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Interim Report

Archaeological Research Excavations

at



The Black Friary

Trim
Co. Meath

By

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Ministerial Consent No. C420
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Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| | Table of Contents | iii |
| | List of Figures | iv |
| | Summary | 5 |
| 1.1 | <i>Site Location</i> | 6 |
| 1.2 | <i>Circumstances and dates of fieldwork</i> | 6 |
| 2 | Geology and Topography | 7 |
| 2.1 | <i>Solid Geology and Soils</i> | 7 |
| 2.2 | <i>Topography and Landscape</i> | 7 |
| 2.3 | <i>Archaeological and Historical Background</i> | 7 |
| 2.4 | <i>Early Medieval Period (AD 500-1170)</i> | 7 |
| 3 | Late Medieval and Post-Medieval Period (c. AD 1170-1900) | 9 |
| 3.1 | <i>The establishment of de Lacy Power</i> | 9 |
| 3.2 | <i>The early growth of Trim</i> | 9 |
| 3.3 | <i>The history of the town in the late medieval period</i> | 10 |
| 3.4 | <i>The late medieval to post-medieval period</i> | 10 |
| 3.5 | <i>Excavations on the Trim Street Reconstruction project</i> | 11 |
| 3.6 | <i>Archaeological Background to the Black Friary</i> | 12 |
| 4 | Archaeological Excavations | 14 |
| 4.1 | <i>Overview</i> | 14 |
| 4.2 | <i>Phase One – Medieval</i> | 14 |
| 4.3 | <i>Phase Two – Post-Medieval to Modern</i> | 15 |
| 4.4 | <i>Finds and Samples</i> | 15 |
| 5 | Discussion | 17 |
| 6 | Bibliography | 19 |
| | Appendix 1 | 20 |

List of Figures

- Figure 1** Extract from OS Map 2005 and aerial photographs showing site location
- Figure 2** Sites listed within the Record of Monuments and Places within 1.5km of the excavation
- Figure 3** Shaded relief map showing results of the topographical survey, 22nd – 26th June 2010, with site grid and Cuttings 1 and 2
- Figure 4** Mid-excavation plan of Cuttings 1 and 2
- Figure 5** Cutting 1: F3 (in situ wall) and associated rubble deposits
- Figure 6** East face of wall F3 with E/W extension to wall

Summary

This interim report details the first season of excavation at Black Friary, Blackfriary townland in Trim Co, Meath. The season ran in two sessions, one during June which focused on survey, geophysical work and preliminary clean back of areas containing tumbled masonry, and the second in August. The excavations at Black Friary, a Dominican Friary founded in 1263, which is in the ownership of the local authority and is a monument protected by Preservation Order (No. 4 of 1972) under the National Monuments Acts, were carried out under ministerial consent C420 issued to Trim Town Council and Finola O'Carroll. An excavation recording number E4127 was issued by the National Museum for recording to the excavations director and author of this report, Finola O'Carroll.

Two surveys were carried out prior to any excavations taking place. A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken by Ian Elliott of IGAS Ltd over the entire site under detection Registration No. R223. The results of this work, which were somewhat hampered by the amount of metalliferous debris scattered over the site as a result of periodic episodes of illegal dumping, are reported on separately.

A topographical survey was carried out by Niall Lynch for IAFS Ltd which covered approximately 60% of the area occupied by the buildings of the Friary. This showed quite clearly that the remains of the Friary buildings can be discerned sub-surface and informed the placement of the cuttings.

Two cuttings were opened during this season. Both were centred on visible pieces of collapsed masonry and were adjacent and within what is believed to be the church. The remains of in situ walls were uncovered, believed to form part of a belfry tower adjoining the church on its north side. There is a considerable overburden of destruction layers containing modern and post-medieval glass and ceramics. Fragments of medieval pottery, some iron objects, small pieces of plaster some of which had traces of paint and two fragments of stained glass were also recovered.

1 Introduction

The IAFS are conducting a research and teaching excavation in the Black Friary, Trim, Co. Meath under the direction of Finola O'Carroll. The site is in the ownership of Trim Town Council to whom Ministerial Consent (C420/E4127) has been issued under the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. This report constitutes a Preliminary report under the terms of that act. This season's work at Black Friary uncovered some of walls relating to the belfry tower of the church of the Friary. Previous work in the vicinity of the site carried out by Matthew Seaver for CRDS (Consent No. C150, Registration No. E2398) uncovered the remains of a well into which a later burial had been cut, as well as the remains of up to ten other inhumations dating to the High Medieval period. It is thought that these burials constitute part of the cemetery associated with the Black Friary.

1.1 Site Location

The site is located in Blackfriary townland on the northern side of the River Boyne in Trim, County Meath (NGR 280225, 257359). A lane runs east from the Kells road and then continues north-south behind the rear of the County Council houses on the west side of the site. It is bounded to the north, east and south by housing and shops, (Fig. 1). It lies approximately 200m to the north east of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Trim, which is located on the highest point in the town close to the river (Fig. 2).

1.2 Circumstances and dates of fieldwork

Arising out of the work carried out by CRDS Ltd in Trim which led to the publication of a monograph, *Uncovering Medieval Trim* (Potterton and Seaver 2009), the IAFS, set up as part of CRDS in 2005, decided to undertake a teaching excavation at the site of the Dominican Friary, or Black Friary, in Trim. It is intended to run this excavation as both a research and teaching excavation and a public archaeology project with the involvement of those in the community who are interested in the work and in the future use of the site.

Fieldwork took place during the months of June and August, and students from a number of countries, as well as some local people, were involved.

2 Geology and Topography

2.1 Solid Geology and Soils

The site is located in an area of Carboniferous Age rocks. The bedrock under the site consists of Lower Carboniferous Age sandstones and limestone. These rocks represent the northward return of the sea at the end of the Devonian, c. 360 million years ago, owing to the opening of a new ocean to the south called the Palaeo-Tethys in what is now central Europe.

2.2 Topography and Landscape

Blackfriary is located on a hill at 63m O.D. The land continues to rise to the northwest along the Athboy and Kells roads. The terrain falls to the south of the Black Friary into Trim town towards the flat floodplain of the River Boyne. The exception is the knoll on which St Patricks Cathedral sits also at 63m O.D. The Black Friary site is currently located within a large field which contains earthworks bounded to the north and east by houses built in the 1980s. To the west it is bounded by County Council houses built during the 1930s and to the south by Supervalu supermarket and further houses from the 1980s. The field is the property of the state and is managed by the Office of Public Works. The laneway to the east of the County Council houses is managed by Trim Town Council. It occupies an area of about 2 hectares, which is now in uncultivated grass and scrub. A distinctive bank and ditch runs north south through the centre of the site, and may mark the limits of the Friary precinct (to the west) with the remaining area being occupied by associated small fields or kitchen gardens.

