

Tuam, Co Galway Study Of Planning & Development for The Heritage Council

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1.0 - Objectives

The survey was commissioned by the Heritage Council as part of a series on four historic towns, Kells, Co Meath; Cashel, Co Tipperary; Thomastown, Co Kilkenny; and Tuam, Co Galway. The purpose of the survey was fourfold:

- a) To examine the effectiveness of the National Monuments Acts, Planning Acts, and current guidelines, and their implementation, in relation to the preservation and management of the archaeological and built heritage. In addition, to make recommendations on how they might be improved.
- b) To examine the policies and development plans of the statutory and local authorities and assess whether these provide optimum conditions for the preservation, recording, and management of the archaeological and built heritage. In addition, to make recommendations on how they might be improved.
- c) To examine the effectiveness of the town development plan using the heritage appraisal of development plans methodology developed by the Heritage Council. Make recommendations on how the development plan might be improved.
- d) To identify what, if any, features unique to Tuam, require a revised approach to archaeology and the built heritage in a planning and development context. The study will also consider how effective any earlier archaeological interventions have been.

1.1 Introduction

1.2 The case of Tuam is vital in that it comprises a particularly significant urban centre. Tuam owes its origins to the Gaelic civilisation preceding the Anglo-Norman invasion and the outline of its streets and lanes indicate a much older civilisation than that normally associated with the founding of Irish towns and cities. The outlines are partly ecclesiastical and partly secular in character, but they share a common fragility when faced with modern urban development. Alterations to plot sizes and site assembly erode the character of older urban centres. Modern construction technology is disproportionately powerful and destructive within the context of buildings and structures.

1.3 Tuam did not undergo the same level of urban renewal experienced in many other Irish towns in the 1990's but the recent Galway County Plan and Tuam Town Plan both envisage increasing population and development in the town and its environs. The level of the proposed development will inevitably put pressure on the existing fabric.

1.4 The following survey will therefore consider both the archaeological and the historical architecture of Tuam. In an urban context both disciplines are the two sides of the one coin, since the character of a town is informed by both. It is perhaps unfortunate that the responsibilities of the archaeological heritage and built environment are largely catered for in different types of legislation, the National Monuments Acts and the Planning Acts. A highly centralised authority underpins the former, whereas the Planning Acts have traditionally sought to refer to local opinion for their operation. The consolidation of the Department of Arts, Culture, the Gaeltacht & the Islands has brought some of the functions together, but it remains to be seen if this will introduce coherent implementation of the legislation.

1.5 The state has been active in introducing an extensive range of legislation dealing with the built heritage in the last decade. A comprehensive and radical policy on built environment is now rooted in the Planning & Development Act 2000. It allows for considerable intervention on the part of the state and local authorities. The real effects of the legislation will no doubt be borne out over the coming years.

1.6 The purpose of this project therefore is to highlight issues of particular significance to Tuam, its character and its heritage. The recommendations that follow are based on a scrutiny of its history and existing characteristics, and the experience of planning there. It is hoped that the recommendations are realistic and capable of being implemented. The recommendations are primarily concerned with local government policies and objectives, although there are some suggested improvements to the legislation and to its implementation. The purpose of the report is to encourage the greater sophistication of urban policy rather than any radical change of direction.

1.7 The focus of attention of this study is on the outlines of early ecclesiastical enclosures, as reflected in the lanes and streets of the town, and on the open spaces that previously provided ground for the fairs and markets held in the town since it was established. As we will see, the legislative provisions, and the local policies protecting monuments may not be adequate in preserving what are in essence fragile urban features. Curved streets, narrow lanes, small plots, open yards, and privately held green spaces are subject to developmental pressures regularly. The loss of the particular is a recurring feature of modern urban development. The purpose of the project therefore is to make a case for some particular features, remnants of an earlier era, fragile yet valuable.

2.0 - Methods

2.1 The history of Tuam was examined with a view to identifying the critical determinants of its modern day shape and function. The purpose of such a survey was to propose guidelines on how the town might be developed in future in line with its historical traditions.

