

**ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE
ASSESSMENT
OF
“CHOLERA HOUSE”,
GREENHILLS ROAD,
WICKLOW**

BALLYGUILMORE ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME

ON BEHALF OF: WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

AUTHOR: ROB GOODBODY

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ABSTRACT

IAC Archaeology has prepared this report on behalf of Wicklow County Council, to study the impact, if any, on the architectural heritage resource of the proposed Ballyguilemore Active Travel Scheme at Greenhills Road, Wicklow (OS Sheet 25). The report was undertaken by Rob Goodbody of IAC Ltd.

It is proposed to provide a footpath alongside a section of Greenhills Road, Wicklow, and to widen the road in that area. At the northern end of the proposed project there is a protected structure on land adjacent to the works and part of the works will involve clearing land in close proximity to the protected structure and laying down a footpath.

The protected structure is the ruin of a farmhouse that is said to have been used to house cholera patients during the outbreak of that disease in the 1860s. It is believed that the last use of the building was as a shed, with a corrugated roof, in the 1990s.

The site survey shows that the ruin of the protected structure is heavily overgrown with ivy, brambles, elder and other vegetation and this conceals some of the walls, preventing close inspection and photography. However, the locations and nature of the walls was determined and showed that most of the surviving walls are of rubble stone, parts of which are now missing. The western wall, which lies closest to the road and the site of the proposed works, was constructed with mud or rammed earth and is in a very poor state, with only a small section still standing.

The proposed works could potentially result in serious damage to the protected structure due to its poor condition and its close proximity to the works. This could occur through direct contact with the walls, through vibration in the vicinity or through damage arising from felling of two trees and removal of the stumps. Mitigation measures are proposed to minimise or eliminate the risks arising from the proposed works.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL

This report has been commissioned by Wicklow County Council as part of the documentation related to the proposed Ballyguilemore Active Travel Scheme. The project is to include works in close proximity to a ruined building known as the Cholera House, which is a protected structure (Figure 1). This report examines the protected structure and assesses the potential impact of the project, with recommended mitigation measures.

1.2 THE DEVELOPMENT

The Ballyguilemore Active Travel Scheme proposes the widening of 460 metres of Greenhills Road and construction of a footpath along the eastern side to continue the existing footpath, which at present terminates alongside Carrig View, approximately 1.2km south of the town centre. The Cholera House is located in a field adjacent to the road, approximately 20 metres from the northern end of the proposed project.

The proposed works are to include setting back the roadside boundary by around 1.5 to 2 metres to enable the construction of the footpath, which is to be 1.8 metres wide.