2.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

There are no prehistoric monuments situated within a 1km radius of Trim. However recorded finds from the vicinity provide some record of human activity in the Neolithic and the Bronze Age.

Two stone axeheads (NMI: 1881 431 and NMI 1929:1593) were recovered in the vicinity of Trim. A number of Bronze Age artefacts have been discovered in the vicinity of the town. The closest recorded monument of prehistoric date is the tumulus (ME036:037) located in Dogstown (third division).

Excavations by Mandy Stephens and Finola O'Carroll in the green space to the south of the castle uncovered a number of deposits in peaty soils. One of these deposits contained a number of pig bones, identified as the forelimbs, and these were dated to 370 – 110 BC, (O'Carroll and Stephens 2007; Beglane 2009).

2.4 Early Medieval Period (AD 500-1170)

The name Trim is derived from the Irish "*Ath Truim*" meaning "*the ford of the elder tree*" (Herity, 2001, 67). This suggests the location had strategic importance as a crossing point of the Boyne from an early period. The *Book of Armagh* refers to an established settlement and the fortified royal residence (probable ringfort) of *Cenéil Lóeguire Breg* located in Trim prior to the establishment of the monastery. The exact location is not known but was probably sited close to a fording point (Hennessy, 2004, 1). Hennessy suggests two possible locations for the ford; where Watergate St. meets the Boyne and the later medieval bridge linking High St. to Market St. and Castle St. The Boyne would have been wider and shallower in the early medieval and possibly extended as far south as Market St. (Hennessy, 2004, 1).

The founding of the monastic settlement is ascribed to St. Loman and the foundation legend of Trim is documented in the *Book of Armagh*. The *Book of Armagh* suggests the royal residence was granted to the church and used as the site of a monastic settlement. The royal residence was relocated across

the river to a site at *Cluain Lagen* (Hennessy, 2004, 1). Annalistic references to the church record the death of the Abbot of Trim, *Cormac mac Colmáin*, in 746. The *mac Colmáins* formed a local ecclesiastical dynasty in the eighth century, controlling the abbacy.

The surviving references in the book of Armagh suggest that the church of Trim may have been founded as early as the fifth century - before the founding of the church of Armagh (Byrne, 1984, 316-319). The successors of St. Loman were variously described as Abbots or Bishops until the diocese of Trim was united with the diocese of Meath in 1152 (Lewis, 1837, II, 643).

It has been suggested that the curving street pattern formed by High Street and Navan Gate Street may represent the vestigial remnants of the early monastic boundary. However, Hennessy disputes this theory and suggests two more likely locations: at St. Patrick's Cathedral, or east of the cathedral centred around Haggard St. (Hennessy, 2004, 1). The street pattern of the town, north of the Boyne, is unusual in a medieval town, being irregular and may represent settlement outside a monastic enclosure in the early medieval period (Hennessy, 2004, 3).

There are a number of later Annalistic references to the monastery. These record the burning and partial destruction of the monastery in 784 and 1128, and further attacks in 1143 and 1155 (Bradley, 1989, 41).

Excavations carried out in the vicinity of St. Patrick's Cathedral uncovered a number of burials, (Kieran 2009) one of which has been dated to AD 780 – 1030 (ibid, 80). Burials were uncovered on Loman Street close to St. Patrick's Cathedral during works related to the Trim Street Restoration Project (Seaver et al 2009) and one burial was dated to AD 540 – 640 (Potterton and Seaver 2009, 54).

The later adaptation of Trim as the centre of a Norman lordship reflects common themes in the pattern of Norman colonization – the utilization of pre-existing church and monastic sites as foci for nucleated settlement, and the establishment of fortified centres situated at strategically significant major river crossings (Graham, 1976, 38-46). At the time of the arrival of the Normans in Ireland monastic centres such as Trim had to some extent taken on the function of nucleated settlements.

3 Late Medieval and Post-Medieval Period (c. AD 1170-1900)

3.1 *The establishment of de Lacy Power*

After the Norman invasion of Ireland the entire "Liberty of Meath" was granted to a marcher Lord – Hugh de Lacy - by Henry II. The original "Liberty of Meath" originated in the early medieval territory of *Midhe* and included not only the present county of Meath but also Westmeath and parts of Longford and Offaly (Graham, 1974, 40).

De Lacy divided Meath into a number of smaller units, which were divided amongst nine major sub-tenants. For himself he retained large areas of Eastmeath (the modern county of Meath) focused around a number of Seignorial manors including: Trim, Ratoath, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Clonard, Duleek and Drogheda. These mottes were focused primarily on the location of major river crossings, defensible sites and on pre-existing church and monastic sites. The Boyne River itself – an important line of communication - also served as a focus for colonization. Trim fulfilled all of these criteria (Graham, 1974, 38-46).

3.2 *The early growth of Trim*

Trim became the centre of the new lordship of Meath and a ringwork castle was constructed on the site of the present stone castle sometime before 1174. The construction of this first fortification is described in "*The song of Dermot and the Earl*" (Bradley, 1989, 42). Excavations on the site of the present castle carried out by Alan Hayden in 1995 revealed evidence of this earlier fortification - consisting of "the remains of a ringwork with an earthen bank, timber palisade and an external ditch" (See Appendix 2: 1995: 237). The ringwork was attacked and destroyed by Ruaidri Ua Conchobair – king of Connacht in 1174, and refortified the following year (Bradley, 1989, 42). Upon de Lacy's return to Ireland in 1175 work began on the stone castle at Trim (Dúchas, 2002, 13-14). When de Lacy was killed in 1186 the Lordship of Meath passed temporarily into the control of the Crown, as Hugh's son - Walter de Lacy - was too young to assume control of the lordship until 1189. Henry II even considered putting the young Prince John directly in control of Meath (Hillaby, 1992-3, 5).

The town of Trim was established as a borough by Walter de Lacy in the early phases of the conquest - in the period between 1194 and 1199. The documentary evidence points to the existence of burgages and burgesses in Trim before 1188, suggesting the grant extended privileges to the members of an established Anglo-Norman settlement, rather than being just a speculative grant designed to attract settlement to a non-existent borough (MacNiocaill, 1985, 374-5).

The town had a clearly laid out municipal structure allowing for a degree of self-government. Town officials included a portreeve (mayor), a recorder, a town clerk and two sergeants at arms. The portreeve also functioned as a justice of the peace. (Lewis 1837, II, 644).

The town grew rapidly - due to its dual function as a commercial and administrative centre for the new lordship. It functioned as a market centre - agricultural produce gathered there from the surrounding areas, both for processing and transport to the ports; at a time when the Norman colonization brought about a rapid increase in the production of grain for an overseas market. The river Boyne was navigable as far as Trim, and the town constituted one of a network of towns on the Boyne providing the infrastructure for the increasing volumes of agricultural produce.

The town was likely to have been divided into commercial/manufacturing areas, i.e. Fishamble St. (now Abbey Lane) is the probable location of the fish market (Hennessy, 2004, 3; Potterton, 2005, 157).

