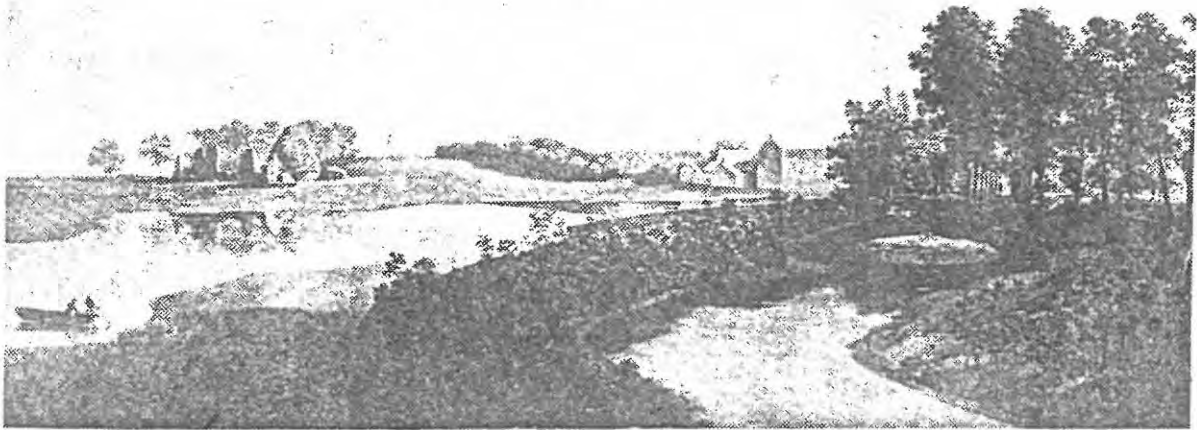


# COUNTY MAYO



## URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEY

URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEY

PART XX

COUNTY MAYO

JOHN BRADLEY

AND

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A REPORT COMMISSIONED BY THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC WORKS

LIST OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	6
General Introduction.....	7
Introduction to Co. Mayo.....	14
Ballinrobe.....	16
Archaeological inventory.....	18
Site of the Anglo-Norman borough.....	18
Streets and street pattern.....	18
Market place.....	19
Mill.....	19
Castle.....	19
St Mary's parish church.....	20
Monument.....	21
Chapel of St John the Baptist (Hospitallers)...	22
Augustinian Friary.....	22
Monument.....	24
Miscellaneous.....	25
Sites in the immediate vicinity.....	25
Ballinrobe Demesne. Holy well.....	25
Carrownaleckna Td. Church site.....	25
Carrownaleckna Td. Holy well.....	26
Cavanquarter Td. Ringforts.....	26
Cornaroya Td. Ringfort site.....	26
Creagh Demesne Td. Church site.....	26
Killosheheen Td. Church site.....	27

Knockfereen td. Ringfort.....	27
Rathkelly Td. Ringfort.....	27
Archaeological problems and potential.....	27
Area of archaeological potential.....	28
Recommendations.....	29
Castlebar.....	31
Archaeological inventory.....	34
Streets and street pattern.....	34
Market place.....	34
Parish church.....	35
Castle.....	35
Archaeological stray find.....	36
Archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity.	36
Knockacroghery Td. Church of Clann Cuain.....	36
Lannagh Lough. Crannog.....	37
Archaeological problems and potential.....	37
Area of archaeological potential.....	39
Recommendations.....	39
Rathfran.....	41
Archaeological inventory.....	42
Site of the borough.....	42
Templemurry church.....	42
Dominican Friary.....	43
Monuments.....	45
Miscellaneous.....	45
Holy well.....	45

Linear feature.....	45
Mounds.....	45
Platform.....	46
Souterrain.....	46
Archaeological problems and potential.....	46
Area of archaeological potential.....	47
Recommendations.....	47
Bibliography.....	49

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1. County Mayo: Location map of towns and boroughs.
- Fig. 2. Ballinrobe: zone of archaeological potential.
- Fig. 3. Aerial view of Ballinrobe from the SW (Courtesy Cambridge Aerial Coll.)
- Fig. 4. Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe, from south.
- Fig. 5. Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe, ground plan.
- Fig. 6. The re-erected west doorway of the Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe, now in Ballyhaunis.
- Fig. 7. Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe: east window, viewed from outside.
- Fig. 8. Detail of mason's marks on the east window of the Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe.
- Fig. 9. St. Mary's Church, Ballinrobe: Holcroft memorial plaque (1668).
- Fig. 10. West gable of Killeenatrava Church, Ballinrobe.
- Fig. 11. Castelbar: zone of archaeological potential.
- Fig. 12. Aerial view of Castlebar from NE (Courtesy Cambridge Aerial Coll.)
- Fig. 13. Rathfran: zone of archaeological potential.
- Fig. 14. Aerial view of Rathfran from SW (Courtesy Cambridge Aerial Coll.)
- Fig. 15. Templemurry Church, Rathfran, from NW.
- Fig. 16. Templemurry Church, Rathfran, ground plan.
- Fig. 17. Outline plan of Dominican Friary, Rathfran (after Leask).
- Fig. 18. Dominican Friary, Rathfran from NW.
- Fig. 19. Dominican Friary, Rathfran from W.

- Fig. 20. Dominican Friary, Rathfran from S.
- Fig. 21. Dominican Friary, Rathfran from E.
- Fig. 22. South wall of choir, Dominican Friary, Rathfran.
- Fig. 23. Dominican Friary, Rathfran: graveslab 15/16th cent.
- Fig. 24. Dominican Friary, Rathfran: graveslab (1618).
- Fig. 25. Seal of the borough of Rathfran (Photo: NMI).

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Towns pose one of the most formidable problems faced by archaeology today. Lived in and occupied over long periods of time, and often covering quite large areas, they are the most complex form of human settlement that we know of. Deep archaeological deposits have accumulated in most towns as a result of the long period of occupation and, accordingly, towns are among the most important areas of our heritage. However, towns are also the homes of modern communities, and are the centres of present-day business, industry and cultural life. The requirements of modern life has brought considerable change to many towns with extensive road widening, building schemes, housing estates and industrial development. The demolition of buildings and the digging of deep foundations has brought about irrevocable change in the appearance of towns, and change, in this century, means more thorough destruction than anything that has gone before. The problem for archaeology is not one of preservation, although this may be desirable, but of recording standing buildings and archaeological levels before they are destroyed. The unfortunate truth is that what is not recorded now has little chance of ever being recorded later.

By its nature archaeology is concerned with the past of ordinary people. The fragmentary building remains, pottery sherds and scraps of worked stone or wood which the

archaeologist discovers cannot be used to reconstruct political movements or great administrative changes. These parts of our past can only be glimpsed from documents, from what people who were alive at the time have observed themselves or heard related. Archaeological data, however, can tell us a great deal about the everyday life of ordinary people and the quality of that life in terms of the technological and economic resources of the particular time and place in question.

Urban archaeology may be defined as the study of the evolution and changing character of urban communities from their earliest origins until modern times; more especially it is concerned with the reconstruction of the natural and human environment within which and as part of which human actions take place. A methodical definition such as this, however, should not obscure the fact that urban archaeology is fundamentally concerned with the past of ordinary citizens, of the form of their houses and streets, of the business of their markets and workshops, of the style and arrangement of their churches, of health and disease, of the variety of cultural, religious and economic activity; in short, it is concerned with the life and death of communities ancestral to our own.

#### Development of Urban Archaeology

For long the study of the urban past has largely been the preserve of historians, sociologists and geographers and it

is only recently that the potential of archaeology to uncover the past has been realised. Part of the reason for this is the general lack of awareness that almost all towns have archaeological deposits. This stems in part from the incomprehension of the ordinary man-in-the-street that a town which is lived-in can have archaeological deposits at all: purely because it is lived in, one tends to think that everything of past ages, unless it is visibly standing has been swept away. In part it also stems from the fact that the construction on a vast scale of buildings requiring deep foundations has only occurred recently, and it is only as a consequence that archaeological deposits have come to 'light. It is also due to the fact that, in previous centuries, archaeological methods and techniques were not advanced enough to take advantage of opportunities even if they did arise. Until relatively modern times the buildings of one generation have been constructed upon the foundations of the last. As structure replaced structure the ground level rose slightly and over the centuries, in cities such as Dublin, considerable depths of archaeological deposits have accumulated.

It was at Novgorod in Russia that the potential of urban archaeology was first revealed. There, organic remains were found in large quantities and it became possible to reconstruct entire streetscapes and to chronicle the changes which happened in them as one generation succeeded the next (Thompson 1967). Gradually as excavation took place in England and Germany it became apparent that the rich

archaeological material in towns was not just a side-light on urban life but it could contribute greatly to our understanding of the archaeology of entire periods and regions. In Ireland the first scientific excavations were commenced at Dublin Castle in 1961 and excavations were to continue in Dublin for the next twenty years. The interest aroused by the High Street and, later, the Wood Quay excavations was widespread and it created an interest in the archaeology of other towns. To date, excavations have taken place in about twenty Irish towns.

Urban sites are important to the archaeologist for a number of reasons. Firstly, in all towns archaeological deposits form the earliest archive. Only a handful of Irish towns are referred to prior to 1200 AD and it is only during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that references become anyway common. Yet the urban life of many towns has continued unbroken since the twelfth or early thirteenth century, while the origins of others lie in the Viking, Early Christian and Prehistoric periods. Even when references occur they rarely throw much light on daily life and tend to be more concerned with political and administrative events. Indeed, most individual properties within towns have no documentation relating directly to them until the late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth century. To all intents and purposes, then, individual sites within towns may have remained completely prehistoric, in so far as they have no documentation, until the seventeenth century or later. Accordingly, archaeological excavation is important if one is

to gain any knowledge of the initial period of a town's foundation or of how a particular area evolved and was used.

Secondly, towns usually possess a much greater depth of stratigraphy than any other type of archaeological site. Stratified deposits are important because they preserve the sequence of developments on a particular site and the wealth of finds associated with urban sites means that it is usually possible to date both structures and layers quite closely. This is particularly important because it makes it possible to establish tight chronologies for artefacts.

Thirdly, the archaeology of a region cannot be understood without knowing what happened to the towns within it. Each town is a unique expression of the history of its area and the destruction of its archaeology would leave an irreplaceable gap in knowledge of the evolution of the region.

The recovery of this information is threatened, however, by the increasing redevelopment and gradual expansion of our cities and towns. It is very difficult to foresee the effects of this redevelopment when the extent of archaeological deposits is generally not known to the Planning Authority and it has happened in the past that the archaeological significance of a site has only become apparent when building work was about to commence. It is important then that the areas containing archaeological deposits should be identified if the potential of this important part of our heritage is to be realised.

### Purpose and Aim of the Present Survey

The Urban Archaeology Survey was established with monies allocated for the purpose by the Minister for Finance in 1982. Its purpose was to compile a corpus of archaeological information on Ireland's towns and to present it in such a way that it could be used effectively by the archaeologist, urban planner, property developer, or interested layman. In this regard the survey has been guided by a submission prepared by the Royal Irish Academy on Urban Archaeology which recommended that the report should have four aims:

1. "To evaluate critically the archaeological potential, both above and below ground of the listed towns".
2. "To emphasise areas where the archaeological deposits could be preserved by the judicious use of new building techniques and the presentation of open spaces, etc."
3. "To assess the level of destruction of the original townscape".
4. "To measure the effects of urban expansion on originally rural archaeological sites".

The chronological cut-off point beyond which material would not be included was 1700 AD.

The identification of sites which were urban centres before 1700 AD is not without difficulties. In many cases such an identification is dependent on the survival of documentary evidence. However, it was felt that it was better

to follow the existing work of Graham (1977) and Martin (1981) rather than impose new criteria. Accordingly the sites which are included here are those for which there is evidence of their status as boroughs prior to 1700 AD.

In the reports the material is presented as follows: the situation of the site is outlined and a brief account of its archaeological and historical background is provided. This is followed by an archaeological inventory which endeavours to catalogue both extant sites and those which are known from documentary sources. Although the amount of information on each town may vary the catalogue follows the same format for each entry, firstly detailing the information on streets and street pattern, and following this with an account of the domestic buildings, market places and economic features such as quays and industrial areas. The seigneurial castle and town defences are described next together with the religious buildings of the town. The evidence for suburbs and activity outside the walls is then outlined and the inventory concludes with a summary of the archaeological excavations and a list of the stray finds. The inventory is followed by an assessment of the archaeological potential of the site.

## INTRODUCTION TO CO. MAYO

Towns came to the county relatively late in the history of Ireland. The Vikings never settled here, the Anglo-Normans made a partly successful attempt, and apart from the possibility of Cong, there were no centres which could have developed into monastic towns. Effectively it was not until the plantation period that towns were built in Mayo and then it was as part of a policy of colonization.

The Anglo-Normans began to penetrate into Mayo in the years after 1237. There is clear evidence that they founded at least two boroughs in the wake of this conquest, Ballinrobe in the south of the county and Rathfran in the north. It has been suggested by a number of scholars that the Anglo-Normans also established boroughs at Burrishoole and Burriscarra but the documentary evidence is lacking at both of these sites and consequently they have been excluded from this report.

With the decline of the Anglo-Norman colony in the years after 1333 Ballinrobe and Rathfran also seem to have faded in significance and it was not until the aftermath of the Elizabethan conquest of Connacht that the town of Castlebar was established under the patronage of the Bingham family.

