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# Archaeological Impact Assessment Report Abbey Grounds, Co. Wicklow.

Archaeological Monument Ref: WI025-012002

Protected Structure ref: WTC-RPS24

ITM E 731199, N 694075

On behalf of:  
MosArt Architecture  
For  
Wicklow County Council

Prepared By:

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19<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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## 1 Introduction

This Preliminary Archaeological Impact Assessment has been prepared by Yvonne Whitty in order to determine the potential impact of a design proposal for the Abbey Grounds, Wicklow Town Co. Wicklow.

This project seeks to develop design proposals for the Abbey Grounds incorporating the public open space surrounding the extant Abbey ruins, and the redevelopment of the former Coach House. The aim of the project is to enhance this key open space in order to maximise its function as a public amenity and a heritage asset. Wicklow County Council have engaged a multidisciplinary team to prepare high quality design proposals for Abbey Grounds and to manage the preparation of an application under Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act for the entire development including a change of use for the Coach House building to a Café/Retail/Exhibition space and provision of public toilets.

The Abbey grounds comprise the ruins of a 13th century ruins of the former Franciscan Abbey in the centre of a park consisting of lawns, shrubs and mature trees located in the heart of Wicklow Town which is enclosed by a stone boundary wall. In the 19th century, paths were laid out around the Abbey ruins, and the landscape was managed as a garden.

The Abbey is a Recorded Monument afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts and it is also listed as a Recorded Protected Structure WTC-RPS24 in the County Development Plan 2021-2027. The site is in the ownership of Wicklow Parish.

This is a preliminary report on the impact of the proposed development on archaeological features as identified in a geophysical report completed in 2018 within the grounds of the Abbey. The deepest excavation of up to 900mm will be at the location of the café extension and elsewhere the depth is on average 300mm. These depths have the potential to impact upon archaeology. A strategy of targeted test trenching based on the results of the geophysical survey in relation to the proposed development plans will enable an assessment to be made of the impact of each element of the development to be made on potential archaeological features so that an appropriate archaeological mitigation strategy can be applied in advance of construction in consultation with the National Monuments Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

## 2 Location description

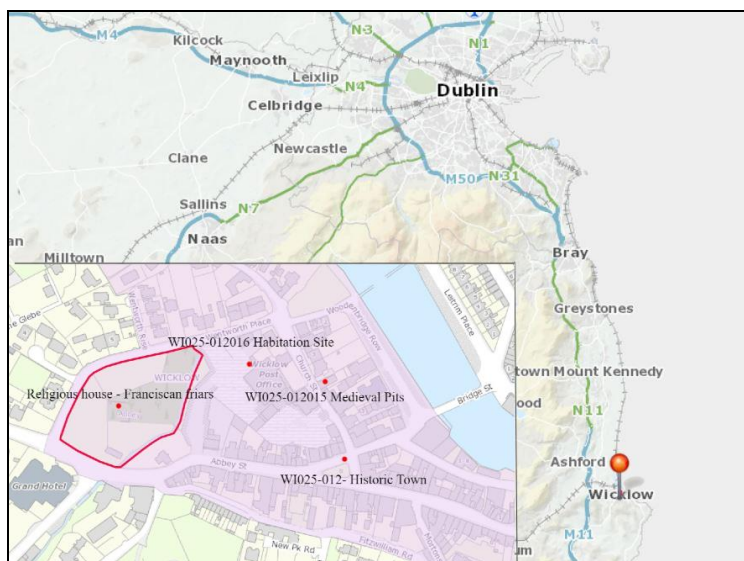


Figure 1: Site Location Abbey Grounds Co. Wicklow.

The site is located to the southwest of the main town centre in Wicklow Town in the townland of Wicklow which is situated within the Civil Parish of Rathnew and the Barony of Newcastle. The 13<sup>th</sup> century ruins of the former Franciscan Abbey form a picturesque centrepiece in a current day park consisting of lawns, shrubs and mature trees located in the heart of Wicklow Town. The site is defined by an enclosing stone boundary wall and the Ashtown Stream runs along the eastern side of the grounds which flows into Leirim River (Plates 1-3). The ruins of the friary are on low ground and is overlooked by the parochial house to the east.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, paths were laid out around the Abbey ruins, and the landscape was managed as a garden. The remnants of this garden layout remain and it is proposed to reinforce this aspect of garden heritage as part of the proposed redevelopment, reinforcing the special character of the 'secret garden' in tandem with maximising the usability of the entire site as multi-functional public amenity and outdoor events venue. The regeneration of this historic open space will provide a focus for visitors and a means for orientating themselves within the town – offering a space to pause, reflect and soak up the atmosphere.



Plate 1: View of Abbey Grounds.



Plate 2: View of Abbey ruins from approximate location of stage area, facing east.





Plate 3: Ashtown Stream facing northeast.



Plate 4: Rear of Coach House where proposed extension will be located.





Plate 5: Coach house which will be extended and change of use to café facing northeast.



Plate 6: Entrance at northeast end of the site from the SuperValu carpark.



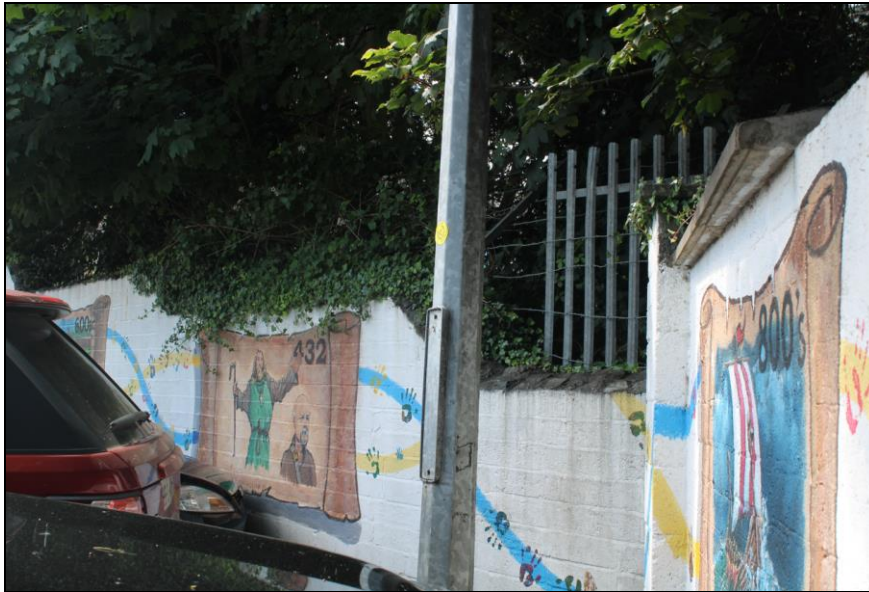


Plate 7: Proposed new entrance at north-east end of park through Supervalu carpark.

### 3 Description of Development

This project seeks to develop design proposals for the Abbey Grounds incorporating the public open space surrounding the extant Abbey ruins, and the redevelopment of the former Coach House (Plates 4 and 5). The aim of the project is to enhance this key open space in order to maximise its function as a public amenity and a heritage asset. Wicklow County Council have engaged a multidisciplinary team to prepare high quality design proposals for Abbey Grounds and to manage the preparation of an application under Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act for the entire development including a change of use for the Coach House building to a Café/Retail/Exhibition space and provision of public toilets (Figure 2-6).

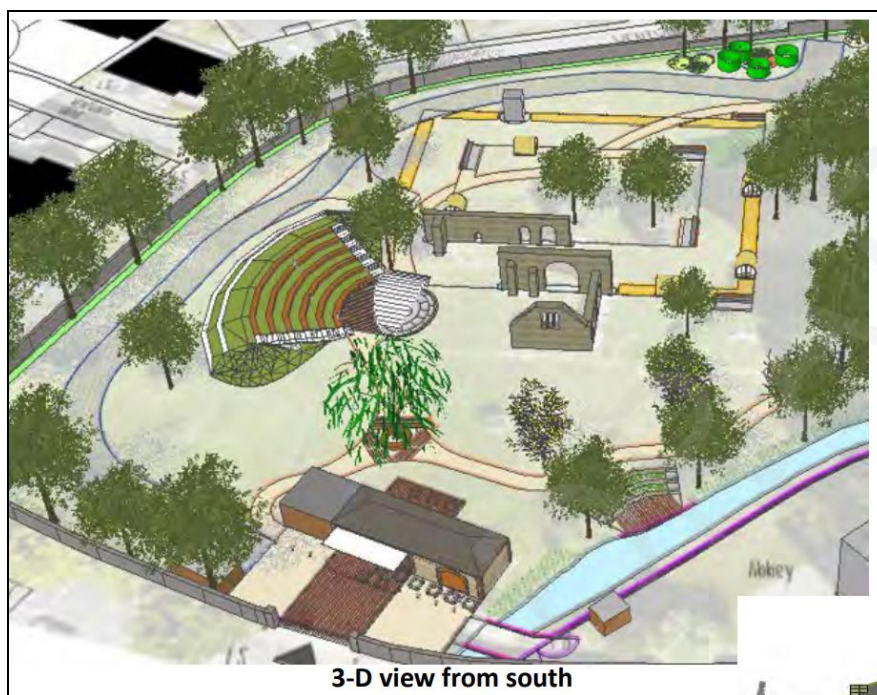


Figure 2: 3-D View of development supplied by MOS Art.



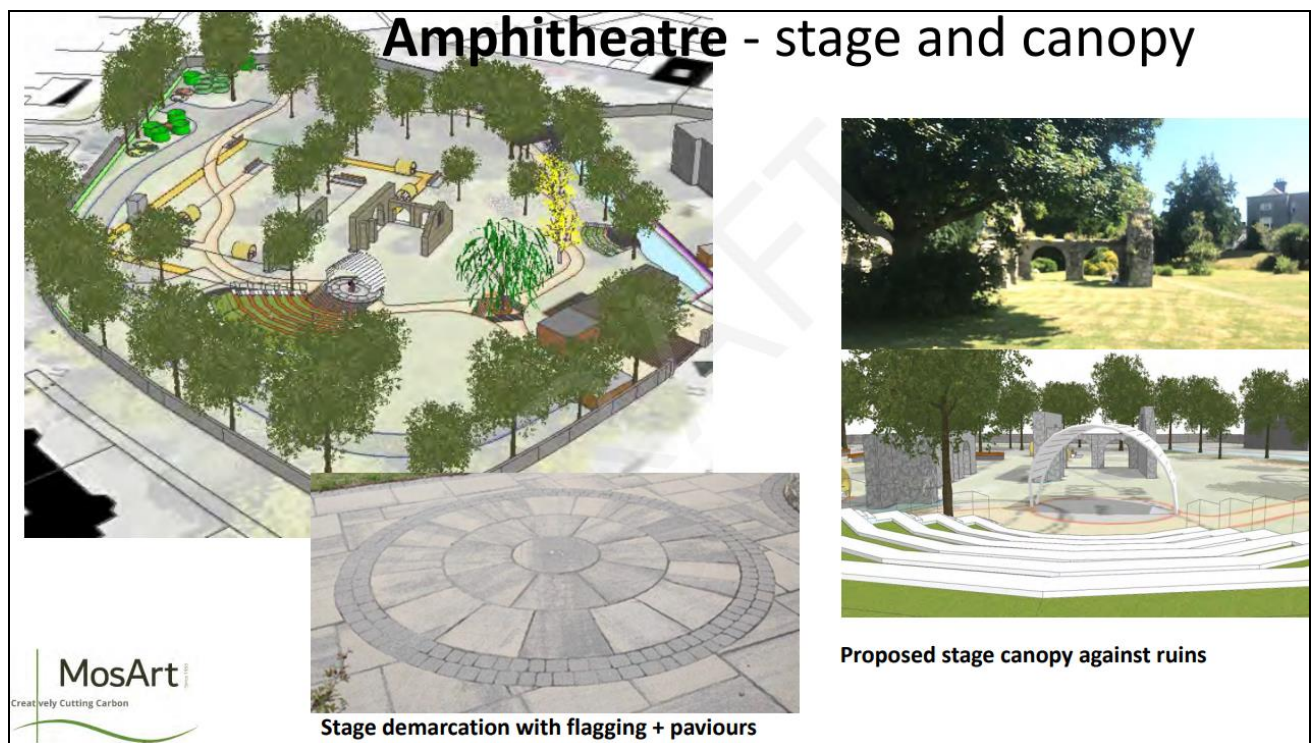


Figure 3: Amphitheatre development plans supplied by MosArt.