3.3 The history of the town in the late medieval period

The town is rich in surviving medieval structures – many of which date from the 13th century, indicating the wealth and expansion of the borough during this period. St Patrick's church (ME036:019) – now the cathedral for the Church of Ireland diocese of Meath - may be of pre-Norman origin and may possibly have been the site of the early monastic settlement. The church may have functioned as the parish church until that function was taken over by the Augustinian house in the later medieval period. The Dominican Friary (ME036:021) was founded by Geoffrey de Geneville in 1263. It was located immediately north of the town near Athboy gate. A complex of earthworks occupy the site, which illustrate the extent of the original buildings (Bradley, 1989, 43, see also Appendix 1).

A Franciscan friary (ME036:024) was located on the site of the existing courthouse. This foundation may have been founded in the first half of the 13th century. Recent excavations on Castle Street have turned up human remains, which appear to relate to this foundation. The friary passed out of use in the 16th century and a courthouse was built on the site – replaced by the existing courthouse in 1805 (Bradley, 1989, 43; See also Appendix 1; Appendix 2: 96E247).

St. Mary's Augustinian Abbey – an important religious foundation - was located on the north bank of the Boyne (ME036:021), and was probably founded in the 13th century. The remains, consisting of the south and east walls of the tower, are known today as "the yellow steeple" (Bradley, 1989, 43, see also Appendix 1).

The 13th century also saw the town grow beyond the defences. Emmet St., outside the Dublin Gate and the area outside the Navan Gate have been identified as possible suburbs (Hennessy, 2004, 3)

Walter de Lacy died in 1241 and his extensive holdings were ultimately divided between his two granddaughters – Matilda and Margaret. Matilda – who was granted Trim and half of the de Lacy estates - married Geoffrey de Geneville, a French noble. The castle was renovated during his tenure and in 1290 de Geneville received the right to carry out a murage toll to build defences around the Castle and town (a murage grant was paid or extracted from the citizenry of a town for the maintenance of a town wall). This appears to be the earliest documentary reference to the enclosure of the town. Trim was the only Meath town apart from Drogheda to receive murage before the end of the 14th century (Thomas, 1992, 196) After de Geneville retired from public life (he entered the Dominican Priory of St. Mary's in Trim – which he had founded) his estates passed to his son-in-law - Roger Mortimer, Earl of March. The estates remained within the Mortimer family for 120 years, though for much of this time the family did not occupy it.

14th century Trim saw the Bruce invasion, poor harvests, famine, the Black Death, the destruction of the Franciscan Friary by the great Boyne flood, St. Mary's Abbey by fire and the encroachment of the Gaelic enemies. The town defences were in disrepair (Hennessy, 2004).

Roger accompanied King Richard II on his Irish expedition of 1394 and remained behind – taking up residence in Trim. He was granted a licence to impose tolls on all goods entering the town for the purpose of "surrounding the town of Trim with a stone wall, paving it anew, improving the town, and in repressing the adjacent enemies and rebels". The town defences (ME036:028, ME036:047) enclose an area of 49 acres and have a circumference of 2km. (Bradley 1989, 43). The existing town walls appear to date from the late 14th and early 15th centuries (Dúchas, 2002, 70).

3.4 The late medieval to post-medieval period

The castle was unoccupied and neglected during the first half of the 15th century – due to the minority of Edmund Mortimer - fifth Earl of March. Edmund came to Ireland as the King's Lieutenant in 1424 but died in 1425. His death signalled the end of the Mortimer family's tenure of Trim - his

estates were broken up and the castle passed into the hands of Richard of York. The castle was partially refortified by Richard in his role as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1449. After the defeat of the Yorkist Cause during the Wars of the Roses, Trim castle passed into the royal estates (Dúchas, 2002, 18-29).

The castle was held by Silken Thomas of the Fitzgerald family during the Geraldine rebellion against the Crown of 1534, and only delivered into the hands of the English through the treachery of its commander – Christopher Parese (Irish Builder, 1886, 34).

A brief description of the town survives from 1584, when the parson of Trim – Robert Draper - was advocating the establishment of a University in Trim, indicating its size and wealth: “...*The towne itselfe is full of very faire castles and stone houses, builded after the Englishe fashion, and devyded into five faire streetes*” (Byrne, 2004, 277).

In 1624 the “*scite and manor of Trym, surrounded with a stone wall, and containing therein three acres, divers houses and gardens, haggards &c., in Trym*” was granted to Adam Loftus. The deed mentions 12 cottages, 2 shops and a range of lands and agricultural yields from the hinterland of the town (Evans 1886, 30-35).

The Confederate and Cromwellian wars of the seventeenth century (1641-52) caused widespread devastation throughout Ireland, with a drastic drop in population and the destruction of the country's economic base. Trim was of considerable strategic significance – providing a strongpoint for the defence of the Pale (Dublin and its immediate hinterland, which was the centre of English power in Ireland). Trim was first captured by the rebels during the Gaelic insurrection of 1641. It was recaptured from the rebels by an English force under the command of Sir Charles Coote in May 1642. Coote was killed shortly afterwards and Sir Richard Grenville assumed command of the town. Grenville became Governor of Trim, established a substantial military base, and carried out a brutal series of raids on the surrounding areas (Miller, 1973, 63-66). However he was careful to prevent harm to Trim itself and its immediate hinterland - this may explain why Trim itself survived the wars relatively intact. The castle was refortified by Colonel Fenwicke in 1647. It was briefly captured by the Royalists in 1649, and shortly afterwards captured by the Cromwellian forces – the Royalists fleeing without destroying the fortifications as they had been ordered – leaving the walls and castles intact (Kelly 2005, 67-71).

The Civil Survey (1654-56) gives a brief description of the town – itemising the various buildings still intact: 74 tenements and 9 houses are listed. Six of the tenements were in the possession of the “The towne of Trim”. The major landholders are the Earl of Roscommon and the “*Lord Ranallah*” (Ranelagh) (Simington 1940, V, 249-250). The Downe Survey of 1656 – a cartographic source depicting forfeited estates along with written descriptions - mentions two intact gates – the Navan gate and the Dublin Gate. It also describes the buildings in the town as “*lowe, Strong and Decent*” and mentions a “*markett on Satterday every weeke which affords Provisions, good store of yarne and cloth.*”

Though Trim declined in significance in the post-medieval period, the town was “*still a place of considerable importance*” in 1837, containing 570 houses - “many of which are neatly built...a small flour-mill, a brewery, and a tannery”, and with a population of 3282 (Lewis 1837, II, 644).