It is these three sites, Ballinrobe, Castlebar, and Rathfran with which the urban archaeologist is especially



concerned but that is not to say that sites such as Burrishoole and Burriscarra are unimportant. They simply fall outside our brief (Fig.1)

This report provides an account of the archaeological remains in the above mentioned former boroughs, and it provides an assessment of their importance to archaeological research. It outlines the areas where archaeological deposits are likely to survive and highlights each town's potential to increase our knowledge of the development of urban life in Ireland. Finally, recommendations are made as to how this potential can be best realized. In the map outlining the zone of archaeological potential the following colour code is used:

Pink: the zone of archaeological potential.

Red: extant archaeological monuments.

Purple: sites of known monuments.

Uncontrolled redevelopment can destroy a town's fragile archaeological heritage and it is the hope of this report that the recommended steps will be taken in order to ensure that urban development and archaeological research may go forward together.

## BALLINROBE

Ballinrobe is located in the south of the county, close to Lough Mask. The placename is derived from Baile an Rodhba, the town of the Robe.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The borough of Ballinrobe was established in the wake of the Anglo-Norman conquest of northwest Connacht in the years after 1237. It formed part of the manor of Lough Mask which was regarded as of such importance that it was held by Richard de Burgh, the conqueror of Connacht (Orpen 1911-20, iii, 208). The date of the foundation of the borough is unknown and there are only a few passing mentions of Ballinrobe in the documentary record. In 1318 a messuage and a garden and half a weir in Ballinrobe belonged to the brother of Margaret de Baddlesmere who had inherited it (Knox 1908, 282). The provost of Ballinrobe is mentioned in 1349 providing a clear indication of its corporate status (Graham 1978, 42).

The Anglo-Norman colony in Connacht began to collapse, however, after the assassination of the Brown Earl of Ulster in 1333. The Mayo lands, of which Ballinrobe formed a part,

were seized by Edmond Burke who subsequently became known as MacWilliam *Uachtair* and established himself at Ballinrobe. Knox (1908, 403) has suggested that the borough died out c.1338 but references to the attempt in 1390 to hold assises at Ballinrobe suggest that there was still some form of settlement here at the close of the fourteenth century (D'Alton 1931, 19). The intriguing account of 1574 which describes Ballinrobe as one of the "towns built by Englishmen most of which had been governed by a portriffe but now all destroyed" (Brewer and Bullen 1870, 476). may indicate that some vestiges of the borough survived into the sixteenth century.

From the fourteenth century until the late sixteenth Ballinrobe remained one of the principal fortresses of MacWilliam *Uachtair* but the determination of the English crown to assert itself in Connacht in the years after 1570 was to generate many transformations. In 1571 Sir Edward Fitton, lord president of Connacht, attacked and captured Ballinrobe (Knox 1908, 180). Although it was to return into the hands of the MacWilliam Burkes on a number of occasions after this date Fitton's capture of Ballinrobe effectively marked the end of a chapter in its history. After the conclusion of the Nine Years War Ballinrobe passed into the hands of the Nolan family and from them to the Cuffs. It was these two families who laid the <sup>d</sup>groundwork for the formation of the present town.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. SITE OF THE ANGLO-NORMAN BOROUGH
2. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN
3. MARKET PLACE
4. MILL
5. CASTLE
6. ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH
7. CHAPEL OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST (HOSPITALLERS)
8. AUGUSTINIAN FRIARY
9. MISCELLANEOUS
10. SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

### 1. SITE OF THE ANGLO-NORMAN BOROUGH

There is insufficient documentation to indicate the whereabouts of the Anglo-Norman borough. In view of the importance of the river crossing, however, the likelihood is that it was located in the vicinity of the modern Bridge St and that the Augustinian friary was founded on its periphery. The possibility also exists, however, that the settlement was located in the neighbourhood of the medieval castle on the south bank of the Robe.

### 2. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN (Fig. 3)

The present street pattern seems to be of seventeenth and eighteenth century date. It is essentially linear in plan

with the N-S running Main St forming the dominating axis. Bridge St and Glebe St cut across this axis at right angles.

### 3. MARKET PLACE

Markets were essential in every medieval borough but the first reference to a market at Ballinrobe does not actually occur until 1606 when Thomas Nolan was granted the licence to hold a weekly market on Thursdays together with an annual fair (D'Alton 1931, 38). In 1616 John King and Adam Loftus were granted a weekly market on Mondays (ibid., 40-1). As the broadest street in the town the upper end of Main St and its intersection with Bridge St and Glebe St would have formed the market place. The Potato Market north of these seems to be of more recent date.

### 4. MILL

In 1529 the prior of Kilmainham leased "the chapel and house of St John the Baptist at Ballinrobe, with a carucate of land and a mill" (D'Alton 1931, 31). This was presumably located along the river in what is today the townland of Friarsquarter.

### 5. CASTLE

Ballinrobe is mentioned as one of the principal residences of McWilliam Uachtair in the histories and

genealogies of the Burkes (Knox 1908, 352). After the Elizabethan wars the significance of the castle seems to have declined somewhat. It passed in 1617 to the Nolan family and from them to the Cuffes. It was described c.1660 as "a fair, large, and good house ... now belonging to Francis Cuffe" (O.S. letters, Mayo, ii, p. 67). It was sold in 1821 for use as a barracks when whatever ancient remains that survived were pulled down (Ir. Builder xvi (1874), 95).

The castle seems to have been enclosed by a bawn, however, because not far from the castle, on the banks of the Robe, the foundations of an old tower were unearthed in the nineteenth century (D'Alton 1931, 36). This may have been one of the corner turrets of a bawn wall. An account in the Irish Builder (vol. xvi (1874), 95) describes "in the rear of the old castle ... a structure called the False Bridge, with about a dozen semi-circular arches, only wide enough to carry one pedestrian abreast, without any parapet whatsoever, and leading from the paddock on the pigeon-hole side to the fish-pond on the south side". This may be a description of blank arcading on the castle's curtain wall.

## 6. ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH

The first reference to this church occurs in 1413 when one Henry was vicar of the church of St Mary and Holy Cross (Twemlow 1904, 387). He had been driven out by 1414, however, when the church is described as without a cure and having no rents to support a rector; accordingly a relaxation of

penance was granted to those who visited and gave alms on certain days (ibid., 421). Two parish churches are mentioned in the later fourteenth century, one in Conkule or Conmacnecule, south of the river and the other in Roba in Kera, north of the river in 1484, 1485 and 1487 (Twemlow 1960, 70, 215, 270). By this time the church of Roba in Kera, presumably Carrownaleckna Church (see Sites in the immediate vicinity, below) had been canonically annexed to the church of Conmacnecule. The site, east of Main St, is occupied by a nineteenth century Church of Ireland church.

Monument (Fig. 9)

Catherine Holcroft. 1668.

Set into the outer face of the north wall. Limestone mural plaque, set inside a chamfered border, with skull and cross-bones above and the impaled arms of Holcroft and Ormsby below. Inscription:

WRITE BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD  
IN HOPE OF A JOYFULL RESURRECTION HERE UNDER/ LYETH  
BURIED THE BODY OF KATHERINE HOL/ CROFT SECOND DAUGHTER  
TO EDWARD ORMS/ BY LATE OF TOBERVADY IN THE COUNTY OF/  
ROSCOMMON ESQUIRE AND LATE WIFE TO CH/ ARLES HOLCROFT OF  
CLOONIGASHEL IN THE C/ OUNTY OF MAYO ESQ: THIRD SON TO  
SIR HENRY/ HOLCROFT LATE OF ESTHAM IN THE COUNTY/ OF  
ESSEX KNIGHT. SHEE WAS MARRIED EL/ EVEN YEARS AND THIRTY  
FOURE DAYS/ AND DIED THE XXth OF JAN: M: DC: LXVIII  
WEARI'D OF TH' EARTH TO HEAV'N BLEST SOUL TH' ART GONE/

ANGELS REJOYCE HERE WEE OUR LOSSE BEMOANE

H. 55. W. 96.5 cm

Mems Dead iv (1898-1900), 283.

7. CHAPEL OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST (Hospitallers)

In 1414 an indulgence was granted for the maintenance of this church (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 339) which was situated to the east of the town in the townland of Friarsquarter. In 1529 "the chapel and house of St John the Baptist at Ballinrobe" was leased, apparently to the Augustinians (D'Alton 1931, 31). The O.S. letters (Mayo, ii, p. 67) quote Downing as writing c.1660 "There was likewise a small cell or abbey of the Goonitars[?] called Teaghowen or Saint John's house now altogether gone to ruin". Today nothing survives of the site which is located in present day pasture land.

8. AUGUSTINIAN FRIARY

This friary is first mentioned in 1337 but the precise date of its foundation is unclear. The suggestion that it was established c.1312 by Elizabeth de Clare wife of John de Burgo, heir of the earl of Ulster, has much to recommend it (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 296). On their marriage in 1308 they received the manor of Lough Mask which included Ballinrobe. Indulgences were granted in 1400 and 1431 because the monastery buildings were in need of repair. The friars were still in occupation in 1574 and returned after the 1641



rebellion.

#### Description (Figs. 4-8)

The friary is situated close to the south bank of the river Robe in an area of flat and relatively good pasture land. The fabric is in poor condition. Part of the north choir wall fell some ten years ago and other parts of the building will soon collapse unless repair work is carried out soon. The masonry consists of coursed limestone blocks with jambs and quoins also of limestone.

#### The Choir

The east gable is buttressed and the outline of a large pointed window is present. This was blocked at some later stage when a smaller window was inserted. Only a very short stretch of the east end of the north wall remains. Immediately north of this are the collapsed remains of what appears to have been a sacristy; there are hints of a vaulted ground floor. The south wall contains a round-headed piscina with moulded jambs; its arch was recently destroyed. The base of the sedillia also survives and parts of the splays of three windows. Mason's marks are present on the window jambs.

#### The Nave

There is no clear differentiation of the nave and choir but immediately west of the westernmost window splay of the choir is a trefoil-pointed piscina with a small slit window beside it; these appear to belong to the nave. The west wall tapers

in height from the wall-plate level in the SW corner to ground level in the NW corner. The west doorway was originally pointed and decorated with cable mouldings but in 1939, following the collapse of the arch stones, it was moved to the Augustinian friary at Ballyhaunis where it can still be seen.

#### South aisle

The remains of this aisle are lit by a single rectangular slit window in the west wall. Parts of the south wall survive to a height of 90cm but there has been considerable interference from burials. There is a round arched recess near the east end of the south wall.

#### Structure south of the south aisle

Insufficient survives of this mortared structure to determine whether it was once part of the friary complex or if it is simply a destroyed vault. Its walls survive to a height of 1.1m.

#### Earthworks

There are numerous undulations in terrain in the field immediately to the west and north of the abbey but these form no coherent pattern.

#### Monument

Graveslab. 17th cent.

Limestone. Rectangular. Incised Latin cross with Roman inscription:

FRA IAMES ...E ...Y WHO DYED YE 28 OF APR 168.

L. 145. W. 62. T. 9 cm.

## 9. MISCELLANEOUS

### Tower

The account in the Irish Builder of 1874 (vol. xvi, 95) speaks of the presence of a small "turret" opposite the barracks at the end of the Black or "Dark" walk. This "Dark" Walk is presumably the footpath along the west bank of the Robe river. The tower may have been somewhere in the vicinity of High St, possibly on the north side of the street.

## 10. SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

Ballinrobe Demesne and Cavanquarter Tds. Holy well.

Titled "Tubbermurry" on the O.S. 25" map. A deep rectangular well lined by drystone walling on three sides. A turas is still practiced between the 15th August and the 8th September each year. As its name indicates the well is associated with the Blessed Virgin.

Carrownalecka Td. Church site.

Long narrow structure surviving to wall-plate height except on the north side. A falt arched doorway is present in the middle of the west wall. The remains of three narrow rectangular slit-windows are present in the south wall but a gap suggests that a fourth one originally existed. The north

wall may have had a similar range of windows but only the easternmost two survive. In the middle of the east wall are two closely set windows of similar form to those in the south wall.

Carrownalecka Td. Holy well.

Titled "St Patrick's well" on the O.S. 1st ed. Located north of the church site this is a short low scarp in the limestone bedrock with a natural spring emerging from the base.

Cavanquarter Td. Ringforts.

The O.S. 25" map shows two ringforts in this townland, south of the town. Both are univallate. The southernmost is cut by a lane.

Cornaroya Td. Ringfort site.

This is shown on the O.S. 1st ed. in the position now occupied by St. Joseph's Convent. the construction of the convent in 1853 presumably removed the surface evidence.

Creagh Demesne Td. *Church site (figs. 10).*

Titled Killenatrava on the O.S. 1st ed. Gwynn and Hadcock (1970, 321) describe it as the site of "a small dependency of the Arroasian nuns" probably established from Cong in the twelfth century. All that survives of the church is the west gable and western ends of the north and south walls. It is located now in the lawns of a modern holiday homes development. In the course of this development the church was pointed and the interior paved. The O.S. Letters (Mayo, ii, p. 67) mention the existence of a small cell west of the

church but no trace of it survives now.

Killosheheen Td. Church site.

The rectangular form of the church is evident in the ground surface indicating that wall footings survive underneath. Dims. 12.5 by 5.5m.

Knockfereen Td. Ringfort.

Immediately south of the town. It is shown on the O.S. 25" sheet as univallate.

Rathkelly Td. Ringfort.

