

SAINT LACHTAIN'S CHURCH  
FRESHFORD  
COUNTY KILKENNY

CONSERVATION PLAN

Margaret Quinlan and Timothy Foley

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## FOREWORD

The Church of St Lachtain in Freshford, County Kilkenny is a place of great antiquity. Its Romanesque porch, facing as it does a busy thoroughfare, is too often passed at a pace which allows no appreciation of its importance. This Conservation Plan clearly and unequivocally states the significance of this monument and gives the church a prominence in the ecclesiastical history of Ireland which had hitherto been largely unrecognised.

The Conservation Plan methodology, introduced by the Heritage Council in 1998, was applied to St Lachtain's Church in 2001 and 2002. It provides a practical vision for the repairs and conservation of the monument and for the future of its setting.

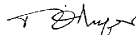
The Conservation Plan process draws together all the elements of built and natural heritage in a historic place, and provides a forum for all interested parties to come together and agree the way forward.

Through this process, the congregation and local community have been empowered to participate fully in the decisions taken, and to engage with the experts, and with the statutory and other authorities.

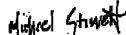
The Heritage Council has contributed this Conservation Plan to allow essential decisions for the conservation of this important monument to be taken in the spirit of the Nara Document on Authenticity:

*'...the cultural heritage of each is the cultural heritage of all. Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it. However, in addition to these responsibilities, adherence to the international charters and conventions developed for conservation of cultural heritage also obliges consideration of the principles and responsibilities flowing from them. Balancing their own requirements with those of other cultural communities is, for each community, highly desirable, provided achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values.'*

(Nara Document on Authenticity, Nara, Japan, 1994)



Dr Tom O'Dwyer  
Chairperson of the  
Heritage Council



Michael Starrett  
Chief Executive

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all members of the Steering Group — Dean Norman Lynas, Eva Holmes, Aighleann O'Shaughnessy, Paula Murphy, Mary Hanna, Charles Mount and Fionnuala Lynch — for their help and support.

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Finally, thanks to the people of Freshford, and, in particular, Neddie Ryan, Grace Keamey, Michael P. Maher, P.J. Cass and Edward Ryan.

MARGARET QUINLAN  
TIMOTHY FOLEY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Conservation Plan for St Lachtain's Church of Ireland church provides a guidance framework for the conservation of this historic place. It summarises and integrates information establishing the significance of the place so that appropriate conservation policies can be set out.

The Conservation Plan sets out principles which should underpin the long-term management of the monument and site to ensure that its significance is retained. It has been established that Freshford is:

- a sacred place of great antiquity
- a place of worship where there has been a high degree of continuity since its foundation
- a place which contains a building of architectural and art historical significance
- a place of archaeological interest
- a place with a strong and attractive urban form
- a place with buildings of interest in terms of vernacular architecture

The purpose of the Plan for St Lachtain's is to ensure that these characteristics are retained. Thus policies are set out for the care and management of the monument itself and its immediate surroundings, thereby enabling the owners to carry out their roles in maintaining this historic site in conjunction with other stakeholders.

Policies are also set out for the environs of the monument, the village of Freshford and the civil parish to assist the planning authority in supporting the objectives of the Conservation Plan.

While the policies primarily provide a framework for decision-making regarding the use and care of the church, they will also help in the evaluation of proposals which could affect the church, site and setting. The aims of these policies can be summarised as follows:

- to preserve the significance of the monument, site and setting, their archaeology and important landscape features
- to guide the usage of the monument
- to provide guidance on the treatment of specific features of the monument
- to improve awareness of the cultural significance and architectural interest of the place
- to provide guidance with regard to future planning policies on the architectural heritage



## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1 DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC SITE

St Lachtain's is the Church of Ireland parish church of Freshford. Surrounded by a walled graveyard, it is sited in a prominent location at the north-east corner of the square, at the junction of Newbridge Road and Kilkenny Street. The church, of limestone rubble, is a much-altered pre-Reformation structure with a fine sandstone Romanesque gabled porch facing the street at the west end. A single-storey, 19th-century annexe abuts the north façade and extends to the north boundary of the graveyard.

### 1.2 WHY THE PLAN WAS COMMISSIONED

The condition of the building, particularly the deteriorating state of the Romanesque porch, has been a cause of concern for some years. In 1999, the Heritage Council took the decision to commission a Conservation Plan for St Lachtain's, Freshford, in partnership principally with the Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland and the Select Vestry of St Lachtain's, and also with the other stakeholders, including Kilkenny County Council, the former Dúchas The Heritage Service and the local community.

### 1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Conservation Plan is to assist the owners in preparing management proposals, planning a programme of conservation, planning new developments, and managing a programme of regular maintenance for the church and site. It will provide a framework for supporting action by others and build on the existing statutory protection as set out at 1.4.

The overall aim of the policies and conservation action embodied in the Plan is to retain the cultural significance of St Lachtain's and to provide for its security, maintenance and its future.

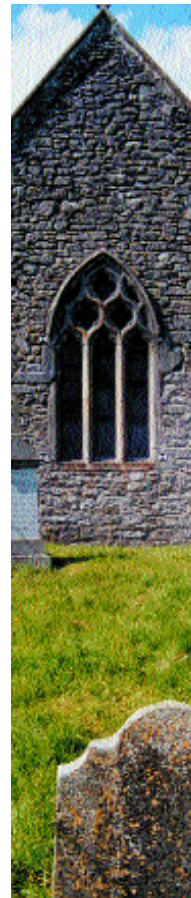
### 1.4 STATUTORY POLICY AND PROTECTION

The existing statutory policy framework for the protection of the architectural heritage is provided by:

- National Monuments Acts, 1930, and as subsequently amended
- Record of Monuments and Places (replacing Sites and Monuments Record)
- Planning and Development Act, 2000
- Heritage Act, 1995
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1999

Existing statutory protection extended to the monument, site and setting is as follows:

- The central area of Freshford is classified in the Urban Archaeological Survey as a zone of archaeological potential. The Archaeological Inventory lists the church and graveyard, wayside cross base, watermill and two fonts.



- Sites listed in the Record of Monuments and Places are protected under the National Monuments Acts. The sites which fall within the civil parish of Freshford are described under the Archaeological Assessment and mapped in the Appendices (available from the Heritage Council).

*Note: During preparation of the Plan, the Record of Monuments and Places was being compiled for the Kilkenny area. When complete, this will supersede the Sites and Monuments Register and the Urban Archaeological Survey.*

- County Kilkenny Development Plan 1994 lists the Hiberno-Romanesque porch, the base of the wayside cross, the Roman Catholic church, St Lachtain's, two single-arch bridges, Toberlachtan well, Cascade House and Uppercourt, balustrade at Cascade, Cascade mill and a further sawmill to the west. This Plan is under review at present. Under the recent planning legislation, all Development Plan listings have been incorporated into the Record of Protected Structures and the protection has been extended to encompass all structures within the curtilage of the protected structure. Hence, the protection offered only to the Hiberno-Romanesque porch in 1994 now extends to the church itself and the annexe, including their interiors.

Looking forward, the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, when compiled for the Kilkenny area, will form part of this framework and may result in additions to the Record of Protected Structures. In addition, the Heritage Council, under its remit for the protection of the architectural heritage, has commissioned the Conservation Plan and indicated in principle its continuing support.

#### 1.5 STEERING GROUP

The Steering Group for the project was formed of representatives of the major stakeholders.

Mary Hanna, Chair	The Heritage Council
Eva Holmes	Select Vestry and local community
Very Rev. N.N. Lynas	representing the Diocese and the
Dean of Ossory	Representative Church Body
Charles Mount	The Heritage Council
Paula Murphy	Kilkenny County Council
Aighleann O'Shaughnessy	Dúchas The Heritage Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands

#### 1.6 CONSULTATION

The consultation process took place at two principal levels, through the Steering Group and the local community. The members of the Steering Group represented the major stakeholders and made their views known to the consultants at the various stages of the preparation of the Plan.

The local community, in addition to representation on the Steering Group, was informed by a postal circular to all households in the Freshford district and submissions were invited. A public meeting was held at which the process of the Conservation Plan was explained and the issues outlined by the consultants. A discussion followed on the significance of the monument within its setting, the problems facing the historic place and the factors which might influence the policies to be decided. The Heritage Council initiative was welcomed and the approach taken was supported.

#### 1.7 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The preparation of the Plan has been guided by the definitions and principles of the ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter) 1999 amendment.

#### 1.8 CONSULTANTS

The consultants appointed to prepare the conservation plan were Margaret Quinlan and Timothy Foley.

The full project team assembled by the consultants is as follows:

Margaret Quinlan	Architect and team leader
Timothy Foley	Architect
Loughlin Kealy	Architect
Leo Swan	Archaeologist
John Feehan	Ecologist
Jason Ellis	Stone Conservator
Sara Pavia	Materials Analyst
Phelim Manning	Surveyor
Elizabeth McKenna	Historian/Researcher
John McCafferty	Historian
Rachel Moss	Architectural Historian



## 2. UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

The accounts given in this section are brief and are given as a background to establishing an understanding of the place and the significance of monument, site and setting. (See Appendices for more detailed accounts.)

### PLACE

The place may be defined as the monument, site and setting.

### MONUMENT AND SITE

For the purposes of this document, the constituent parts of the study have been broken down into clearly defined elements. The monument is defined as St Lachtain's Church and Annexe, set within the site defined as the curtilage of the church contained within the boundary walls of the garden and the graveyard. The monument and site are completely within the ownership of the major stakeholders — the buildings and garden belonging to the Church of Ireland while the graveyard is in the care of Kilkenny County Council.