3.5 Excavations on the Trim Street Reconstruction project

Excavations in recent years on the Trim Street Reconstruction Project by CRDS Ltd. have recovered a wealth of archaeological remains. Excavations under ministerial consent C121/139, E2016 uncovered two major sites (Stephens 2009). On the Castle Lawn the remains of the former course of the Leper river were uncovered. They contained deposits of animal bone which may have been the result of ritual feasting and were radiocarbon dated to the earlier Iron Age. A series of inhumations were

uncovered cut into these peaty deposits and dated to between the thirteenth-fourteenth century. Part of the castle moat was also revealed. On Emmet St. a series of houses fronting on to the street with pits, wells and surfaces to the rear dated to between the thirteenth and sixteenth century were excavated. This indicates a significant suburb outside the Dublin Gate.

Excavations and monitoring under ministerial consent C150/E2398 revealed a further series of sites (Seaver 2008, 2009, Shine 2007). To the north of the river excavations at Athboy Gate uncovered a large ditch and a stone structure. This is likely to be the gate structure. Deposits within were dated to the thirteenth-fourteenth century. Monitoring on Haggard St/High St. uncovered metalled street surfaces with overlying organic deposits. At Navan Gate a medieval ditch was found bordering the street in the area outside the line of walls known as Greek Park.

3.6 Archaeological Background to the Black Friary

The Black or Dominican Friary at Trim was founded by Geoffrey de Geneville, Lord of Trim, in 1263 (Potterton 2005, 319). He had inherited the title by marrying Matilda, the granddaughter of Walter de Lacy, and controlled a wide area known as the Liberty of Trim. De Geneville spent his final years at the Friary and was buried there in 1314. The Dominican order had arrived relatively late into Ireland (1224) and founded religious houses in Irish medieval towns in the thirteenth century (Barry 1987, 159). Due to their relatively late arrival and the nature of their ministry they were primarily granted sites outside towns. The house was probably dedicated to St Mary of the Assumption. The friary was of considerable importance and was the location for a meeting of Irish bishops which took place at the Friary in 1291 and indicates the status of the institution. The Archbishop of Armagh held a visitation in the guesthouse in 1367. The Black Friary was the location for Parliamentary meetings in 1446 and 1491 (Hennessey 2004, 10). The friary had fallen into disrepair by 1540 and the hall, dormitory and kitchen were considered beyond repair. The friary was suppressed in 1540 with the church cloister, chancel and other properties being sold to the Bishop of Meath. It also noted a 4 acre orchard, garden and cemetery and a 3 acre close of pasture land beside the wall of the house. 3 houses and gardens were also located within. A belfry, chapter house, dormitory, hall, three chambers, a kitchen, a pantry and a stable are mentioned in 1541. They also held 72 acres of total estate land. A friary was re-established in 1630 before being transferred to Donore in 1713 (Hennessey 2004, 11).

Much of the building stone was sold during the eighteenth century. The site consists of 2ha with heavily overgrown areas of masonry. It is enclosed by a double bank and ditch as south and east. The Friary was situated outside the walls and the Athboy Gate was previously known as the Black gate. It was first referred to in a property transaction as the *Bl'aac'zhat*, in 1532. In 1616 a property was mentioned as being near Blackgate a name derived from the fact that it allowed access to the medieval Dominican friary known as the Black Friary (Potterton 2005, 183-4). Properties 'without the north gate' are mentioned in 1571 (Ibid, 200).

In 1988 geophysical survey was carried out by Professor William Kennedy of Florida Atlantic University which suggested a layout for the friary buildings. The team from Florida originally planned further work in the field but due to logistical reasons this never took place.

Recent work by Matthew Seaver of CRDS Ltd. carried out as part of the Trim Street Restoration Project (TSRP, under Ministerial Consent no. 150) uncovered burials in the adjacent Railway Lane (Seaver and Kelly, 2009). This has helped to establish the position of the burial ground associated with the Blackfriary. Monitoring of drain-laying on the laneway demonstrated that this cemetery did not extend to the west and northwest of the friary buildings. The burial ground was located to the southwest of the friary buildings, and must have extended as far as the town wall at the back of what is now Supervalu. Its eastern extent is unknown. The presence in this area of settlement-related features, such as a well, suggests that burial must have expanded into this area due to pressure for space.

The articulated skeletons, as well as the disarticulated bone, indicate that at least eleven burials took place in this restricted area. The violent nature of pathologies observed by the osteologist on site associated with two of the articulated burials indicates considerable conflict taking place during this period. It is likely that at least one of these young men was involved in fighting on more than one occasion. Political conflict and violent incidents within and outside the town were rife during this period (Potterton 2005, 113, 137). Indeed, in one of these incidents a man begged indulgence from the pope for striking in the head with a sword an individual who was allegedly plundering the town. Burials 2, 3 and 4 all appear to be within a single grave fill, possibly suggesting that they were buried at the same time (Seaver et al, 2009).

4 Archaeological Excavations

4.1 Overview

It was decided to focus attention for this season on the church which lies towards the southern end of the site (Fig. 3). Two cuttings were set out, both located in the area of what was believed to be the belfry or crossing tower of the church, though whether there was an actual crossing tower or else a belfry on the north side of the chancel is unclear. Cutting 1 was 5m N/S by 4m E/W and a large piece of collapsed masonry extended into it. Cutting 2 was 6m to the southwest of Cutting 1 and was 4m N/S by 6m E/W. Cutting 1 was subsequently extended southwards and an area 5m N/S by 7m E/W was opened.

Cutting 1 was initially set out to encompass a piece of collapsed walling, F2, which has a curving or dished face on its northern side with what look like remnants of steps. It has been suggested that it is the remains of a spiral stairs (Potterton 2005, 330). In situ walls were uncovered to the south of F2, and the cutting was extended to reveal these. Work in Cutting 2 concentrated on recording the collapsed walling within it, and in excavating sondages at either side at the southern end, one at the centre of the western side which joined with a fourth at its northern end (Fig. 4). Due to the depths of the overburden of rubble collapse and the proximity to the fallen masonry these were not bottomed.

4.2 Phase One – Medieval

Medieval deposits and features were uncovered in Cutting 1 which was then extended to further expose the features found. The features uncovered consisted of a number of sections of in situ walls (see Fig. 4).

The first of these, F3, was located to the south of the large block of tumbled masonry which was visible above ground in Cutting 1. The wall was constructed of a mortar and rubble core with roughly dressed facing stones. These had been robbed out and only the lower four courses remain (Fig. 5). The wall was faced on three sides, to the west, south and east (Fig. 4). It is 1.14m wide at its southern end and extends northwards for approximately 2.15m, at which point it runs into the deposits beneath the tumbled masonry, F2. It survives to a height of 1.55m.

A second wall, F20, was found running parallel to the wall F3. It lies 1.68m to the west of F3 and was of similar proportions, though it is now more reduced in height and its facing stones appear to have been robbed out to a greater depth (Fig. 4). Both walls splay slightly outwards from south to north, so that they are slightly wider at their northern ends than their southern, and the gap between them correspondingly decreases slightly from south to north. Both were built over a pre-existing wall F10, which consists of an unmortared double line of flattish stones, which survives to a height of at least 0.25m and runs east west between the two walls F3 and F20 at their northern end (see Fig 4). It is unclear if the wall F10 was actually built as a step or surface.