This is a large fort immediately west of the town. Univallate with traces of a mound in the interior.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Ballinrobe is important to archaeological research because it is one of the few positively attested Anglo-Norman boroughs in Mayo. The nature and size of the medieval settlement there remains unknown as does its exact life-span. In this regard it would be particularly interesting to discover how long the settlement survived under the control of MacWilliam Íochtair. The precise site of the borough is unknown but if, as suggested above, it was in the vicinity of Bridge St then it is likely that the construction of houses along this street will have removed much of the archaeological deposits there. On the other hand if the settlement stretched towards the friary or the parish church,

or if it was located in the neighbourhood of the castle then the likelihood of archaeological deposits surviving is greater. The primary aim of archaeological investigation in Ballinrobe, however, should be to locate the site of the Anglo-Norman borough.

The documentary records relating to Ballinrobe prior to 1700 are very restricted in the information which they convey and in the future archaeology is likely to be the most important means of learning more about the town's past and of understanding the character and detailed form of Ballinrobe today. To do this the below ground archaeology of Ballinrobe must be protected so that its potential can be properly exploited. At the moment this is best achieved by judicious use of planning constraints and by conditions attached to planning consents.

#### Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 2) delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern Ballinrobe. This comprises the area occupied by the seventeenth century town together with an area outside representing a penumbra or fall-out zone. Areas around the Augustinian friary, Carrownaleckna Church, and the site of the castle are also distinguished. East of the town the site of the ringfort at Cornaroya is marked; west of the town the fort in Rathkelly Td. and the church site at Killeenatrava are marked, while south of the town the ringfort in

Knockfereen Td. is highlighted.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The future of archaeological research in Ballinrobe is dependent on the monitoring of development and the inclusion of archaeological work as a matter of routine in the planning process. Accordingly the following recommendations are made:

1. That the realisation of Ballinrobe's archaeological potential be made an objective of the County Development Plan.
2. That the shaded area on Fig. 2 be regarded as an archaeological zone.
3. That the character of the street pattern be respected as far as possible.
4. That the surviving monuments, listed above, within the town and in its immediate vicinity be preserved.
5. That deep foundation development (1 m plus), including cellars and underground structures, be discouraged within the archaeological zone.
6. That in those instances where it is not possible to apply recommendation 5, the developer be required to have a report prepared on the archaeological implications, if any, of the proposed development. Such reports, which may include test excavation, should be obtained at the further information

stage of the planning application, and should be considered by the planning authority and the Office of Public Works before planning permission is granted.

7. That all applications for planning permission involving disturbance of the ground in open areas within the zone, on which buildings have not previously been built, be referred to the National Parks and Monuments Branch of the Office of Public Works for their consideration.

8. That all licences for planning permission involving sub-surface excavation up to 1 m deep should point out the legal obligation to report the discovery of archaeological finds.

9. That the planning authority should notify the Office of Public Works of proposals for any major roadworks or service schemes involving sub-surface excavation greater than 1 m in depth, and be guided by the latter body's recommendations.



## CASTLEBAR

The town is located in an area of undulating drumlin terrain and is on the Castlebar river, close to where that river exits from Lough Lannagh. The placename is derived from Caislen an Bharraigh "Barry's castle" which suggests that the castle was once held, if not built, by a De Barry.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Carra, the barony in which Castlebar is located, fell into Anglo-Norman hands shortly after 1237. It may well have been a de Barry who established the first castle here but, if so, history does not record it and the first name associated with Castlebar is a de Cogan who held it in 1333. (Orpen 1911-20, iii, 216). With the assassination of the Brown Earl of Ulster in that year Castlebar, like Ballinrobe, came under the influence of Edmund Burke and the dynasty which he founded--MacWilliam Íochtar. Castlebar became one of their castles but in the succeeding two centuries it is mentioned only twice. In 1385 it was captured by Cormac MacDonough (Knox 1908, 150) and in 1412 it was burned by Brian Mac Domhnaíl Ua Conchobair and the O'Connors of Sligo (A.Conn; AU).

After this Castlebar dissapears from the record until the Elizabethan invasion of Connacht. In 1576 the castle was besieged and captured by forces under the lord deputy, Sir Henry Sidney who placed MacWilliam Burke in charge of it on condition that he kept it for the queen's use (Knox 1908, 186; cf. Brewer and Bullen 1868, 354). The castle was captured agian in 1586 by Sir Richard Bingham, lord president of Connacht, when it is referred to as "Castlebarry near Castlebar" (Hamilton 1877, 242, 140). Two years later the castle was leased to Brian FitzWilliam (16 RDKPRI, no. 5255), brother of Sir William FitzWilliam (lord deputy 1588-94) because it was regarded as having been forfeited through the attainder of Edmund Burke (Hamilton 1885, 11). FitzWilliam's lease was bought by John Bingham, the brother of the president of Connacht, who himself became sherrif of Mayo in 1591 (Knox 1908, 246). This nepotism at the expence of the Burkes did not go unnoticed, even in government circles, at the time. It provoked the Burkes to rebel and Richard Bingham was forced once more to recapture the castle in 1589 (Hamilton 1885, 233, 236). In 1592 Bingham described the castle as ruinous:

"the Burkes having broken it down in their rebellions it is only some pieces of old walls" (Hamilton 1885, 525, 532, 560).

In 1594 the castle was leased to Ludovick Bryskett (16 RDKPRI, no. 5911) and this resulted, the following year, in an ownership dispute between Bingham and Bryskett (Morrin 1862,

303; Hamilton 1890, 362, 418, 434, 500, 407). In 1595 Castlebar was captured by Tibbot na Long Burke but it was recaptured by Sir Conyers Clifford who forced Tibbot na Long to submit (Brewer and Bullen 1869, 266, 271; Atkinson 1893, 292, 303, 324). The old argument as to ownership flared up again in 1606 when the executors of Brian FitzWilliam were granted Castlebarry (Russell and Prendergast 1874, 65).

In 1607-8 the manor was granted to John Moore along with the castle (Erck 1846-52, ii, 377) but John Bingham was living in the house in that year and he was granted the right to hold an annual fair (Erck 1846-52, ii, 551), indicating that a settlement had been established at the foot of the castle. In 1617 Bingham was granted the castle and town of Castlebarry (Russell and Prendergast 1877, 524) and this seems to have effectively resolved the ownership dispute. The town was to remain in the hands of Bingham's descents, created earls of Lucan in 1795.

In 1611 Castlebarra is included on a list of boroughs which were to be created in Connacht (Brewer and Bullen 1873, 136, 145; Russell and Prendergast 1877, 161). The order to draw up the fiand of incorporation was made in 1612 and Castlebar appears on the list of new boroughs which returned members to parliament in 1613 (ibid. 303, 334). Under its charter of incorporation the town was to be governed by a portreeve assisted by fifteen burgesses.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN
2. MARKET PLACE
3. PARISH CHURCH
4. CASTLE
5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FIND
6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

### 1. STREETS AND STREET PATTERN (Fig. 12)

The street plan is essentially linear, consisting of one long street composed of Ellison St, Market St, and Bridge St. On the eastern side of Ellison St the backs of some of the burgage plots appear to have been truncated by "The Green", a town park probably laid out by the earl of Lucan in the early eighteenth century. Settlement north and west of the Castlebar river probably dates to the eighteenth century.

### 2. MARKET PLACE

In 1607-8 John Moore was granted "the town and castle of Barries alies Bries" and was given liberty to hold a market and one annaul fair in the town (Erck 1846-52, ii, 377). This right was transferred to John Bingham in 1608 (ibid., 551). The original market is likely to have been held in Market Street which expands to accomodate the market stalls at its southern end. This street is shown as Main St on a 1798 map

of the town (NLI 16.I.3 (13)). A market place is shown on the O.S. 1st ed. 6" map on the west side of Ellison St, at the location occupied on the 25" map by the "Constabulary Barracks". A further market place called Shamble Square is located on the south side of Shamble St.

### 3. PARISH CHURCH

The original parish church of Castlebar was undoubtedly at Knockacroghery south-west of the town (see below, archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity) but the date at which it was abandoned and Christ Church established within the town is unknown. The present Christ Church was erected in 1828 and replaced a structure built in 1739 by Richard Cassells. In view of the clear spacial relationship between the church and "The Green" it is possible that both were laid out together. This probably occurred in the early eighteenth century. If this was the case then the church at Knockacroghery may have functioned for almost one hundred years as the parish church of the town.

### 4. CASTLE

The importance of this castle in the early history of Castlebar has already been outlined above. According to the O.S. Letters (Mayo, ii, p. 193), it was situated:

"in the yard of the new barracks, on a rising ground, which is washed at its base, by the river of Castlebar.

A small portion of the foundation, from which earth has been cleared away, can be seen".

This situation gave the castle a commanding position on the crest of a hill overlooking a meander in the Castlebar river. Downing, who wrote a short description of the county of Mayo c.1660 for Sir William Petty's intended Atlas of Ireland describes the site as:

a very fair, large bawn and two round towers or castles therein, and a good large house in the possession of Sir John Bingham, and his heir, the youngest of three knights Bingham's that commanded since Queen Elizabeth's time (O'Donovan 1844, 160-1, n).

The site is now occupied by the Castlebar Military Barracks, headquarters of the Fifth Cavalry Squadron. No remains of the structure now survive.

#### 5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRAY FIND

Among the objects exhibited before the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland in 1888 was a bronze socketed spearhead, "from Castlebar" (JRSAI xviii, 477). The whereabouts of this spearhead is now unknown.

#### 6. SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

Knockacroghery Td. Church of Clann Cuain.

The site is shown on the O.S. 1st ed. 6" as a sub-circular

area delimited by a broken line and titled "burial ground". tree symbols indicate that the site was overgrown at this stage. The sub-circular nature of the feature suggests that it is remains of an ecclesiastical enclosure. It is set on the crest of a low hill which affords good views of the neighbourhood. The site is briefly mentioned by Lewis (1837, i, 289) and by the O.S. Letters (Mayo, ii, p. 193). A community clean-up in 1988 exposed the remains of a fifteenth century church and at least eight dressed stone fragments. The church has external dimensions of 21.8 by 8.3m. It can be identified with the church of Clann Cuain referred to in the early fourteenth century (Sweetman 1875-86, v, 233; cf. Knox 1902, 404-5).

Lannagh Lough. Crannog.

There is a strong possibility that the island marked on the O.S. 1st ed. 6" map at the northern end of Lannagh Lough is a crannog. It is not marked on the 25" map. The site is located immediately west of Knockacroghery churchyard. Not visited. See Knox 1908, 63.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Castlebar is important to archaeological research because it is a fine example of a seventeenth century plantation town. More particularly it is important as an example of the average sized plantation town. In contrast with Derry, which has a well established historical and archaeological record,

little is known of the smaller more typical towns. The plantation town was developed on a site which already possessed a late medieval stone castle, probably of tower house type, and which had also been settled by the Anglo-Normans. It is not known if any settlements were associated with this fortification.

The street pattern of the seventeenth century town still survives but no houses of this period are extant. Almost certainly, however, the foundations of some of these houses survive below ground level and their excavation would reveal information, for instance, on the regions of England from which the initial settlers came. It would also be important in determining their relationship to the housing of the other plantations in Ulster, Munster, the midlands, and north Wexford.

The documentary records relating to Castlebar prior to 1700 are limited and in the future archaeology is likely to be the most important means of learning about the town's past and of understanding the character and detailed form of *Castlebar* today.

The protection of buried archaeological evidence in Castlebar is of importance therefore and this is best achieved by judicious use of planning constraints and by conditions attached to planning consents.



### Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. II) delimits the area of archaeological potential within modern Castlebar. This comprises the area of the seventeenth century town, together with an area around the site of the castle, and the church site of Clann Cuain in Knochacrogbery Td. Within this area the main disturbance to archaeological deposits has occurred along the street frontage as a result of the rebuilding of houses here in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Elsewhere, however, deposits are likely to survive and there is the strong likelihood of recovering house foundations, refuse pits, industrial areas, and workshops of seventeenth century date.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The future of archaeological research in Castlebar is dependent on the monitoring of development and the inclusion of archaeological work as a matter of routine in the planning process. Accordingly the following recommendations are made:

1. That the realisation of Castlebar's archaeological potential be made an objective of its Development Plan.
2. That the shaded area on Fig. II be regarded as an archaeological zone.
3. That the character of the street pattern be respected as far as possible.
4. That deep foundation development (1 m plus), including

cellars and underground structures, be discouraged within the archaeological zone.

5. That in those instances where it is not possible to apply recommendation 4, the developer be required to have a report prepared on the archaeological implications, if any, of the proposed development. Such reports, which may include test excavation, should be obtained at the further information stage of the planning application, and should be considered by the planning authority and the Office of Public Works before planning permission is granted.

6. That all applications for planning permission involving disturbance of the ground in open areas within the zone, on which buildings have not previously been built, be referred to the National Parks and monuments Branch of the Office of Public Works for their consideration.

7. That all licences for planning permission involving sub-surface excavation up to 1 m deep should point out the legal obligation to report the discovery of archaeological finds.

8. That the planning authority should notify the Office of Public Works of proposals for any major roadworks or service schemes involving sub-surface excavation greater than 1 m in depth, and be guided by the latter body's recommendations.

## RATHFRAN

Situated in the north Mayo on an inlet of Killala Bay. The placename is derived from Rath Branduib "Brandub's rath". The name Rathfran is specifically linked on the O.S. maps with a ringfort in Rathfran Park Td.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Almost nothing is known of the history of this borough. Its position in Tirawley would suggest that it was part of the lands of the Barretts, the Anglo-Norman family who settled in this area in the mid thirteenth century (Orpen 1911-20, iii, 218). The individual connected with the foundation of the Dominican friary in 1274, however, is a member of the de Exeter family whose lands were mainly located in Erris, further to the west (ibid., 221). The founder of the borough then remains unknown.