2.2 The legislation and guidelines in effect at present were surveyed with a view to identifying their range, scope, and suitability. Much of the legislation and guidelines are very recent and there is a need to comprehend their implications in the absence of prolonged experience. The legislation falls into two main categories, the National Monuments Acts 1930, 1954, 1987, & 1994, and the various Planning Acts 1963 onwards.

2.3 The Old Tuam Society, Galway County Council, and the Tuam Commissioners were consulted on what particular issues were of concern to them, and what if any proposals they suggested to remedy any problems they identified. Issues raised as a result of such meetings have been integrated into the following sections.

2.4 Archaeological interventions carried out in Tuam as a consequence of planning conditions were examined. Almost all interventions came about as a result of the National Monuments Act 1987 empowering local authorities to request archaeological investigations prior to construction. The consequent excavations have been a remarkable feature of heritage related activity in the country as a whole, both in urban and rural areas. They have succeeded in retrieving an enormous volume of information, often at considerable expense and public controversy. The value of this activity has only recently been scrutinised.

2.5 The Tuam Town Plan, approved May 2000, was assessed along the lines proposed in the appraisal methodology produced by the Heritage Council. It is to be hoped that the appraisal will provide a means allowing local authorities to gauge their proposals in relation to their archaeological and built heritage. The value of the appraisal will only become apparent over some considerable time, but it is hoped that it might provide a focus for future discussion on the town's development by those involved in its planning.

2.6 The planning permits issued by Galway County Council for developments and its environs in the 1990's were examined with a view to establishing the extent of compliance with statutory policies on prior archaeological excavations and other heritage considerations. The survey was not exhaustive, but a general pattern of responses to the planning applications vis-à-vis heritage matters emerges.

3.0 Baseline (Map 1)

3.1 Tuam is situated in a low lying area of north Galway County, 21 miles north of Galway City. The N17 national route links the town to Galway City to the south and Sligo, via Claremorris, to the north. Additional routes link it to Athenry and Ballyhaunis.

3.2 Tuam comprises the town and its environs. In 1996 the population of the town stood at 3,487 and 2,140 in the environs. The environs of Tuam forms the larger area and much of it has been set aside for residential development in line with county policy. Consequently it is anticipated that the population of the town and environs will reach 8,000 by 2004. Its hinterland of rich agricultural lands has an estimated population of 27,000.

3.3 A body of Town Commissioners, established in 1843, presently serves the town. For the purposes of planning however, the local authority is Galway County Council. The council is based in the city and has set out its policies and objectives in the 1998-2003 County Plan. The Tuam Town Plan 2000-2005 is set within the context of overall county policy. Significantly, Tuam has been earmarked for a diversion of 'resources' from the city, including residential development. This is reflected in the Town Plan in the promotion of a policy of greater population density and large-scale land zoning for residential purposes.

3.4 The town lies south of an area of a particularly rich archaeological landscape comprising chiefly of several hundred ringforts, souterrains, and unclassified earthworks. The volume of monuments indicates the rich heritage of its hinterland, but their survival owes much to the relative isolation and lack of modern development in the region. There are 34 prehistoric monuments currently recorded within Tuam and environs.

3.5 The centre of the town has so far escaped the transformation brought about by urban renewal common elsewhere. The present spate of development is a recent phenomenon and the challenges facing the town in preserving its character and heritage are topical. This is also the case in the environs where the proposed zoning for residential purposes will inevitably place pressure on the integrity and preservation of the field monuments.

3.6 Tuam does not at present share the prestige and attractions of its sister Episcopal sees, Armagh, Cashel, and Kells. Its name does not have the associations of Kells. The evolution of the town from a monastic centre, to a modern town, is nevertheless a remarkable story and is of major heritage value. Much of the evolution can be observed in its morphology and layout. As in the case of the other sees, its origins lie within the realms of the Gaelic world, unlike the Anglo-Norman origins of many of the urban centres of the country as a whole.