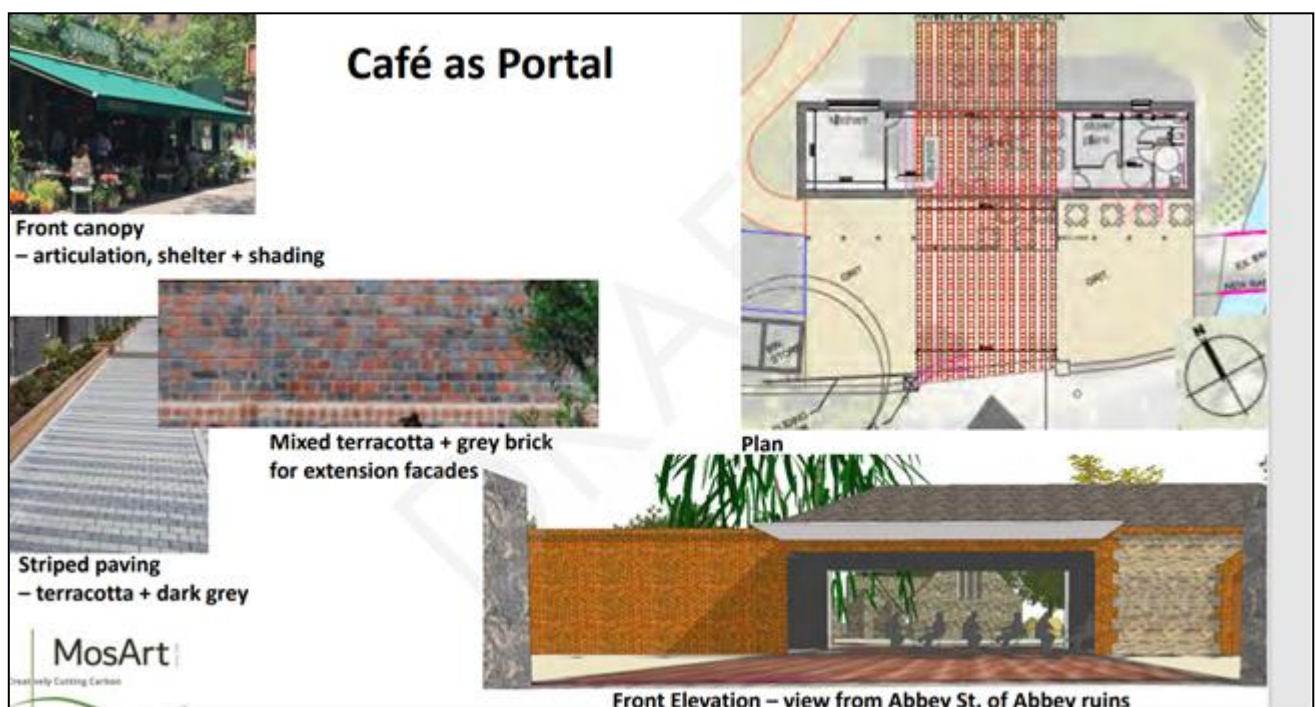


Figure 4: Café extension to Coach House.

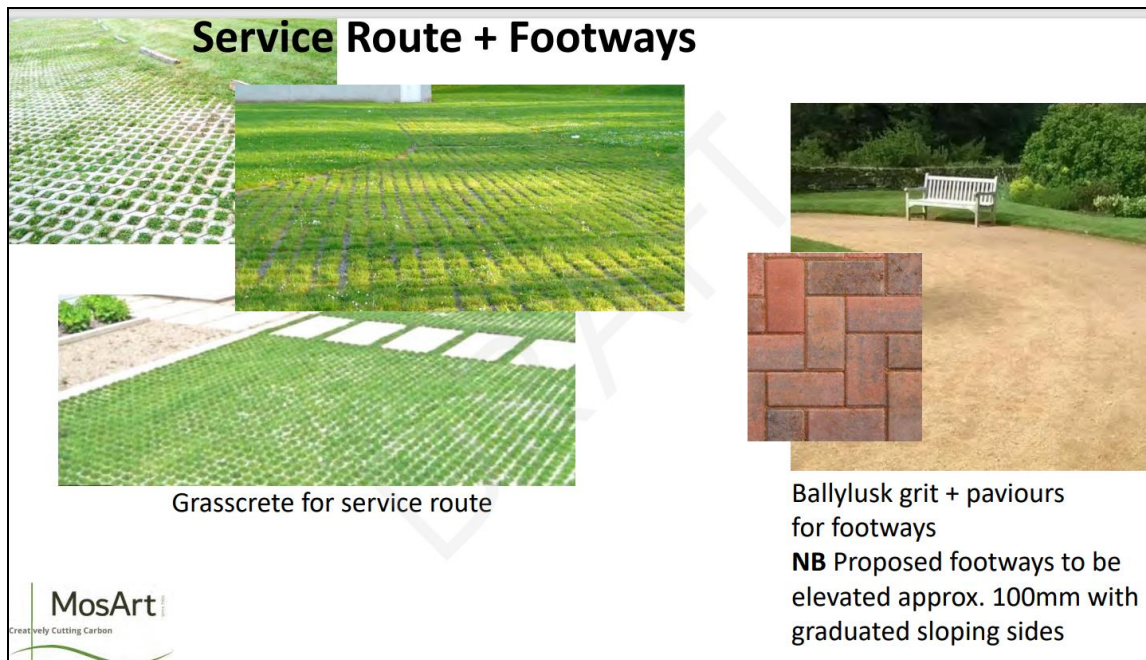


Figure 5: Service route and pathways.

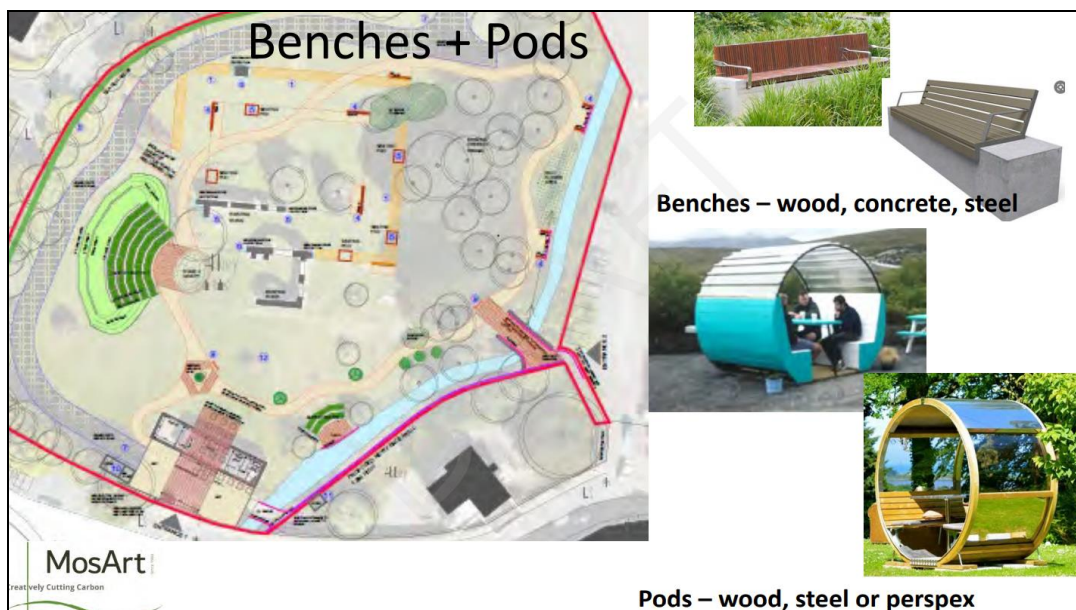


Figure 6: Benches and pods.

## 4 Legislative Background

This assessment is guided by relevant legislation, standards and guidelines in respect of archaeology, built and cultural heritage, as follows:

### European Legislation

- Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and National Heritage, 1972
- Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe, (the 'Granada Convention') ratified by Ireland in 1997



- European Convention Concerning the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (the 'Valetta Convention') ratified by the Republic of Ireland in 1997

## National Legislation

- National Monuments Act 1930, amended 1954, 1987, 1994, 2004 and 2014;
- Heritage Act 1995
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999
- Planning and Development Act 2000-2018 (as amended).

It is an objective of Wicklow County Council that Wicklow, as the county town, should become a Tourism Destination Town. This objective is supported by the following plans, policies and strategies of Wicklow County Council:

- County Wicklow Tourism Strategy and Marketing Plan
- Wicklow County Development Plan 2016 – 2022
- Wicklow Town – Rathnew Development Plan 2013 – 2019
- Wicklow Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 - 2022
- Wicklow Town Public Realm Plan 2008



Figure 7: Extract from published RMP map sheet 25 showing zone of notification for Wickow Town. The Abbey is located within this notification zone.

## 5 Receiving Archaeological and Historical Environment

The information contained within this impact assessment has been compiled from various sources as detailed below and also includes a site visit with MosArt to discuss the archaeological implications of their proposed development and it was agreed that the boundary wall which was originally designed to have been removed at certain places to open up the site would remain intact.

In summary the cultural heritage constraints have been reviewed within the study area of Wicklow Town from the following sources:

- Archaeological Survey of Ireland including:
  - Register of National Monuments;
  - Record of Monuments and Places (RMP);
  - Sites and Monuments Record (SMR);
- Database of Irish Excavation Reports (<https://excavations.ie/>);
- Topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland;
- Cartographic analysis;
- The Place name Database (Logainm);
- Record of Protected Structures for Wicklow Council (WCC).

A number of cultural heritage constraints are located within the study area of the proposed development. The site of the Franciscan Friary is a Recorded Monument (WI025-012002) afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts and it is also listed as a Recorded Protected Structure WTC-RPS24 in the County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The Friary is also within the Zone of Notification for Wicklow Historic Town (RMP WI025-012----) (Figure 7).

### **5.1 National Monuments**

Under the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) and its various amendments archaeological sites in the ownership or guardianship of the state or a Local Authority and sites under preservation orders may be designated as National Monuments and offered the highest level of protection under Irish Legislation.

The site of the Abbey is in the ownership of Wicklow Parish and the proposed works will be carried out by Wicklow County Council.

### **5.2 Record of Monuments & Places and Sites & Monuments Record**

The RMP is a published list of archaeological monuments and places, generally predating AD 1700, known to the National Monuments Service of the DHLGH, which receive statutory protection.

The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) provides details of documentary sources and field inspections of recorded sites, and also contains information on potential sites which are not contained in the RMP but are identified for inclusion to the next published revision of the RMP.

A summary of RMP constraints within Wicklow Town are listed in Table 1 below <sup>1</sup> (Appendix 3).

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) Files and unpublished archaeological excavations in relation to the proposed development are available at The National Monuments Service Archive in the Irish Life Centre, Dublin 1 and all monuments were

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<sup>1</sup> Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) descriptions sourced from National Monuments Service's Historic Environment Viewer ([www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)).



checked on [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie). The recorded monuments are discussed in the historical background of this report and are summarised in Table 2 below.

The site is within the archaeological constraint zone for Wicklow Town, WI025-012. Wicklow town is of Viking origins and has evidence of settlement from the medieval period and onwards. The proposed works are within the grounds of the Franciscan Friary which is an RMP site WI025-012002 and subject to statutory protection in the Record of Monuments and Places, established under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 (Figure 7).

Reference Number	Legal Status	Townland	Monument Type	NGR
WI025-012	Recorded Monument	CORPORATION LANDS, GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED), WICKLOW, BALLYNERRIN LOWER, CORPORATION LAND (1st division)	Historic town	331487/193987
WI025-012001	Recorded Monument	CORPORATION LAND (1st division)	Castle, Motte	331269/194331
WI025-012002	Recorded Monument	WICKLOW	Franciscan friary	331264/194039
WI025-012003	Recorded Monument	GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED) (Detached portion)	Church	331331/194232
WI025-012004	Recorded Monument	WICKLOW	Graveyard	331331/194232
WI025-012005	Recorded Monument	GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED) (Detached portion)	Architectural feature	331299/194240
WI025-012006	Recorded Monument	GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED) (Detached portion)	Font (present location)	331308/194253
WI025-012008	Recorded Monument	GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED) (Detached portion)	Architectural fragment	331309/194249
WI025-012009	Recorded Monument	GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED) (Detached portion)	Headstone	331316/194240
WI025-012010	Recorded Monument	GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED) (Detached portion)	Headstone	331326/194239
WI025-012011	Recorded Monument	GLEBE (Newcastle By., Wicklow Urban ED) (Detached portion)	Headstone	331330/194223
WI025-012012	Recorded Monument	CORPORATION LANDS	Promontory fort - coastal	332244/194008
WI025-013	Recorded Monument	CORPORATION LANDS	Castle - Anglo-Norman masonry castle	332309/194042

Table 1: RMP sites in the vicinity of Wicklow Town.