Plate 1: St Lachtain's Church, view from the south-east

### SETTING

The setting may be defined as the present settlement of Freshford lying within the boundaries of the civil parish of Freshford. The civil parish is taken as the geographical unit within which the historical setting of Freshford can be considered. In addition to being the basic ecclesiastical unit, of which the church of St Lachtain's is the centre, it is also the standard administrative unit with the deepest historical roots in use throughout Ireland, and forming the basis of the Down Survey in 1665. A study of early ecclesiastical sites in County Westmeath suggests that parish boundaries have their origins in the early Christian period. In this plan, the extent of the civil parish is based largely on the Down Survey and on the determination by Simington as transferred to the earliest edition of the 1:10560 Ordnance Survey map for the region. The various elements of the setting are not within the ownership of the stakeholders, a factor which will have an effect on policies and their implementation.

## 2.1 BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The exact foundation date of the monastery at Freshford is unknown, but it must have been in existence by the early 7th century, prior to the death of its founder and first abbot, St Lachtain, in 672. Early historical accounts refer to the monastic foundation as Achadour. The anglicised version of the name Freshford had come into usage certainly by the 17th century when it appears in an inquisition held during the reign of James I (1603-1625) and stems from a mis-translation of the Irish word *Eachadh* as 'ford', rather than its correct meaning, 'field'.



Plate 2: The West Porch

The monastery at Achadour is mentioned with some frequency in the *Annals* prior to the 13th century, suggesting that it was a foundation of some local significance. During the 12th century, documentary references to the monastery suggest the possibility that an attempt was made to have Achadour recognised as the Episcopal centre of the newly established diocese of Ossory. This may also provide an explanation for the addition of such an elaborate porch to the earlier church, as secular patronage of this type would have benefited both the status of the church and the benefactors.

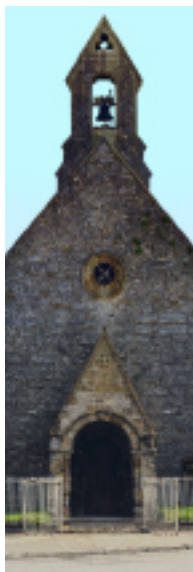


Plate 3: West façade, with 12th-century porch and 19th-century window and bellcote

In spite of these efforts, Achadour was not proposed as a centre of the diocese at any of the 12th-century reforming synods, and by 1218 it was accounted as part of the temporalities of the See of Ossory. However, prominence within the See was maintained when, during the mid 13th century, Hugh Mapleton, Bishop of Ossory, built his Episcopal palace, Uppercourt, at Achadour.

Uppercourt remained the favoured residence of the Bishops of Ossory until the 1550s when the last Episcopal resident, John Bale, so outraged the population of Freshford with his post-Reformation zeal that they murdered five of his servants and forced him to flee for his life. At this point, the property passed into the secular ownership of the Shee family. It is probable that the Shee family, like many other recusant gentry, used lands leased from the Church of Ireland to fund the activities of continentally-trained Catholic clergy.



Figure 1: Down Survey map of Crannagh Barony c. 1665: detail showing former Bishop's Palace at Uppercourt

By the 18th century, the Ryves family had taken up residence at Uppercourt. Visitation records from 1731 record a bequest made by Lady Penelope Ryves to the church around 1711, and a mural slab in the church of the same date records her death.

The earliest Visitation records referring to the church fabric date to 1622 and 1679, both of which record the chancel as being ruinous and the nave in some disarray. In 1731, Bishop Tension's Visitation describes ivy around the chancel and an elder tree growing from it, implying that the chancel was still in a ruinous condition. He records the unevenness of the floor and the fact that the pews were out of repair, but mentions the presence of timber lying nearby for their repair. By the following year, the church had been re-roofed, and the Visitation records tell us that 'the nave is in a much better condition than last year'. Subsequent Visitations record that from this point on, the church was kept in good repair.

It is uncertain when the graveyard boundary was established. A map made by John Brownrigg and John Longfield sometime between 1784 and 1824 shows the line of the boundary wall as it exists today, with the exception of the western line that was slightly altered with the construction of Newbridge Street. The annexe was added to the north side of the church in 1824 and subsequently extended to the boundary.

Various minor repairs to the church are recorded in the vestry minute books that survive from 1824. However, for the period 1833 to 1876, the tenure of Rev. Luke Fowler, there is a significant lack of entries. Other evidence for the state of the church fabric during this period is provided by a number of antiquarian sketches of the porch, and a description by the architect and historian R.R. Brash, all of which indicate that the porch lacked the upper courses of its gable.

Major renovations to the church apparently took place during the 1860s to the designs of the architectural firm Welland and Gillespie, architects to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. A collection of architectural drawings housed in the library of the Representative Church Body (RCB) includes designs for the repaired porch and circular window, the hammerbeam roof and chancel arch, and for the pews, choir stalls, lectern, pulpit and gallery rails. A Certificate of Consent for alterations was signed in 1877, naming R. Langrishe as architect.



Figure 2: J. Welland's design for stalls and chancel rail. Undated (c. 1860)

Other furnishings were added to the church during the 20th century. The carved altar rails were commissioned by Canon McCheane c. 1900. Electric light was installed in 1929. A major refurbishment of the sanctuary commenced in 1949 included the donation of a new Communion table and reredos by the St George family, the installation of a terrazzo floor, and the replacement of the panelling on the sanctuary walls.

## 2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT AND SITE

A full description of the building and contents is included in the Appendices.

The monument and site consist of St Lachtain's Church, with a 19th-century annexe located in a post-medieval graveyard enclosure. St Lachtain's is the Church of Ireland parish church of Aghour, a parish which now combines with three other parishes: St Canice's and St John's, both in Kilkenny, and St Aidan's in Kilmanagh. The rector is the Dean of Ossory. A number of churches in the surrounding area, Ballinamara, Odagh and Ballyragget, have been closed. However, St Lachtain's Church is in regular use and, although congregations are small, divine service is held weekly. The annexe serves as a vestry.

## CONSTRUCTION

The church is a two-cell structure of roughly coursed rough-cut limestone and a significant proportion of Carboniferous sandstone, all of local origin. The 12th-century porch is made of yellow/white sandstone of the Old Red Sandstone series of the Devonian age. Nineteenth-century additions to the west façade are also of yellow/white sandstone. There is some re-use of cut stone, including a number of pieces of radially cut limestone ashlar in the south wall of the nave which may originate from the fabric of a curved structure, possibly a round tower or belfry tower. The building is roofed throughout with stone slate. A bellcote at the apex of the western gable, and chimney at the junction between nave and chancel, are 19th-century additions.



Plate 4: View from north-east, showing nave, chancel and annexe

## NAVE

The west façade of the nave has a centrally located 12th-century porch and antae, probably of 10th/11th-century date. There is a single circular light with chevron ornament above the porch, datable to the 19th century. The south wall of the nave is lit by three traceried lancets of uniform size, the north wall by one traceried lancet and one neo-Romanesque round-arched window at high level.

## PORCH

The porch comprises four orders of richly ornamented arches and a shallow barrel vault. The inner order, the plainest of the four, preserves a dedicatory inscription naming the patron and craftsman. Although asymmetrically arranged, this appears to be original to the monument. This order is grouped with a further two orders, the arches of which are decorated with chevron ornament. The outer order, carved with an elaborate step pattern and zoomorphic masks, is separated from the three orders of the doorway by a shallow barrel vault. On the west face, level with the springing of the outer order arch, are two figurative panels, one depicting a rider figure, the other two ecclesiastics. These, like a third figurative panel set into the jamb of the inner order, do not appear to be in their original locations. The porch is surmounted by a gable, the upper courses of which are a 19th-century replacement.





Plate 5: The West Porch

## CHANCEL

The south wall of the chancel is lit by two windows of differing age and dimensions. The westernmost window is a small plain lancet, the easternmost a larger lancet with tracery similar to the southern nave windows. There is a blocked, pointed arched doorway between the two windows. The north wall of the chancel is blind. The east window is a large lancet with elaborate tracery infill.

## INTERIOR

The interior of both nave and chancel have rendered and painted walls, a hammerbeam roof which is lower over the chancel, and timber floors which have been replaced in part with concrete. The division between nave and chancel is marked by a change of floor level and a 19th-century pointed arch of dressed limestone. A timber gallery across the western end of the church is reached by a timber stair. Glass and furnishings date mainly from the 19th century, with the exception of a stone font, possibly late medieval, in the south-west corner, and a memorial slab of 1711 on the north-east wall.



Plate 6: Interior of chancel looking east



Plate 7: East elevation of the Annexe

## ANNEXE

The 19th-century annexe, which is used as a vestry and for meetings, connects to the northern wall of the chancel by a short corridor. The west front is four bayed with two central doors flanked with diamond-paned square windows. It is of limestone rubble construction, with roughcast render on all exterior walls, and a stone slate roof. The interior has a timber boarded floor, rendered and painted walls, and a raised-collar, timber-sheeted ceiling. A timber-sheeted panelled

partition has been constructed at the northern end of the room.

CONDITION

The church appears to be reasonably sound structurally, although there is evidence of settlement cracking. The stone of the porch is in very poor condition and is dealt with in detail elsewhere. There is a serious problem of timber decay present at floor level in a number of areas. External pointing, impervious internal finishes, rainwater goods, slating and windows need attention. (Some of these problems have now been remedied. See Addendum, page 53.) The annexe is in poor condition generally. Building services are inadequate. There is no water and the electrical installation does not comply with current standards. While the space is of manageable size, conditions in the church and annexe do not make for ease of use, especially in winter months.