On the east face of F3 there is evidence that there was a section of wall which ran east west from F3 forming a corner (Fig. 6). The stones which are keyed into the fabric of F3 do not extend from it at a uniform angle. There are two possibilities, either they were robbed out and displaced at the time that the walls were being dismantled and the facing stones taken, or this was not a wall but the beginning of a set of steps. These may have linked with the apparent spiral stairs represented by the tumbled masonry F2.

It was not possible to definitively identify a floor level in the vicinity of these walls. Flecks and lumps of mortar were present in all but the lowest levels and. Those examined were generally of a gritty to

sandy texture, but with a high percentage of clay. Within F18, a layer of clay with sand within it, which appears introduced and may have been a floor level two fragments of sandstone moulding, possibly from a window occurred (E4127:18:002). A section of an iron scissors (E4127:26:02) was recovered from the lowest deposits excavated at the north of the extension to wall F3.

4.3 Phase Two – Post-Medieval to Modern

Several pieces, some quite sizeable, of collapsed masonry were recorded in both cuttings. In Cutting 2 a large chunk of masonry (F101), lying roughly north south was recorded. This had a maximum width of 1.6m and appears to have been a piece of the corner of a wall which collapsed across the church. Two faces were visible, but the exposed upper surface is of broken masonry. Two east west running sondages were excavated at either side of this on the south side of Cutting 2 and a third extended westwards from its northern end. The deposits consisted of stony mortar rich fills with medieval and post-medieval ceramics. The sondages were not fully excavated. A fourth sondage was excavated on the north side of F101 and similar fills were revealed (Fig. 4). This too was not bottomed as it was decided to focus work on Cutting 1.

In Cutting 1 the part of what may have been a spiral staircase F2, was recorded. The thickness of the wall was approximately 1.4m.

In addition to the in situ walls F3, F10 and F20 there were three further pieces of collapsed masonry. One, F24 was extending westwards for 1.5m from the eastern baulk and consisted of a chunk of mortared core 1m wide approximately. No facing stones remain on it.

A second piece, F21, lay abutting the south west corner of F20. This is 1.85m in measurable width and facing stones are only visible on its southern side. Here the remains of an arch are visible at its base, though only two of the stones which would have faced the arch remain in place.

A third lump of masonry, F12, lay on the southern side of the cutting (Figure x). This is 3.7m in length, 1.2m in width and 1.15 in depth. On its northern face there is a shallow arch built into the structure, a relieving arch. On the south face a chamfer is visible suggesting that this was the exterior face. The arch is now off-centre, suggesting that an additional piece is missing.

A series of deposits had covered these remains. At the lowest levels these deposits were clay rich, but contained sand and sometimes mortar. Mixed and poorly sorted deposits of brown silty sand containing mortar, occasional animal bone and rubble were exposed within this cutting. While there appeared to be various lenses within these (in particular the area between F3 and F20 was very mixed, with frequent charcoal), there were no clear and consistent differences to suggest clear phases of backfilling of the interior of the church or the deposition of different deposits within different areas; the deposits blended into one another. In one such deposit, F22, a human femur was recovered, lying beside a human(?) scapula. These were in the south-west corner of the cutting. Modern glass occurred in these deposits to the level of the wall/step feature F10.

The deposits overlying the walls all contained a high percentage of stone, mortar and modern debris. The overburden was up to 1.20m deep.

4.4 Finds and Samples

Medieval Pottery

Nine sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the two cuttings

Post-Medieval and modern Pottery

Seven sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from both cuttings. A quantity of modern ceramic was uncovered of which a sample of six pieces was retained

Metals

A piece of an iron scissors was found in Cutting 1, one blade with its handle which terminated in a ringed head.

A fragment of lead which would have held window glass in place was recovered.

Six metal (possibly iron) nails were recovered

Two belt buckles, one copper, date uncertain were recovered in Cutting 1.

Plaster

A number of fragments of plaster with a well finished surface were recovered. One had traces of paint on it.

Stained glass

Six fragments of stained glass were recovered, four from Cutting 1 and two from Cutting 2.

Human Bone

A number of disarticulated pieces of human bone were recovered. Small fragments of skull, possible finger bones and a tooth were recovered from rubble layers abutting the wall F3. A human femur was found in possible disturbed floor levels adjacent to F12, a fallen relieving arch.

5 Discussion

Historical sources state that the Dominican (Black) Friary was founded in 1263 under the probable patronage of Geoffrey de Geneville (Potterton 2005, 320). These sources indicate that a considerable amount of money may have been expended on this foundation and the preliminary evidence from the topographical survey indicates that the church and cloister were larger in size when compared to the Dominican Friaries at Sligo and Carlingford (Kevin O'Brien, pers comm.), suggesting that the endowment allowed a degree of grandeur in building the complex. The topographical survey indicates the location of the church, cloister, domestic ranges and the chapter house (see Fig. 3) and the location of the cemetery has been deduced by previous work in the area (Seaver et al 2009).

On foot of the topographical and geophysical surveys it was decided to focus attention on the area of the church, specifically in the vicinity of identifiable pieces of collapsed masonry. The focus of the excavation in this first season was on the extension to Cutting 1, south of the collapsed spiral stairs. It was hoped to ascertain whether there was a belfry tower, to find the floor levels within the church and to determine whether there were any in situ remains.

As stated it appears from the topographical survey that the church lies immediately south of this area and that the access stairs were on the north side of the church.

The objectives were successful on two out of three counts. The presence of a tower was confirmed by the location of what appear to be in situ walls, the two plinths F3 and F20, remains of the superstructure in the form of large pieces of masonry indicating the presence of a spiral staircase and evidence for a structure high enough to require a relieving arch to support a second storey. Preliminary examination of these remains by Kevin O'Brien suggest that the tower may have been about 4.4m in external width, it may have been square, and may have been accessed from the domestic range to the north west of the church. A smaller stairs from ground level is possibly indicated by the eastwards extension to the wall F3. However, it was not possible to identify with any certainty the actual floor level of the church. The amount of disturbance to the floor from the probable deterioration of the buildings post-reformation, the quarrying of the walls for dressed stone and the eventual collapse of the walls was considerable. The recovery of human bone from various layers of rubble fill and from a possible floor level suggest that there was a great deal of disturbance to the floor of the church, where it is likely that a number of burials occurred. Until further work is done the extent of such disturbance is unclear.

Given the nature of the collapse it is possible that the belfry lay in its entirety to the north of the church and did not form a crossing tower over the junction of the nave and chancel. The two wall plinths found, F3 and F20, appear to lie to the north of the line of the north wall of the church, but this relationship can only be verified when the church walls are uncovered. The question of whether there was a crossing tower or a belfry tower built abutting the north wall of the church is still open. Excavations did not extend to the south of the large piece of collapsed masonry, F12 but the apparent line of the north wall should have run between this and the walls of the plinth. The topographical survey appears to suggest that the line of the wall is interrupted by the tower structure at this point, and that there was access beneath the tower through to the cloister garth and the east range. This is also indicated by the arrangement of the two plinths, F3 and F20 and the possible step between them, F10.