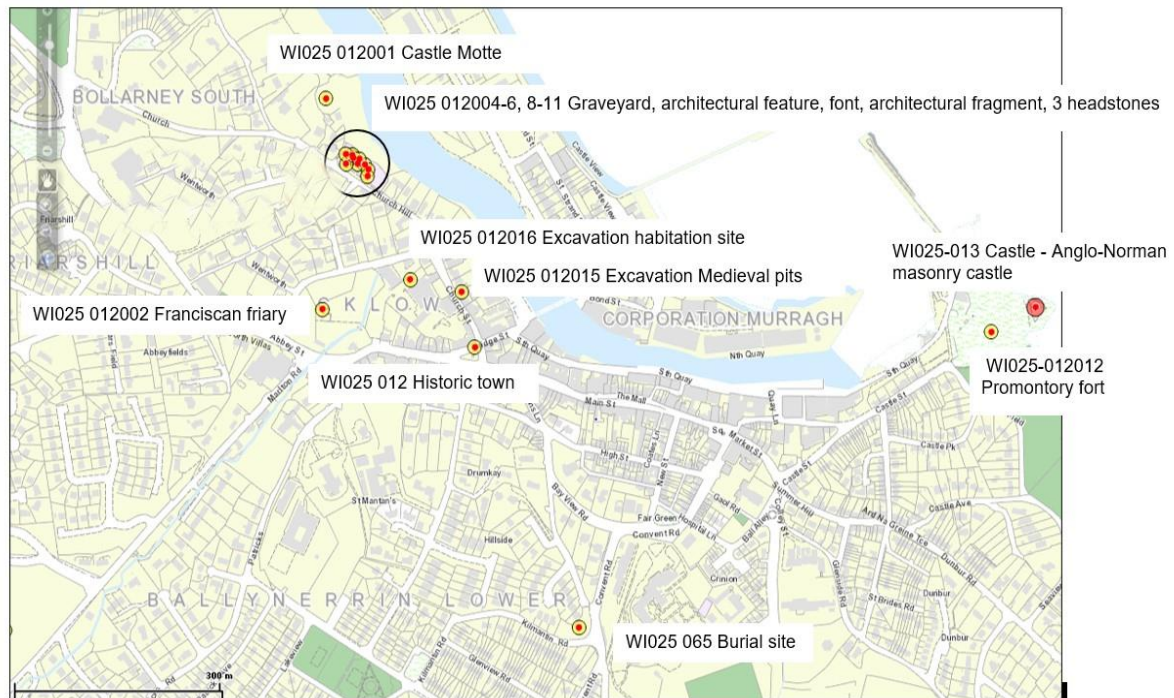


Figure 8: RMP sites in Wicklow Town.

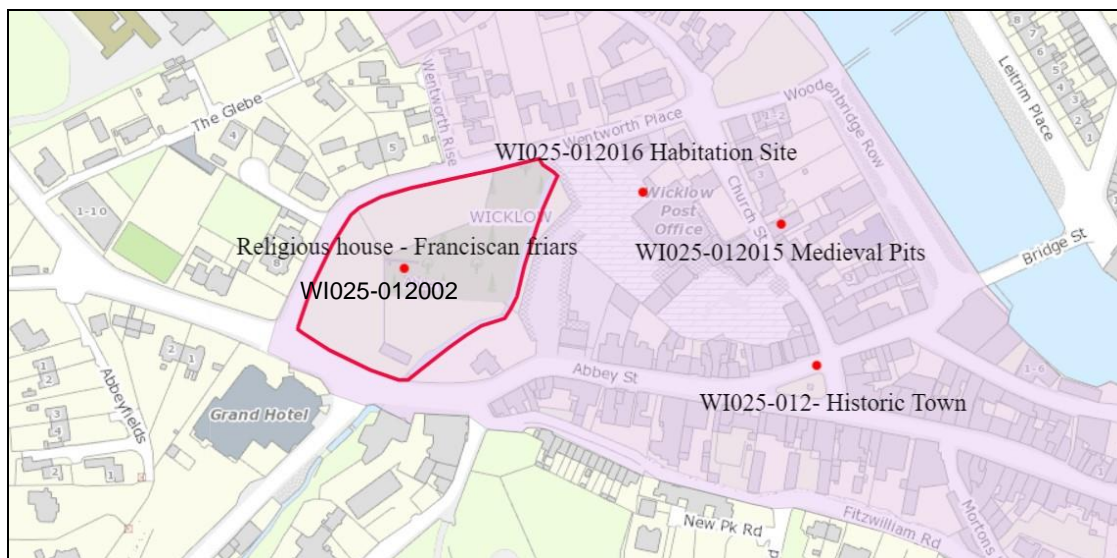


Figure 9: RMP sites and zones of notification within the vicinity of the Abbey grounds site which is outlined in red.

A total of fourteen Recorded Monuments have been identified within Wicklow Town, a further two were listed with a precise location unknown; the religious house of the Benedictine nuns (WI025-0120139) and a Hospital (WI025-012014). Nine of the Recorded Monuments are associated with the Church of Ireland graveyard (WI025-012004--). These monuments include headstones, the graveyards, a font, architectural fragments and features. These sites are discussed in the historical background section of this report.

### 5.3 Database of Irish Excavation Reports

A review of the Excavations Bulletin (1970-2007) has revealed that several excavations have been carried out on Church Hill and Wentworth Place ([www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie))<sup>2</sup>.

Four excavations were carried out on Church Hill, none of which yielded anything of archaeological significance. An excavation for the purpose of relaying a sewer pipe along the southern side of Church Hill Street, 98E0555 did not expose anything of archaeological significance. Monitoring undertaken 'The Chestnuts' Church Hill, 99E0425 did not reveal anything of archaeological significance. This site was adjacent to St Thomas's Church of Ireland parish church, which stands on the site of the medieval parish church, WI025-012003. Testing was carried out for an extension to 'Johnsville' villa 98E029 and 1 Milton Villas, Church Hill, 02E1356 both excavations did not expose anything of archaeological significance.

A series of archaeological assessments were carried out at Wentworth Place adjacent to the Abbey, two of which yielded archaeological features. A site assessment by James Eogan which included test trenches was located at the junction of Wentworth Place and Church Street, 97E0118. Archaeological features dating to the medieval period which comprised of rubbish pits and boundary ditches, some of which contained prehistoric scrapers were subsequently excavated under the same licence. Testing adjacent the above site by Una Cosgrave, 98E0431, exposed a deposit of archaeological material which lay below modern disturbance. Monitoring of foundation trenches, which did not impact on the archaeological deposit was carried out under the same licence. Excavations at 'The Cottage' Wentworth Place 00E0127, was adjacent to excavations carried out on the site of Wentworth House. The line of one of the boundary ditches from the Wentworth House excavation would have run through the site at 'The Cottage', however, no finds of features of archaeological significance were exposed (Figure 10).

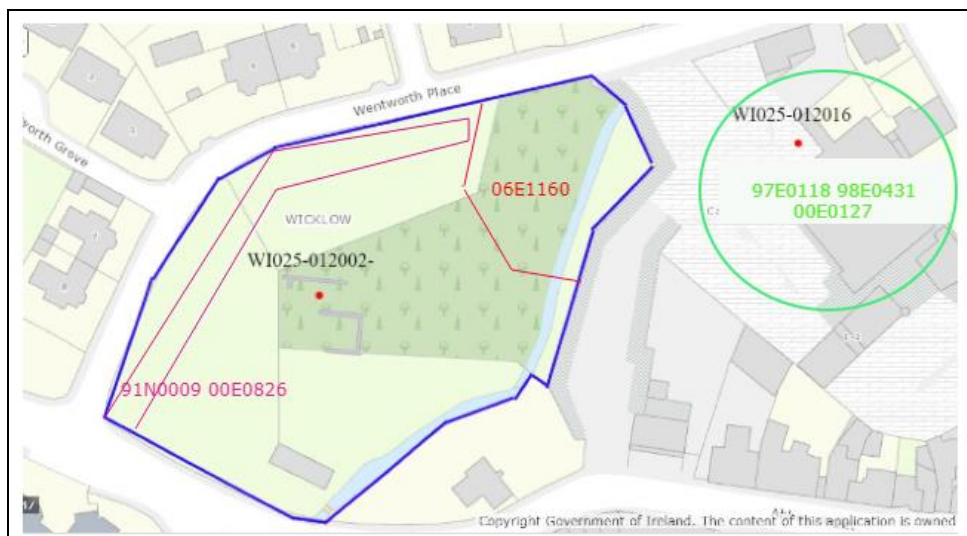


Figure 10: Excavations within the vicinity of and within the friary<sup>1</sup>. Licences; 91N0009, 00E0826 and 06E1160 (Figure 10). Testing in advance of a sewer network upgrade by Carroll which consisted of laying sections of the new culvert and sewer pipe from the shopping centre carpark entrance on Wentworth Place and into the abbey grounds involved the excavation of a drain and pit which contained post medieval pottery, slate and mortar, Licence 06E1160.

<sup>2</sup> All information on previous excavations in Wicklow Town were obtained from the website [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie)



Medieval pottery and cobbling were exposed during the monitoring of this upgrade and Three pieces of ornate masonry were found during the excavation for the gabions (stone-filled baskets) in the Ashtown Stream which originally belonged to the abbey, Licence 06E1160. They were ornate and well worked and very likely to have belonged to the abbey at some time. An isolated, truncated pit uncovered during construction of the wall on Woodenbridge Row was the only feature found during the course of the project. The pit contained pottery of early modern date, but little else that could determine its function.

In 1991 monitoring of the construction of a sewage pipe through the northern and western parts of the friary uncovered the remains of possibly part of one of the friary buildings along with sherds of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Also uncovered were culverts, gullies and red brick walls (Curran, 2018). Monitoring of the upgrade works by Tobin however failed to identify any features of archaeological significance, Licence 00E0826.

The most relevant and significant archaeological survey of the friary was however completed in 2018 which formed part of a community archaeology research project based upon a collaboration between Wicklow County Council, Wicklow Tidy Towns and UCD School of Archaeology. This excellent body of work is crucial to understanding the potential impacts of the proposed development and accompanies this impact assessment. The survey carried out sought to identify any sub-surface remains which may point to the existence of the remaining (parts of) structures and/or activities associated with the recorded monument. The survey identified a number of probable structures associated with the friary in addition to several features associated with the later (18<sup>th</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century) formal gardens as illustrated below in Figure 11.

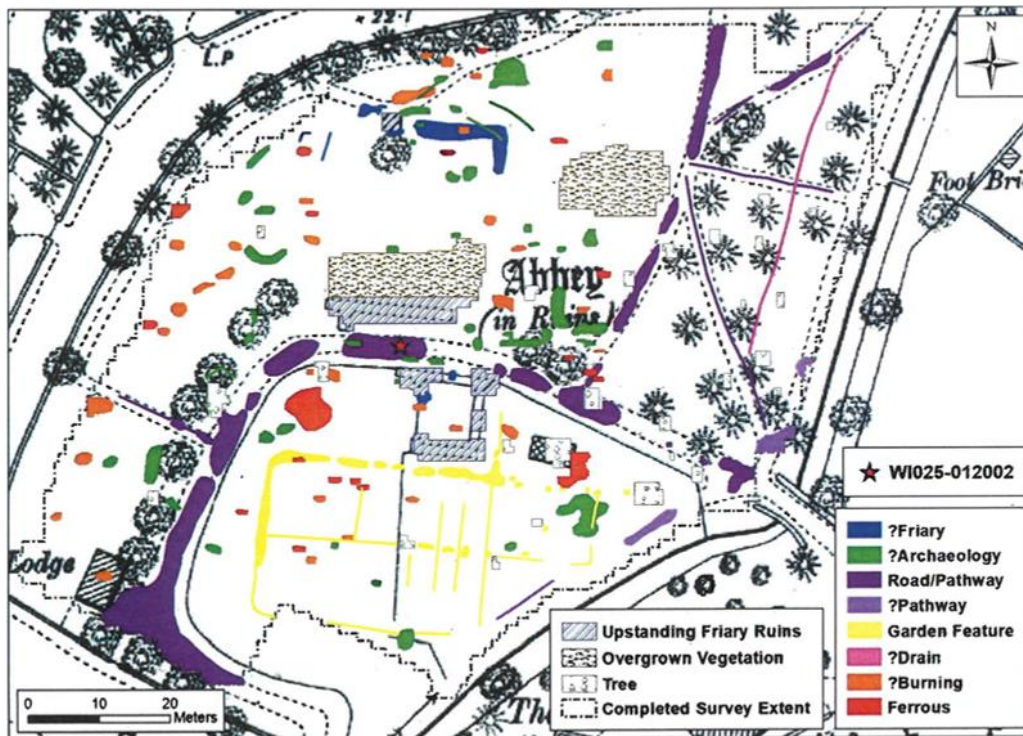


Figure 11: Extract from Figure 13 Geophysical Survey (Curran, 2018).

#### 5.4 Topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland;

The topographical files are held in the National Museum of Ireland in Kildare Street. All files relating to Wicklow town and the surrounding townlands of Ballynerrin Lower, Ballynerrin, Ballynerrin Upper, Corporation Lands, Wicklow, Hawkstown Lower, Ashtown, Ballyguile Beg and Ballyguile More were inspected to ascertain whether any artefacts had been thus far



recorded in the vicinity of the development. These files identify all recorded finds which are held in archive and have been donated to the state in accordance with national monuments legislation.