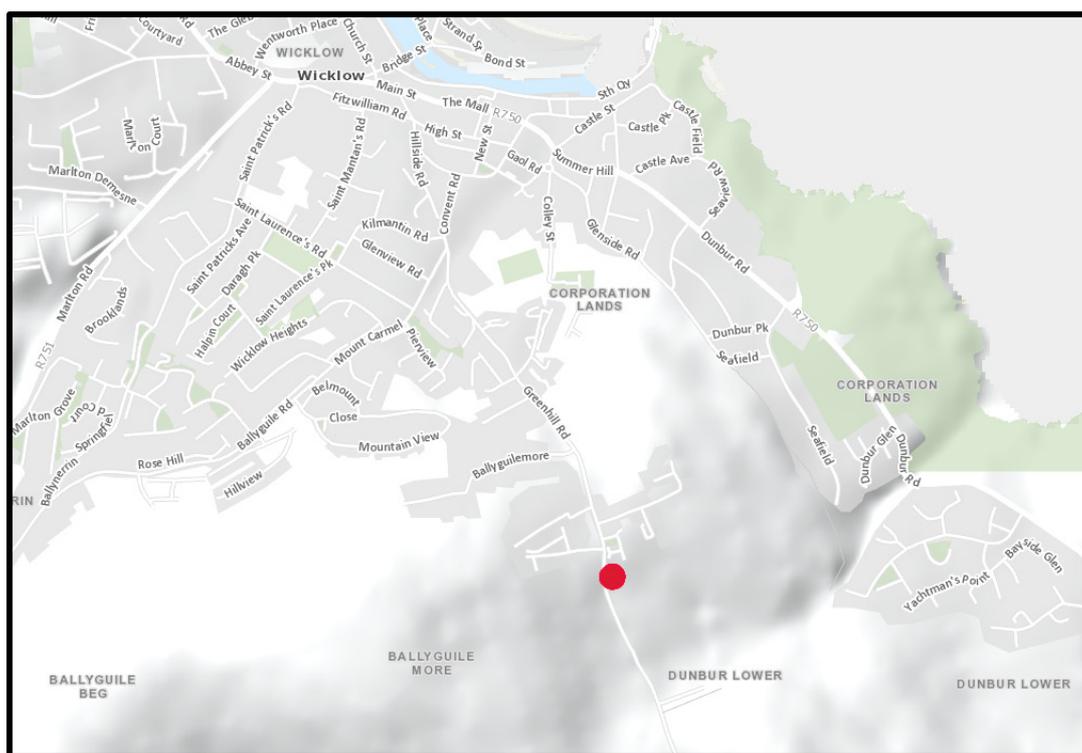


Figure 1: Site location

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The origins and period of construction of the Cholera House are uncertain. The building was depicted on the first-edition Ordnance Survey map, as seen in the extract below, from six-inch Wicklow sheet 25, 1839.

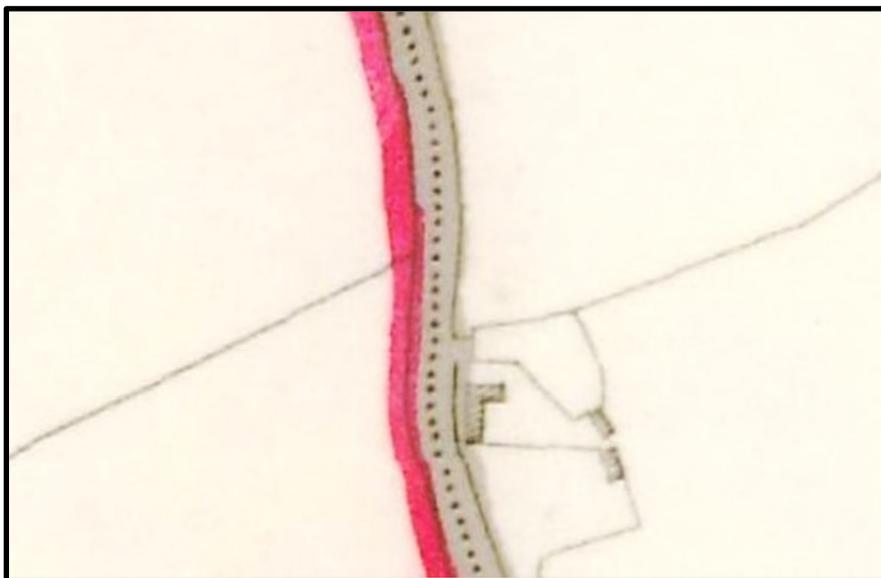


Figure 2: Detail of first-edition Ordnance Survey map, 1839

The location of the building is not a perfect match with later editions, such as the 1909 map reproduced below, but the similarities in size, shape, orientation and neighbouring features is such that the differences are more likely to be due to mapping methods than demolition and rebuilding. The principal difference in the way that the house is depicted on the two maps is the orientation, while there are also differences in the boundaries and outbuildings in the vicinity of the house and these are likely to represent true differences.