4.0 History of Tuam

4.1 Earliest Origins

The earliest origins of Tuam are invariably associated with St Jarlath, or *Iarlaith*, who reputedly founded a monastery in the area. Little is known of him, but a legend describing his arrival is contained in the life of St Brendan of Clonfert. According to the legend, the wheel of his chariot broke in the area while travelling from his monastery of nearby Cloonfush, several miles to the east. This event had apparently been foretold by St Brendan to mark the spot upon which Jarlath would meet his death. Duly inspired, Jarlath established his monastic settlement here. The town of Tuam celebrates the occasion by using a chariot wheel as its symbol. According to Colgan, Jarlath eventually met his death in 540 AD, whereas Ware placed the apex of his life later in the 550's. Whatever the case Jarlath may be placed in the early stages of Irish Christianity.

A more prosaic factor in the choice of location for the monastery is hinted in the name of Tuam, a shortened version of its older name *Tuaim da Ghualainn*, i.e. the mound of two shoulders. This probably refers to the high ground on either side of the River Nanny, overlooking a probable fording point over the River Nanny (or Corchra). The ford drew travellers from several different directions. St Jarlath's monastery, therefore, would have been close to a prominent feature of the landscape, and the focus of local interaction.

The political hegemony over this fording point and locale seems to have been exercised by the Conmaince in the 6th and 7th centuries. They were identified with the southern O'Neill, who dominated the high kingship of Ireland for five hundred years. The O'Neill rule appears to decline in the early part of the 10th-11th centuries in the face of the rise of Brian Boru and the Viking towns. The Vikings made their mark in Connacht as early as 835, no doubt striking terror into the local population in their avaricious quest for slaves and precious goods.

The instability paved the way for the O'Connor tribe, based in Cruachu, County Roscommon, to challenge for the control of the country. At the beginning of the 11th century, the O'Connors appear to have pushed the rival O'Flaherty family away from Tuam, and then constructed a fortress on the eastern banks of the Corchra River by 1049.

4.2 The O'Connors and the Rise of Tuam

The construction of a castle at Tuam marked a fundamental turning point both in the history of the O'Connors and the area. For reasons which are unclear, the O'Connors abandoned their historical homeland of Cruachu, replete with its ancient ceremonial sites, markets and fortresses and moved to Tuam, bringing with them all the paraphernalia of the Royal seat of one of the five provinces of Ireland. The existing monastery was therefore subject to considerable patronage and support by the O'Connors, and no doubt functioned as an important ceremonial centre for the leading members.

Consequently, Tuam became the political and ceremonial centre of Connacht. In 1111 it was named as one of the 5 episcopal sees of Ireland. In 1127 the lands around the monastery were extended and the great cross slab commissioned commemorating the genius of Tordealbhach O'Connor, and the abbot and bishop of Tuam, Aed O'hOssian. The monastery was crowned an Episcopal see in 1152 at the Synod of Kells. The endowments must be seen in the context of the aggrandisement of the O'Connors, particularly in the reign of Tordealbhach, whose career was characterised by constant warring and intrusions into the south and east of Ireland in a bid to underline his High Kingship of Ireland.

During his reign, and for possibly another 100 years after his death in 1156, Tuam acquired the familiar trappings of a medieval ecclesiastical town. The Augustinians established a priory in 1140, a new Cathedral was constructed in 1180's, the church of Tempaill Jarlath was reconstructed in late Romanesque style, around the same time, and the Premonastasian Abbey of the Holy Trinity was in existence by 1204. For much of the 13th century, the O'Connors retained a strong military and political presence in Connacht and it was not until the defeat of Ruairi at the Battle of Athenry in 1316 that the Anglo-Norman Burkes finally destroyed them. Unlike many Irish towns therefore, Tuam's origins are firmly rooted in the Gaelic world, albeit in its final flourish.

4.3 The Medieval Era and the decline of Tuam

The rise of Galway city, under the patronage of the Burkes, and the corresponding decline of the O'Connors, inevitably diverted resources from Tuam. It continued to function as the ecclesiastical capital of the province and the agricultural produce of its hinterland was no doubt traded there. Indeed, this commercial function was underlined by the charter of 1260 granted by Lord Edward, son of Henry III, and later to be Edward II, to

'Thomas, Archbishop of Tuam and his successors, a yearly fair at his vill of Twem to last for eight days, namely on the feast of St Thomas the Martyr, and seven days following'.