The finds are discussed in the historical background and outlined in the table below (Table 2).

County	Townland	Vicinity of	Monument	Finds	Reg. No.:
Wicklow	N/A	the Black Castle	The Black Castle	Bronze Harness Mount	M 1951:14
Wicklow	"The Murragh"	Wicklow	-	Irons Sword, (14 frags.) Viking	S.A. 1909:31
Wicklow	N/A	Wicklow Town	None. Acquired by vendor at an auction, and believed to have come from Wicklow Town district.	Stone Axe head (ground)	P.1950:26
Wicklow	Wicklow Town	At old 'sline' bridge, river Leitrim	-	Wooden spade	1946:358
Wicklow	Corporation Lands	Black Castle	Castle	Flint flake (1970:179), + Medieval Pottery (Nos. 1970: 174/178).	1970:179
Wicklow	Ballynerrin, parish Rathnew, Barony Newcastle	N. A	Cist	Cremated bones	P1952:3
Wicklow	N/A	Within two miles of Wicklow Town	-	Bronze Axe head	N/A

Table 2: Topographical Files.

### 5.5 Cartographic analysis;

Analysis of historic mapping shows the human impact on the landscape and its evolving nature over clearly defined time intervals. The following maps were consulted in relation to the proposed development site;

- Down Survey, William Petty, c.1656 Wicklow Scale of 160 perches to 1 inch;
- Extract from Jacob Neville's Map of County Wicklow from 1760;
- 1888-1913 Ordnance Survey Map of the Town of Wicklow
- Ordnance Survey Map of the Town of Co. Wicklow, sheet XXV.77 1895



Figure 12: Extract from the Down Survey, William Petty, c.1656 Wicklow Scale of 160 perches to 1 inch (downsurvey.tcd.ie).

At the time of the Down Survey Map Wicklow is depicted along with the River Leitrim and at least one church. Several other buildings are also illustrated (12). There is no obvious depiction of the Abbey.



Figure 13: Extract from Jacob Neville's Map of County Wicklow from 1760.

In 1760 Wicklow Town is depicted along with the River Leitrim, the Black Castle and three churches (Figure 13). The church-on-church hill is also depicted and appears to be the largest of all those illustrated. The Abbey appears to be depicted as does a circle which encloses a cross to the northwest of the possible friary building.

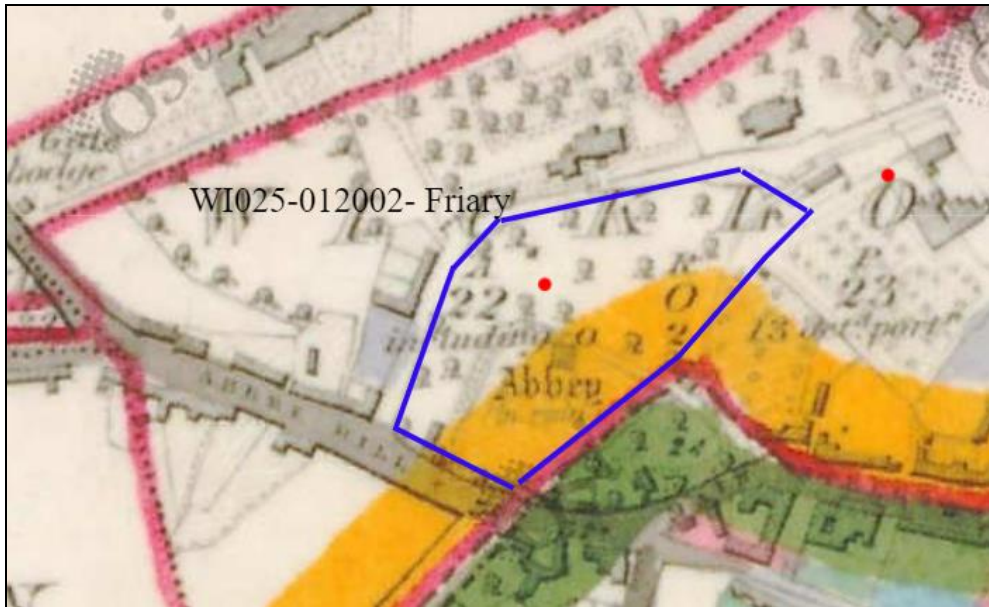


Figure 14: First edition Ordnance Survey map with site outline marked in blue c.1838 (source [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)).

At the time of the first edition map the Abbey is depicted as 'in ruins and within a landscaped park. There is a small 'L-shaped' building on at the southwest end of the site on Abbey Hill, although there is no trace of this building today. A pathway is depicted skirting around the ruins of the Abbey. The site is located in the townland of Wicklow which is situated within the Civil Parish of Rathnew and the Barony of Newcastle. The southern part of the site is also a parish and barony boundary between Rathnew and Drumkay (parish) and barony boundary between Newcastle and Arklow. These boundaries may preserve much earlier land divisions.

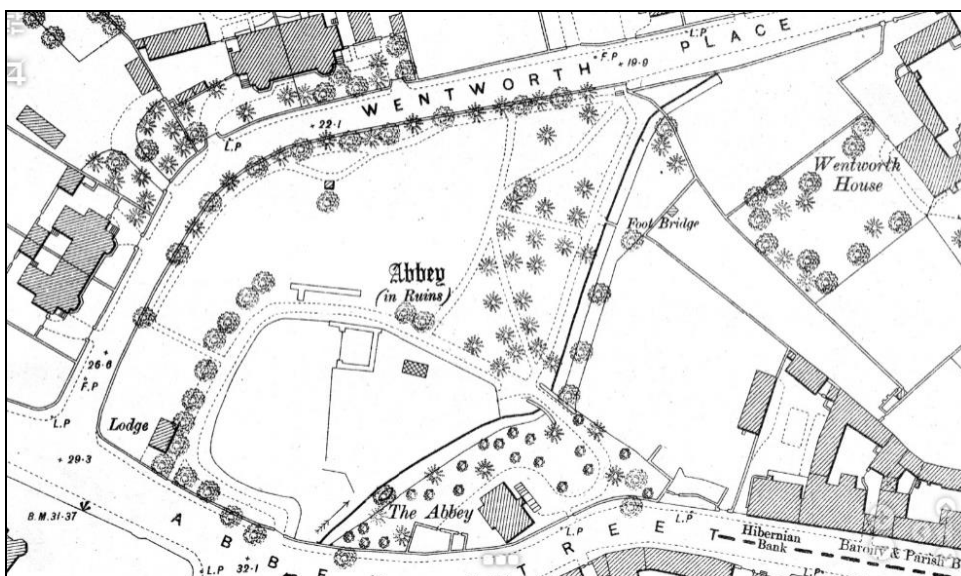


Figure 15: Ordnance Survey Map of the Town of Co. Wicklow, sheet XXV.77 1895 (source [digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:41681](http://digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:41681))



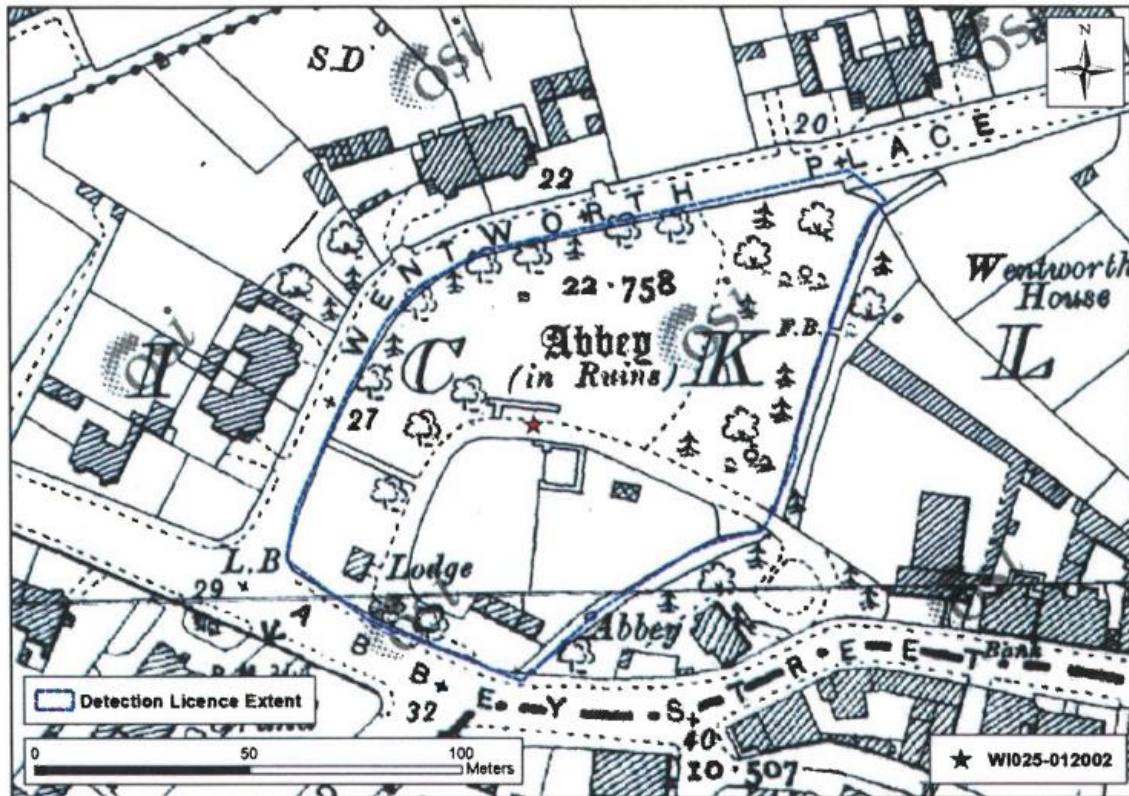


Figure 16: 1888-1913 Ordnance Survey Map of the Town of Wicklow (Curran, 2018).

A small building is positioned in the south western corner on the 1888-1913 and 1895 maps, this was not depicted on the first edition map. There is no visible trace of this building today and it is possible that the bin storage area may be located in the vicinity of this building. A second unnamed rectangular structure is depicted on the 25inch map and 6inch maps, located between the lodge and the abbey (which is now the parochial house) and oriented north west to south east, which is still visible today. The free-standing 'stump' of masonry which lies to the north of the ruins of the Abbey is depicted on all historic mapping. Gardens and pathways follow the circuit of the enclosing walls Stream in the north east quadrant of the grounds. A glasshouse structure (approx. 6m x 4m) is depicted on both the 1895 and 25inch maps - and was confirmed by a photograph taken by Robert French in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century; this structure is no longer upstanding but an area of overgrown shrubbery and briars appears to mark its original location (Curran, 2018).

### 5.6 Place name Analysis

There are a number of sources available for place name analysis, O' Donovan, Curry and O' Conor were the Ordnance Surveyors who recorded the townland names of Wicklow. Other sources used include Joyce's *Irish Local Names Explained* (1870) and the website Logainm.ie. Liam Price however provides the main source of information. *The Place-Names of County Wicklow Part VII the Baronies of Newcastle and Arklow* and also his notebooks which records antiquities, folklore and place names are an invaluable source of information (Corlett & Weaver, 2002). Other sources consulted include John Colgan's *Acta sanctorum Hibernia*, *The Lives of the Saints* by O Hanlon and the *Ancient Churches in the Deanery of Wicklow* by Ronan 1928.

Place names are an invaluable source of information as they may record a forgotten history or a long-forgotten site which may still survive below the surface of the ground. This is especially true in

Wicklow and Cill Mantáin are not the same place- although the Irish version of the name is used in modern times for Wicklow. Price notes that this place may have been a cell built by a hermit before ever the Norse came to Wicklow. the case of Wicklow town as will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The site is located in the townland of Wicklow which is situated within the Civil Parish of Rathnew and the Barony of Newcastle. The southern part of the site is also a parish and barony boundary between Rathnew and Drumkay (parish) and barony boundary between Newcastle and Arklow.

### **Cellmantan, Kilmantin, Wicklow**

Curry notes that the name Wicklow has puzzled many antiquarians and that it was not the original name for Wicklow (Corlett & Medleycott, p. 87, 2000,). It was once called Killmantan by Irish speakers but a date when it became known by this name is not certain. Curry translates it as church or '*Cell of Mantan*', which means toothless person. According to Price there is a reference to a Mantan in the Annals of Clonmacnoise which he believes is an untrue story. The Annals record that Cill Mhantáin derives its name from a man who was made toothless after he was struck in the mouth by another man who opposed St Patrick's landing in Wicklow (Price L., p. xv, 1967). He states that this is as an obvious invention to account for the name Cill Mhantáin, furthermore the eight century manuscripts associate St Patrick with Kildare, not Wicklow (ibid.).