The evidence for Rathfran's status as a borough comes not from documentary records but from a lead seal matrix, found near the ruins of the Dominican friary and now in the National Museum of Ireland. The seal is ornamented with a fleur-de-lys and inscribed in Lombardic lettering: S. COMVNE DE BURGA DE RATHFRAN HIB "The seal of the community of the

borough of Rathfran in Ireland". From the Lombardic style of lettering the seal matrix can be dated to the thirteenth century (Fig. 25).

The borough would appear to have been simply a small settlement lacking defences which probably did not last for long. An indication that the site may have been attractive as a harbour is provided by a report of 1597 which refers to Rathfran Bay as the place where MacWilliam kept his boats ("pinnaces") (Atkinson 1893, 285-6).

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY

1. SITE OF THE BOROUGH
2. TEMPLEMURRY CHURCH
3. DOMINICAN FRIARY
4. MISCELLANEOUS

##### 1. SITE OF THE BOROUGH (Fig. 14)

No surface traces survive to indicate the location of the borough but the likelihood is that it was located in the vicinity of the Dominican friary and Templemurry Church.

##### 2. TEMPLEMURRY CHURCH (Figs. 15-16)

The perpetual vicarage of Rathfran is mentioned in 1448-9

(Twemlow 1915, 378). In 1455 the vicar William Omochan was described as an excommunicate who continued to celebrate mass and who was delapidating the fruits on the repair and maintenance of the church (Twemlow 1921, 248, 349). Mention of the vicarage occurs again in 1469 and 1484 (Twemlow 1960, 130, 132).

The church is sited on the crest of a hillock beside the north shore of the tidal estuary of the Cloonaghmore river. There is a short steep slope from the site down to the shore and the site overlooks Rathfran friary to the west. It is a small rectangular building in a poor state of repair. The south wall survives to a height of 1.4m but the other walls survive only as footings and are partly concealed by collapse. There is a piscina in the south wall which had a pointed trefoil arch, now lying on the ground. The remains of a buttress survive at the east end of the south wall. The masonry consists of roughly coursed sandstone. The building has internal dimensions of 6.77 by 4.47m.

### 3. DOMINICAN FRIARY

Founded in 1274 probably by a member of the de Exeter (Dexter) family (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 228). In 1439 an indulgence was granted to the friary to assist repairs because it was without a refectory, bell-tower or bell, and was badly damaged as a result of recent wars (Twemlow 1915, 516-17). Little seems to have changed by 1458, however, when the monks were so reduced that they had to take up rural

occupations and neglect divine worship (Twemlow 1921, 177). At the Dissolution the possessions included two quarters of land and there was then a small house adjoining the site and a ruinous mill (Erck 1846-52, i, 221). The monastery was burned in 1590 by Sir Richard Bingham (ALC) and in 1596 it was leased to William Taaffe (17 RDKPRI, no. 6016). The friars seem to have remained in the neighbourhood until the end of the eighteenth century and two are mentioned in 1731 as living in Templemurry and Ballysakeery nearby.

#### Description (Figs. 17-22)

The remains consist of the church, the domestic buildings ranged around the cloister, and another range of buildings placed around a courtyard to the north of the cloister.

The church is a long undifferentiated thirteenth century structure but probably divided originally into a choir and nave by a rood screen. The choir was lit by a large three light east window, now destroyed, and a row of five pairs of lancet windows in the south wall. There are two tomb recesses at the east end of the north wall and, in the south, a piscina and round-headed sedilla.

The nave, which was rebuilt at a later stage, had three lancet windows in the south wall and a large window in the west gable, which has also been rebuilt. The gable is pierced by a doorway which is not original. South of the nave is an aisle which was probably added in the fourteenth century. The claustral buildings are evidenced by their foundations only.

The buildings ranged around the upper courtyard, however, seem to have been added to the original cloister. The building has been described by Leask (1930).

#### Monuments (Figs. 23-4)

Two memorial slabs are placed upright against the east wall of the church. The first of these is an uninscribed slab decorated with animals and foliage, of fifteenth or sixteenth century date. The second is a cross-slab with the Roman inscription: IHS IOHANNES O MMNILANIE FIERI FECIT 1618.

#### 4. MISCELLANEOUS

##### Holy well

A modernised well set into a west facing slope within the present confines of Templemurry graveyard. Local people say that the visiting day is Garland Sunday and that the well is dedicated to St Brendan. The site is a natural spring.

##### Linear feature (Fig. 14)

This earthen feature with sloping sides and a flat bottom crosses three fields in Rathfran Td. It does not make any sense as a drainage channel and seems to have functioned as a field boundary or perhaps a pathway. It runs from the old shoreline to the ringfort in Rathfranpark Td. (unnamed on the O.S. 25" map).

##### Mounds

Three unusual mounds are located on the shore between high

and low water marks, to the south of the friary. It is not clear if these are archaeological features or not.

#### Platform

This unusual wedge-shaped feature is located on the old shoreline. The edges are revetted with stone and it has a max. length of 22.3 m, and a max. width of 8.8m tapering to 4.5m.

#### Souterrain

A short distance NW of Templemurry church and within the confines of the graveyard a souterrain is reported by local people to have been uncovered in the course of grave-digging some years ago.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Rathfran is an example of a deserted medieval borough. The principal archaeological problem which needs to be resolved is the exact location and size of the Anglo-Norman settlement. It has been suggested above that it probably lies in the vicinity of the Dominican friary and Templemurry. Within this area, disturbance has been confined to ploughing. There is a problem also in identifying the castle which was doubtless the medieval manorial centre. It may be that the fort marked as Rathfran on the O.S. maps is an example of an Anglo-Norman ringwork and that it functioned as the manorial centre.



In summary, documentary records of the site are few and in the future archaeological excavation is likely to be the principal means by which additional knowledge can be obtained. The borough is not under direct threat from commercial development at present.

#### Area of Archaeological Potential

The shaded portion of the accompanying map (Fig. 13 ) delimits the area of archaeological potential. This is based on the suggestion outlined above as to the location of the borough. The ringforts in the townland of Rathfran Park have also been ringed. In the absence of archaeological excavations nothing can be said about the depth of archaeological deposits.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The future of archaeological research at Rathfran is dependent on the monitoring of development and the inclusion of archaeological work as a matter of routine in the planning process. Accordingly the following recommendations are made:

1. That the shaded area on Fig. 13 be regarded as an archaeological zone.
2. That the existing monuments within the former borough be preserved and maintained.
3. That development be discouraged within the archaeological zone.

4. That in those instances where it is not possible to apply recommendation 3, that the developer be required to have a report prepared on the archaeological implications, if any, of the proposed development. Such reports, which may include test excavation, should be considered by the planning authority and the Office of Public Works before planning permission is granted.

5. That the Planning Authority should notify the Office of Public Works of proposals for any major roadworks or service schemes involving sub-surface excavation and be guided by the latter body's recommendations.

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- A. Conn.: Annals of Connacht, ed. A. Martin Freeman. Dublin. 1944.
- AFM: Annals of the Four Masters, ed. J. O'Donovan, 7 vols. Dublin 1851.
- AI: Annals of Inishfallen, ed. S. MacAirt. Dublin, 1951.
- ALC: Annals of Loch Ce, ed. W. M. Hennessy. 2 vols. London 1871.
- AU: Annals of Ulster, ed. W. M. Hennessy and B. MacCarthy, 4 vols. Dublin 1887-1901.

#### Journals

- JRSAI Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.
- PRIA Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.
- RDKPRI Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records, Ireland

#### Other Abbreviations

- NLI : National Library of Ireland
- NMI : National Museum of Ireland

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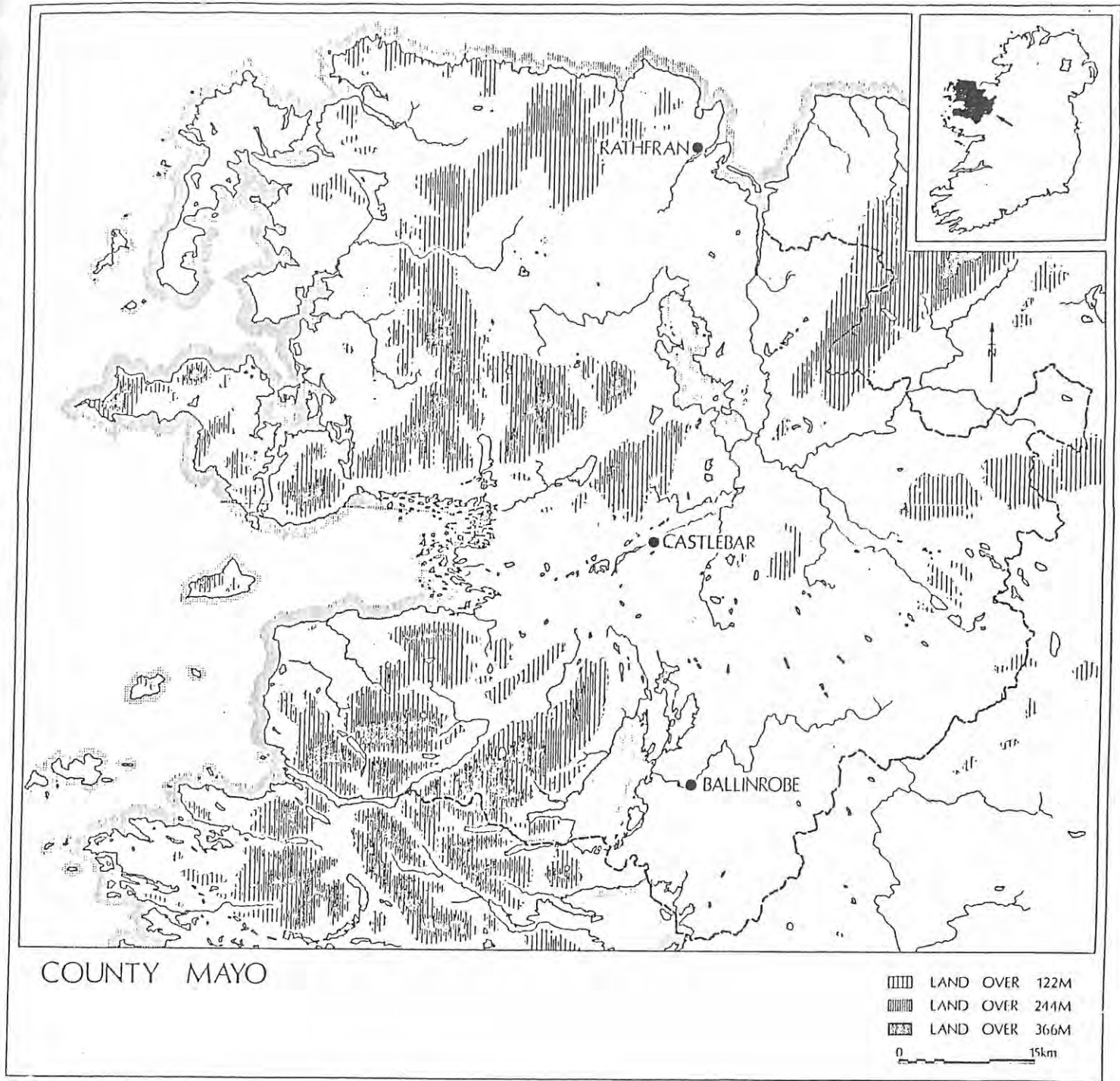


Fig. 1. County Mayo: Location map of towns and boroughs.



Fig. 3. Aerial view of Ballinrobe from the SW (Courtesy Cambridge Aerial Coll.)

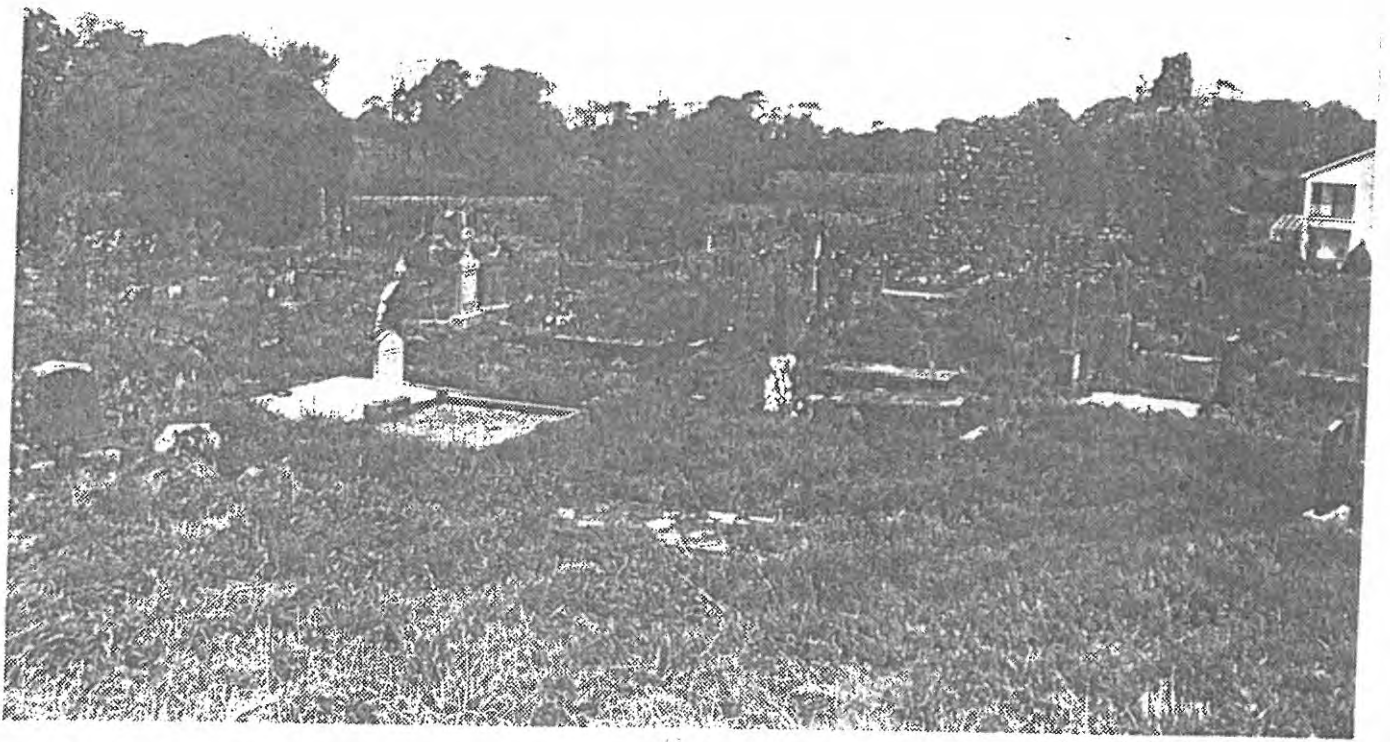


Fig. 4 Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe, from south.



