

Archaeological assessment

**Units 8 and 9
The Village Centre
Clane
County Kildare**

By

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Archaeology
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared for *Deaton Lysaght Architects* on behalf of Kildare Library Service in support of a Part VIII application to develop a new library at the centre of Clane village (Figure 1). The development site is located to the rear (east) of St. Patrick and St. Bridget's Church within the KD014-026001 designation relating to the historic town of Clane.



Figure 1 Site of proposed library (ASI Historic Environment Viewer)

- 1.2 The assessment compiles evidence for the historic settlement of the site and assesses the likelihood of there being archaeological deposits surviving which may enjoy protection under the National Monuments Acts (as amended) and the *Kildare County Development Plan 2017-23*. The nature of the development itself is then assessed along with any potential impacts occasioned by the foundation design or other ground reduction operations.
- 1.3 The development site is within the KD014-026001 designation for the historic town, however it does not have a discrete designation of its own. It most likely constituted the very end of a back plot, although it is significant that the *Urban Archaeological Survey* concluded that here are no clear burgage plot patterns, and the settlement may well have been abandoned before the close of the medieval period.¹
- 1.4 The proposed development is relatively low-impact and unlikely to disturb *in situ* archaeological deposits that may have survived underneath. A church bell elevated above the corner of the site is of interest and it is recommended below that consideration be given to its integration in the development.

¹ Bradley, J. *et al.* 1986. *Urban Archaeological Survey: Kildare*. Vol. 2, 143.

2 Historical and archaeological contexts

- 2.1 The town of Clane appears to have developed around the site of the early ecclesiastical settlement of *Cluain Damh* (KD014-026017), some 200m south of the development site on the hillock now occupied by the former parish church of St. Michael's. The monastery at Cluain-damh was founded by St. Ailbe and the first abbot was St. Senchell (d. 549).² The *Annals of the Four Masters* record the death of Banbhan in 782 and the settlement retained an importance prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans as the location of a synod convened in 1162 by Gelasius, archbishop of Armagh.³ The site retains most of its primary oval enclosure today.
- 2.2 The area was part of the Gaelic kingdom of the Uí Fáeláin and comprised excellent land bordering extensive wetlands to the west. After the coming of the Normans, the Barony of Oтын (the modern Barony of Clane) was granted to Adam de Hereford, who in turn granted it to his brother Richard, and the de Hereford's were probably responsible for the erection of the motte (KD014-026004) at the southern end of the town, overlooking a crossing point on the Liffey (KD014-026008). An archaeological excavation adjacent to the motte (03E0904) produced animal bone and one inhumation with associated medieval pottery.⁴ The town also contains a Franciscan Friary (KD014-026005) and graveyard (KD014-026012), and, reputedly, the hospital of St Mary Magdalene (KD014-026015). The friary was founded c. 1258, probably by Gerald FitzMaurice, lord of Offaly, who was buried there in 1287. A damaged effigy still in the friary may represent Fitz Maurice.

The present street pattern is linear, reflecting the medieval arrangement, with a principal street forking at its northern and southern ends. There are no obvious burgage plot patterns (although there is a linear western boundary), and the settlement may well have been abandoned by the fifteenth century. The 1654 Civil Survey noted four castles associated with the settlement, of which there is no surface trace surviving.⁵

According to the *Urban Survey*, the former parish church of St Michael's was originally held by the Knights Hospitallers and is first referred to in 1212.⁶ Described as a parish church in 1307, by 1615 the chancel was in ruins. The structure on site today comprises a rectangular, four-storied, battlemented, west-tower, possibly dating to the seventeenth century, onto which an apsidal church was added in the late eighteenth century. The building was renovated in the 1980s for use as a community centre. A thirteenth-century granite font (KD014-026010) found in the wall of the tower was moved to the church of St Michael and All Angels at Millicent on its construction in the 1880s.

² John Colgan, 1645. *Acta Sanctorum ... Hiberniae*, 748.

³ *Annals of Ulster*, cited in Gwynn, A. and Hadcock, R.N. 1970. *Medieval religious Houses: Ireland*. Blackrock, 31.