Price notes that there is not much to be said about the history of County Wicklow until the sixth century (ibid.). Cuala which was ruled by the Ui Theig Tribe was an early name for the area which included the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains (Corlett, p. 34 1999, Price, p.vii 1967). Wicklow was known as Hostium Dee, the Mouth of the Dee in the Book of Armagh, the Annals of the Four Masters call it Inbhear Dea in 835 (Ronan, p. 141, 1928). It derived its name from the River Deadha, which flowed through the territory of a tribe called the Ui Deadha, the river is today known as the Vartry River. According to Price as discussed previously Kilmantin was on the 'other side of the Marlton river' and he notes that this may have been a cell built by a hermit before ever the Norse came to Wicklow (Price, 1945). Ronan's reference discussed below to a church Cellmantan in 1179 A.D. supports Price's theory. It is possible that the burials at Weston Close are associated with this early foundation.

Price defines Wicklow as meaning 'the water meadow of the Vikings' and between 835 A.D. and 1185 A.D. it became known as Wykinglo by the Danes and Wyklo by the English according to Cambrensis (ibid).

Logainm gives the Irish for Wicklow as Cill Mhantáin. The website also contains documentation from the archives of the Placenames Branch. It contains information in the form of scanned handwritten notes from various sources. It notes that Wicklow is a Danish name, in Irish is Cill Mantáin i.e. Mantans Church.

Joyce gives the name Wickow as Danish in origin with old forms of the name being, Wkynglo, Wygyngelo, Wykinlo. He gives the old Irish name as Kilmantan, the church of St. Mantan. He like Curry references the Annals of Clonmacnoise stating that Mantan was one of St. Patrick's disciples who had his front teeth knocked out by the blow of a stone thrown from a 'barbarian' was opposed to St. Patrick's landing. This disciple was given the name Mantan meaning toothless one.

Ronan recounts another similar but different story to Curry which Price rejects as to the origins of Kilmantan, it was a disciple of St Patrick who accompanied him on his landing at the mouth of the Vartry River. He was called Mantan as in Irish this means gapped teeth. Mantan appears to have accompanied St Patrick on his travels however was disobedient and St Patrick predicted that the church of Mantan should be humble and of moderate

dimensions (O'Hanlon & Joly, p. 83, 1821 -1905). According to Ronan two ancient writings give an account on the life of Mantan; the Viita Tripar and Jocelyn's Life.

Wicklow town has a rich archaeological heritage stretching back from early medieval times right up until the later medieval period. Evidence of early prehistoric activity in Wicklow however is scarce, and there are several explanations for this.

In *Kings, Saints and Saga*, Smyth argues that the Wicklow Mountains, especially the coastal strip stretching from Bray down to Arklow and further south was a political backwater in early Ireland. This could be explained by the poor accessibility of the area as it was cut off from the richer Irish interior by the surrounding mountain chains, it was poorly drained and very heavily forested. Its rivers ran west to east from the mountains to the sea, obstructing the path of travellers striving to move up or down the coastal hinterland (Smyth 1994). The following sections will discuss Wicklow town in terms of the archaeological periods in an attempt to illustrate the rich and varied archaeological and maritime heritage of the town

### **Prehistoric Period (7,000BC to 400AD)**

Mesolithic activity (7,000- 4000 BC) in Wicklow is primarily confined to a 4km coastal strip which extended east from Seabank near Arklow to Clommannon 5km north of Wicklow town. An explanation for this could be that the majority of this activity would have taken place in the coastal areas which are now submersed by and washed away by the sea through erosion (Stout 1994, p.4; Corlett 1999, p.11).

Coastal locations were important for Mesolithic communities and boats would have been an essential means of travel for them. There is very little evidence for boats from this period from Ireland however many dug out boats have been uncovered in Europe (Brady, 2008). In more recent years Mesolithic fish traps have been uncovered in Dublin's Docklands and represent a more sophisticated method of fishing that was previously thought and may have been a common sight in Mesolithic Ireland around bays and river estuaries during this era (ibid.).

One kilometre southeast of Wicklow Harbour there is evidence of later Mesolithic activity from a cave at St Bride's Head which was discovered by Charles Martin in 1932, WI025-039. The cave floor contained broken flints and flint pebbles (Stout 1994). Mitchell spurred on by the findings in 1932 revisited the coast around Wicklow and found Mesolithic tools on the coast just south of Wicklow town and also at Brittas Bay just north of Arklow. At the latter location he found a large scatter of flint debris near a stream which included scrapers, blades and rough outs (ibid 5).

The earliest evidence for settlement and movement through the west Wicklow mountains dates to the Neolithic period (c.4000-2500 BC), the period of the first farming communities in Ireland. Neolithic passage tombs, burial places of the ancestors and ritual markers of prehistoric territories are found along the western edges of the Wicklow Mountains and on particular summits and hills. Today passage tombs are visible as distinctive cairns (Grogan & Kilfeather 1997, p.3). A stone axe head which would date to this era was found in Wicklow Town (NMI Ref: P 1950:26). These axes would have been used in the construction of dug - out canoes and perhaps more robust sea going vessels which would have exported porcellanite stone axes from Antrim as far as England (Brady, 2008, p.17).

It is in the Bronze Age (2500 – 600 BC) that more substantial settlement patterns emerged. Newly discovered archaeological sites, uncovered as a result of the construction of the N11 Rathnew to Arklow road scheme uncovered sixty-six sites, the majority of which were burnt mound sites. They are typically located near a stream or in marshy ground and comprise a crescent-shaped mound made up of small pieces of shattered stone (Stout 1994). The excavations of the church and burial site at Drumkay northwest of the town uncovered evidence for earlier occupation which centred on a circular hut site at the southeast corner of



the burial site and enclosing ditches. Flint artefacts dated this site to the Bronze Age (O'Donovan, 2006).

In the Early Bronze Age, the dead were placed in cist burials comprised of a usually rectangular structure either constructed either below surface in a pit form or above the surface. The edges were lined with stone slabs covered by one or more capstones, often the dead were accompanied by grave goods such as pottery vessels.

An example of a cist burial of an Early Bronze Age date can be seen in Ballynerrin, WI025-014. The cist was aligned east-west on a gentle south facing slope of a low flat-topped hillock.

Cremation pits another burial style from this era generally date from c. 2400-500 B.C. and comprise of a pit containing the cremated remains of an individual occasionally accompanied by grave goods. A single cremation pit was excavated by the author in 2013 in the townland of Knockrobin approximately 1.5km northwest of Wicklow Town. The excavation of the church and burial site at Drumkay, prior to the excavation of the Port Road uncovered evidence for earlier occupation which centred on a circular hut site. Flint artefacts dated this site to the Bronze Age.

There is evidence during the Bronze Age of increased contact with Europe and this would have been enabled through the new tools and technology which enabled more robust boats to be built. The earliest evidence outside Ireland is boats that were plank built and were sewn together (Brady, 2008). The tradition of dug out boats did however continue in Ireland and a fine example is the Lurgan boat which was hollowed out from an oak tree. Wicklow was linked with the Isle of man, Pembrokeshire, Cornwall and Argyll (ibid. p19). Wicklow gold and Avoca copper would have made Wicklow an important town during this era.

### **Early Medieval Period (500- 1150 A.D.)**

The medieval period in Ireland began around 500 A.D. This was a time of massive social change with the arrival of Christianity the new and soon to be dominant religion and the development of new political dynasties. At the Iron Age/ early medieval transition Ireland was made up of up to 150 tuatha or tribal units/ petty ruled over by a chief or king. In turn these tribal units formed part of larger territorial units ruled over by over Kings.

In the sixth/seventh century Wicklow was ruled by the Dál Messin Corb a leading Leinster dynasty of whom St Kevin of Glendalough was a member. This tribe was later taken over by the Uí Mail who rose to power as the Kings of Leinster having killed Maelodran, a legendary hero of the Dál Messin Corb tribe (Smyth 1994, p.48, Corlett 1999, p.35).

Little is known about the early history of the Irish church. By the first half of the 5th century A.D. there was a significant Christian community living in Ireland. In the year 431 A.D the bishop Palladius was sent by Pope Celestine to the "Christians in Ireland" (Edwards, p.99, 1990, Charles-Edwards p.182, 2000). The late fifth century saw the beginnings of extensive missionary activity in Ireland. St Patrick is the best known of the early missionaries.

Archaeological evidence for early medieval Christianity includes cemeteries, hermitages, and pastoral church sites along with large and small monasteries. Burial in Irish monastic cemeteries was reserved for higher ranking members in society up until the 8th century. Prior to this the general population were buried in what has been termed familial burial grounds which would have contained both pagan and Christian burials. By the early 8th century, the church began to legislate with regard to acceptable burial practices for Christians. As monastic centres became more predominant the use of familial cemeteries discontinued as the Church encouraged communities to bury their dead in consecrated ground.

There is significant evidence for early medieval Christianity in Wicklow Town and in 2013 the author completed an assessment for a site at Weston Close which may be Cellmantan, first

noted in 1179 A.D. A total of ten burials were identified in the southeast corner of a roughly 'D' shaped enclosure on the ridge of a natural hill.

A previous assessment in 1990 by Scally at Weston Close uncovered Leinster Cooking ware, which broadly dates from the mid-12th to the 14th centuries. A decorated medieval tile of 16th century date was also uncovered. This indicates that the site may have been in use over a period of time.

Other evidence for early medieval activity in the environs is at the Church site of Drumkay in Glebe townland, WI025-011001 which is approximately 1.5km northwest of Wicklow town. The excavations in advance of the Wicklow Post Access Road uncovered a church and cemetery site which contained 191 burials all enclosed within a series of ditches, the burials which dated to three phases date from 600-1100 A.D up until 1600 A.D. The earliest burial pre dated the church, the foundations of which were also exposed during the excavations. This ecclesiastical site is thought be associated with a St Bercham (O Donovan E., p.9, 2006).

The townland boundary between Glebe and Knockrobin was excavated by the author in 2013. The bulk of the features exposed during the excavation in 2013 were related to medieval industrious activity, for example four kilns and associated features were excavated and recorded. It is not uncommon for this type of activity to be located at the periphery of medieval graveyards and ecclesiastical sites.

Across the road from the school is the protestant parish church which is said to be of seventeenth century in date. It is a single aisled building with a west tower. There are several medieval architectural fragments in this church; a romanesque doorway of uncertain provenance however Corlett suggests it may have come from an earlier church that may be located within the graveyard of the present church (RMP Files). The remains of a fifteenth century church were noted during gravedigging at the north side of the graveyard according to the RMP files. There are a number of 17<sup>th</sup> century headstones in this graveyard.

There is certainly a great deal of early medieval activity in Wicklow Town and during this period easy access to the Irish Sea would have been increased maritime activity. There are many historical references to the boats used by the saints to convert the pagan Irish and boats are depicted on the high crosses. They appear to represent the Scandinavian style longboats (Brady, 2008, p.26)

### **Later Medieval Period (1150-1700 A.D.)**

From 795 A.D. the Norse raiders or Vikings began raiding the east coast of Ireland and founded their first base at Dublin. From there they plundered the countryside especially targeting the monasteries which held great wealth. The invaders secured rivers by establishing bases at its mouths and from there they could penetrate inland (Flynn p. 14, 2003).

Etchingham notes that the beginnings of Viking activity in Wicklow by 827 A.D. are quiet well documented (p.113, 1994). The name, Wicklow as has been discussed above derives from the Scandinavian either Vikingalo, 'meadow of the Vikings' or Vik-lo 'meadow of the bay, (Grogan and Kilfeather, p.177, 1994). Price defines Wicklow as meaning 'the water meadow of the Vikings' and between 835 A.D. and 1185 A.D. it became known as Wykinglo by the Danes and Wyklo by the English according to Cambrensis (ibid).

The first hint of a permanent Viking settlement in Ireland was at 'Inber Dea' somewhere in Wicklow which was identified in the Annals. It was from this location that the pagans attacked Kildare. Raids undertaken by the Inber Dee Norsemen referenced in the annals include a raid on Glendalough in 834 A.D., Ferns in 835 A.D., Glendalough again in 836 A.D. and Ferns again in 839 A.D. There was also an attack on Clonmore in 835 A.D. and in 836 A.D. on Christmas Eve, which indicates that the Norsemen must have overwintered in Wicklow. By 836 A.D. the Norsemen had established themselves on the Wicklow coast line.

The locations suggested are Wicklow, Bray and Arklow, however the latter is the preferred location for this settlement.

Two finds from the vicinity of Wicklow Town are indicators of settlement, iron sword fragments from the low-lying coastal area, The Murrough in the north of Wicklow Town (Reg S.A 1909:31) and a pair of brooches and silver chain (NMI Ref: 1901:50-52) from Threemilewater near Arklow. Both finds were made in the late 19th century so the find spots are not exact. The sword belongs to a group of highly decorated swords probably manufactured in southern Scandinavia in 9th century (NMI Topographical Files). Whilst only fragments of the sword have survived it is possible that this sword may have been deliberately bent or broken as part of the burial practice as was the case at Kilmainham and Islandbridge (Etchingham, 1994).