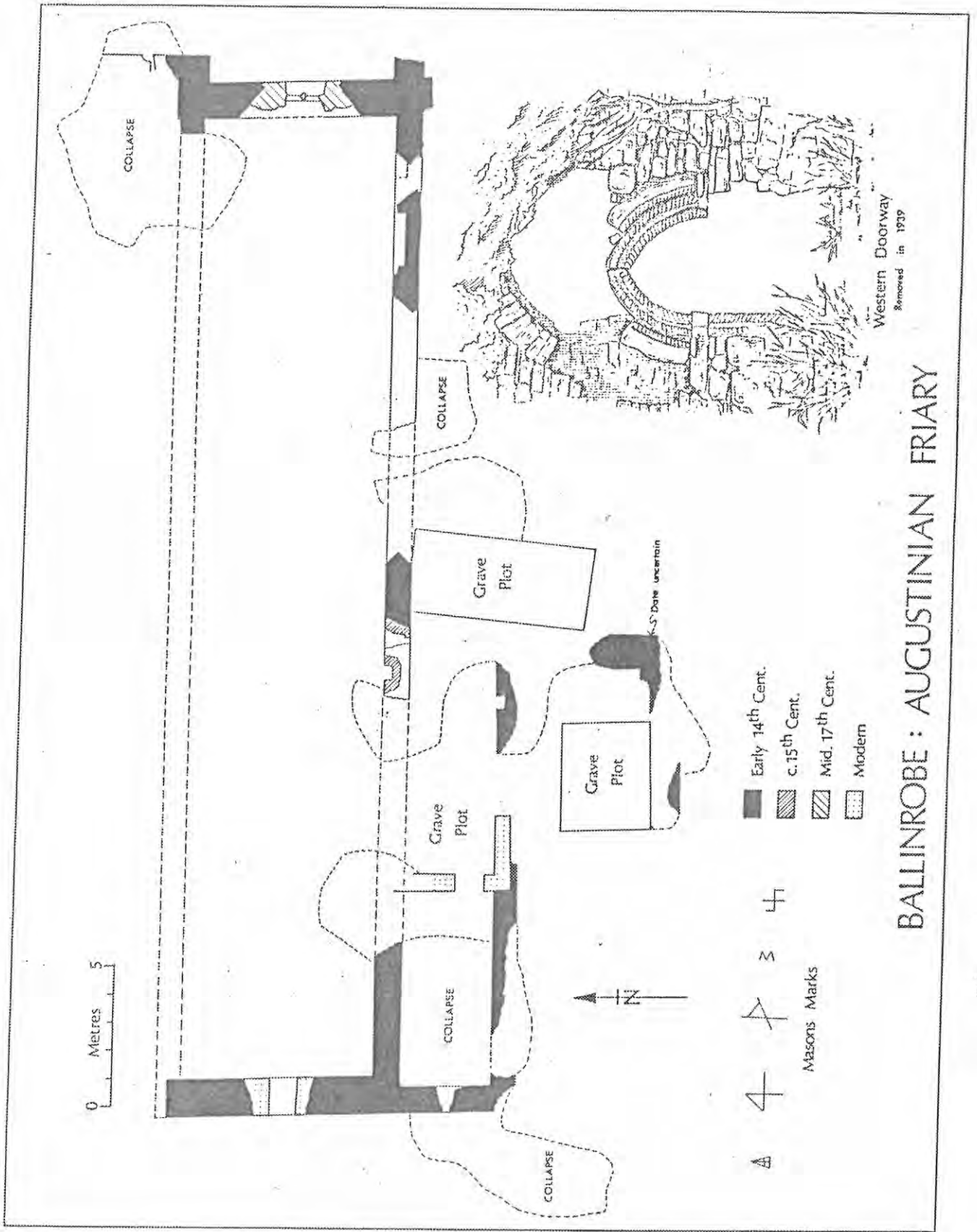


Fig. 5. Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe, ground plan.

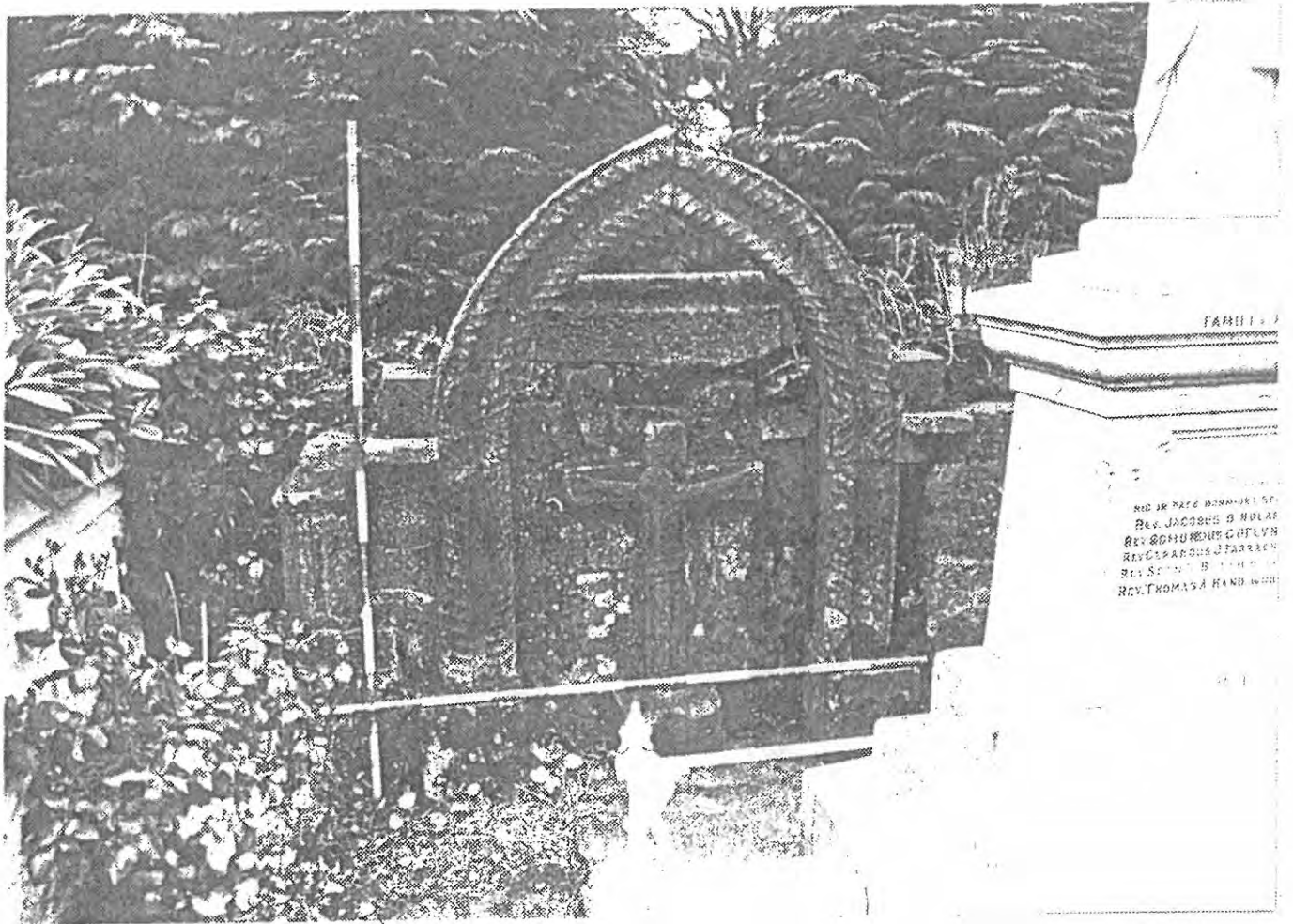


Fig. 6. The re-erected west doorway of the Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe, now in Ballyhaunis.

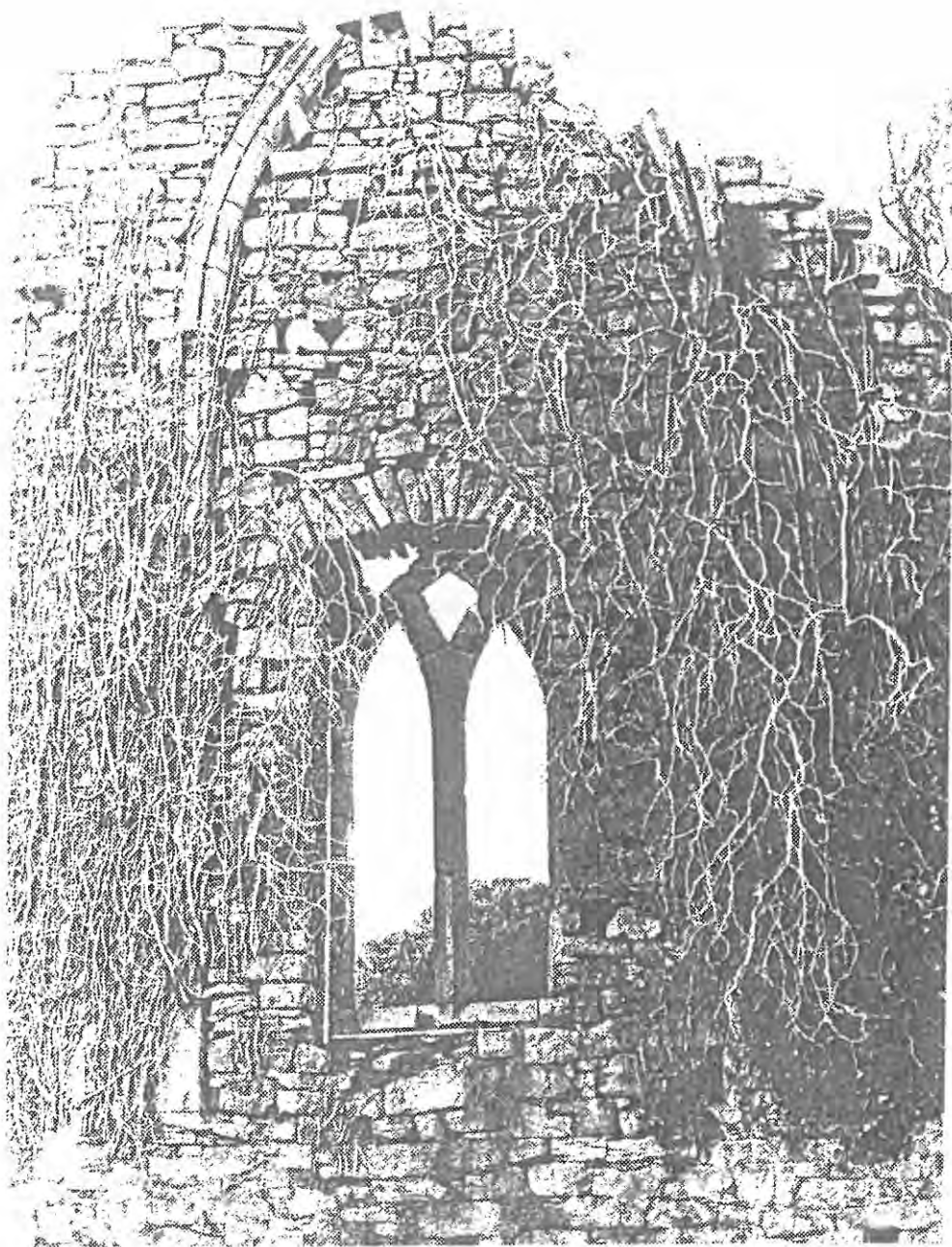


Fig. 7. Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe: east window, viewed from outside.



Fig. 8. Detail of mason's marks on the east window of the Augustinian Friary, Ballinrobe.



Fig. 9. St. Mary's Church, Ballinrobe: Holcroft memorial plaque (1668).