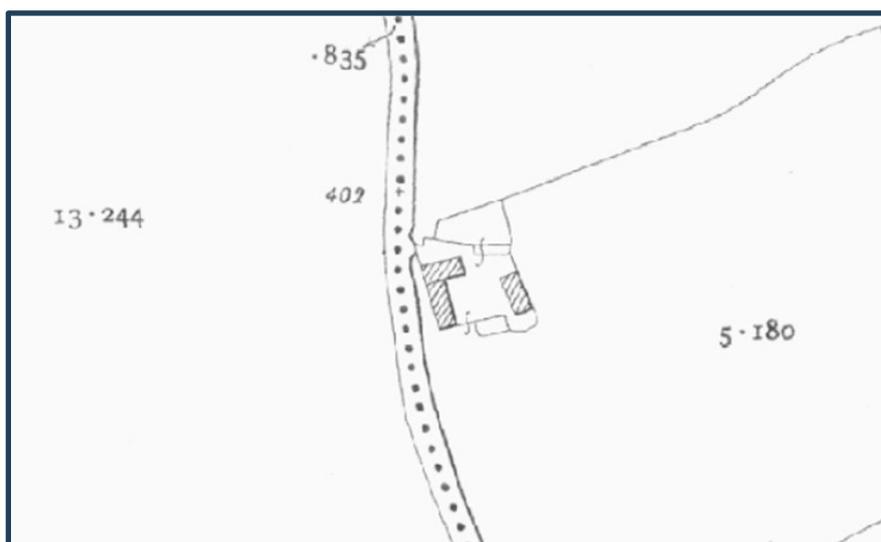


Figure 3: Detail of Ordnance Survey map of 1909

The entry in the record of protected structures states that the building is thought to have been built to treat victims of cholera in the outbreak of 1866. Research undertaken for this report has been unable to verify this, although it is important to state that this is not to state that the information is not correct. The building is not described as a cholera house in the valuation records during the 1860s and there is no mention of a cholera house or hospital in that location in the grand jury presentments.

Health, including the provision of hospitals and dispensaries and the provision of services that were required during epidemics, was the responsibility of the poor law unions from the 1840s. Wicklow town and its environs were in the area served by the Rathdrum Union, which had its workhouse at Rathdrum. During the cholera epidemic of the late 1840s the Rathdrum Union established a cholera hospital at Monalin, Newtownmountkennedy and this appears to have been a short-term measure.¹ The Union had previously hired a house as a temporary fever hospital and it may be that during the cholera epidemic of the 1860s a similar approach was taken, hiring the house that is the subject of this report on a temporary basis to receive those who were suffering from cholera.²

With the possible exception of that temporary use, the house appears to have been occupied as a farmhouse through the nineteenth century and subsequently used as a shed. According to the entry in the record of protected structures the structure was roofed with corrugated iron until the 1990s.

¹ County of Wicklow, *Abstract of Presentments, Spring Assizes 1849, Newcastle Barony*, p. 49.

² O'Connor, John, *The Workhouses of Ireland*, Anvil Books, 1995, p. 245.

3 RESULTS OF DESKTOP STUDY

3.1 RECORD OF PROTECTED STRUCTURES

The Cholera House is included in the record of protected structures, as set down in the Wicklow County Development Plan 2021-2027 under reference W29. The building was first included in the record of protected structures in the Wicklow Town and Rathnew Development Plan 2013-2019.

3.2 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREAS

The Cholera House does not lie within an Architectural Conservation Area.

3.3 NATIONAL INVENTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

The Cholera House is not included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