The pair of brooches and silver chain was handed into the museum after passing through two or three hands and was supposedly found between Threemilewater and Arklow. The brooches are a well-known Scandinavian tortoise brooch, Norwegian type 51 as classified by Jan Petersen and date to late 9th or early 10th century (O Floinn, Topographical Files NMI). They are believed to constitute part of the grave goods of a female of Scandinavian birth and are indicative of settlement.

A further indication of settlement in Wicklow Town is the Round Mount (WI025-012001). This steep sided mound is situated on high overlooking the Leirim River at the north end of Wicklow town. This steep-sided mound 6-7m in height has been dug into at its southeast side and is very overgrown with trees and briars (Grogan and Kilfeather, p.177). This site appears to be the site of the 'castellum' which was granted to Strongbow by Henry II in 1173 (Grogan and Kilfeather 177, Etchingham p.118). This may indicate that there was a pre-Norman settlement at the site. Price believes that this mound represents a Scandinavian assembly mound (Etchingham, p.118).

Glendalough during this era was one of the most important monasteries in Ireland and possessed great wealth and was surrounded by great deciduous forests which provided fuel and timber for the Vikings houses and ships. The Vikings were skilled sea farers and their ships were light, fast and clinker built. Excavations in Dublin, Waterford and Wexford along with art work representations have given a good understanding of their ships (Brady, 2008). The Skuldelev 2 which was deliberately sunk in a fjord in Denmark appears to have been built in either Wicklow or Dublin in 1042 (ibid.). The Sea Stallion of Glendalough longship is a replica of the Skuldelev 2 which was built in 1042 and it was sailed from Roskilde to Dublin in 2007 in order to experience how swiftly and far the Vikings could travel in their ships.

By the end of the twelfth century the Vikings were met with a new political and social force as the Anglo Normans invaded Ireland. The Anglo-Norman invasion was the result of a vendetta between Dermot and Tiarnán O'Ruairc of Bréifne. In 1152 A.D. Mac Murrough abducted O'Ruairc's wife and held her hostage for a year. O'Ruairc formed alliances with Mac Murroughs enemies and in 1166 A.D. banished him from Ferns. As a result of this Mac Murrough who realized his lands were in danger requested Henry II's help in reclaiming his lands. Mac Murrough travelled through England and Wales gathering forces including Strongbow who pledged his assistance on a number of conditions; that he would be King of Leinster when Mac Murrough died and that he could have Aoife, Mac Murroughs daughter.

The invasion began in 1167 A.D. when a small troop of Anglo-Norman forces along with Mac Morough landed in Bannow Bay. In 1169 A.D. further troops arrived and they set out to take Dublin. The High King Ruairi O'Conchúir did not anticipate the route Mac Murrough would take through the mountains and the Anglo Normans took Dublin within a few days. Henry II granted most of the land in Leinster to Strongbow but retained a narrow strip from Wicklow to Arklow himself.

In the initial decades after the Norman invasion in 1169 A.D., a distinctive type of earth and timber fortification - the motte and bailey - was built. The more substantial stone castles



followed in the 13th and 14th centuries. Less elaborate tower houses, the fortified residence of the aristocracy (both old Norman and Gaelic), were erected in the 15th to early 17th centuries A.D. The Anglo-Normans were an important influence in the creation of an urban network in medieval Ireland.

Anglo-Norman activity in the environs of Wicklow town is represented by Black Castle which is just south of Wicklow Harbour on a rocky promontory. It is separated from the land at its west by a deep rock cut fosse and the sea on all other sides. Today only the foundations survive along with its south wall (Grogan and Kilfeather 1994, p.181). Black Castle was probably built in the 13th century as part of a coastal defence which stretched from Bray to Arklow (Simpson 1994, p.213). In 1229 the castle was in Geraldine hands but by 1339 it was held by a royal constable with a garrison of soldiers.

The earliest wreck recorded in this study area relates to an attack on the Black Castle in 1355 where a boat which was laden with many foot soldiers and archers sunk after a strong wind blew it onto the rocks below the Black Castle. The attack was led by Thomas Talbot, Lord of Malahide on his Irish enemies which were encamped near the Black Castle (Brady, 2008).

The O'Byrne's seized the castle in 1370 and it was rebuilt by a William Fitzwilliam with the addition of three towers, two of which were over 30ft high. By the end of the 15th century the castle is recorded as being in disrepair (ibid 214). A bronze harness mount from Black Castle is recorded in the National Museums Topographical Files (Reg M1951:14).

The twelfth century also saw the introduction of continental monastic orders with the Anglo-Norman lords setting up religious centres in their new lands (Grogan and Kilfeather 1994, 147). Wicklow had become a place of importance during this era as evidenced by the building of a new church and Franciscan Friary. The new church was built under the patronage of the Fitzgerald's, presumably the present-day Church of Ireland Church on Church Hill (Ronan, p.143, 1928).

The elaborately carved door arch which is compared to a similar one at St Saviour's Church in Glendalough (Leask, p., 160-161, 1955-1960). This arch which dates to the 12th century coupled with the limestone font may indicate that the present church stands on the site of an earlier church of which these were features.

The Franciscan Friary was also built in Wicklow during this era by the O'Toole's and the O'Byrne's in 1279 A. D, in gratitude for a victory gained over the Fitzgerald's (Ronan, p.134, 1928). The Friary is first referred to in 1325. The north wall of the nave (h c.6m) and parts of the southern transept of is all that survives today, it is constructed of uncoursed slaty limestone (Plates 1 and 2). The S wall of the transept has a round-headed three-light window, with traces of sandstone jambs. The nave has a large inserted arch, and the only original feature is part of a window splay at the E end.<sup>3</sup>

There are only a handful of references to activity at the site in the subsequent centuries, such as the fire of AD 1301 which damaged the friary as well as the Black Castle (Finlay 2013, 34).

There is a reference to a Benedictine Convent (RMP WI025-012013) having existed in Wicklow Town from 1448 to 1470 A.D. and also the existence of a leper hospital 1578 A.D. (RMP WI025-012014) (Emerald, p. 10, 1998-1999).

The Anglo Normans also brought new ships to Ireland in the form of galleys, cogs, hulks, and barges. Wooden and stone quay fronts facilitated the expansion of ports, however there has not been a complete vessel found from this era to date. The ships were used to transport goods and the cog and hulk type were important merchant vessels in that they

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<sup>3</sup> Sites and Monuments Record ([www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)).

could also be used as war ships (Brady, 2008, p.31). Fish was the most important export during this era and brought significant taxes to the Anglo Normans who established Castles at major ports in the country including Black Castle in Wicklow discussed above (ibid. p. 32).

By the 14th century A.D. England was engaged in wars with France and Scotland and its resources were heavily stretched. As a result, King Edward II withdrew most of his army from Wicklow. The Norman settlers were attacked frequently and withdrew into the Pale for protection (Stout, 1998).

In 1534 the suppression of the monasteries was enacted by Henry VIII and the allegiance of the Irish clans was sought through Henry's 'surrender and regrant' policy (Emerald, 1998-1999, p. 7). In 1541 Henry was declared King of Ireland and various clans including the O'Byrne Clan submitted to his rule. The plan was that Wicklow would be shired, however this did not materialise for many years.

The friary and its lands were seized in AD1552 as part of the suppression of the monasteries. The following paragraph is an extract from the geophysical survey report completed and which provides a detailed history of the site:

*'At the time it was seized, its lands consisted of 9 acres of arable land and 1 acre of meadow (Archdall 1786, 778; Clarke 1943, 11), possibly including the area known as 'Friar's Hilt' (Clarke 1943, 13) which is situated to the west of the friary site, and potentially extending into the 'Glebe' townland which adjoins it. The land was then leased to various tenants (loyal to the Crown) who used it for various secular purposes, for example as an arsenal during the Rebellion of AD 1641 (Finlay 2013, 35), and as a courthouse and a gaol during the 17<sup>th</sup> and possibly early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (ibid). It is unclear whether the original structures or buildings were used and/or were modified in any way, although the red brick building remains and wall foundations uncovered during the 1991 excavations (see below), would suggest that additional structures were present around this time.*

*The friary and grounds finally returned to the ownership of the clergy in AD 1799 when they were granted to Fr. Andrew OToole by the Earl Fitzwilliam (Finlay 2013, 112-115). The last secular tenant was a Catherine Eaton (death recorded in 1795) who resided in a house on the site of what is now the parochial house - the original house was destroyed by fire in AD 1799 (Finlay 2013, 114). Catherine Eaton was the last of the Eaton family, and no doubt a relation of the Mrs. Eaton who strove to maintain the friary ruins and gardens (Archdall 1786, 778). The gardens were defined as a 'pleasure garden' by Beranger and Barralet during their 1780 sketching tour, describing it as being "laid out in walks, lawns and flower beds" (Harbison 2004, 185); although images of the site around this time do not depict the formal gardens (Plates 7 & 8). Wright (1822, 61) describes the grounds as a "gentleman's garden", also attributing their maintenance to Mrs Eaton. However, late 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs (Plates 9 & 10) of the site depict well-planted, formal gardens, complete with pathways which seem to corroborate the 1895 mapping (and the geophysical survey results) (Curran, 2018).*

Wicklow Town was believed to have come to prominence again in the late 16th and early 17th centuries A.D. (Bradley and King, p.68, 1989). Earthwork ramparts are recorded as being constructed around Wicklow in 1576 (ibid p.94).

In 1606 A.D. Wicklow was eventually created a county. Coinciding with the shiring of the county the Church of Ireland sought to extend its control over the county and a general visitation of Ireland was commissioned to report on the state of the Protestant Established churches. Richard Bermingham was the vicar of Wicklow and the church was noted as in good or 'bene' condition (Emerald, p. 18, 1998-1999).

A further visitation by Archbishop Bulkeley's in 1630 A.D. showed that there was still strife in Wicklow and that the Protestant Established churches were failing to get a firm foothold in the county. The protestant church in Wicklow which was previously in good condition was now covered but, not decent, within. There was also the record that Balthazar Fox, the vicar

there had been robbed of parcels of land, called by the name of Maudlin which were seized by a James Byrne of Ballynerrin. Drumkay was in ruins and only the family of the rector Thomas Redmond attended services there.

By AD 1640 A.D. Catholics owned less than half the land in the county through a policy of plantation. The 1641 A.D. rebellion broke out in Ulster and in Wicklow the O Byrnes and 'the whole Roman Catholic population rise up in multitudes and rob and spoil the Protestants, (Emerald, p. 21, 1998-1999). Luke O'Toole placed Wicklow Castle under siege. It is held in local folklore that on November 29th 1641 A.D. while assembled in a church near the fair green of Wicklow the parish priest, Fr Byrne and his congregation of 300 were massacred by Sir Charles Coote in retaliation for Luke O' Tooles attack (ibid.). This author did not find a specific reference to this massacre at the time of writing this report.

In 1649 A.D. Cromwell arrived in Ireland with an ultimatum; 'to hell or to Connaught' as Irish landlord's lands were transferred into protestant ownership. In 1653 A.D. an act was passed in the English parliament which confiscated all land in Ireland (Flynn, p.35, 2003). A series of economic legislative acts also damaged Ireland's port towns by placing restrictions on importation and exportation of goods (Brady, 2008, p.38).

### **Modern Era**

The Elizabethan era brought with its intensified land acquisition with the "Surrender and Regrant" strategy constructed to induce Irish leaders to put their land under the protection of the crown. The Irish leaders in turn would personally own their land and be able to will to whom they liked. This was a contrast to the traditional Irish clan system in which the clan and not an individual owned the land and the chief was a mere administrator of the land during his lifetime. The "Surrender and Regrant" system however, also allowed the crown to recall land ownership and grant the land to "undertakers" who were suitable English people of the new faith.

The build-up of increasing occupation, discrimination and political instability eventually lead to the Irish rebellion of 1798 which was one of the most tragic and violent events in the history of Ireland. After years of disagreements and sporadic violence the rebellion broke out. In neighbouring Wexford, the rebels mustered larger forces and won several important victories including at the Hill of Oulart, Ferns and Enniscorthy.

The rebellion in Wicklow never escalated to a similar level as what happened in Wexford. Explanations to this could be the occurrence of massive arrests that took place before the rising and there was also a lack of important early day victories for the Wicklow rebels. Wicklow men however did gather in large numbers at Blackmore Hill and around Newtownmountkennedy but it could be argued that the failure of the United Irishmen was not to gather in force in the south of the county, across the border from the insurgent Wexford (Cullen 1994, p.491).

One of the heroes of the 1798 Rebellion - Billy Byrne of Ballymanus - is reputed to have been buried on the friary grounds following his execution in 1799, which may also have taken place on the grounds (Curran, 2018).

Other developments in Wicklow during this era relate to maritime activity. Shipbuilding flourished during this era however and there were in 1788 1,034 vessels registered in Ireland (Brady, 2008, p.41). This era also saw the building of the lighthouse in order to make shipping safer. Admiralty charts were also published in 1776 by Mackensie which again improved the life of sea farers.