ARTEFACTS ASSOCIATED WITH MONUMENT

The following artefacts are associated with the monument through tradition or through circumstance: (See Appendices)

- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Alabaster fragment        | National Museum         |
| • Altarplate                | In storage              |
| • Arm Shrine of St Lachtain | National Museum         |
| • Finial                    | Clontubrid Holy Well    |
| • Fonts                     | St Lachtain's RC Church |



Plate 8: East gable, showing disturbance to fabric south of the window



Figure 3: First Edition OS Map showing location of Freshford



Figure 4: 1900 Ordnance Survey map showing location of Freshford

## SITE

The site is 0.2 acres in area, roughly trapezoidal in form, and enclosed by a limestone rubble wall with concrete capping. It consists of a graveyard enclosure and a Garden of Remembrance which contains a small number of burials and through which the annexe is accessed. The majority of burials within the larger enclosure date to the 19th century, although parts of two 17th-century monuments are preserved, one built into the graveyard wall beside the entrance gate. Nineteenth-century railings continue the line of the boundary wall across the west front of the church.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

All bird and plant species recorded to date are common and are listed in the Appendices. Fortunately, the headstones have not been cleaned and show a variety of lichens. There is a substantial ash tree behind the church but otherwise there is little of special significance in the vegetation within the graveyard.

Organic growth on the porch consists primarily of the lichen *Lepraria* and *pleurococcoid* green algae (*Apatococcus/Desmococcus*) which favour damp conditions. Occasional green 'granules' seen in the interstices of loosened grains are *pleurococcoid* algae. These are superficial and not thought to cause damage.

## 2.3 EVOLUTION OF THE MONUMENT

The earliest section of the building is the western part of the nave. This was originally a single-cell structure with antae. A clear vertical joint visible in the south wall of the nave shows its length as 11.27m, while the original width was as today, 7m, giving a width-to-length proportion of roughly 1:1.7. Churches of this type are notoriously difficult to date. The cathedral at Clonmacnoise, of roughly the same proportion, is thought to be the same church mentioned in the *Annals* as being constructed in 909 AD, but the form continued to be used into the 12th century, as for example at Roscrea where the antae have moulded quoins, and at Kilmalkedar where the antae are clearly coursed in with the Romanesque doorway. This part of the church can therefore be dated to anywhere between the 10th and 12th centuries.

The sandstone porch dates to the 12th century. Stylistically, the sculpture, in particular the capitals of the second and third orders, can be related to Cormac's Chapel, Cashel, dated to between 1127 and 1134. Structurally, the inner order arch, which is continuous and square in section, relates to Clonkeen, Co. Limerick, and Aghadoe, Co. Kerry, the latter dating to 1158. The construction of the porch at Freshford can therefore be placed at c. 1150. Heavy re-pointing at the junction between the porch and the face of the west façade does not help to resolve the dating of the nave fabric, as it is impossible to see whether or not the porch is contemporary with it, or whether it is a later addition.

At some point during the medieval period, the nave was extended eastwards by c. 8 metres. With the possible exception of a window sill in the south wall, there are no contemporary dressed features. This phase of building, obscured on the north wall by the 19th-century annexe, incorporates a number of pieces of re-used stone both in the wall fabric and the quoins. Several of these pieces are radial ashlar, possibly from a round tower or apse.



Figure 5: Plan showing different phases of development of St Lachtain's

Extension eastward was continued by the addition of a diminutive chancel structure, probably during the 15th century, as suggested by the presence of a small lancet of 15th-century type coursed into the fabric of the south wall. A record of a blocked, ogee-headed piscina, uncovered on the interior south wall during renovations in the early 1950s, is also suggestive of this date.

Scarring on the southern part of the east gable indicates the prior existence of a third diminutive extension to the east, accessed through what was apparently quite a low archway.

The dating of the extension of the nave is difficult due to the lack of diagnostic features. The use of ashlar in round tower construction was uncommon before the 12th century, so its secondary use provides a likely *terminus a quo* of at least the late 12th century for this section of the structure. The extension eastward of earlier church buildings was commonplace during the 12th century. However, had the building been extended during this period, one would expect the addition of a chancel accessed through a carved chancel arch, as is the case at comparable structures such as Fore and Glendalough cathedrals. There is no evidence of this having been the case.

The sill in the fabric of the south wall of the nave extension is comparable in style to the sill of the 15th-century lancet in the chancel, and is level with it. While not conclusive, this suggests that the two extensions were contemporaneous. The addition of the third cell is also difficult to date, and its function uncertain.

The earliest documentary sources for the fabric, the Visitation records for 1622, recount that the chancel was in a 'ruinous' condition. This appears to have remained the case until 1731 when extensive repairs were carried out. The only source surviving for this work is Bishop Tension's account which refers to the presence of timber for the repair of the church. However, from subsequent descriptions of the church as in 'good repair', it can be inferred that the renovations were considerable.



Plate 9: South wall of chancel, with 15th-century lancet, blocked door and 15th-century window

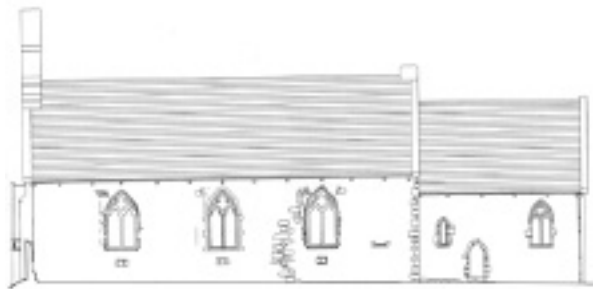


Figure 6: South wall of nave showing evidence of previous windows and vertical break where the original nave was extended

Firstly, there is evidence that the northern corner of the chancel was substantially rebuilt. Traces of two parallel vertical joints in the north wall close to this corner suggest the original presence of a doorway in this position. This probably corresponds to the record of a 'Gothic' doorway, uncovered during the internal renovation to the chancel in the early 1950s. There is now no trace externally of any dressed stone belonging to this entrance. However, the width of the opening corresponds closely to the width of the blocked, re-set doorway in the south wall, so it is possible that the stones were re-set in this position in 1731. It is possible that the third cell was the chancel in 'ruinous' condition and was fully demolished at this time.

Although the nave was recorded as being in sufficient repair to be used, it appears that it too underwent considerable renovation during the 1730s. The round-headed window, detectable by a scar immediately above the porch, probably dates from this time. Its insertion may coincide with the construction of the gallery, a common addition to parish churches during this period. The insertion of the window would have necessitated the removal of the upper courses of the porch gable. It is therefore suggested that the disassembly and subsequent reconstruction of the gable and outer order of the porch may date from then. The concern for preserving historic sections of the fabric, but in a non-archaeological manner, fits well with this period. Comparable examples can be seen at Rahon, where the Romanesque window was preserved but inaccurately re-set (inside-out) in the eastern gable during the rebuilding of the church in 1732, and at Killaloe and Dysart O'Dea where Romanesque portals were re-erected in an inaccurate manner in c. 1710 and c. 1683 respectively.

Traces of evenly spaced relieving arches for three windows in the south wall of the nave, and a vertical joint in the north wall of the nave, may relate to similar windows inserted into the fabric at this time.



References to the then incumbent, Luke Fowler, 'beautifying' the church fabric in the 1840s may refer to the replacement of these windows with traceried lancets, particularly in the south walls of the nave and chancel, and probably the east window also. Fowler was also responsible for erecting an iron gate across the porch, of which evidence is still visible in the iron hinge protruding from the stone surface.

Major renovations to the fabric were instigated some time towards the end of the 1850s under the auspices of the architect Joseph Welland, and following his death, the partnership of his son, William Welland and William Gillespie. It is not conclusive that certain renovations to the fabric, including the reinstatement of the apex of the porch gable, were carried out by the Wellands. The works necessitated the shortening of the gallery window, and a surviving unsigned and undated drawing in the RCB library shows the proposed insertion of a circular window to replace it. Together with the insertion of the neo-Romanesque window porch and gable apex, new capstones with Romanesque pellet ornament and made from a similar yellow sandstone were placed on the top of the antae.



Figure 7: J. Welland elevation and plan of chancel arch. Undated (c. 1860)

The building was apparently also re-roofed during this period and the pitch of the roof changed; a new belfry and chimney were added. Internally, Welland produced designs for a new cut limestone chancel arch and hammerbeam roof. A plan of the church, locating the new chancel, is ambiguous in the depiction of the window arrangement in the north wall of the nave. It shows a triple ope with two large central mullions. The location of the window corresponds to the vertical scar visible on the north wall of the nave, but it would have been partially blocked by the construction of the vestry and schoolroom annexe. The annexe was constructed in 1824; Welland was appointed architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1826, so the annexe was almost certainly in place when Welland's designs were being produced. There are two possible solutions to this. First, Welland's plan was based on an earlier plan of the church drawn up prior to 1824, a theory supported by the fact that the door to the vestry corridor is not indicated in the plan. Secondly, the window was still in place after the building of the annexe, and the works in the late 1850s/1860s included the refenestration of the north wall of the nave. In addition, the vestry book, which records the construction of the annexe in some detail, and in the following year the glazing of the chancel window and sexton's door, makes no mention of any glazing in the nave. The windows in the north wall of the nave are also quite different in character from those in the south. The easternmost one is apparently made from reconstituted stone, while the window at the top of the gallery stair is neo-Romanesque, more in keeping with Welland's work on the west façade. Designs were approved for a new interior furnishing scheme by Welland and Gillespie in 1865.

Carved altar rails were commissioned by Canon McCheane c. 1900 and electric light was installed in 1929. A major refurbishment of the sanctuary was initiated in 1949, comprising the insertion of new panelling, a terrazzo floor and the donation of a new Communion table and reredos. Since then, the church has been subject only to minor repairs.

## 2.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SETTING

The civil parish is taken as a geographical unit within which the settlement at Freshford can be considered in its historical context. However, the unit of territory of which the village is a focal point is more meaningfully explained in terms of its physical endowment which provides the basic resources available for life, particularly the soils which determine agricultural activity and materials for building.