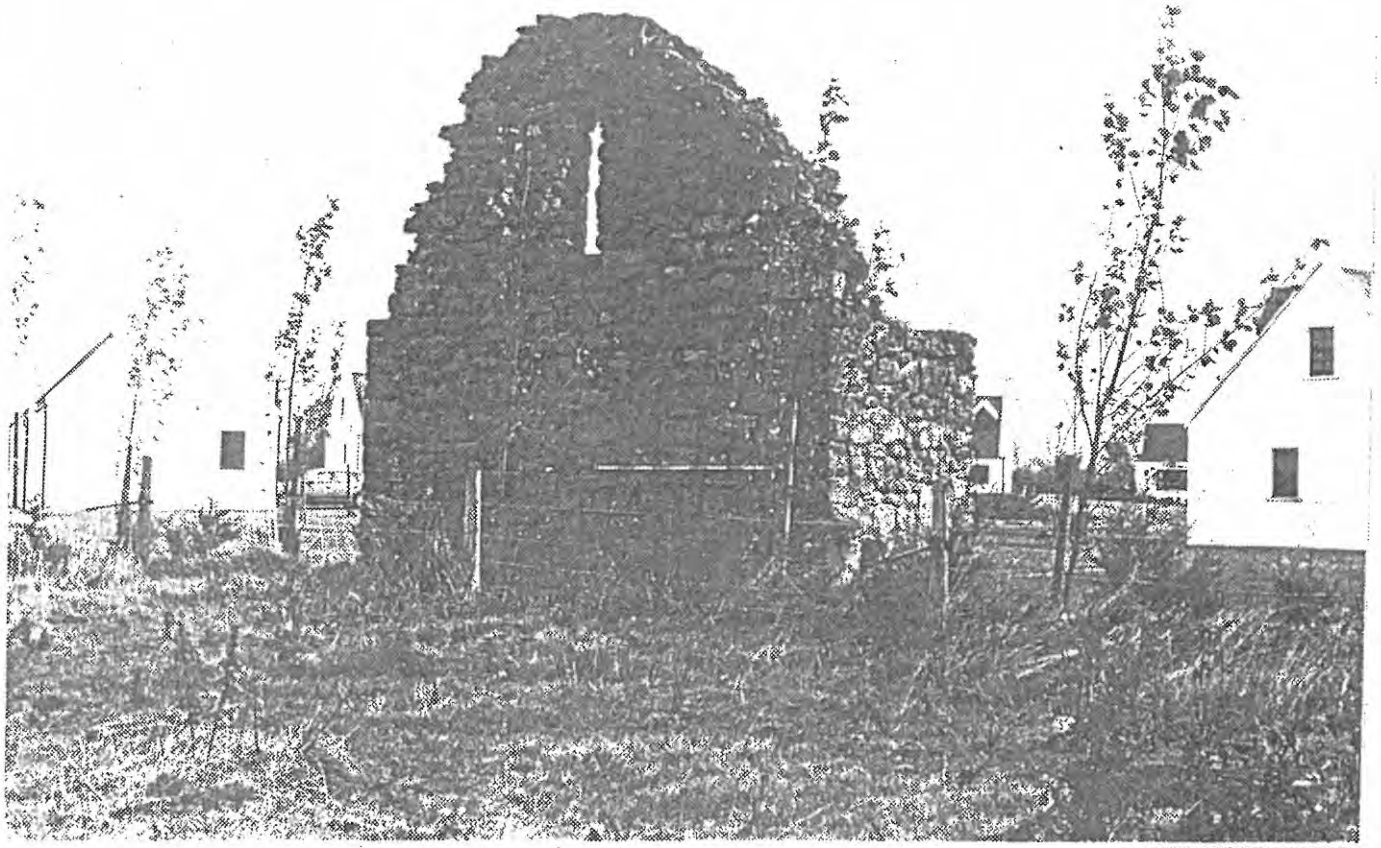


Fig. 10. West gable of Killeenatrava Church, Ballinrobe.

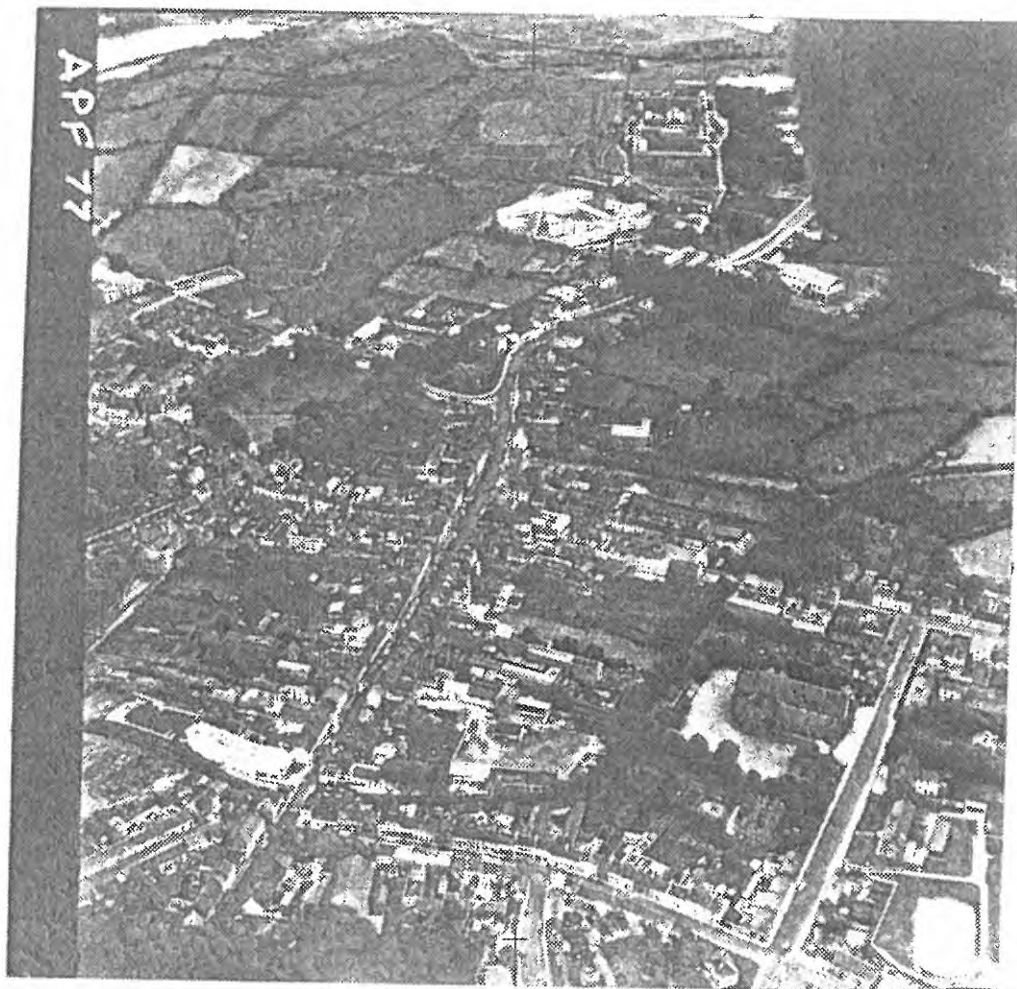


Fig. 12. Aerial view of Castlebar from NE (Courtesy Cambridge Aerial Coll.)

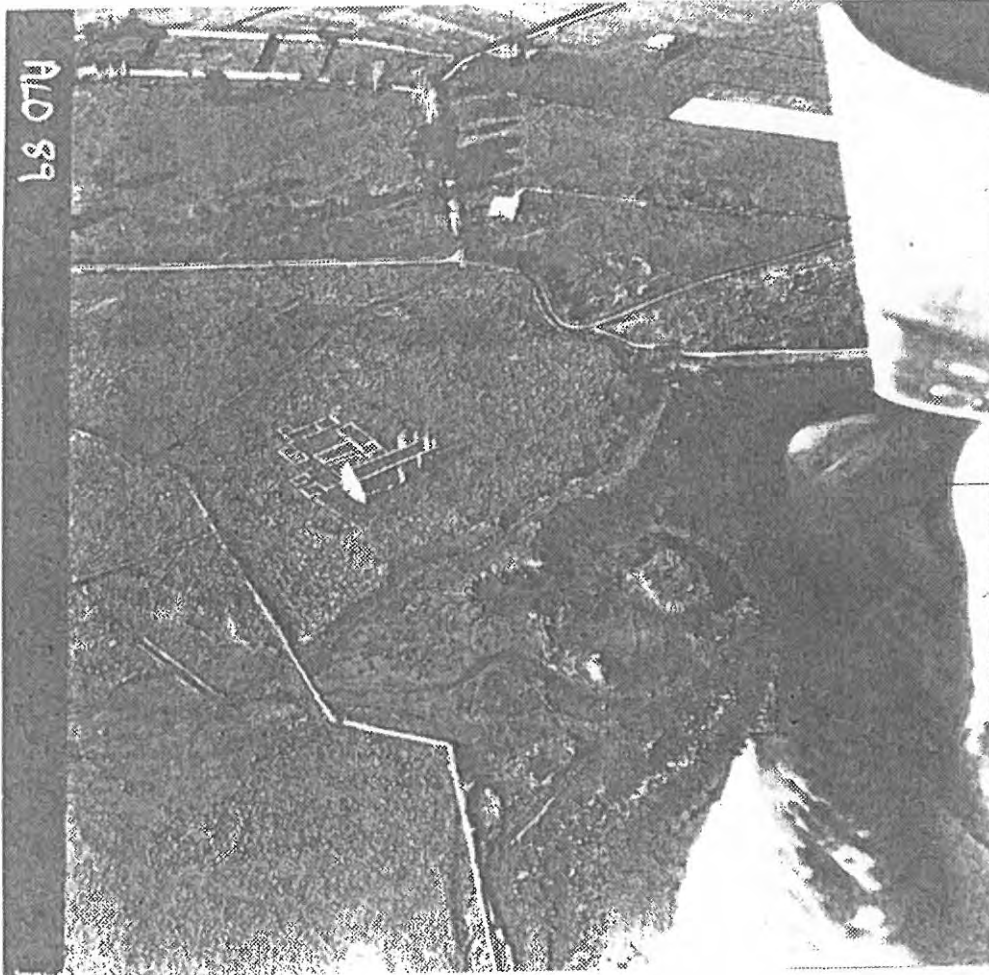


Fig. 14. Aerial view of Rathfran from SW (Courtesy Cambridge Aerial Coll.)





Fig. 15. Templemurry Church, Rathfran, from NW.