By the mid-18th century there were large volumes of ships on the Irish Sea and shipwrecks were a common occurrence. Between 1852 and 1856, 384 vessels were lost at sea (Brady, 2008, p.45-46). The wreck that was in the harbour is known locally as the Sarah and all that remains of this wreck is the ballast which is visible at low tide. Another monument from this era is the Capstan which is still extant today. It was constructed by the Tyrell's of Arklow for



£5 and was used to haul ships into the river against the tidal flow prior to the construction of the harbour.

The East Pier was the first phase in the development of the harbour in the early 1880s. This is where the lighthouse is now located. It was at the time the largest mass concrete construction in Europe. This was quickly followed by the construction of the Packet Pier in 1886 that allowed larger ships to berth in the harbour. The North Pier was built in 1908 and meant that Wicklow had a proper harbour of refuge, capable of berthing large vessels in all tides and weather.

### 5.7 *Record of Protected Structures for Wicklow Council (WCC).*

Comprehensive and systematic legislative provisions for the protection of the architectural, archaeological and natural heritage were introduced by the government with the implementation of the Planning & Development Act in 2000, which has been amended in various points since. The 2000 Act set out the development plan as the basic policy document of the planning authority in which the overall strategy and specific objectives for sustainable development and proper planning within an area are set out. The legislation requires that each planning authority renew its development plan every six years. The planning authority have an obligation to create a record of protected structures (RPS) which lists structures of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. This record forms part of the planning authority's development plan. In addition, the National Monuments Acts (1930-2014) protects monuments of archaeological, historical or architectural interest creating an overlap with the 2000 Act in the protection of structures of special interest. The Abbey is a Recorded Monument afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts and it is also listed as a Recorded Protected Structure WTC-RPS24 in the County Development Plan 2021-2027.


W24	The Abbey, Abbey Street, Wicklow Town	Remains of Abbey	Preserved remains of sections of ruined Franciscan friary including thirteenth century window and fifteenth century tower.	
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Plate 8: Extract from Wicklow County Council Development Plan-Appendix 4 Record of Protected Structures 2021-2027.

## 6 Impact Assessment

### 6.1 *Receiving Archaeological Environment*

The geophysical investigations at Wicklow Abbey have succeeded in highlighting multiple phases of activity that the friary grounds have witnessed over almost eight centuries of (known) use. In conjunction with evidence from the excavations within the site, the geophysical survey has been particularly successful in revealing details about potential archaeology which may survive and also the 18th/19th century extensive landscaped gardens (Figure 19). There will be no direct impact on any upstanding masonry however there is huge potential for sub surface archaeology to survive including, buildings associated with the friary, gullies, masonry, stone foundations, burials and structures related to the site when in use as an arsenal during the 1641 Rebellion and as a courthouse and gaol during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

There is also potential for burials to be encountered during the course of ground works associated with the development. There is a record that one of the heroes of the 1798 Rebellion - Billy Byrne of Ballymanus - is reputed to have been buried on the friary grounds

following his execution in 1799, (Curran, 2018). There were numerous red brick building remains and wall foundations uncovered during the 1991 excavations associated with the sewage pipeline which skirted the west and north of the interior of the friary and would suggest that additional structures were present when the friary was in use in the between the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

There have been three excavations which uncovered archaeological features within the grounds of the friary all associated with sewerage upgrade works<sup>4</sup>. The sewer pipe runs along the western length of the friary and turns northeast through to the SuperValu carpark (Figure 12). A corridor of approx. 15m in width was stripped of topsoil and driven on by machinery in advance of the sewage works and so it is likely that this has had a significant impact on the geophysical survey which has highlighted that the area is disturbed as is labelled M1 on Figure 17 below. There are however potential archaeological features in the pipeline corridor.

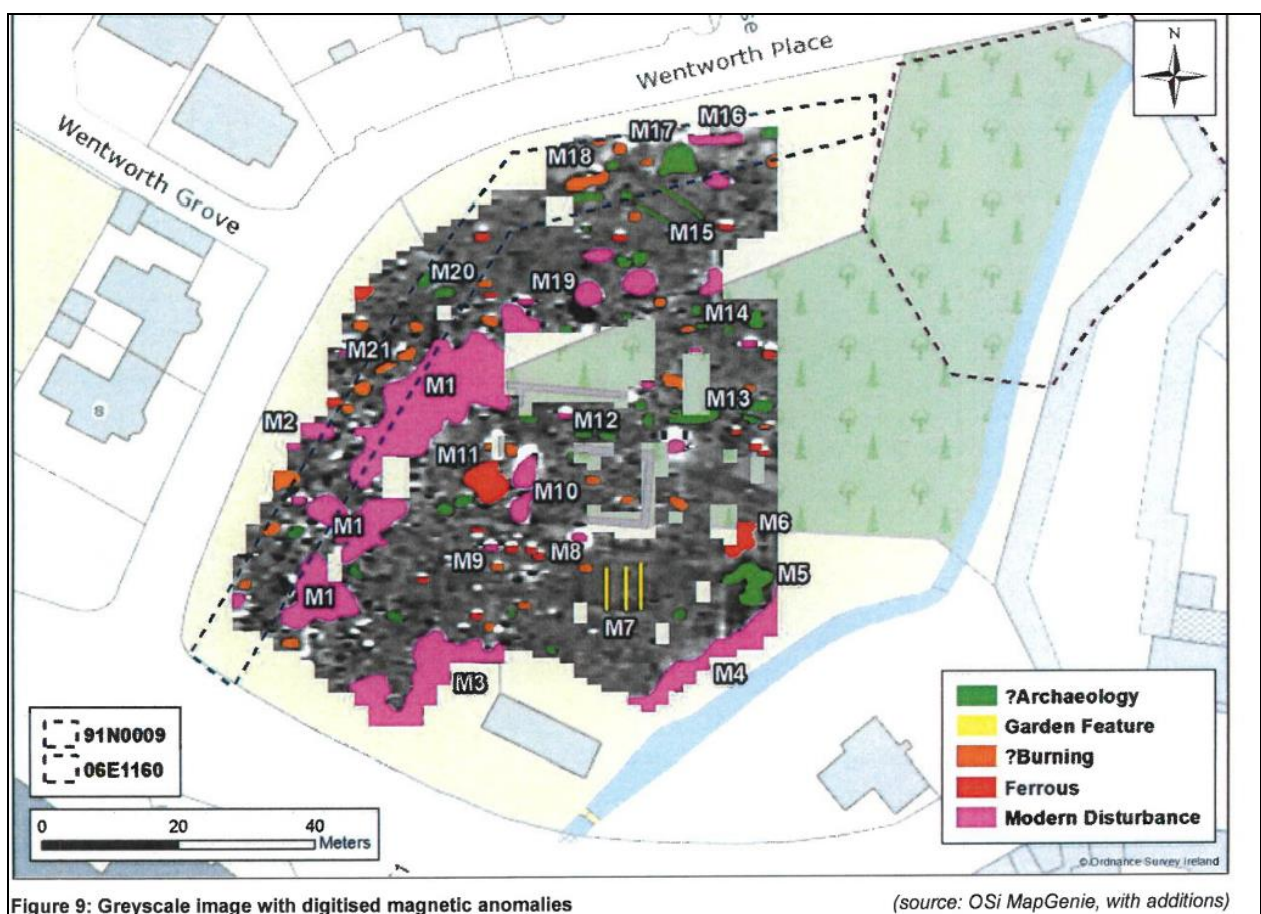


Figure 17: Extract from geophysical survey report Figure 9, and sewage pipeline works highlighted by dashed lines Licences 91N0009 and 06E1160 (Curran, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Licences; 91N0009, 00E0826 and 06E1160

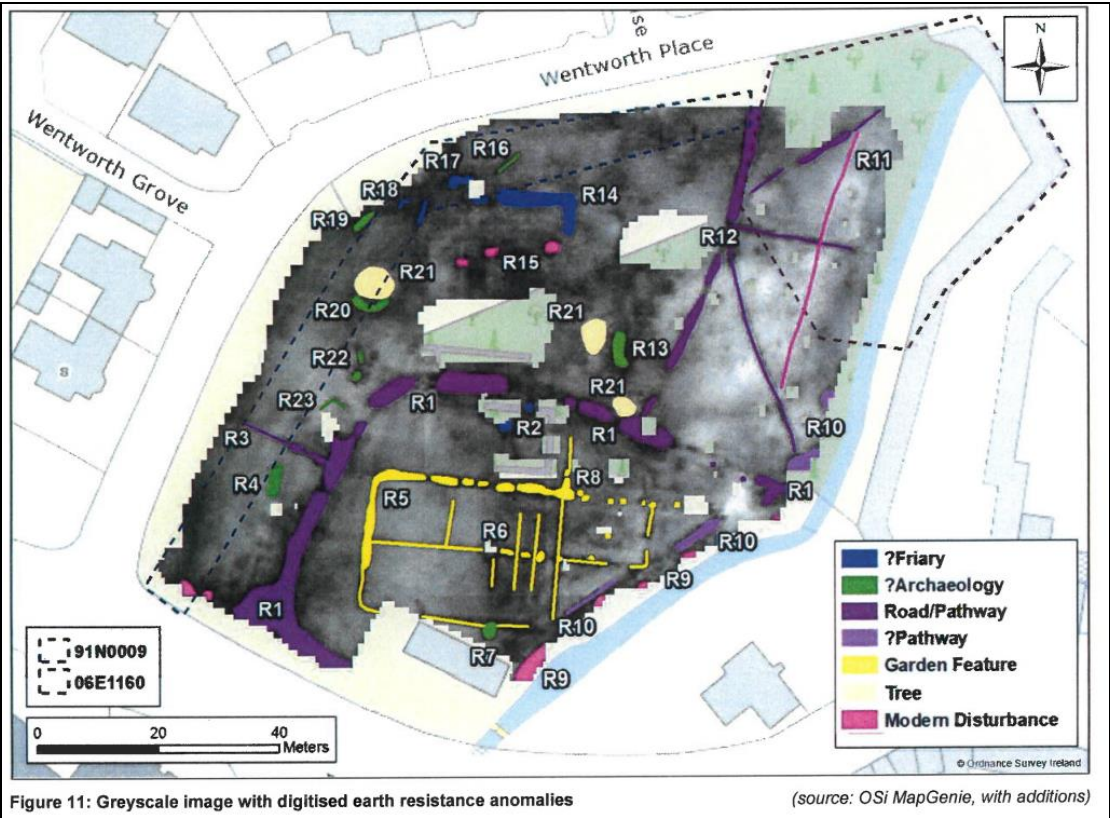


Figure 18: Potential archaeological features and sewage pipeline works highlighted by dashed lines Licences 91N0009 and 06E1160 (Curran, 2018).

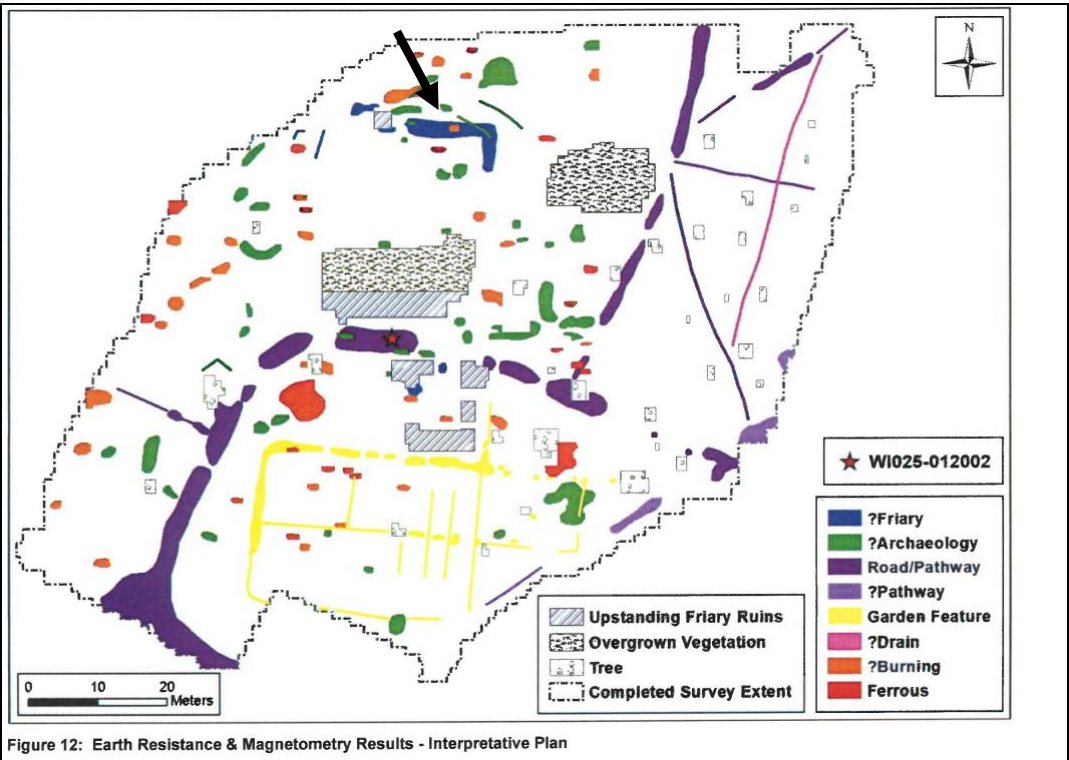


Figure 19: Interpretative Plan of potential archaeological features (Curran, 2018).