⁴ Duffy, C. 2006. 'Moat Commons, Clane' in *Excavations 2003*. Bray, 237-8.

⁵ Bradley *et al.* 1986, 137-54.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 142-4.

- 2.3 Some limited evidence can be extrapolated from a number of sources regarding the medieval population. There are references in Dublin guild merchant roll c.1190-1265 to tanners hailing from Clane⁷ however it is likely that the ever present danger of Gaelic incursion stymied the development of the town and the establishment of a sustainable population. This sense of instability is reflected in physical form in the 'Pale ditch' where the enabling legislation of 1488 specifically refers to Clane.⁸ The Pale was fortified by towerhouses at Clongowes and Painstown, where the Liffey running from Clane to Ballymore acted as continuing defence line. Communications were improved by the construction of a stone bridge over the Liffey in 1392,⁹ however by the sixteenth century there are few if any specific references to the settlement. The significance (or otherwise) of the town is suggested by the demolition of most of the friary after its dissolution in 1534 and the reuse of its masonry to re-edify the castle at Maynooth.¹⁰
- 2.4 Despite the extent of modern development in the town, there have been relatively few archaeological licences issued over the years, with the majority of investigations being of 'no archaeological significance'. In 1997, archaeological monitoring (97E0345) of some 2km of trenching for *Bord Gáis Éireann* pipeline revealed a series of three shallow pits cut into the natural boulder clay, one of which produced a small amount of animal bone, along with 'local ware' sherds of thirteenth- or fourteenth-century date.¹¹
- In 2003, archaeological monitoring (03E1219) of a housing development at Abbeylands at the southern end of the town recovered medieval pottery and a dressed-stone interpreted as possibly a mullion from the Franciscan Friary, located some 100m to the west.¹²
- Also in 2003, archaeological testing (03E1488) at a development site located at Prosperous Road and Millicent Road resulted in 115 sherds of mostly medieval pottery being recovered from the topsoil - Leinster cooking ware, Dublin-type ware, Dublin-type fineware and Dublin-type cooking ware. The post-medieval pottery consisted of possible Merida-type, black-glazed ware, glazed red earthenware and stoneware. In addition, two clay-pipe stems and a clay-pipe bowl were also recovered.¹³
- 2.5 By the middle of the seventeenth century there was possibly a revival in the fortunes of the settlement and it is interesting that the buildings are given more prominence on the county map produced for the Down Survey, compared with the barony map (Figure 2). The terrier states that the land 'is good dry and fertile for Corne of all sortes. The pasturable ground is good for Cattle of all sortes and ye bog in som parts of the Barony is fitt for firing' and two manors are referred to, Timahoe and Clane itself.

⁷ Potterton, M. and Murphy, M. 2010. *The Dublin region in the middle ages. Settlement, land-use and economy*. Dublin, 439.

⁸ Ibid., 266.

⁹ Ibid., 196.

¹⁰ Ibid., 255.

¹¹ Brady, N. 1998. 'Clane, Kildare' in *Excavations 1997*. Bray, 92.

¹² Ó Ríordáin, B. 2007. 'Abbeylands, Clane' in *Excavations 2004*. Bray, 194-5.

¹³ Byrne, M.E. 2006. 'Prosperous Road/ Millicent Road, Clane' in *Excavations 2003*. Bray, 238.