The descriptions given below summarise the findings of archaeological, architectural and ecological assessments carried out as part of the preparation of this Conservation Plan. The assessments involved analysis of existing cartographic, documentary and aerial photographic evidence, supplemented by field examination of identified sites.

### THE CIVIL PARISH

The civil parish of Freshford is situated in a generally flat area of alluvium, bounded to the south by the steep scarp that marks the junction with the Slieve Ardagh Upper Carboniferous plateau. Limestones of Lower Carboniferous

underlie the areas of high ground to the north and north-west, extending towards Johnstown and Durrow. There is a relatively thin soil or glacial drift cover. The alluvial gravel consists mainly of limestone cobble grade, but there is a substantial amount of Upper Carboniferous sandstone.

There is a range of recorded monuments within the civil parish providing evidence of settlement in the prehistoric, early Christian, medieval and post-medieval periods.

From evidence derived from aerial photography, there is a cluster of three sites on a flat area above the River Nuenna in the Clintstown townland. The configuration suggests a ritual/burial site of the Bronze Age. The location is also close to Toberlachtain, which itself may have been a prehistoric ritual site prior to classification as a holy well.

Remains of several secular buildings of the early Christian period exist in the vicinity of Uppenwood Demesne and Boherkyle. In addition, there are two listed ecclesiastical monuments of this period in the parish, Toberlachtain or St Lachtain's well, and Tobernapeastia, of which there are now no visible traces above ground. Toberlachtain provides a significant link to the remote past, and although the traditional pattern is no longer held, the site retains significance in the locality.



Figure 8: Detail from Down Survey Parish map of Crannagh Barony c. 1665

A large and prominent feature, identified as an unusual example of a motte and bailey from the late 12th or early 13th century, stands on a steep ridge in the townland of Moat. Its location close to the settlement of Freshford underlines the prominence of the site during the 12th century. Another monument of this period, identified as a possible watermill located in Freshford Lots, is likely to be the site of an early castle (as shown on the Down Survey Map of 1665). This may have succeeded the motte and bailey described above, having been demolished after the construction of Uppercourt.

The demesne of Uppercourt, or Upperwood as it was known, is a major feature of the landscape, sited on the north-facing slopes overlooking the settlement of Freshford. It was an Episcopal seat from the mid 13th century. Richard Shee acquired the manor of Aghore from the bishop of Ossory in 1570. Uppercourt, which consisted of most of the parish of Freshford, remained in the Shee family until forfeited to Cromwell in 1653, when it was given to Sir George Askew. In the early 18th century, it was the property of the Ryves family. Mary Juliana Ryves married Sir William Morris and he commenced the construction of a new house, designed as a free-standing classical country villa c. 1790. The design has been attributed to John Roberts of Waterford. Much of the stone used is said to have come from the castle destroyed by Cromwell's army. This house was greatly altered c. 1875 by the architect J.J. McCarthy, on behalf of the Eyres who had acquired the property. An extra storey and three-storey east wing were added. The house remained in the Eyre family until purchased by the Maher brothers in 1918. It was sold in 1929 to a religious order and survives today, having been altered again through the addition of a wing to accommodate scholastics. The stucco-dores who worked at Uppercourt also exercised their art on a small house within the village where they lodged. This has been demolished.

## THE PRESENT SETTLEMENT OF FRESHFORD

The village of Freshford is situated on the Uaithne, anglicised as Nuenna, river, predominantly on its southern bank. It is located about 9.5 miles/15.3km north-west of Kilkenny city on the R693 road, some 9 miles/14km from Urlingford, and via the R694, 6 miles/10km from Ballyragget. The population in 1996 was 632 persons.



Plate 10: The Square, viewed from the gate to St Lachtain's graveyard

The regional road, R693, carries a large volume of heavy traffic between the west of Ireland and the ferry port of Rosslare. The road runs through the centre of the village and within four metres of the Romanesque porch.

The form of the village consists of a large open space or square, roughly rectangular in shape, with a series of streets leading out into the countryside. The northern edge of the central space or square is formed by an east-west street axis, leading east and then south to Kilkenny and westwards towards Tubbrid. The buildings are mainly two storey within the central areas of the village, arranged in continuous terraces, with only three buildings of greater height, the two churches and the three-storey Community Hall. There are a few single-storey dwellings within the village, generally of older stock and including some which are derelict. As one progresses outwards, the proportion of single-storey buildings increases, and semi-detached and detached houses predominate. The central space contains a green, surrounded by red chestnut trees and traversed diagonally by a tree-lined route. The trees are mature, and when in leaf, mask the variations in building around the edge of the square. Two bridges span the river, linking the village square with routes to Ballyragget and Urlingford on the northern side.

There are eight principal streets or thoroughfares that, together with the square, comprise the urban structure of the village: Buncrusha Street, Bohergloss Street (continuation of Newbridge Street), Chapel Street, Creel Street, Kilkenny Street, Mill Street, Newbridge Street and Old Bridge Street. The brief descriptions below are drawn from the outline inventory of the village which was carried out as part of the study.

The architectural fabric of the village reflects its geological context. With the exception of St Lachtain's Catholic Church and a few other buildings, the predominant building material consists of generally rough, undressed limestone blocks of irregular size. There were a number of limestone quarries in operation in the area during the 19th century, although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact source of the stone used. A high proportion of stone used in the buildings and walls is alluvial Upper Carboniferous material. This, and some of the limestone rock used as well, was gathered from the stream or quarried from alluvial deposits.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

The natural flora and fauna of the village and its surroundings are modest, with all species recorded to date being quite common. The strip of wood to the south of the village beyond Uppercourt Manor contains most of the best trees in the area, especially beech, and has considerable amenity value. The red chestnuts in the square, planted in 1918, carry a good variety of lichens.

The quality of the water in the Nuenna River is very good, and a brief review of the stream, based on invertebrate fauna, suggests that the water quality is currently 4-5 on the standard national scale of 1-5. The area of the stream adjacent to the Manor Mill cascade is of particular interest. Here, the bottom is covered with actively growing sheets of tufa. It is probable that this is accompanied by specialised invertebrate fauna and should be preserved.



Plate 11: St Lachtain's, viewed from the Square

## 2.5 EVOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE

Freshford village is a classic example of an early monastic settlement overlaid by later planned developments.



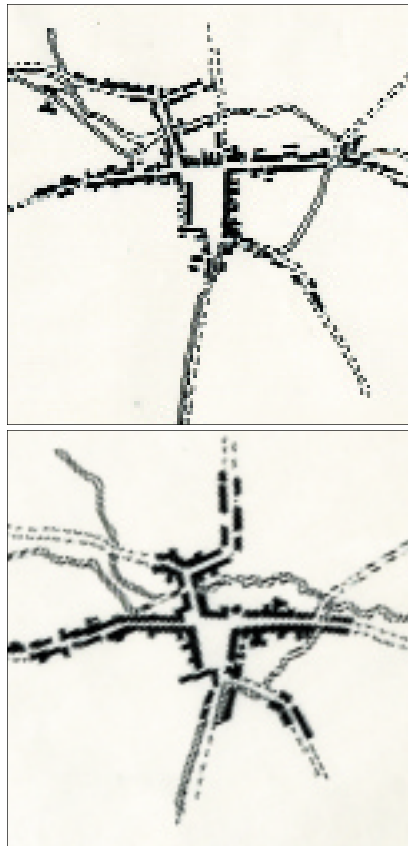
Plate 13: Aerial view of Freshford. Note the surviving inner and outer enclosures of the Early Christian settlement to the east of the Square

An indication of the extent of the Early Christian settlement is given by the surviving remnants of the *tearmon*, or boundary, common to both monastic and secular enclosures of that time. The remains indicate that the boundary was formed by the bend of the Nuenna River to the north, by a tributary stream from the south which joined the Nuenna to the east of the site, and by curved inner and outer enclosures to the south. Freshford is not unique in utilising the natural bend of a river to complete its enclosure, as is evidenced by Rahau, Co. Offaly and Glendalough, Co. Wicklow. The existence of both inner and outer enclosures is regarded as evidence of a high-prestige site. The chief buildings and sacred or ritual features were located within the inner enclosure, while the more mundane activities were contained within the outer boundary. The bank of the outer boundary preserves a broad range of flora, comparable to that occurring in local hedgerows. Of particular note on the monastic bank is the presence of *Alexander* (*Smyrnium olusatrum*). It is associated with medieval sites and thus may be one of the few 'living relics' of early monastic life.

From an examination of topography and the study of maps and aerial photographs, one can deduce that the settlement lay at the conjunction of several routes, but one cannot be certain which, if any, of those visible today were the definitive ones. However, it appears likely that a route from the south skirted the western side, connecting with a river-crossing at the western end of the enclosure, and from there linking with routes to the north and west. Furthermore, the striking alignment of what is now the Clintstown Road with the outer ditch suggests that a route from that direction crossed the river and stream at the eastern end of the enclosure, and looped around to link with the southern route. It may be that there were entrances to the enclosure at both the east and west extremities near the crossing points. Evidence for an east-west link to the north of the river is lacking, apart from that suggested by the alignment of present-day Creel Street.



Plate 12: The River Laithe



Figures 9 (top) & 10: Development of Freshford in the early 19th century after maps by Ather and Clements (above) and the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (below)



Figure 11: Detail from map by Taylor and Skinner c. 1778

One cannot be certain either of the full extent of the early settlement on the western side, since all of the south-west quadrant has been overlaid by subsequent developments. The archaeological area indicated by the Dúchas map gives one estimation, but it is arguable that the ancient crossing point may have been at the site of the present old bridge, and this crossing is likely to have been outside the enclosure. The wedge-shaped spaces at Chapel Street and the Fowl Market suggest early urban space formation, but this conjecture is impossible to verify empirically or from documentary evidence. Apart from the indicative evidence of the Down Survey map, such cartographic evidence as is available dates from the late 18th century and later.