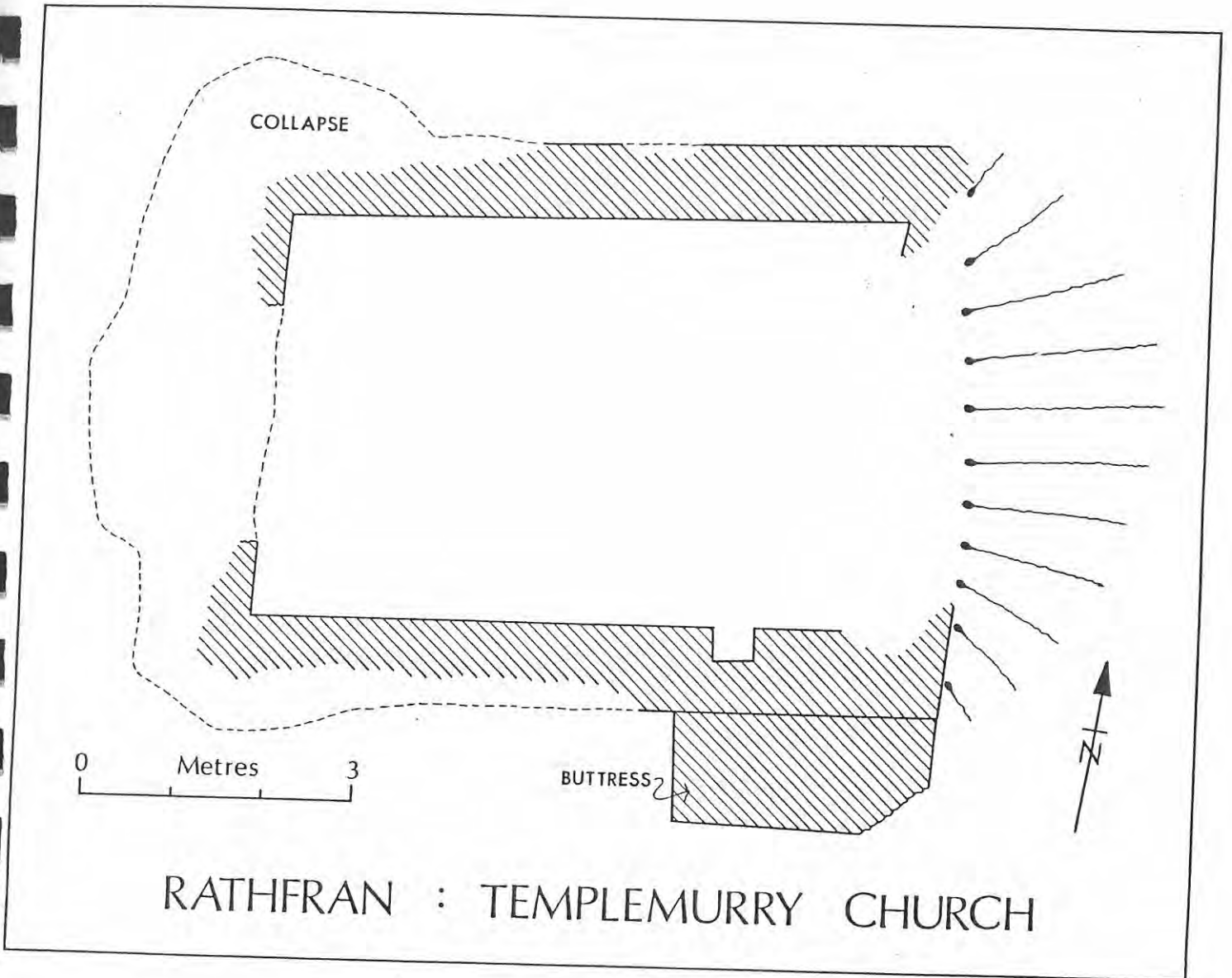
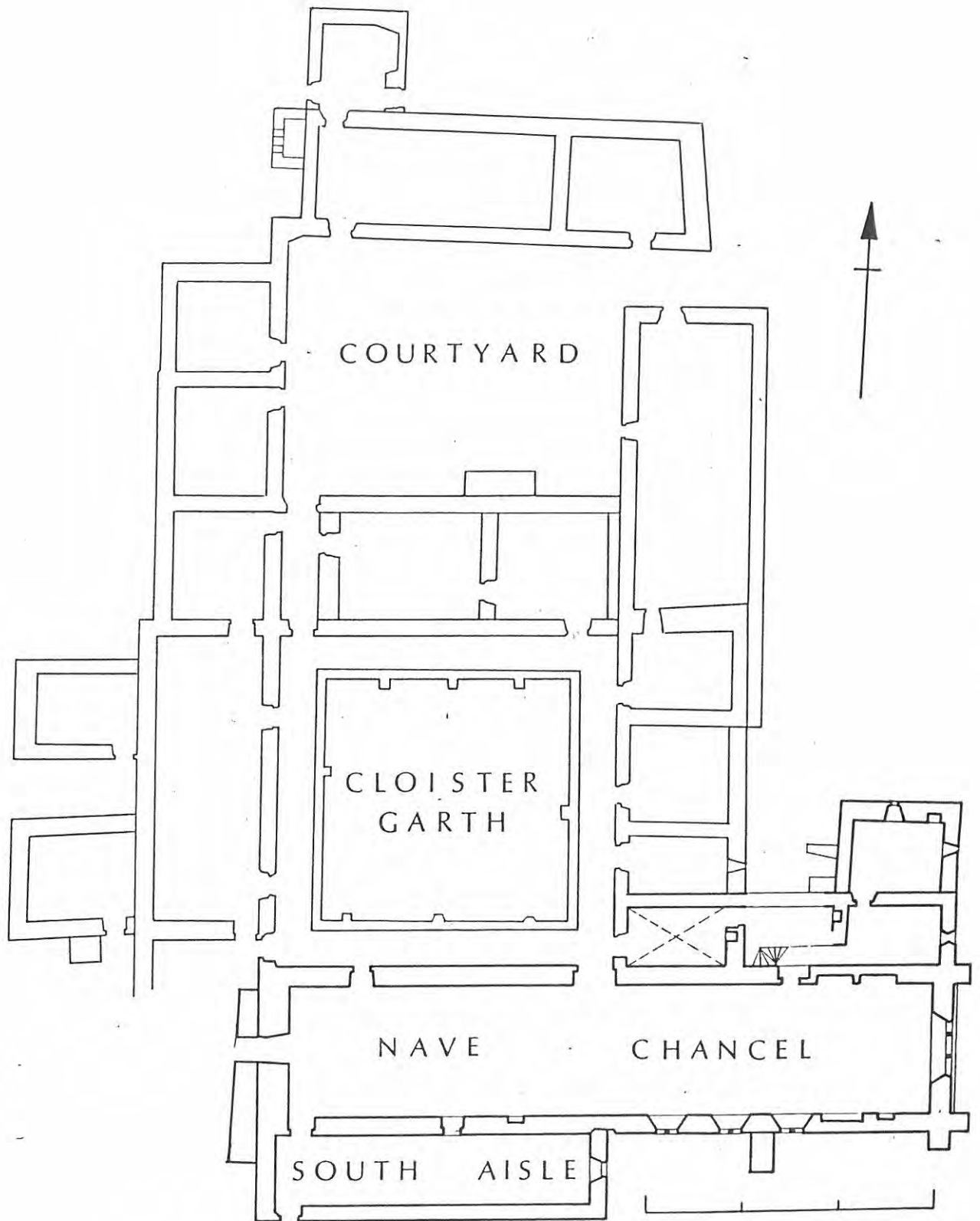


Fig. 16. Templemurry Church, Rathfran, ground plan.



RATHFRAN : DOMINICAN PRIORY

Fig. 17. Outline plan of Dominican Friary, Rathfrán (after Leask).

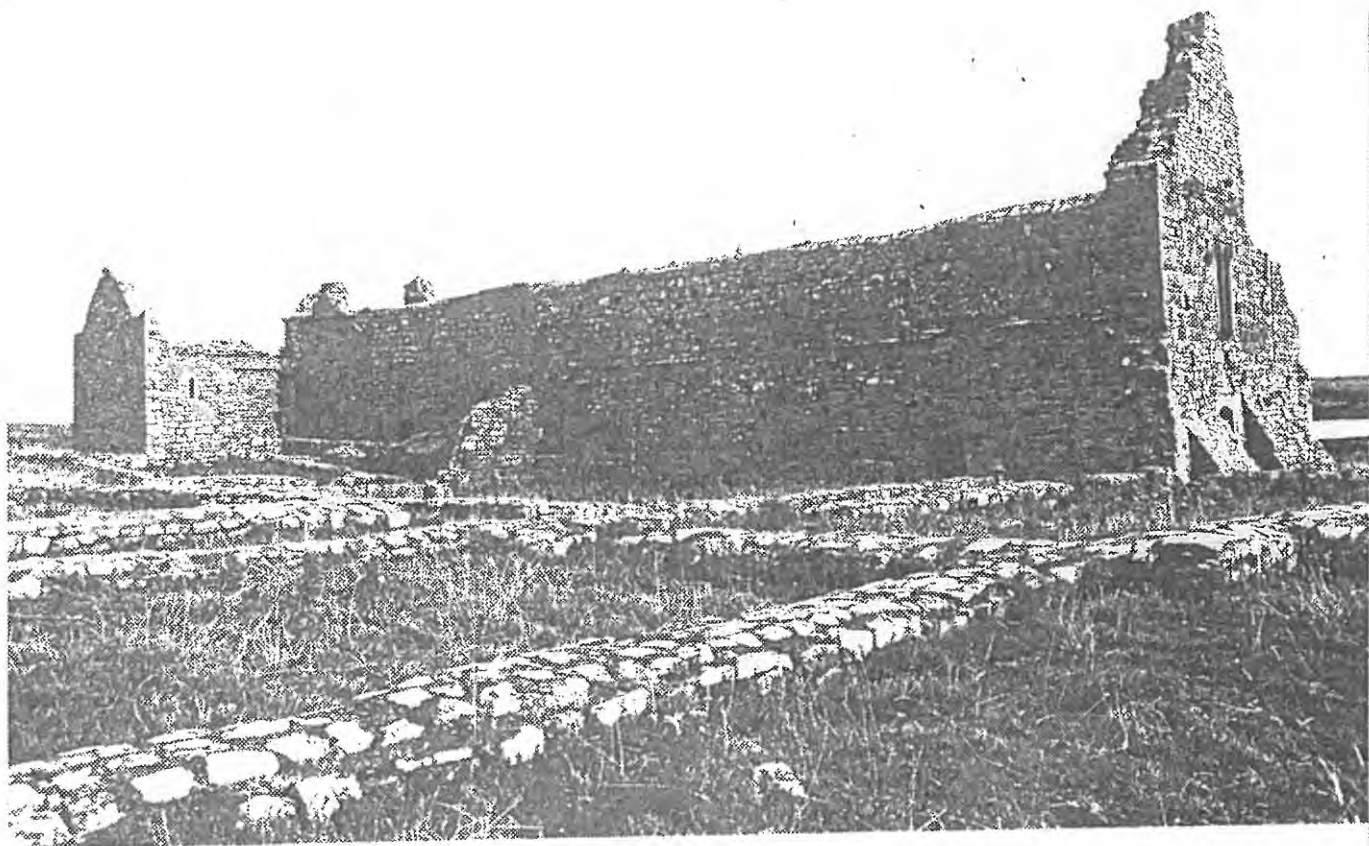


Fig. 18. Dominican Friary, Rathfrán from NW.

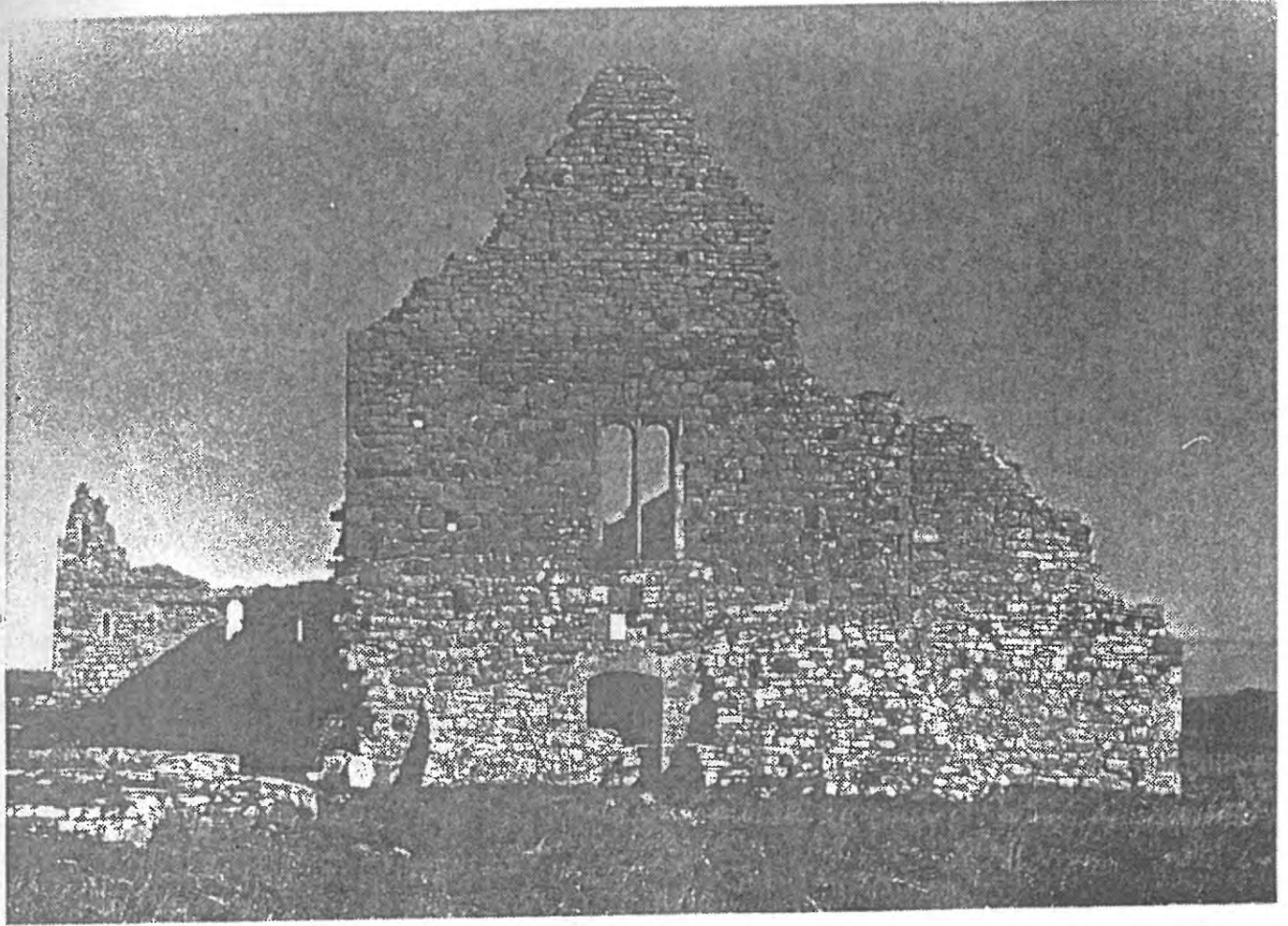


Fig. 19. Dominican Friary, Rathfrank from W.