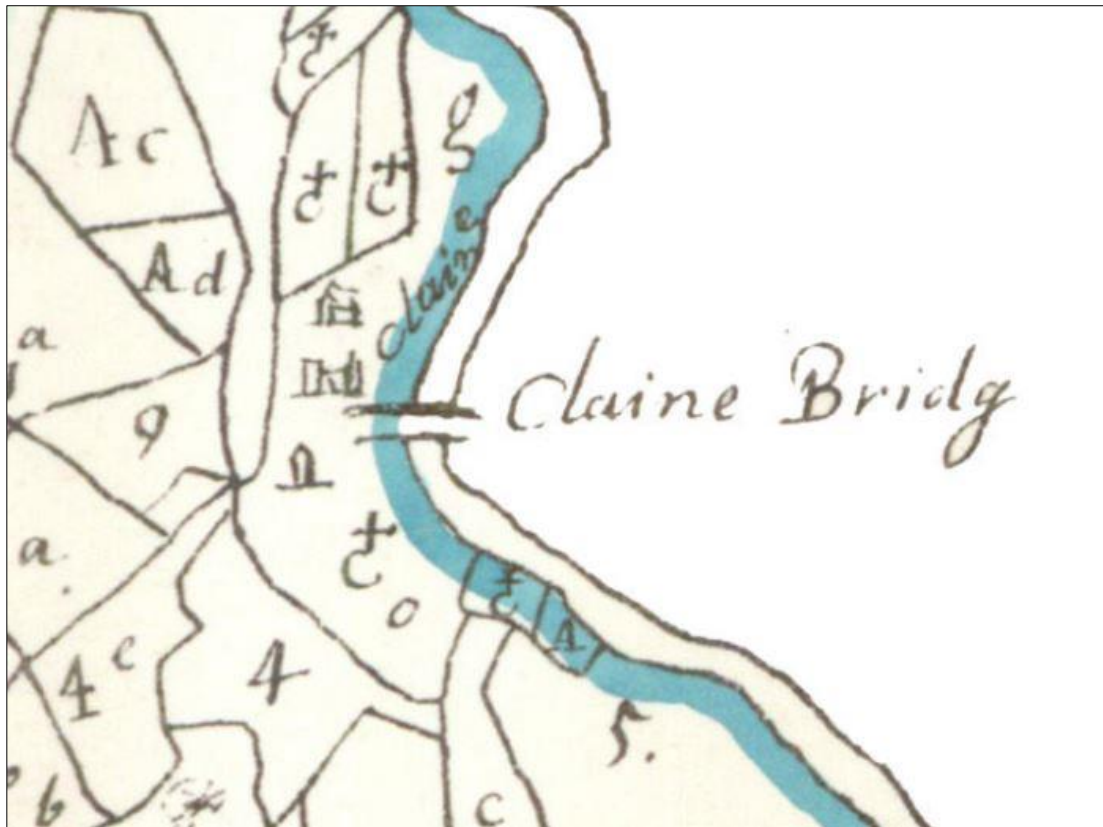


Figure 2 'The Barony of Claine in the County of Kildare' c. 1654-7, (north to left)

- 2.6 The modern town is recognisable on the initial Ordnance Survey mapping, undertaken in 1836 and published some three years later (Figure 3). The location of the site under discussion can be identified on enclosed grounds annotated as part of the village, well behind the R.C. Chapel which was replaced c. 1880 by the existing exercise in Gothic revival.

The second edition mapping (not illustrated) demonstrates little change, however in the intervening period there were fruit trees planted in the field and in the field to the north. The plot cannot be identified on the Tenement Valuation c. 1856 but is well defined on the 25 inch mapping surveyed in 1908 (Figure 4). Again, the site is depicted as being undeveloped and indeed it would appear to have remained so until the present structure was built prior to 2010.