It can be said that the square and the long, straight axis on the line of the Kilkeny Road are typical of the intervention of 'improving' landlords of the 18th and 19th centuries. While, due to the imprecision of the evidence, it is not possible to ascribe an exact date to the construction of the square and the long east-west axis, part of the latter appears on the Taylor and Skinner map of 1778, the earliest map that gives an indication of the form of the village. The principal route to Urlingford via Mill Street is evident on this map. What is now the Tubbrid Road via Buncrusha appears to have been simply an entrance route to Uppercourt at this time, although there may have been unrecorded tracks also.

The square now encloses a central green space, lined and traversed diagonally by red chestnut trees. These were planted in 1918. The date of construction of the square lies in the 34 years between 1778 and 1812, since it appears on the Aher and Clements map of 1812, but not on Taylor and Skinner of the earlier date. The Kilkeny/Tubbrid road is present at the earlier date, and by 1812 forms the north edge of the square. Old Bridge Street and the Fowl Market are to be seen to the north side also, and Chapel Street exits the square at the south-east corner. On the 1812 map, Buncrusha Street is shown without an entrance to the demesne. The map also shows clearly that the village had developed along the east-west axis. Creel Street is an important route, forming a T-junction with Mill Street and Old Bridge Street before swinging sharply north towards Ballyragget. From the map evidence, Creel Street would appear, along with Chapel Street and Mill Street, to be an early route leading to the western crossing place. Also on the 1812 map, the configuration of the south end of the square, extending into what is now Pitcher Lane, indicates an entrance from that point into the backlands to an area which is described as 'Mr Maher's Ground' on the Longfield and Brownrigg map of 1828. This map shows the square to have a solitary tree close to the pump. At this stage, the shape of Freshford is virtually as it now exists; the only changes that follow are to the buildings rather than to the urban structure.



The first Ordnance Survey map of 1838 shows a route for the rear entrance to Uppercourt from the extended Buncrusha Street, and also the then newly constructed link between the square and the Ballyragget Road, via Newbridge Street to the corner of Creel Street. The construction of the Female and Male National Schools in 1876 gave a new form to the south side of the space; the first edition Ordnance Survey map suggests that this side had been similar in form to New Row, and local opinion is that the intention of the landlord was to create an entrance from the square to the Uppercourt demesne. Their construction, and that of the Roman Catholic church of St Lachtain and the Community Hall, must have had a major impact at the time. Today the effect is diminished for most of the year by the fact that the edges of the square are screened by the mature trees when in leaf.



Figure 12: Detail of map by Longfield and Brownrigg c. 1828

# 3. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## 3.1 METHODOLOGY

The assessment made of the cultural importance of this place derives from two principal sources, careful examination of what exists at present, and the findings of the various studies that have been carried out. The methodology adopted can be summarised as follows:

The church and porch have been physically surveyed and photographed in detail. A wide range of historical documentation has been examined to establish the history of the site and of the church and its various modifications. Its fabric has been analysed to establish phases of construction. The material of the porch has been analysed to determine the nature of the stone and the causes of its decay. The settlement of Freshford and its environs have been studied, both in their historical development and as they are today.

In short, each element of the historic place has been examined both in itself, and from the perspective of the contribution to the place as a whole. The assessment of the significance of Freshford has been arrived at through an understanding of how these various elements combine.

## 3.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In terms of archaeological importance, the physical fabric of the village of Freshford incorporates the entire area of the Early Christian site and contains upstanding remains in the form of substantial lengths of the inner and outer monastic enclosures.

The physical fabric of the Church of Ireland church incorporates a 12th-century Romanesque porch whose design is of outstanding historical interest and aesthetic quality. Its construction in the 12th century was probably intended to attract status at a time of significant change in political and ecclesiastical organisation.

The porch is one of two such in Ireland, the other being the north porch of Cormac's Chapel. The still-legible inscription on the portal is one of three in Ireland on a monument of this type. The other two, Killeslin and Mona Incha, are both within 25 miles/40km of Freshford, but much more fragmentary. The Freshford inscription records the names of both patron and craftsman, and this fact, together with the elaborate design of the porch, show that it had a patron of some importance. The inner orders of the porch are in their original position. It is one of a very limited number of Irish Romanesque porch/portal structures to survive almost as built, and has the potential to provide information regarding structural and technical concerns of the time.

The church is a complex artefact incorporating historic fabric from a series of building campaigns over a period of at least 900 years. The church incorporates the 12th-century porch and other fabric of that time, and possibly earlier. Subsequent alterations and rebuildings are evident from the 15th, 18th and 19th centuries. The proximity of the church to the site of the medieval Episcopal residence located at Uppercourt may have had an effect on its development. The west façade has a particular importance in terms of architectural history, as an example of the desire for accurate historical reconstruction prevalent in the latter part of the 19th century. The re-use of radial ashlar in parts of the fabric provides some evidence, though not conclusive, of the existence of a hitherto unknown round tower or attached belfry.

A piece of 15th-century alabaster sculpture traditionally associated with the church provides a rare example of the type of decorative art used to embellish the altars of Irish medieval parish churches. The alabaster fragment, probably of English manufacture, is one of only ten such pieces to survive in Ireland.

Implementation of the Plan and conservation of the monument will create an interest among a wide range of people to whom the church and its site are not widely known. It will enhance its contribution to the wider community of Freshford and environs.

The history of the monument and of its site embodies the development of the early, medieval and Reformed Churches in Ireland, right into modern times. Being a complex historical monument, the church has educational value as an aid to understanding historical events extending over 900 years. This is of special importance at the present time of rapid social and cultural change.

An essential component of its cultural and community significance is the fact that the ecclesiastical site has seen continuity of worship since the 7th century. This is important both in relation to its present-day use for worship by the Church of Ireland community, and to its appreciation by the wider Christian community. It is of social importance to the local congregation, and the maintenance of worship there is of strategic importance to the Church of Ireland.

The church is a significant landmark within the surrounding landscape and within the village. Its relationship to the planned village is important visually and aesthetically (at the present time), and this quality relates to future planning and development in the vicinity. The history of this relationship also helps one to understand the processes of urban development in the 18th/19th centuries, as led by 'improving' landlords.

## SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

- A place of great antiquity
- A place of worship where there has been significant continuity since its foundation
- A place that contains a building of architectural interest
- A place that contains a building of art historical interest
- A place of considerable archaeological interest
- A place whose history is a microcosm of Irish Church history from Early Christian to the modern day
- A place with a strong and attractive urban form
- A place containing buildings of interest in terms of vernacular architecture and urban planning

## 4. DEFINING ISSUES AND ASSESSING VULNERABILITY

This section describes the likely threats to the monument, defining the factors which impact on it, and the degree to which the significance of the monument is, or may be, affected by them. This is done under the two main headings:

- Factors affecting the monument and site
- Factors affecting the setting

### 4.1 FACTORS AFFECTING THE MONUMENT AND SITE (CHURCH, ANNEXE AND GRAVEYARD)

This section summarises the various factors which have affected the significance of the monument and site in the past or which are likely to affect its significance in the future. Seven such factors have been identified:

- Complexity of its evolution
- Deterioration of the historic fabric
- Adverse environmental conditions
- Continued use for worship
- Lack of interpretation/lack of knowledge
- Insufficient levels of protection
- Potential future conflicts

#### COMPLEXITY OF ITS EVOLUTION

Investigations of the fabric of the body of the church have shown that at least five building campaigns have taken place: the 10th/11th-century early church, the Romanesque (12th century), the medieval (15th century), the reconstruction for worship (18th century), and the restoration of the porch and church and construction of the annexe (19th century). The result is the complex structure that exists today. The historic monastic enclosure has been extensively subsumed into the street and plot pattern of the current settlement, and the creation of the modern roadway has also reduced the extent of the ecclesiastical site.

#### DETERIORATION OF THE HISTORIC FABRIC

The condition survey (see Appendices) has revealed defects which are accelerating the deterioration of the fabric of porch and church, and which will continue to do so unless corrected. The stonework of the porch is in a state of ongoing decay. The investigations carried out by English Heritage and the Project Team have indicated the likely decay mechanisms at work in the stone, and areas requiring additional investigations are identified in this Plan. The alterations at various times, the reconstruction, restoration and repairs, have resulted in loss of material, and in some instances, the insertion of inappropriate

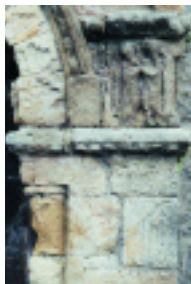


Plate 14: Detail of south jamb of porch

materials into the historic fabric. With regard to the historic monastic enclosure, surviving parts of boundary structures now form part of present-day property boundaries and thus could be affected by changes in ownership or use.

#### ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Lack of air movement in the inner section of the porch maintains conditions conducive to deterioration of the stonework. The presence of hard repair material, pointing and render on the inner surfaces of the body of the church traps moisture within the walls. The inhibition of drying out produces conditions conducive to accelerated decay. Drainage channelling around the church is also insufficient. The monument is also exposed to continuing risk of damage from vibration, air-borne pollutants and accidental impact, all arising from its proximity to a busy road junction. In addition, the closeness of the railings to the surface of the porch renders the fabric vulnerable to accidental or mischievous impact damage. Within the body of the church, the use of LPG gas heating raises the moisture content of the air and contributes to the deterioration of the fabric.