The charter may have provided some short term prosperity but it did not prevent the long term decline. Many of the buildings of Tuam had been destroyed by fire in 1244, and for the following two and half centuries constant warfare and instability appear to have sapped it of any commercial initiative. In 1555 it was reported that the city of Tuam was by then 'in ruins, unfortified, and almost uninhabited...'. Another account dated to 1561 observed that the local gentry used the very Cathedral itself as a fortress, and that there were by now only twenty or thirty houses in the town. The reformation appeared to have had little impact, and it was not until the arrival of Archbishop Lally in 1573 that Protestantism made its presence felt. Moreover, the status of archbishopric was threatened when it was proposed to transfer the Cathedral to Galway in the early years of the seventeenth century.

4.4 The Stuart & Georgian town and its revival

The drastic step of transferring the Cathedral thankfully never occurred. Instead, the archbishopric remained in the town, and the initiative of the Stuart monarchy stimulated growth. In 1613, it was granted borough status during the reign of James I, and in return two loyal protestant individuals were to be forwarded to the newly formed Irish Parliament in Dublin. The borough was comprised of a sovereign, twelve free burgesses, and the commonalty, but it was strangely devoid of any particular geographical limit. The borough and its parliamentary representatives appear to have overseen the establishment of the town as a commercial and trading centre. The population increased for much of the following two centuries and the pattern of streets characterising the towns' centre probably took shape.

The revival continued apace in the following century, with the arrival of Archbishop Singe in 1716 (-1742) heralding a period of notable improvement. During his tenure, the town saw the laying out of the demesne and accompanying gardens, on either side of the River Nanny. The demesne was laid out in the English style of matching clumps of trees, water, and natural contours popularised by Launcelot Brown. Archbishop Singe was buried in 1742 in the grounds of the St Mary's Cathedral. As a mark of respect, the shaft of the Market Cross was removed from the market place and set over his grave.

The loyal citizens of the borough also added value to the produce of their holdings and of the hinterland with the establishment of breweries, tanneries, tuck mills and gig mills. By the late eighteenth century Tuam was a prosperous, confident, provincial market town, and many of its finer buildings are testimony to this. Apart from the demesne, other notable additions to the town included the Bishop Street Bridge (1735), the Market House in Town Square (1780), and several other fine residences e.g. Waterslade.

4.5 The Tumultuous Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century ushered in a period of more extensive and rapid change than seen previously. The recovery of the Catholic Church, the Famine, the extension of central government, and the rise of the political movements demanding national independence, all had demonstrable repercussions. The catholic revival began modestly with the establishment of St Jarlath's College in 1800. The Catholic Free School was founded in 1816, and the construction of the new Catholic Cathedral began in 1823. The enormous presence of Archbishop McHale who arrived in 1834, remaining there until his death in 1881, overshadowed political and cultural life in the town.

The nationalistic outlook for which Archbishop McHale is chiefly remembered was greatly influenced by the encroachment of the British government in all areas of life. The creation of the Tuam Poor Law Union led to the construction of a workhouse on the Dublin Road. Other governmental agencies followed including the courthouse, the Bridewell, and the police barracks. The system of local government itself was reformed with the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act 1840. Tuam was therefore vested with 22 elected members of the Town Commission, the first of which elected a catholic chairman in November 1843.

By then Tuam, and the roads that snaked out of it, possessed over 6,000 inhabitants. For the most part, they lived in mud cabins which stretched out from the town as far as Newtown Morris, up to Newgrove, or at least a mile down the roads leading to Galway and to Athenry. The population fell to 5,000 in 1851, as a consequence of the Famine and its accompanying emigration. Thereafter it experienced a decline of its populace. By 1911, the population fell to c.3,000 and has slowly recovered since then. By 1971, the population reached 4,900 and is presently c.5,600.

The towns business and trading prospects, however, generally improved in the aftermath of the Famine. The market was held every Wednesday and Saturday, in addition to twelve monthly fairs every year, attracting the produce of its extensive hinterland. Cattle, sheep, pigs, and wool appear to have been the mainstay of the markets. The town was linked by railway to Athenry in 1860 and, hence the larger cities.