4 FIELD INSPECTION

4.1 SURVIVING REMNANTS

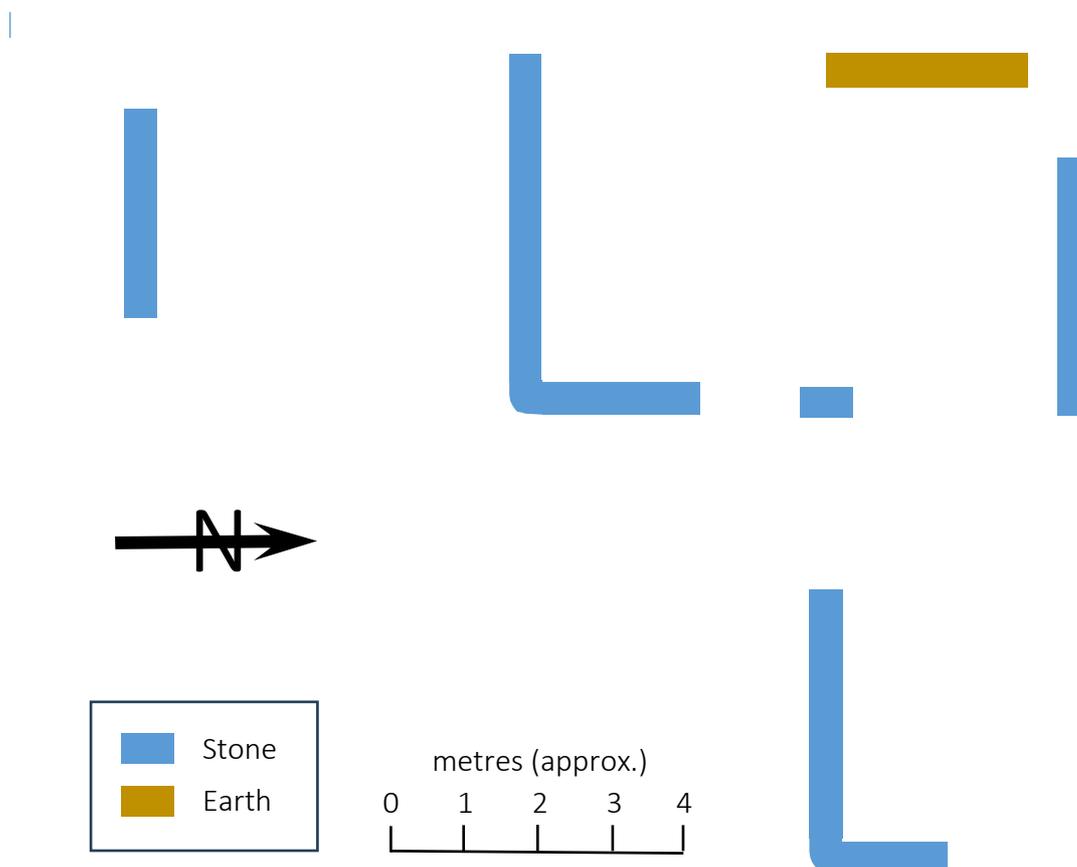


Figure 4: Sketch plan of surviving elements of Cholera House

The site of the Cholera House is very overgrown with brambles, ivy, nettles and other vegetation and it is difficult to discern many of the surviving elements of the building. The sketch above is not to scale but shows the approximate layout of the remaining parts of the walls, with west at the top and Greenhills Road off the top of the sketch. The wall on the right-hand side is estimated, as its presence can be seen, but the extent is uncertain. The sections running horizontally in the sketch are also estimated.

The majority of the surviving walls are of stone, predominantly laminated stone such as mica schist or shale, with some granite stones. The section of wall that is closest to the road is of mud, or earth and is gradually disintegrating.

4.2 PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY



Plate 1: View toward Cholera House across Greenhills Road

The Cholera House is located near the north-western corner of a field, to the south of a gateway and access leading from Greenhills Road to the field. The photograph below indicates the dense growth of ivy, brambles, elder and other vegetation on and around the remnants of the building. Dense coverage of ivy conceals much of the remaining walls, while the brambles and other vegetation restrict movement in the vicinity of the ruin. As noted above, the listing in the record of protected structures states that “Up to c.1990’s (*sic*) it had a corrugated roof and was used as cattle sheds.” No remnants of corrugated iron were noted on the site and nothing remains of the roof.



Plate 2: View toward Cholera House from the north, within the field



Plate 3: Remnant of western wall

The western wall of the house is the wall closest to the public road. This wall is of mud, or rammed earth and has largely been washed away by the weather. A section of this wall remains, about 2.7 metres long and 1.5 metres high, although, as the photograph above shows, the remnant is very uneven in shape. To the south of this remnant there is a raised area of ground, like a low bank, and this may represent the collapsed remnant of the rest of the wall. Where parts of the stone walls are visible, they are built with rubble stone, using a laminated stone such as shale or mica schist, though there is some granite included. The surviving elements are mere fragments, with only limited sections rising to full height.