The presence of painted plaster and stained glass confirms that the church was well appointed. Stained glass and painted plaster fragments have been found in the Cistercian foundation at Tintern Abbey (Lynch 2010) and the Augustinian Friary at Kells (Clyne 2007).

It is intended to return for a second season of excavation at Black Friary this summer. The objectives would be to open one cutting immediately to the west of Cutting 1, extending south to Cutting 2. This cutting will straddle the line of what appear to be, from the topographical survey, the line of the north wall of the church and the southern wall of the cloister.

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Appendix 1

Method Statement for Excavations at Black Friary for 2011 under Ministerial Consent No. C420; Registration No. E4127

As indicated in the initial application for Ministerial Consent it is the intention of the project to establish initially by geophysical prospection, survey, and by hand clearance the extant remains of the Friary above and below ground. It is further intended to devise a programme of clearance and excavation based on these results to ascertain the location and extent of the Friary buildings and associated features and graveyard.

In tandem with the research excavation and survey work, it is intended, over time, to develop in conjunction with Trim Town Council and the local community a conservation plan for the preservation and amenity use of the area.

In 1988 a geophysical survey was carried out by Professor William Kennedy of Florida Atlantic University which suggested a layout for the friary buildings (Kennedy 1989). The team from Florida originally planned further work in the field but due to logistical reasons this never took place. The results of this survey were sufficient to enable suggestions to be made as to the function of certain of the surviving remains.

During June 2010 a geophysical and resistivity survey were carried out by Ian Elliott of IGAS Ltd, under Registration no. R223. This combined with a topographical survey confirmed the earlier work by Kennedy and gave more detail as to the extent of the Friary buildings.

Recent work by Matthew Seaver of CRDS Ltd. carried out as part of the Trim Street Restoration Project (TSRP, under Ministerial Consent no. 150) uncovered burials in the adjacent Railway Lane (Seaver and Kelly, 2009). A well was also uncovered and it is clear that these were all within the Friary grounds, and the burials were part of the Friary graveyard.

It is believed that the southern side of the site is bounded by the town wall. This does not now survive above ground.

It is intended over a number of seasons to establish the extent and nature of the above ground remains of the Friary, to understand the layout of the Friary buildings and associated graveyard, gardens and other features. A further aim of the project is to try to establish if any remnants of the town wall survive below ground. However, it is envisaged that the work during each season will be self-contained, and any test-pits excavated will be fully back-filled at the end of each season. This is particularly important as the site is not a closed site.

Two cuttings were opened during the 2010 season and confirmed the presence of upstanding walls, possibly relating to the belfry tower.

Work this season will comprise of (see also Fig. 3):

- Further clearance of grass and scrub from some of the extant (masonry) features
- Opening one north south running cutting 12m by 6m which will extend from Cutting 2 along the west side of Cutting 1, and will traverse the line of the north wall of the church and the south side of the adjoining cloister.

A mechanical excavator fitted with a ditching (toothless) bucket may be used to assist in the removal scrub from certain areas, where practicable. Otherwise all clearance and excavation will be by hand. The National Monuments Service will be apprised of any findings and consulted as to further works.

Excavation Team

The team will consist of a Director Finola O'Carroll, a geophysicist Ian Elliott, a supervisor and between 4 and 12 students. An osteoarchaeologist will be on call.

Logistics

Logistical support will be provided by Trim Town Council, and further back-up can be provided by the IAFS. if necessary for additional personnel or equipment if required.

Finds and samples

All archaeological finds and samples should be stabilized, bagged and recorded according to NMI guidelines. Conservation and specialist analysis will be undertaken by the persons named below if required. Finds, samples and excavation archive will be stored in the IAFS offices, UCD, until after the completion of the report. Finds will ultimately be housed in the NMI.

Conservation

The IAFS retain the services of a number of finds conservation specialists, including Ms Susannah Kelly of the Archaeology Dept, UCD.

Specialists

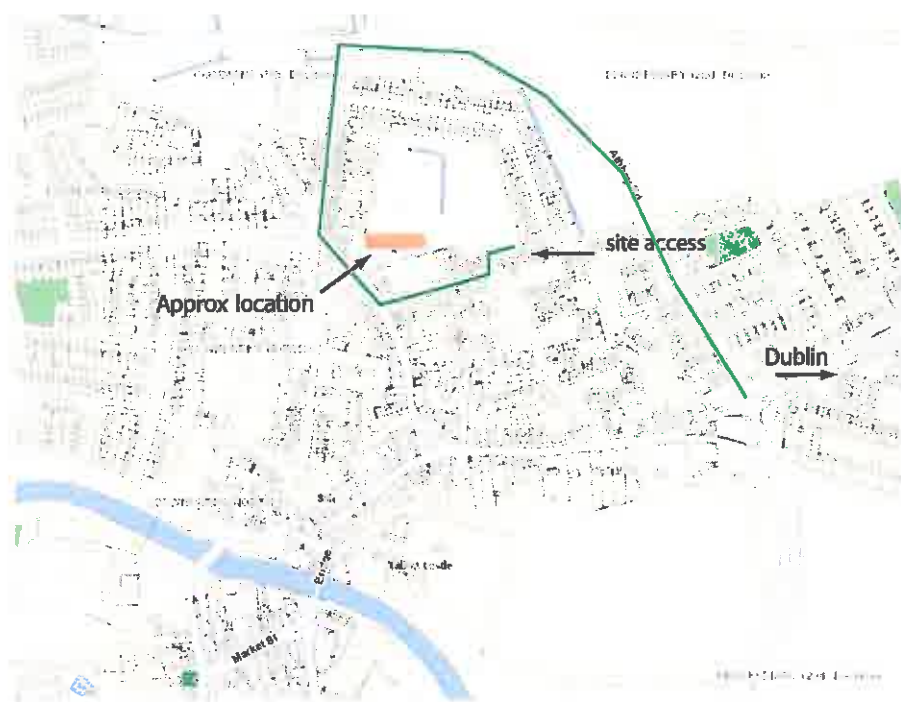
The IAFS retain the services of a number of specialists, including Ms Linda Fibiger (human bone), Headland Ltd. (soils) and Dr Stephen Mandal (stone – in house).

Constraints

Safety Hazards – The IAFS safety statement of practices will be complied with regard to trench depth and distances from existing structures.

Reporting

A full report outlining background, methodology and results of the investigation, shall be forwarded to the NMS, NMI and to the Local Authority at the end of every season. When the programme is completed it shall be fully published, but it is envisaged that interim publications of both scholarly and popular nature shall appear at regular intervals. It is also intended to maintain and update a section on the IAFS website devoted to the research project.