Plate 15: Detail of northern capitals of porch

#### CONTINUED USE FOR WORSHIP

Continued use of the church for worship is of community and strategic importance to the Church of Ireland and the Select Vestry. The fact that worship in the building has been continuous since the 10th/11th century is an important element of the significance of the monument, and the maintenance of that use is of importance in retaining that significance into the future. However, continued use of the doorway for access to the church will result in minor but ongoing damage to the stonework arising from abrasion from accidental contact as well as impact damage from the opening and closing of the door. Any enhanced use of the annexe will involve at least the upgrading of roof, walls, floor, electrical and sanitary services.

#### LACK OF INTERPRETATION/LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

Freshford has not been regarded until now as a site of the first importance. In contrast with the attention paid to Cormac's Chapel and Clonfert Cathedral, it has been largely ignored. The information assembled from documentary sources concerning the history of the church and site, together with the evidence produced in the course of this study regarding the fabric and site, have shown the need for a fresh appraisal. Further investigation may reveal hidden features surviving within the fabric of the monument and within the site and setting. Archaeological excavation associated with works may provide evidence which would enhance knowledge and appreciation of the monument.

There is need for archaeological assessment of building works within the archaeological area indicated by Dúchas The Heritage Service (now the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government). With regard to interpretation, there is at present little coherently presented information available locally which would assist in such appreciation.

### INSUFFICIENT LEVELS OF PROTECTION

At the present time, the monument enjoys a measure of statutory protection. It lies within an area of archaeological potential as designated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, and therefore has some protection under the Monuments Acts. The body of the church (apart from the porch) is not specifically protected under the County Development Plan, although, given the enhanced awareness of its importance, it may be so protected in the future. In any event, the revisions introduced in 1999 could be taken to extend protection to the monument as a whole. However, statutory protection *per se* is unlikely to be significant unless it is accompanied by specific measures that address the threats to the monument as described above. Such measures must then be supported by the requisite resources.

### POTENTIAL FUTURE CONFLICTS

Future conflicts may arise from three main sources.

- As the significance of the monument becomes more widely known, there could be an increase in visitor numbers. The site cannot cope with the impacts which would arise from a substantial increase in visitors.
- Given the custom and practice of burial within the churchyard to the south and east of the church, an increased awareness of significance could lead to greater demand for burials in the churchyard. Burials located close to the church walls could adversely affect the substructure.
- Inappropriate developments in the immediate vicinity of the site. Conflict could arise if new uses of adjacent property were to result in nuisances from noise or increased traffic, or if new developments were to be visually intrusive.

Section 5 sets out Conservation Policies which address these factors.

## 4.2 FACTORS AFFECTING THE SETTING (THE SETTLEMENT OF FRESHFORD AND THE CIVIL PARISH)

### FACTORS AFFECTING SIGNIFICANCE

This section summarises the various factors which have affected the significance of the present settlement of Freshford and the civil parish of Freshford, or which could do so in the future. In affecting the setting, they also impact on the monument. Five such factors have been identified:

- Disruption of early enclosure/disruption of key relationships
- Lack of knowledge/lack of interpretation
- Risk to historic fabric/insufficient statutory protection
- Risk to landscape features/amenity
- Inadvertant damage

#### DISRUPTION OF EARLY ENCLOSURE/ DISRUPTION OF KEY RELATIONSHIPS

The evolution of the settlement over the centuries has partly obliterated the monastic enclosure, and the remaining evidence is vulnerable. The relationship of the monastic enclosure to the landscape, to the river and to the site of the bishop's residence are obscured by the existing street pattern and the demesne development. The historical evolution of the settlement is also not well documented, and key elements of the town's past form, such as the courthouse and the riverside industrial buildings, have largely disappeared or have been absorbed in the fabric of later building.

#### LACK OF KNOWLEDGE/LACK OF INTERPRETATION

At present, there is a general awareness within the village of Freshford that the porch of St Lachtain's is of historic importance. However, the history and significance of the settlement, and the survival of ancient features and historic fabric of the church itself, are less well known locally. There is very little awareness of these matters in the wider community. Although there is some historical documentation in existence, it is dispersed in a variety of sources and repositories. Locally, there is insufficient available material to inform either the community or the visitor of the existence or the significance of the various features of the church, its site or the setting of the village. The lack of available information extends to the natural environment, where increased awareness would contribute greatly both to the enjoyment of the place and to the care extended to it.

#### RISK TO HISTORIC FABRIC/ INSUFFICIENT STATUTORY PROTECTION

A great deal of the historic fabric of Freshford has disappeared over time. It is widely accepted that all traces of the Episcopal occupancy in the Uppercourt area have now disappeared. Much of the evidence of the industrial past of the village is now gone or in a ruinous state. More recently, many of the vernacular features of the buildings of the town have been replaced by modern substitutes. Although most of the village falls within the area of archaeological potential as established by the Urban Survey, there is little awareness locally of any special restrictions on development and few of the buildings of the town are listed in the County Kilkenny Development Plan 1994.



Plate 16: The Fowl Market, Bridge Street, a good example of vernacular building

#### RISK TO LANDSCAPE FEATURES/AMENITY



Plate 17: Cascade Mill Bridge, view from the south-east

Despite the depredations of time and changing uses, many landscape and archaeological features related to Freshford's past still survive, both in the immediate vicinity of the town and within the civil parish. For the greater part, the relationship between the town and the surrounding landscape is still unspoilt, and there is considerable amenity potential in the vicinity of the river and in the Uppercourt demesne. These relationships are sensitive and the features are vulnerable to development. The relationship of the monument and site to the surrounding landscape, and the high quality of much of the townscape and surrounding areas, could be lost through insensitive or poorly sited development. The richness of vegetation in the locality is vulnerable to land management practices.

#### INADVERTANT DAMAGE

Given the extent of the original foundation, it is likely that there are further undocumented features within the town and within the civil parish. In the case of some of the documented sites, it is clear that they are not recognised for what they are. Inadvertent damage and loss will arise from insufficient knowledge or appreciation.

Section 5 sets out Conservation Policies which address these factors.



## 5. CONSERVATION POLICIES

### POLICY STATEMENT: THE OVERVIEW

St Lachtain's Church of Ireland Church is a complex monument of great significance. Its history presents a microcosm of Irish ecclesiastical history, embodying the transitions from early Christian settlement to medieval site, to Reformed Church and to modern worship. It has been a site of Christian worship for over a millennium, and its fabric contains evidence of much of these transitions. The church incorporates a porch of considerable historical and art historical interest. It is set in a small attractive village, remodelled in the late 18th century, within which evidence of the medieval monastic enclosure still remains. The statement of overall policy is as follows:

*The objective of the Conservation Plan is to maintain the layers of significance embodied in the place, the monument, site and setting, in the context of continuing use of the church for worship.*

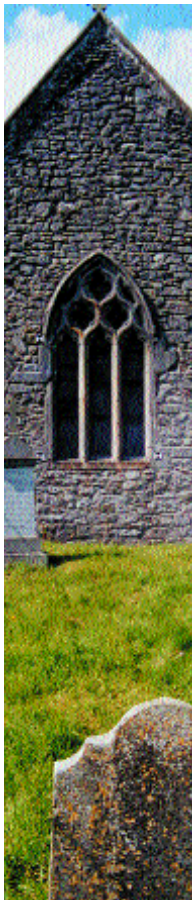
This policy is elaborated through policies for the monument and policies for the setting.

- *Policies for the Monument and Site:* general policy headings are set out and specific policies are established for the elements of the monument and site.
- *Policies for the Setting:* general policy headings are set out and specific policies are established which address significant elements of the setting, that is, the village of Freshford and the civil parish.



Figure 13: Engraving of St Lachtain's porch published in G. Petrie's *Ecclesiastical Architecture*, 1845





5.1 **POLICIES FOR THE MONUMENT AND SITE**

Policies are set out to address those issues which affect the church and porch, the annexe and graveyard, and which make them vulnerable. These were described in Section 4.1 under the following headings:

- Complexity of its evolution
- Deterioration of the historic fabric
- Adverse environmental conditions
- Continued use for worship
- Lack of interpretation/lack of knowledge
- Insufficient protection/potential future conflicts

**GENERAL POLICIES FOR THE MONUMENT AND SITE**

- A Retain the full authenticity and integrity of the place, maintaining in situ the evidence of the various stages of evolution.*
- B Halt the deterioration of fabric and prevent further deterioration by putting in place a range of conservation measures to retain material integrity.*
- C Counter adverse environmental conditions by putting in place a range of short and medium term actions to monitor impacts and mitigate adverse effects.*
- D Prepare guidelines for building owners and users to counter conflicts arising from continuing use for worship, including guidelines for future management.*
- E Put in place measures to improve knowledge and awareness of the significance of the place.*

Each of these policies requires a range of specific policy actions which, in turn, are reflected in the procedures for implementation of the Conservation Plan.

**POLICY A**

**RETAIN THE FULL AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE PLACE, MAINTAINING IN SITU THE EVIDENCE OF THE VARIOUS STAGES OF EVOLUTION**

This policy addresses the need for integrated action to retain the surviving evidence of the complexity of evolution of the place, that is, evidence of the reconstructions, extension, alterations, restoration and repairs of the church fabric, and the evidence of the impact of settlement history. This general policy addresses the need to augment existing measures in an integrated way. Thus it includes three specific policies:

- A1 The promotion, by the building owners and the Heritage Council, of complementary policies within the statutory bodies with responsibility for heritage. These policies will include designation of the central area of Freshford as an Architectural Conservation Area, the inclusion of the church and graveyard in the Record of Protected Structures by Kilkenny County Council, and the completion of the Heritage Council church inventory. The policies should include measures to ensure appropriate work practices by public agencies and private organisations carrying out works in the vicinity of the monument.
- A2 The Select Vestry, the diocese of Ossory and Kilkenny County Council should ensure that appropriate expertise is brought to bear on all matters impacting on the fabric and usage of the church and on the usage of the site.
- A3 On the adoption of the Conservation Plan by the stakeholders — the Select Vestry, the Representative Church Body, the Heritage Council, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Kilkenny County Council and the local community — a steering committee should be established to oversee its implementation (see Section 6, Implementation).