Plate 4: Remnant of stone wall



Plate 5: Typical view of wall of house

The view above represents the state of a significant amount of the walls, where they are barely visible due to dense growth of vegetation. In some cases, the presence of a wall is only confirmed by pushing a rod into the vegetation to see if there is any hard surface beneath the ivy.



Plate 6: South-east corner of main part of house

The house may be described as having a main section with a rear return projecting to the east and another room located to the south. The south-eastern corner of the main house is visible and is seen in the photograph above. This is of rubble masonry as described above, though it is in better condition than other parts of the visible walls. There is a curve at the corner and a similar curve is noted at the south-eastern corner

of the return. These curves were probably introduced as the small size of the stones would not be suitable for constructing an angled corner of acceptable strength.

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGY

5.1 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The proposal to provide a footpath along the eastern side of Greenhills Road will involve encroaching beyond the present verge on the road margin into the site of the Cholera House with the potential to damage the remnants of the building.

The works will include setting back the existing roadside boundary by approximately 1.5 to 2 metres. This will require the removal of the existing hedgerow on the boundary and two trees within the site of the Cholera House. A survey carried out on the site has estimated that the side of the house nearest to the road is at a minimum of 3 metres from the existing road edge.

These works are to take place extremely close to the very fragile remnants of the house, the closest part of which will be the rammed earth western wall seen in plate 3 above and which is in very fragile condition. The proximity of the works makes it difficult to erect protective fencing to ensure that no encroachment can take place beyond the work area.

Potential damage could occur through physical contact with the ruin of the house, through vibration resulting from the works or through damage from falling sections of the trees that are to be felled. It is assumed that the stumps of the two trees need to be removed and this has the potential to damage the ruin.

In summary, the potential impacts arise from:

- Erection of protective fencing
- Physical contact with the ruin during construction
- Vibration during the works
- Falling trees or parts of trees during felling operations
- Removal of tree stumps

5.2 MITIGATION

- Erection of protective fencing
To avoid damage to the protected structure no works should be undertaken in the vicinity of the ruin except those absolutely necessary for the implementation of the road widening and provision of footpath. Provided crews are adequately briefed and trained there should be no necessity for protective fencing. The limits of the work area should be marked out with aerosol site marking paint, leaving the largest distance possible from the upstanding remains of the protected structure. No members of the work crew or public should cross that line.
- Physical contact during construction

Training and other measures are to be undertaken to ensure that no operative, no machinery or other equipment encroaches beyond the marked work area toward the ruin. Removal of vegetation is to be removed only up to the defined work area only. Under no circumstances are the elder bushes that are growing adjacent to the walls of the ruin to be trimmed, cut or removed as they are likely to be physically attached to the wall.

- **Vibration during the works**
Work practices are to be designed so as to minimise vibration and other causes of movement of the ground. No machinery is to be brought within 3 metres of the boundary of the work area except for the buckets on the extended arms of machines with the machines kept beyond that limit. In removing the bank by machine toothed buckets are not to be used as these will snag roots and pull them, with possible impacts on the ground in the vicinity of the ruin. Roots may be cut by hand or with power saws but not pulled.
- **Impact from falling trees or branches**
The two trees that are to be removed are to be section felled, with the sections of branches dropped or lowered to the road surface, ensuring that no branches of any size are allowed to drop nearer to the ruin.
- **Stump removals**
The removal of the stump of the two trees that are to be felled is to be by means of a stump chipper. Under no circumstances are the stumps to be removed by digging or leverage. The stump removal is to be confined to the area needed for the works and is not to extend beyond the defined site boundary, regardless of whether part of the stump remains beyond the boundary line.

Training

All operatives, supervisors and professional staff of all trades and professions, including machine operatives and tree contractors are to be trained in the above criteria during site induction and the specifications for all contractors working in the vicinity of the protected structure is to include clauses relating to the protection of the protected structure and penalties to be invoked in the event of any damage that may occur to the protected structure.