Not to Scale

Irish Archaeology Field School
Black Friary, Trim
Co. Meath

Consent No.: C420
Registration No.: E4127
Date: August 2010

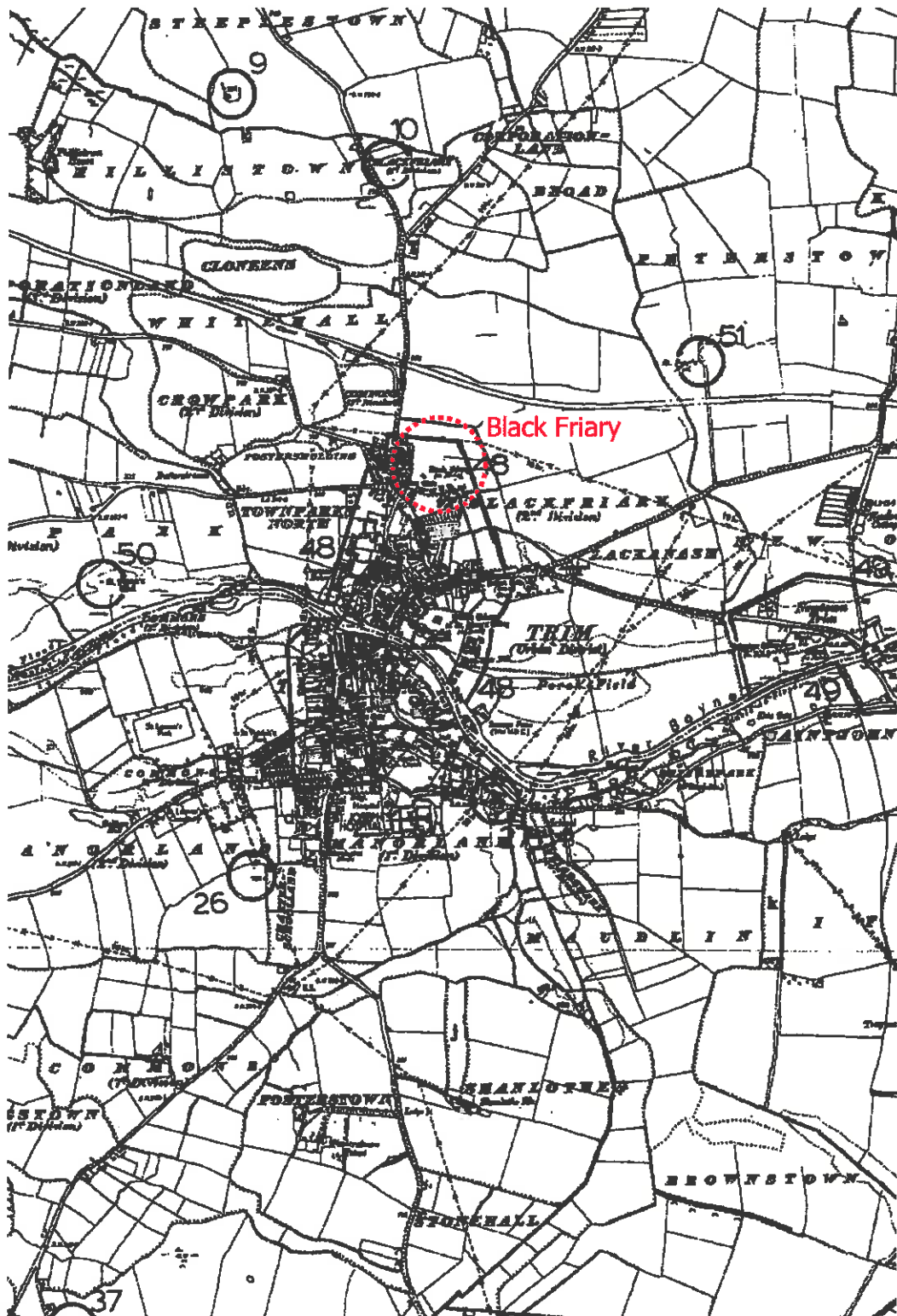
Drawn by: SM

LEGEND



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Fax: +353 1 2968195
email: info@iafs.ie

Figure 1. Extract from OS Map 2005 and aerial photograph showing site location.



