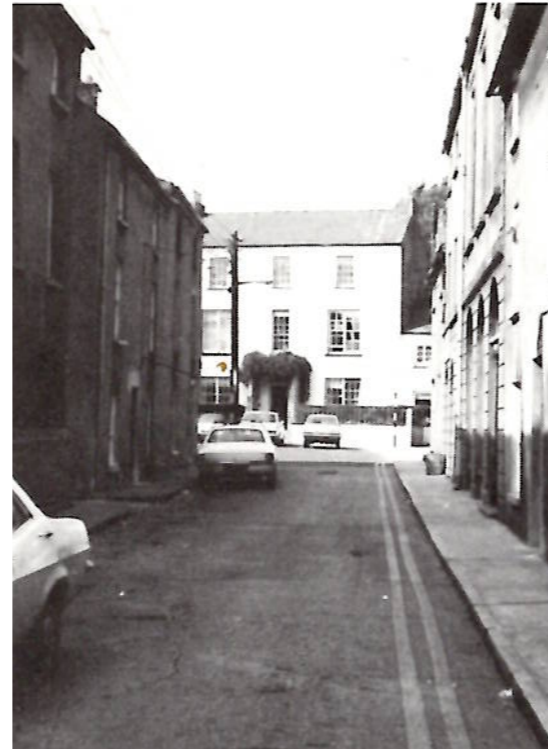


Archway to Poyntz Lane

Historic Context



William Street Doorway



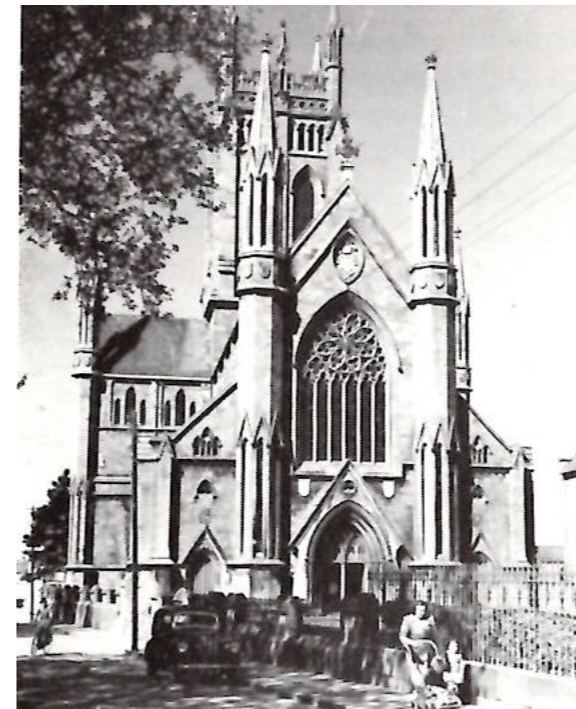
Chapel Lane



Wellington Square

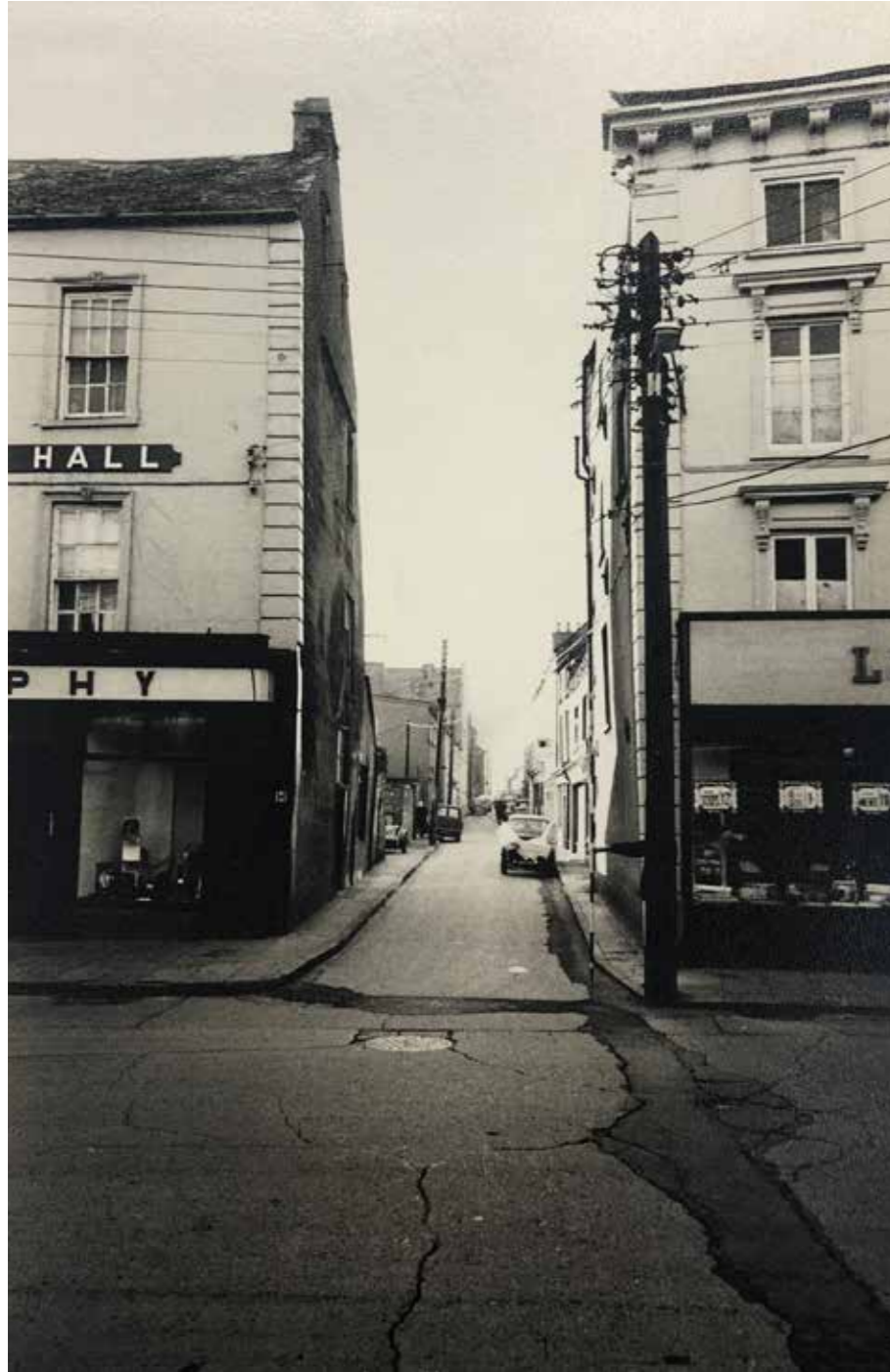


The Malthouse, Tilbury Place



St Mary's Cathedral

Images from Kilkenny Its Architecture and History, ed. Katherine M Lanigan and Gerald Tyler, 1977



View of Friary Street from High Street
Bolton Street Student Survey, 1970

Historic Context

Latter Half of 20th Century

During the 1950's, the low level of economic activity in Ireland exposed its historic building stock to benign neglect, which in the 1980's supported its active demolition.

Rothe House was bought and restored by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society in 1962, restored and opened as a museum and library in 1966. Its burgage plot was repaired and gardens reinstated in the early 21st century.

Kilkenny Its Architecture and History, ed. Katherine M Lanigan and Gerald Tyler, was published in 1977 by An Taisce Kilkenny Association and sponsored by Smithwick's Brewery. The book, produced in 1977, was produced to encourage appreciation of the heritage values and character of Kilkenny City during its period of modernisation and renewal. The book records a snapshot of Kilkenny during the 1970's, and offers recommendations for its future conservation and development.

The book contains a street-by-street appraisal of the streets of Kilkenny which include the laneways to the west of the city centre forming part of this study. It shows photographs of the laneways before large scale erosion of its burgage plots took place in the form of shopping centres and car parks. References to the views and character of the laneways before this modern development are valuable- for example, the views from Evans Lane of St Canice's Cathedral and Johnswell Hills.