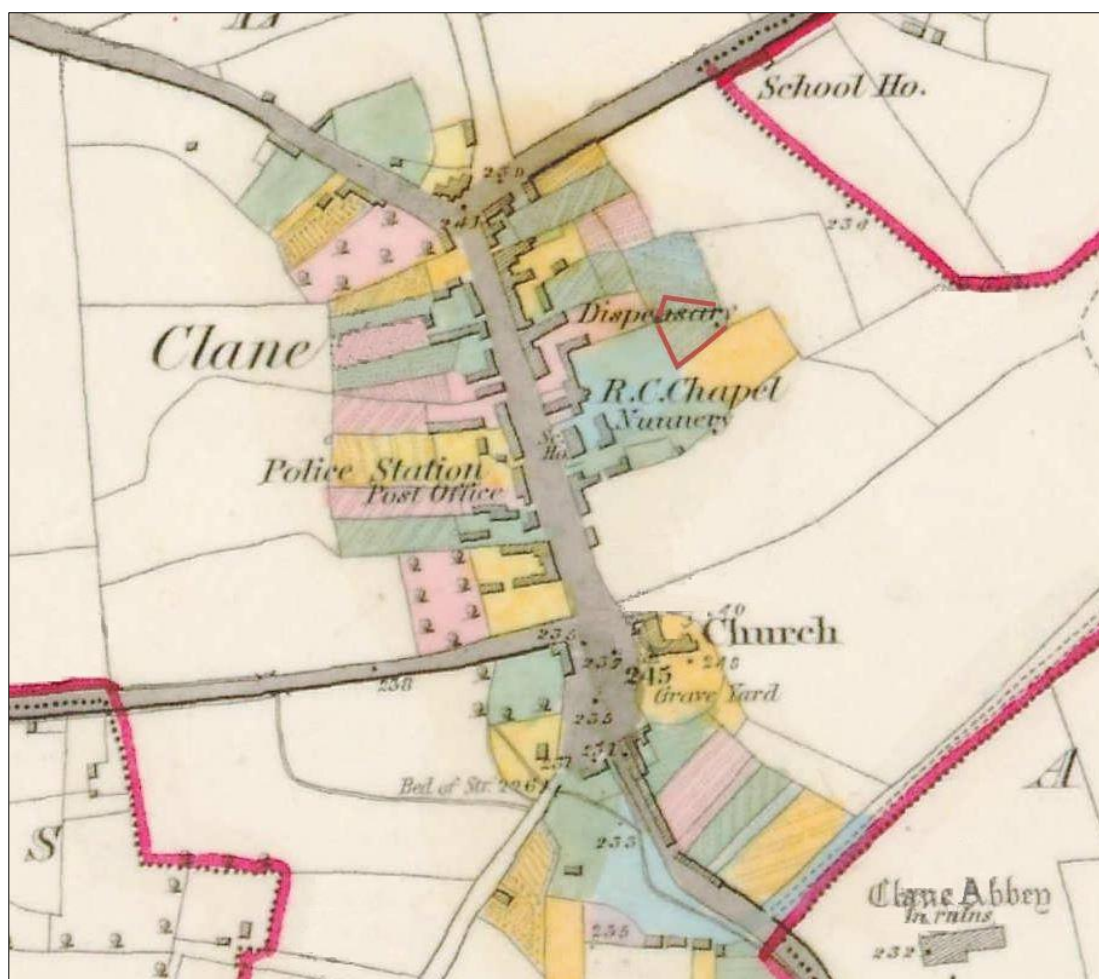


Figure 3 Ordnance Survey, Kildare, sheet 14, 1836-39

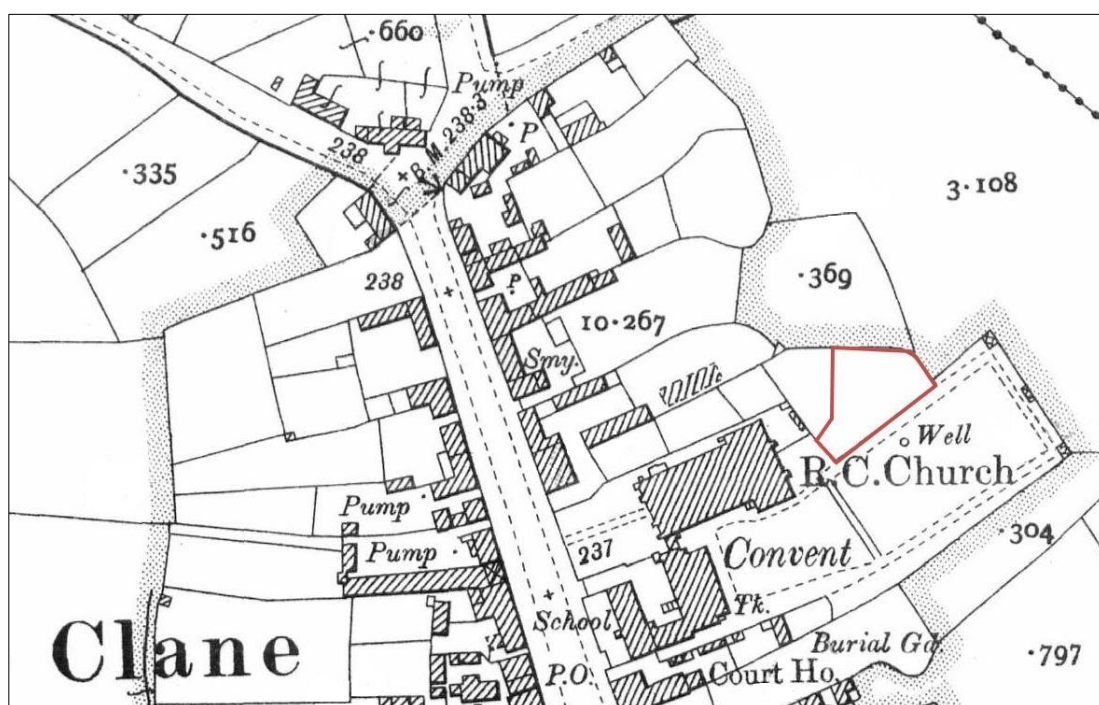


Figure 4 Ordnance Survey, KE014-06, 1908-10. Footprint of existing structure outlined

3 Existing site

- 3.1 The site of the proposed library is accessed from the north of the church and the standing building is part of a small retail development known as the Village Centre. The building, which is of little architectural value, tightly occupies the corner of the site (Plate 1) with a small yard to the rear and a smaller exterior passage against the southeastern boundary, and has a concrete slab floor.



Plate 1 Existing structure

- 3.2 The southern and western boundaries comprise masonry walls in limestone rubble brought to a rough course. Where they most likely date to the construction of the church c. 1880, the boundary has remained constant from the 1830s. The northern boundary is in concrete blocks and presumably dates to the construction of the shops.

Of interest at the eastern corner of the site is a cast bronze church bell which sits on a purpose-built platform (Plates 2 and 3). There are no proposals to remove the bell, which is the most significant heritage item adjoining the site, but is not in the ownership of the planning authority.



Plate 2 View of proposed library site from northeast



Plate 3 Church bell elevated at eastern corner

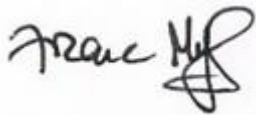
4 Impact of proposed development

- 4.1 The proposed development will see the retention of the shell and roof structure of the existing retail units and the insertion of new elevational treatments. The vista from the KD014-026017 church site will not be affected.
- 4.2 It is possible that the existing slab will be removed and replaced for increased insulation, however there is no necessity for wholesale ground reduction across the site where it is assumed that existing services will be retained.
- 4.3 The existing historic boundary walls and the church bell are being retained and it is likely that there will be repair or repointing undertaken locally.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

- 5.1 The assessment has demonstrated that there has been little of archaeological significance recovered from development-related archaeological investigations in Clane. The site of the proposed library lies well away from the medieval street frontage and would have been at the very back of the plot, where activity would have been minimal. Where there is no documentary evidence for a town ditch along the boundary, it certainly remains possible that one existed; however the low-impact nature of the proposed development does not pose a serious threat to deeper deposits.
- 5.2 Where no decision has been made regarding the retention of the existing slab, it is likely that a library will require a high level of ground insulation. Ideally, in a zone of archaeological potential, the slab should be retained to protect underlying deposits, however in this instance there is unlikely to be a significant impact. It is nonetheless recommended that the substrates be inspected by a suitably qualified archaeologist should the slab be removed.
- 5.3 The church bell elevated on the corner of the site is threatened by ivy growth which requires attention in the short term. Although not in the ownership of the planning authority, it is recommended that the ivy is cut back and killed off after the breeding season.

It is additionally recommended that conservation works undertaken to the boundary walls should use a lime-based binding mortar and retain the existing rough coursing.



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