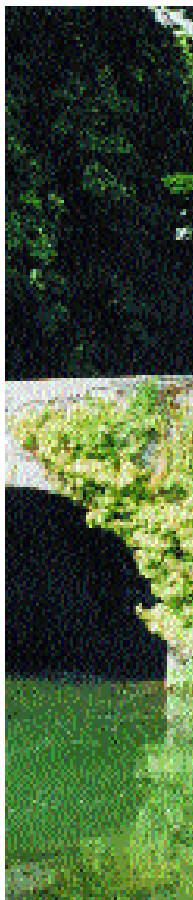
## POLICY B

### HALT THE DETERIORATION OF FABRIC AND PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION BY PUTTING IN PLACE A RANGE OF CONSERVATION MEASURES TO RETAIN MATERIAL INTEGRITY

Policies under this heading address the continuing deterioration of the fabric: the stonework decay in the porch, loss of material, mechanical damage, and the insertion of inappropriate materials; the fabric defects within the body of the church and the annexe; and the risk to important surviving features.

- B1 Complete and maintain a comprehensive record of the fabric. The record established in the preparation of the Plan comprises survey drawings of the ensemble, rectified photographs of the exterior, record photographs of the interior and contents, a condition report, and the reports of scientific tests carried out. This record should be updated from time to time to include the items listed below and the interventions carried out in implementing the Conservation Plan. Make a copy available locally.
- B2 A full photogrammetric survey and/or rectified photographic and a detailed hand-held photographic survey of the porch should be carried out.
- B3 The construction of a full-scale model of the porch as a replica before further deterioration takes place. The replica should be installed in the annexe where it should form part of the interpretative material provided (see E1 below).
- B4 The commissioning by the Select Vestry and the diocese of Kilkenny of a Management Plan for the monument. This will set out immediate, short and medium term conservation actions, and an ongoing programme of testing, monitoring and inspection of the doorway, linked to a reporting regimen which can inform conservation actions. This Conservation Plan will form part of the briefing documentation for this commission, and it provides outline recommendations (see Section 6, Implementation).





- B5 Carry out remedial work as outlined in the recommendations made on foot of the condition assessment (see Appendices and C below).
- B6 The implementation by the Church of Ireland of a policy of quinquennial inspections of the fabric of the church, linked to a programme of regular repair and maintenance, carried out in accordance with best conservation practice.
- B7 All works to the graveyard fall under National Monuments legislation. They must comply with the guidelines on the care and conservation of graveyards.

### POLICY C

#### COUNTER ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS BY PUTTING IN PLACE A RANGE OF SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS TO MONITOR IMPACTS AND MITIGATE ADVERSE EFFECTS

Policies under this heading address the adverse environmental conditions arising from the location of the monument, its form and condition: trapped moisture, vibration, air-borne pollutants, and the risk of impact damage.

- C1 Reduce the effects of vibration and pollution from passing traffic. Liaison with Kilkenny County Council on road reclassification and traffic management is required, together with investigation of additional mitigation measures. An immediate measure recommended is a restriction on axle weight of vehicles using R693 route and the adjacent streets.
- C2 Reduce/eliminate penetration of water into the doorway. A series of actions will be required and their effects monitored. Actions chosen should seek to minimise interference with historic fabric and visual intrusion.
- C3 Remove harmful dense finishes from interior of the church and allow walls to dry out before replastering with a soft lime render.
- C4 Install an appropriate heating system (see D6).
- C5 Assess for risk of lightning and install a lightning protection system if necessary.
- C6 Install a system of drainage outfall to the channel surrounding the main body of the church. Works in this regard will require appropriate archaeological assessment and may be combined with the provision of building services.

### POLICY D

#### PREPARE GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING OWNERS AND USERS TO COUNTER CONFLICTS ARISING FROM CONTINUING USE FOR WORSHIP, INCLUDING GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT

Policies under this heading aim to reduce the inevitable wear and tear on the fabric and to address conflicting priorities and potential future conflicts that arise from the augmented uses of the building.

- D1 Minimise the use of the Romanesque doorway for normal access to the church.

- D2 Protect the porch from casual contact by relocating the railings and securing the gates to prevent impact/mechanical damage.
- D3 Put in place procedures to prevent damage to the substructure of the church arising from the continuance of the custom and practice of burial within the churchyard to the south and east of the church. New burials within the graveyard should be restricted, and all interments in any new plots archaeologically monitored.
- D4 Promote appropriate new uses within the annexe, including arrangements for visitor services and necessary sanitary facilities, with accompanying guidelines for building and visitor management (see B4 above).
- D5 Promote measures to make the building more amenable to its current use as a place of worship by preparing a brief for vestry and parish use of annexe and gallery. These areas will, *inter alia*, need to cater for the requirements of travelling clergy.
- D6 Install new electrical, heating, water and sanitary services, taking care to minimise their impact on the fabric. Drainage runs will require appropriate archaeological assessment (see C4 above).

## POLICY E

### PUT IN PLACE MEASURES TO IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

These policies address issues arising both from insufficient knowledge of the significance of the monument and the lack of interpretation of such information as is now available. In this situation, hidden features are at risk, and the significance of the place is vulnerable to development (see A1 above).

- E1 Establish an exhibition space for interpretative material in the annexe.
- E2 Assemble and display informative material on historic artefacts associated with but remote from the monument — alabaster, arm shrine, finial and fonts.
- E3 Commission a publication on the monument and site, of general as well as specialist interest.
- E4 Notwithstanding the above, the material produced through this study should be made available to the local community and visitors as part of the provision for interpretation.
- E5 Carry out a study of lichens on the graveyard monuments.
- E6 Train local volunteers to act as guides to the church and site.
- E7 Promote the publication of guidelines for development related to the village's classification as an area of archaeological potential and proposed Conservation Area.





5.2 **POLICIES FOR THE SETTING**

Policies are set out to address the issues affecting significant elements of the setting, that is, the village of Freshford and the civil parish, and which make them vulnerable. These have been described above under the following headings:

- Disruption of early enclosure/disruption of key relationships
- Lack of knowledge/lack of interpretation
- Risk to historic fabric/insufficient statutory protection
- Risk to landscape features/loss of amenity
- Inadvertent damage

**GENERAL POLICIES FOR THE SETTING**

- F Preserve and maintain surviving elements of the early enclosure.*
- G Give effect to the existing statutory protection offered through designation of the area as being of archaeological importance.*
- H Ensure greater statutory protection for historic fabric, features and relationships.*
- J Ensure greater statutory protection for important landscape features.*
- K Put in place measures to improve knowledge and awareness and encourage appropriate practices.*
- L Promote the development of an integrated information bank on historic and other features of the civil parish.*

Each of these policy heads requires a range of specific policy actions. These are reflected in the procedures for implementation of the Conservation Plan.

**POLICY F**

**PRESERVE AND MAINTAIN SURVIVING ELEMENTS OF THE EARLY ENCLOSURE**

This policy sets out to address the implications for the significance of the place, of the partial obliteration of the early monastic enclosure and the obscuring of the key relationships of the enclosure to the river, and of the historic settlement to the site of the bishop's residence and the landscape.

- F1** Promote the protection through incorporation into the Record of Monuments and Places (the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government) and the Record of Protected Structures (Kilkenny County Council) of all surviving elements of the inner and outer monastic enclosures.
- F2** Promote the carrying out of a full architectural inventory of Freshford village and environs. The inventory will provide the basis for enhanced statutory protection (see H1 and Appendices).

## POLICY G

### GIVE EFFECT TO THE EXISTING STATUTORY PROTECTION OFFERED THROUGH DESIGNATION OF THE AREA AS BEING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

This policy addresses the difficulty of effective protection from building works and other changes made to the physical environment of the village.

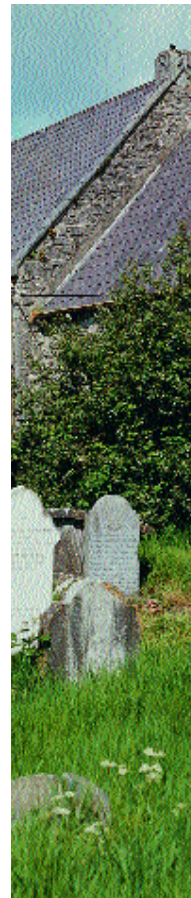
- G1 Promote awareness within the community of the existing levels of statutory protection.
- G2 Ensure careful monitoring of all development work within the archaeological area as designated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

## POLICY H

### ENSURE GREATER STATUTORY PROTECTION FOR HISTORIC FABRIC, FEATURES AND RELATIONSHIPS

These policies are intended to ensure that there is no lack of statutory protection for the surviving historic fabric and existing character of the village, and to combat the ongoing loss of traditional fabric and features.

- H1 Promote the designation, in the Development Plan of Kilkenny County Council, of the central area of Freshford as an Architectural Conservation Area and maintain the vernacular features and mature planting within the village.
- H2 Promote the protection of the quality of streetscape and of important views within the village and avoid inappropriate placing of items of street furniture such as street lights, telephone kiosks, poles etc.
- H3 Identify additional structures as worthy of protection through the revised County Development Plan.
- H4 Seek the preparation of a Local Area Plan for Freshford by Kilkenny County Council.