The book is critical of the 'modern' developments in Kilkenny's historic core, with appraisals of 20th century buildings often citing inappropriate proportions and scale, and generally poor architectural design. It is an invaluable snapshot of Kilkenny in history. Sadly, the book's recommendations have not been adopted.

Bolton Street architecture students survey of Kilkenny, 1970, also records the streetscapes of Kilkenny. The photograph of Friary Street from High Street shows the tarmac carriageway and cars parked along Friary Street, with footpaths and kerbs paved in concrete pavers.

Following the economic slump of the 1980's, tax incentives forming part of the urban renewal schemes worked against conservation and came to affect the built heritage of Kilkenny negatively. Similarly to other towns and cities in Ireland, large expanses of vacant and derelict buildings in the historic core were demolished and replaced with modern buildings in the attempt to reinvigorate the cities. Much of the 20th century fabric of the laneways dates from this period and shows poor methods of modern construction, inappropriate materials like PVC windows, fascias and rainwater downpipes, and mis-proportioned structures out of scale to their receiving environment.

Presentation Convent, which previously stood opposite the St Mary's Cathedral, was demolished in 1992, making way for the Market Cross Shopping Centre. Entrance gates on James Street and a small mausoleum along the City Wall between James Street and Wellington Square are the only surviving remains of the Presentation Convent, both identified as heritage assets on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.