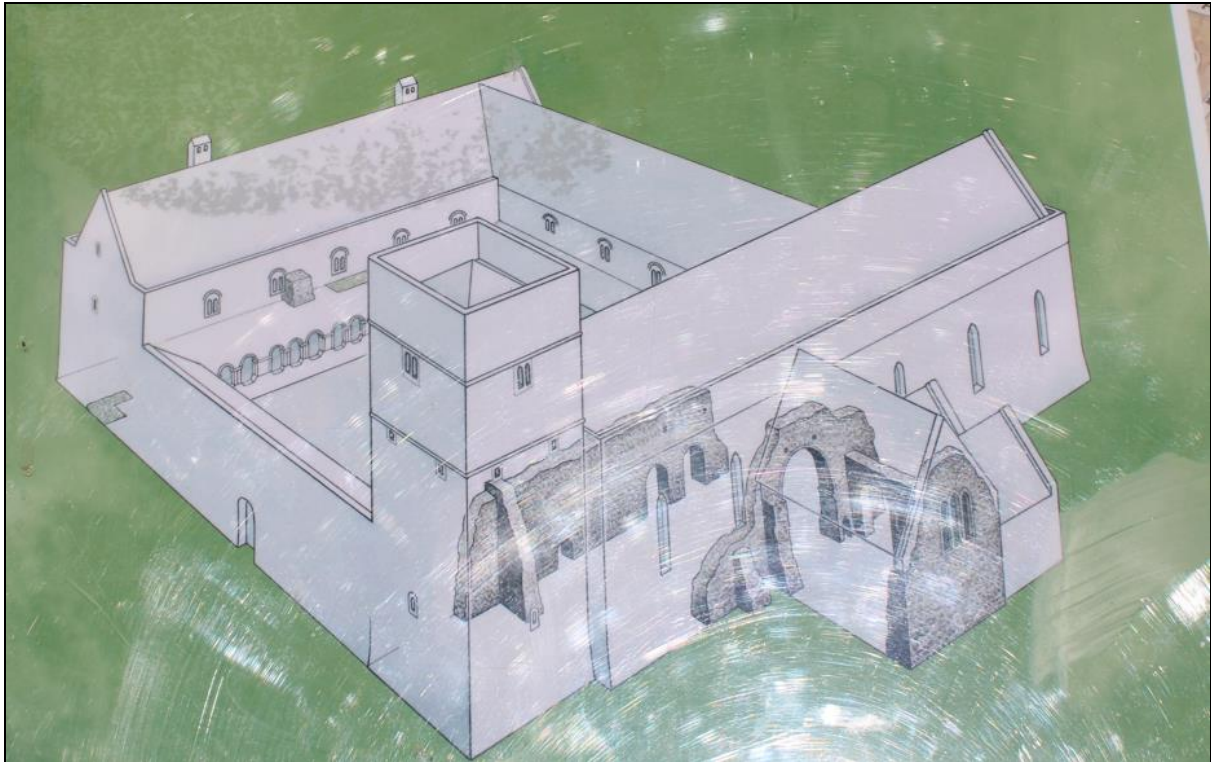


Plate 9: Reconstruction of the Abbey based on surviving structures (lectern in grounds of Abbey).

The geophysical survey and reconstruction drawing based on the results of the survey and previous archaeological excavations has provided an accurate picture of potential archaeological features which may be impacted upon by the development (Figure 19 and Plate 11). Although there has been significant disturbance along the east and northern part of the site there are potential archaeological features identified and also areas of burning. At the stump of masonry a wall structure was identified which has been interpreted as the partial remains of the cloister as indicated by the black arrows (Figure 19 and 21). Other isolated areas of potential archaeological significance are visible throughout the site; however they do not follow a coherent pattern. The pathways and garden features comprise stone-built / paved road or pathways and match the route around the grounds which is depicted on 19<sup>th</sup> century historic mapping (Figure 9-11).

## 6.2 Development Impacts

The proposed development has been designed in such a way that there will be shallow and minimal excavations undertaken where feasible. The following are elements of the proposal which may impact upon sub surface archaeological features and the depths of excavation required.

- **Coach extension and public toilets-** Approx. excavation depth of between 700 to 900mm

The deepest excavation is at the location of the coach house which was built after the time of the first edition map in 1838. A visual inspection of the building has confirmed that there is no visible masonry from the friary incorporated into the coach house construction. A conservation engineer Trevor Wood has been engaged to carry out a structural assessment of the building and will oversee the works. The excavation to a depth of between 700m-900m for the proposed extension to the north and south of the building has the potential to impact upon previously unrecorded archaeology. A central portion of the building will be removed, however there is no obvious works stone that may have come from the friary associated with this structure (Figure 4).

- **Amphitheatre / stage for events-** Approx (80mm paver, 50mm grit/sand bed, 150mm sub base, total depth of excavation 280 to 300mm)

The excavations in advance of the amphitheatre and stage area have the potential to impact upon an area of ferrous, garden paths and potential archaeological features, depending on the level at which these features are located (Figure 3 and Figure 18).

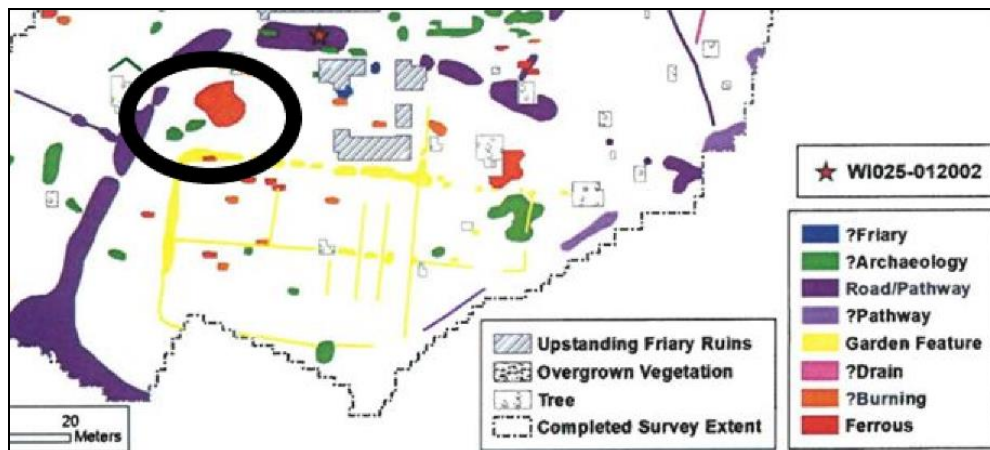


Figure 20: Black circle highlights stage area in relation to geophysical survey results.

- **Small Store-** Approx. (150mm sub base, 100mm concrete base, timber structure strapped down to concrete. Base, total depth 250mm)

There was no geophysical survey carried out in this area however there is potential for the small building which was depicted on the 1888-1913 map to be exposed (Figure 14).

- **Grasscrete road-** Approx. (80mm paver, 50mm grit/sand bed, 150mm sub base, total depth of excavation 280 to 300mm)

The grasscrete will run along the perimeter of the western and northern boundary of the site with from the entrance at Abbey Street and exiting along through the car park at SuperValu over the Ashtown Stream and across a bridge with stone piers (Figure 5 and Plate 6). There will be no impact upon the stone bridge and the wall which will be broken at the SuperValu carpark is a modern concrete wall with murals painted on it (Plate 7). This is also the approximate line of the sewer and therefore if the grasscrete can run on top of this previously excavated ground the potential for impacting on archaeological remains is minimized. Although a 15m corridor was stripped for the sewerage works, the geophysics indicates that there are potential features of archaeological significance within this area. This grasscrete pathway will be excavated to a depth of 280mm-300mm and this depth is sufficient to uncover features of archaeological significance as depicted on the geophysical survey. The proposed route of the grasscrete does not appear to impact upon the possible partial remains of the cloister as indicated below by the black arrow on Figure 19. If the location of the sewer is available on mapping from Wicklow County Council it may be possible to locate the grasscrete road on top of this, thus minimizing any potential impact on archaeological features. Further consideration to this option should be given.



Figure 21: Grasscrete as indicated by blue line overlain on geophysical survey results, black arrow marks cloister location.

➤ **Stream-side seating and associated fencing**

Depending on the construction associated with the seating and if there is any ground disturbance in terms of railings etc there is potential for archaeology to be uncovered. Three pieces of ornate masonry were found during the excavation for the gabions (stone-filled baskets) in the Ashtown Stream which originally belonged to the abbey, Licence 06E1160.

➤ **Power, Lighting, CCTV & Wifi** (there are no high columns lights, only bollards, approx. depth for standard duct under grass or pavement of 700mm)

The cable routes have yet to be finalised however given the depth of excavations and depending on the location of the cables it is highly likely that archaeology may be encountered during the course of excavations. Further consultation will be required when the cable routes are finalised.

➤ **Trees removed** – both mixed clumps and individual species around parts of periphery

Depending on the method of tree removal and if the stumps are removed there is potential to uncover archaeology beneath the roots of the tree.

➤ **Public benches**

There is no anticipated impact if these are placed on the grass.

➤ **Multi-modal and new pedestrian access**

The entrance wall the abbey grounds at the coach house will be widened for large vehicular access. The southern wall/road is a townland, parish and barony boundary highlighting its antiquity and it is possible that the existing wall may be built upon the line of an earlier boundary. There is also a record of earthwork ramparts being constructed in Wicklow in 1576 and as Franciscan Friaries were generally located at



the edge of medieval towns it is possible that the ramparts were located in the vicinity of the boundary of the friary (Bradley and King, p.68, 1989). The north-eastern entranceway into the grounds of the SuperValu carpark comprises a concrete wall, however earlier walls and features of archaeological significance may be located beneath the wall. Significant archaeology was exposed during excavations on the site of Wentworth House 30m to the east of the wall, more than 200 sherds of medieval pottery, in addition to a coin minted during the reign of Henry II and a Neolithic scraper was found (Plate 10, Licence 97E0118). This scraper highlights the potential for multi-phased archaeology to be encountered during the course of construction works.

➤ **Pathways-** raised by 100mm

The pathways will be raised and will comprise of ballylusk stone. Depending on the depth of excavation required to raise the pathway i.e if it is just sod or will require a deeper excavation there is potential to uncover archaeological remains. The pathway appears to lie on the partial remains of the cloister as depicted in the geophysical survey and there are other possible features are also depicted in the footprint of the path (Figure 19).

## 7 Archaeological Mitigation

The proposed development site at the Abbey Grounds is a Recorded Monument afforded statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts and it is also listed as a Recorded Protected Structure WTC-RPS24 in the County Development Plan 2021-2027. The site is in the ownership of Wicklow Parish and is being developed by the council. Any future works should be undertaken under archaeological licence and in consultation with the NMS and the NMI.

Archaeological sites can be affected adversely in a number of ways: disturbance by excavation, topsoil stripping; disturbance by vehicles working in unsuitable conditions and so the following mitigation for the development of the Abbey grounds is recommended:

The depths of excavation between 200m-300m have the potential to impact upon features identified in the geophysical survey. It is recommended that geophysical survey should be overlain with the development plans and targeted test trenching of all anomalies within the footprint of all paths, the amphitheatre and stage area should be undertaken as soon as possible. This will enable an assessment of the nature of the archaeology likely to be encountered during the course of construction works and also the depth at which such archaeology may be encountered so that further archaeological mitigation can be applied in advance of construction works.

It is also recommended that the internal path which appears to impact upon the possible cloister is altered so as to avoid this wall as indicated by the black arrow on Figure 21. Test trenching of all anomalies within the footprint of each element of the development may enable an assessment to be made of the potential impact of the works on the features identified in the survey. It will enable a further archaeological mitigation strategy to be applied; preservation in situ if the depths required for construction will not impact upon the archaeology, avoidance of archaeology or preservation by record which will involve full excavation of all archaeological features or deposits discovered in addition to monitoring of construction works.

Test trenching the footprint of the café extension and any associated services for the public toilets and bin storage area is also recommended in order to establish if finds or features of archaeological significance will be impacted upon by the development. This works should be

carried out as soon as possible so that further archaeological mitigation can be agreed prior to construction works, thus avoiding delays to the programme.

*All works should be carried out under the relevant excavation licence under Section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930-2014 (as amended) and in consultation with the NMS and NMI.*

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## Online

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