- POLICY J**
- ENSURE GREATER STATUTORY PROTECTION FOR IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES**
- These policies address the qualities of landscape and surviving archaeological features that contribute to the significance of the place, and seek to promote the protection of key features of the natural environs of the village.
- J1 Instigate a programme of conservation of the following important archaeological features of the civil parish: ringfort (KKo13-021), Toberlachtain holy well (KKo13-025), motte (KKo13-026).
  - J2 Promote the conservation of the variety of plant species in local hedgerows. In particular, it is important to ensure the survival of Alexanders on the ditch of the monastic enclosure. Vegetation control measures in the vicinity of this feature should be carefully monitored.
  - J3 Carry out a survey of trees and other vegetation including lichens in the square and in the surrounding landscape.
  - J4 Identify important views and vistas and list for protection through the revised County Development Plan.

- POLICY K**
- PUT IN PLACE MEASURES TO IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS AND ENCOURAGE APPROPRIATE PRACTICES**
- These policies address the inadequacy of knowledge and awareness of the significance of the settlement, the survival of ancient features and historic fabric within it, and the lack of material locally that would help the community or the visitor to understand the place.
- K1 Promote and support the development of materials to assist environmental education programmes in local schools.
  - K2 Promote the re-publication of the book, *We Grew Up Around Freshford*, compiled by Desmond McCheane, with a modern supplement.
  - K3 Ensure that copies of the documentation on the locality produced through this study are available locally, as part of the interpretation facilities in the annexe.
  - K4 Promote the production of illustrative material featuring the doorway of St Lachtain's and the square.

## POLICY L

### PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED INFORMATION BANK ON HISTORIC AND OTHER FEATURES OF THE CIVIL PARISH

These policies seek to combat the danger of inadvertent damage, to enhance the possibility that features undocumented at present might be brought to the attention of the relevant authorities, to ensure the recognition of documented sites, and to promote the investigation of the built heritage of the civil parish of Freshford.

- L1 Seek the immediate execution, by the National Inventory of the Architectural Heritage, of an Interim County Survey of County Kilkenny to complement a full inventory of Freshford village.
- L2 Promote the preparation of a map of the civil parish to record the significant detail of the parish landscape: hedges and stonework, natural features and habitats, land use and settlement, archaeology, architecture, folklore and related cultural detail, industrial and agricultural archaeology, topographic tradition and folklore. This will draw attention to those aspects of parish heritage worthy of conservation or in need of protection and could serve as a blueprint that other parishes might follow.

All the above policies are subject to A1, A2 and A3.





## 6. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The successful implementation of the Conservation Plan will hinge on several factors:

- the acceptance by the major stakeholders of the general and specific policies of the Plan
- the establishment of complementary policies by each of the stakeholders
- the clear allocation of resources by each of the stakeholders to support the policies of the Plan
- the co-ordination of implementation procedures
- periodic review of the Conservation Plan and of the implementation measures

### 6.1 ADOPTION OF THE CONSERVATION PLAN

A Conservation Plan is the end result of a process of investigation, analysis and consultation among the principal stakeholders, culminating in agreed actions to be taken to conserve a monument. The principal stakeholders in the case of Freshford are the Select Vestry of St Lachtain's, the diocese of Ossory and the Representative Church Body, the State through the agency of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, National Monuments and Historic Properties Division, the Heritage Council, Kilkenny County Council, and the local community in which the monument is situated.

The preparation of the Conservation Plan related to the Romanesque porch in Freshford has revealed a significance to the monument, site and setting which had not been anticipated at the outset.

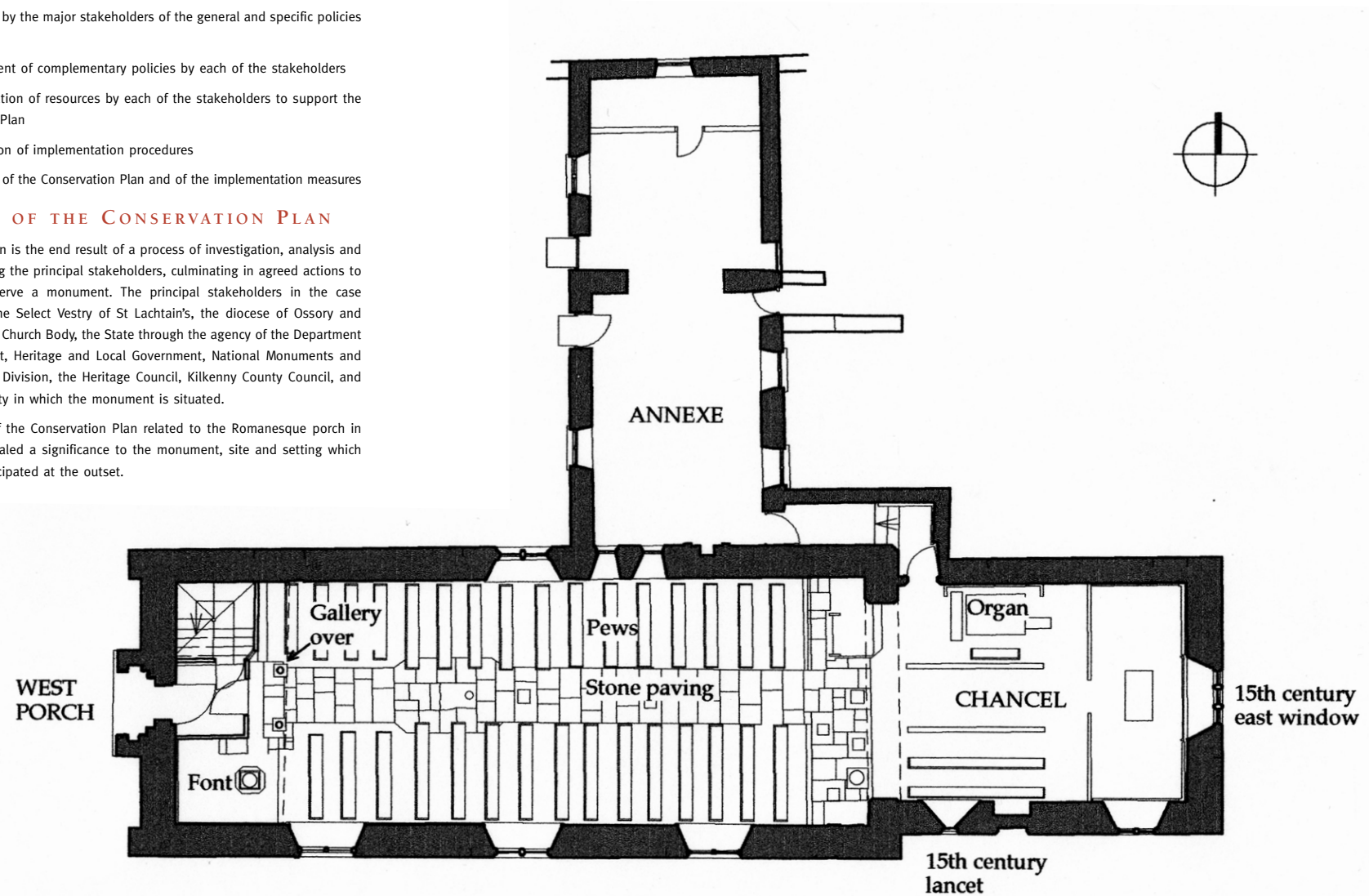


Figure 14: Ground floor plan of St Lachtain's

The first requirement is the acceptance by the building owners and the other stakeholders of the significance of the findings of the studies carried out in the preparation of the Plan, and the adoption of the measures proposed. The production of the Plan completes only the first stage of the process. The consideration of the proposals by the stakeholders, whose responsibilities towards the monument vary widely, is the next stage, followed by the procedures required to bring about its adoption. The focus will then be on how they can co-ordinate their efforts in the interest of safeguarding this significant monument.

Thus the secondary requirement is the establishment of complementary policies and procedures by each of the stakeholders.

#### 6.2 **RESOURCES**

The resources required to maintain the significance of this monument and site into the future are beyond the immediate capacities of the Select Vestry and will require ongoing and creative effort at national and local levels. Resource allocation will be a challenge to the owners and other stakeholders also. The benefit of the Conservation Plan is that it allows each of the stakeholders to identify and agree priorities, and to seek and allocate resources on the basis of these priorities.

#### 6.3 **CO-ORDINATION OF POLICIES AND REVIEW**

It is proposed that a steering group/liaison group be established, to be facilitated by the Heritage Council, which will oversee the implementation of the Conservation Plan. This group will act as a channel for communication and co-ordination. The group will review the Conservation Plan at regular intervals, bi-annually, until such time as the initial interventions have stabilised the situation, and thereafter annually.



## 6.4 PRIORITIES

### SHORT-TERM

Establish a steering group and put in place the necessary arrangements to execute a programme of urgent conservation actions directed at halting the deterioration of the fabric, including the following:

- Seek immediate weight restriction on road pending further action.
- Restrict access through porch.
- Move the railings to improve protection of the porch.
- Reduce/eliminate moisture penetration.
- Remove impervious interior finishes to west gable of the church.
- Ensure proper functioning of drainage channel around church.
- Address the problem of timber decay.
- Instigate scientific testing to identify initial treatments to stone.
- Commission photogrammetric survey of porch.
- Establish a monitoring regime.
- Ensure lightning protection.

### MEDIUM-TERM

Prepare a management plan to allocate resources to a programme of ongoing conservation, repair and development works in accordance with the provisions of the Conservation Plan.

### ADDENDUM

Between the completion of this Conservation Plan and its publication, the agencies involved have been working to address the short-term priorities identified. Under the direction of Margaret Quinlan, Conservation Architect, and with grant assistance from the church, the Heritage Council and the local authority, the drainage around the church has been improved, the timber decay has been remedied, the impervious interior finish to the west gable has been removed and replaced with a lime plaster, and the porch has had gentle lime mortar repairs which have stabilised its condition to some extent. Work is continuing on scientific testing of stone and stone treatments.

At the time of publication, however, efforts to reduce the danger to the porch from passing heavy vehicles have not been successful, and the porch remains at a considerable risk of damage.

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