0 1km

Irish Archaeology Field School
Black Friary, Trim
Co. Meath

Consent No.: C420
Registration No.: E4127
Date: August 2010

Drawn by: SM

LEGEND

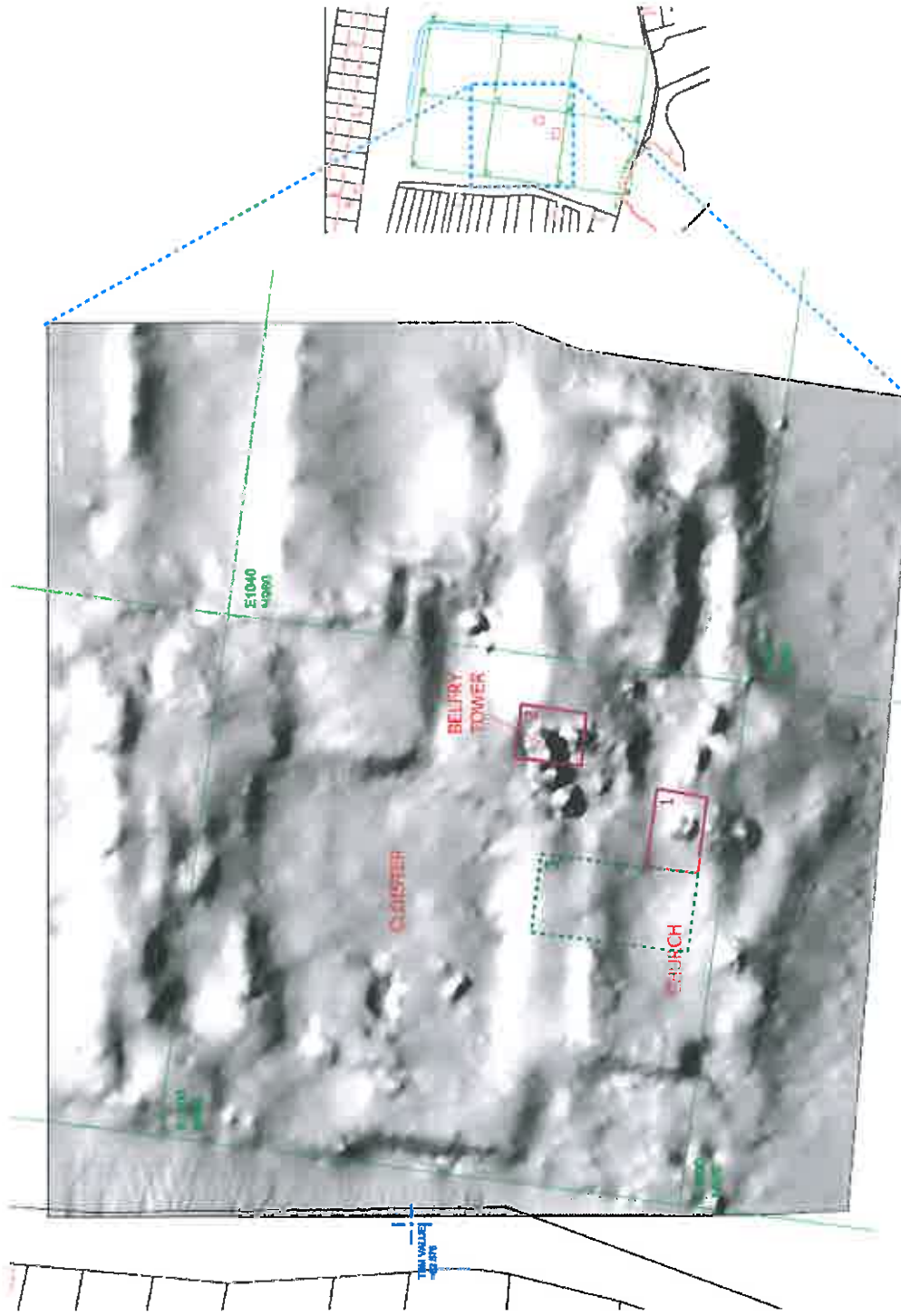


Recorded archaeological site
or monument



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Figure 2. Sites listed within the Record of Monuments and Places within 1.5km of the excavation



LEGEND

-  2010 cutting
-  proposed 2011 cutting

Irish Archaeology Field School
 Black Friary, Trim
 Co. Meath

Consent No.: C420
 Registration No.: EA127
 Date: August 2010

Drawn by: NL/SM



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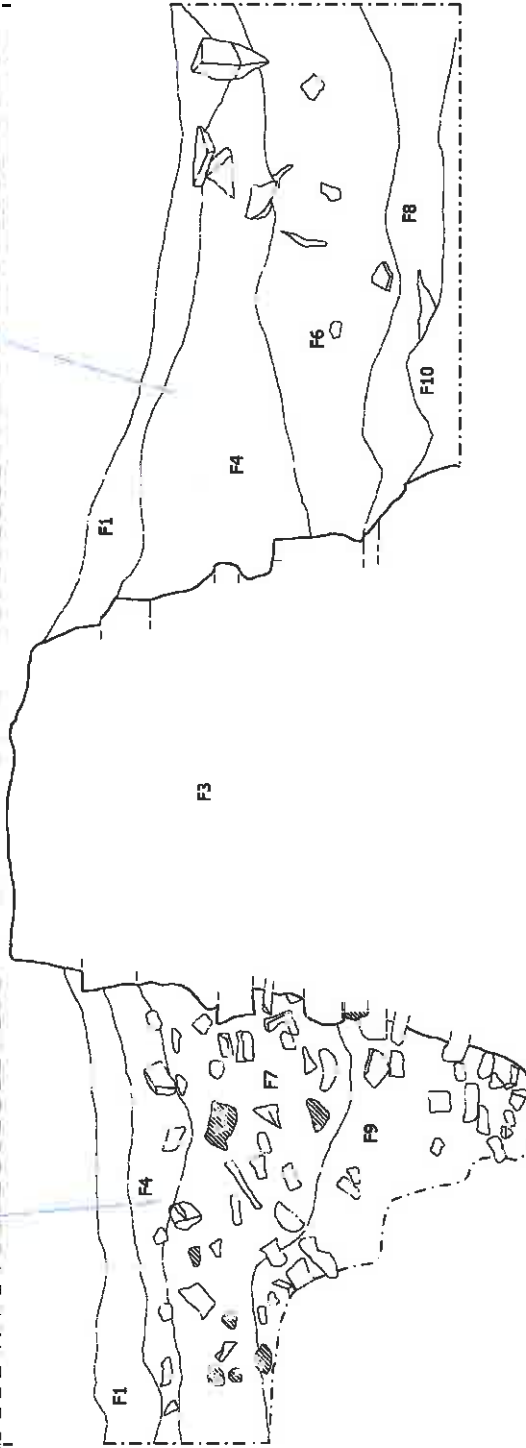


Figure 3. Shaded relief map showing results of topographical survey 22nd-25th June 2010



Dwg 1.7 Sh. 10

1036E Line level 63.615m 1032E
932N 932N



LEGEND

- Wall outline
- - - - - Limit of excavation
- - - - - Level line
- Boundary of fill
- ◐ Mortar
- ◑ Stone

Irish Archaeology Field School
Black Friary, Trim
Co. Meath

Consent No.: C420
Registration No.: E4127
Date: August 2010

Drawn by: KM
Illustrated by: GC

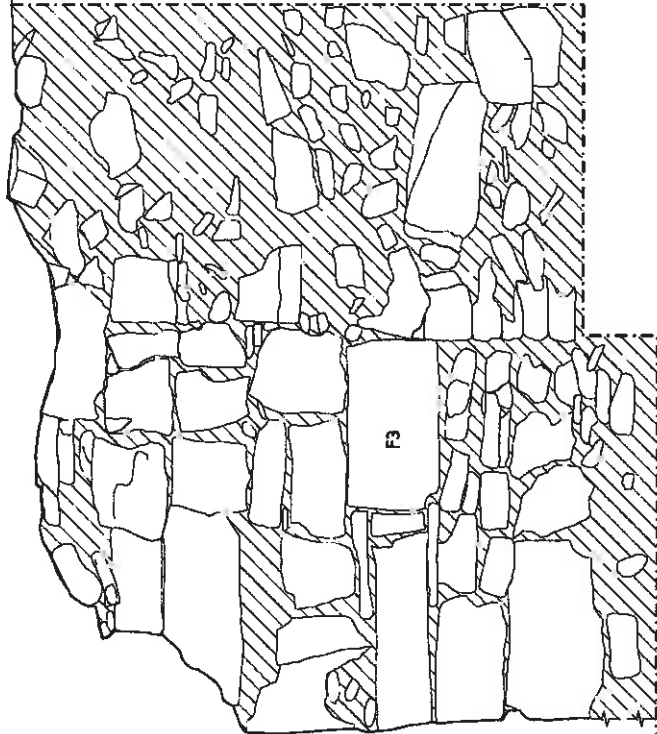


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Figure 5. Cutting 1, F3 and associated rubble deposits



Dwg 1.15 Sh. 13



line of sondage at base of F3

63455
A

LEGEND

- Stone
- Mortar
- Limit of excavation
- Boundary unclear
- Well outline



Irish Archaeology Field School
Black Friary, Trim
Co. Meath

Consent No.: C420
Registration No.: EA:27
Date: August 2010

Drawn by: KM
Illustrated by: GC



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Figure 6. East face of wall F3 with E/W extension