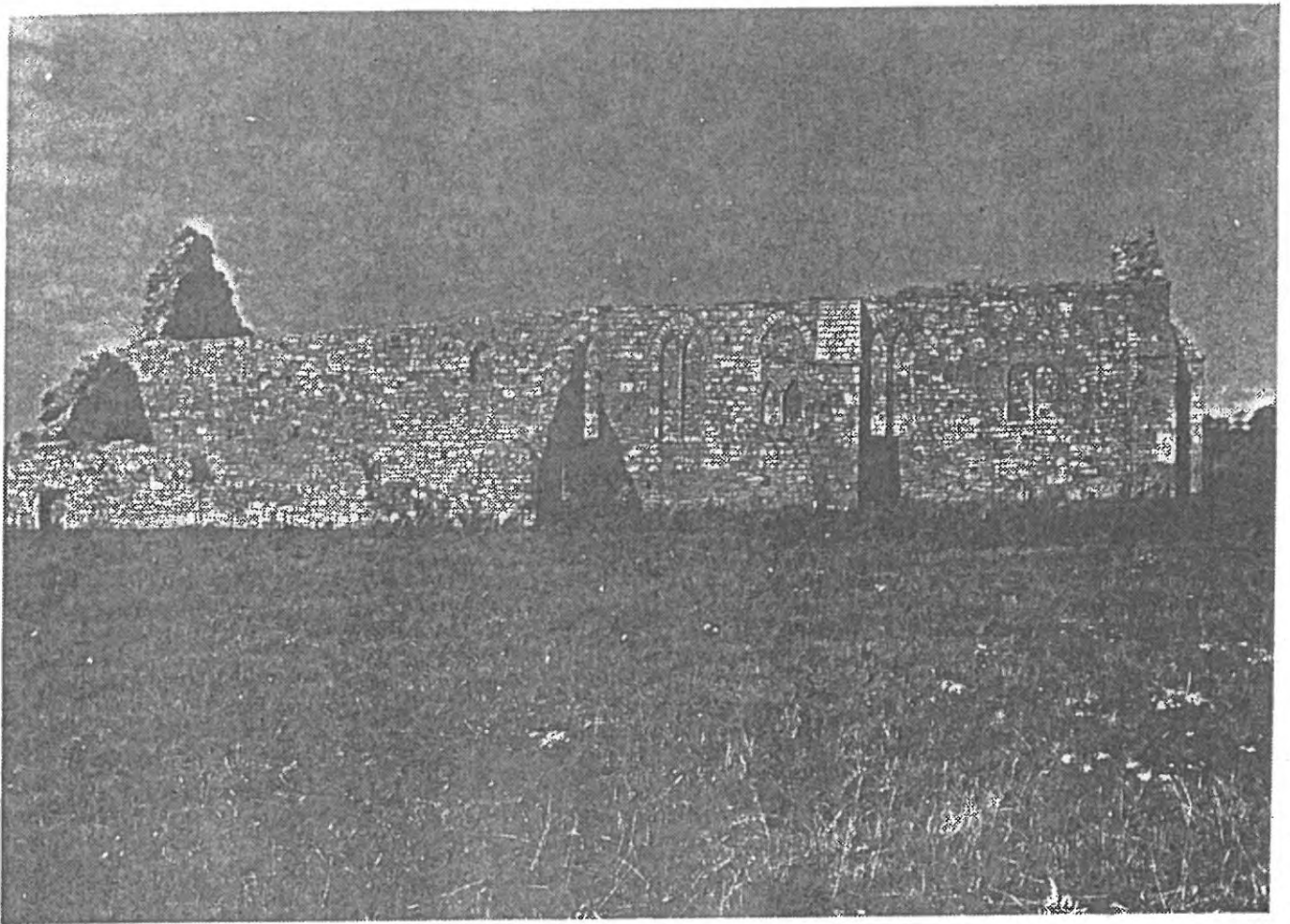


Fig. 20. Dominican Friary, Rathfran from S.

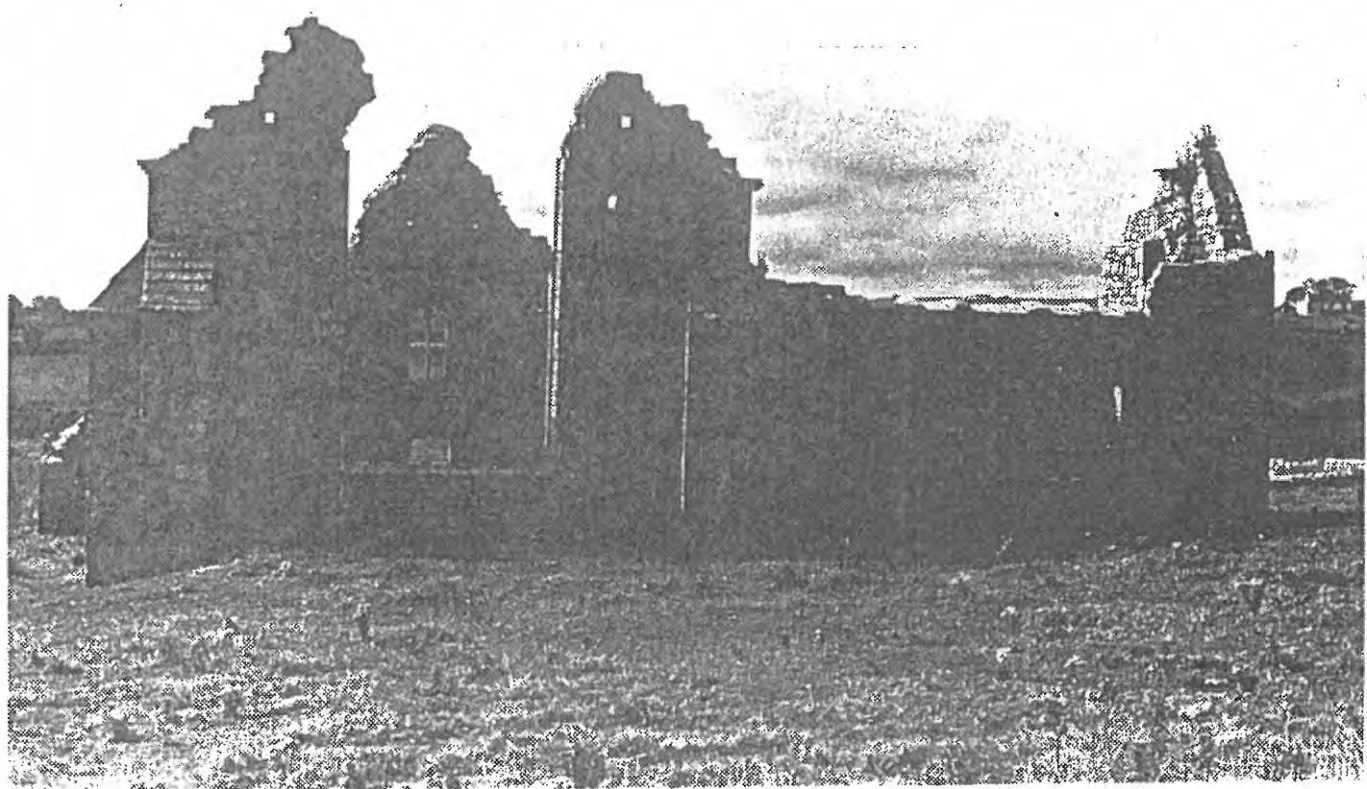


Fig. 21. Dominican Friary, Rathfriland from E.



Fig. 22. South wall of choir, Dominican Friary, Rathfrán.



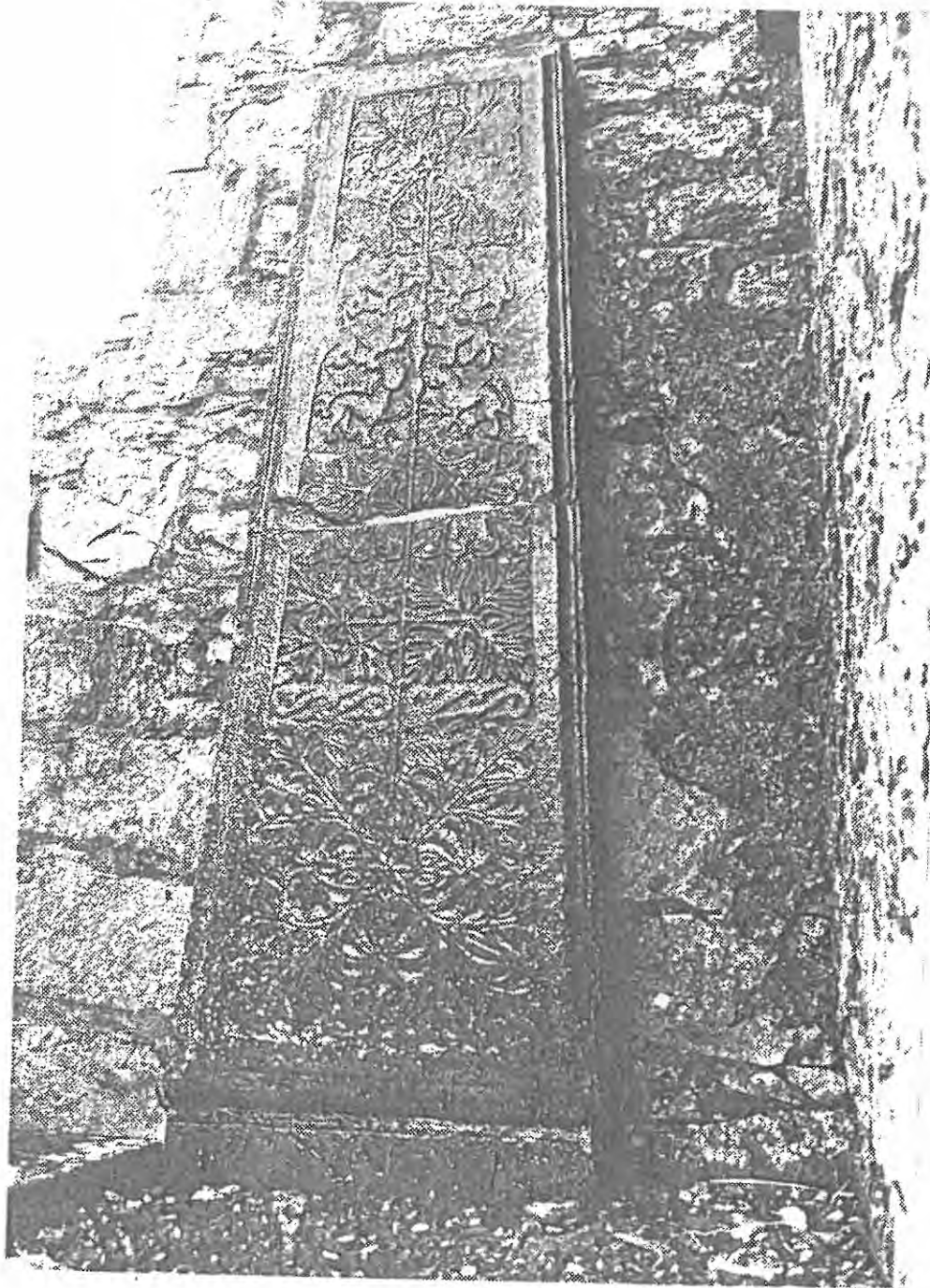


Fig. 23. Dominican Priary, Rathfran: graveslab 15/16th cent..

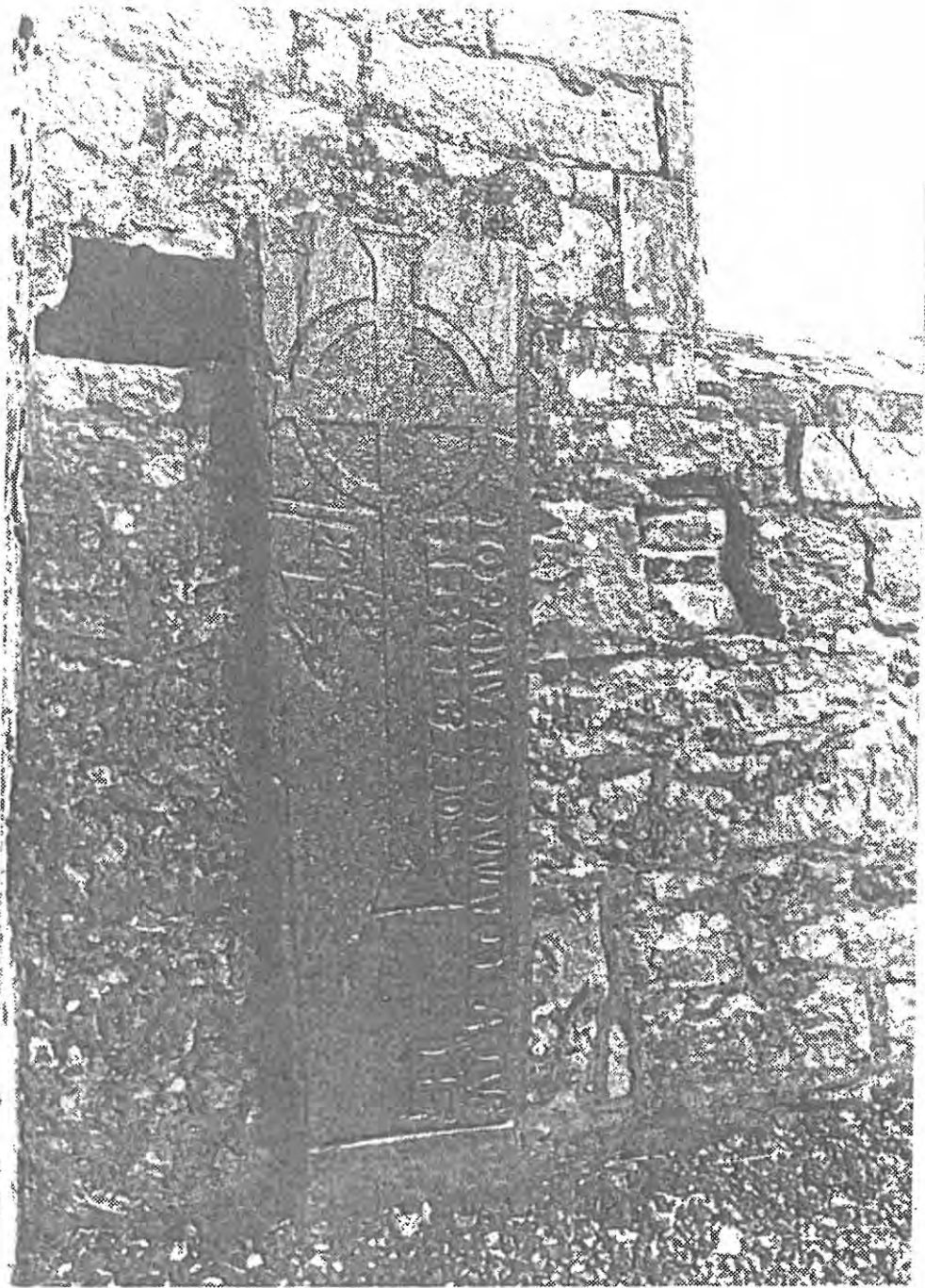


Fig. 24. Dominican Friary, Rathfran: graveslab (1618).



Fig. 25. Seal of the borough of Rathfran (Photo: NMI).