4.6 The Modern Era

By the early part of the twentieth century Tuam was a thriving provincial town. Agriculture experienced a boom during the First World War and this undoubtedly benefited its merchants and traders. The valuation of Tuam rose by £2,000 between 1901 and 1919 to reach £5,450. In addition, it benefited from the planting of emigrants in its hinterland by the Congested Districts Board.

The new Irish State provided a sympathetic environment for the catholic institutions that went from strength to strength with new secondary schools, and enlarged religious establishments. Only in the very recent past has this trend abated. The Protestant Bishopric experienced a general decline culminating in the sale of its demesne to the town commissioners in 1952.

In the 1920's serious efforts were made to clear the unsanitary hovels inhabited by the poorer citizens, and to rehouse the poorer families in more reasonable accommodation. Over 200 local authority houses were constructed by 1942. The establishment of the Sugar factory in 1934 provided employment for hundreds for several decades until its closure in 1987. The railway was closed for commercial traffic in 1973.

The buildings of Tuam emerged relatively unscathed from construction activity common in other parts of the country in the 1960's and 70's. The centre of the town retains its essentially eighteenth to nineteenth century building fabric and many of the roads preserve the scale and width of a bygone era, although the ever increasing traffic through the centre has had the effect of setting aside large open spaces for car parking. It is in the outskirts of the town where the recent improvements in the national economy are most marked, in the form of new housing estates, road improvements and industrial quarters. The challenge for the future, therefore, will be to retain the characteristic charm of the old town in the new economic and social environment.

5.0 Legislation and Existing Guidelines

5.1 The range and extent of the legislation and guidelines providing for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the built heritage has greatly increased in the very recent past. The legislation reflects growing concerns and public interest in the archaeological heritage on the one hand, and in the built environment on the other. The National Monuments Acts primarily deal with the archaeological heritage, whereas the various Planning Acts provide for the built environment for the most part.

5.2 Legislation dealing with archaeology is focussed on the concept of monuments and their protection, beginning with the National Monuments Act 1930. The act has been updated in 1954, 1987, and 1994. The Heritage Act 1995 added to the legislative mechanisms and the National Cultural Institutions 1997 is a recent act providing for archaeological artefacts.

5.3 In addition to the above, the seminal Local Government Act 1963 contained provisions for the role of local authorities in protecting historic structures, and subsequent planning acts followed suit. The recent Planning & Development Act 2000 is a particularly powerful instrument for the protection of the built heritage, including archaeological monuments.

5.4 The National Monuments Acts have been in force for a longer period and the overall effect of the legislation can be gauged more accurately. The Planning Acts have recently been dramatically upgraded and the effect of the legislation is not as yet clearly demonstrated. A significant feature of both sets of legislation is the interaction between the statutory authorities, chiefly the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, and the local planning authorities.

5.4 Monuments

The 1930 Act set out the definition of a '*monument*' as a structure, site, or cave, etc. indicative of human activity in antiquity. The act furthermore identified certain structures, caves or sites that have national or international importance, as *National Monuments*. The latter are often placed in the care of the state, or vested in the local authority for protection. National Monuments may only be materially altered by permission of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, and may be the subject of Preservation Orders affording them full protection from interference. (Powers for Temporary Preservation orders were introduced in 1954).

5.5 Definition of Monument

The following definition is included in the Heritage Act 1995 Part 1 2(1). There are no inherent protective measures given in the definition, which was first given in the 1930 National Monuments Act.

a) any artificial or partly artificial building, structure or erection or group of

such buildings, structures or erections,

b) any cave, stone or other natural product, whether or not forming part of the ground, that has been artificially carved, sculptured, or worked upon or which (where it does not form part of the place where it is) appears to have been purposely put or arranged in position,

c) any, or part of any, prehistoric or ancient -

i) tomb, grave, or burial deposit, or

ii) ritual, industrial or habitation site

and

d) any place comprising the remains of any such building, structure or erection, and such cave, stone or natural product or any such tomb, grave, burial deposit or ritual, industrial or habitation site, situated on land or in the territorial waters of the State, but does not include any building, or part of any building, that is habitually used for ecclesiastical purposes.

5.6 It is important to note, however, that the Monuments Act 1987 also recognised the possibility of declaring an area as a monument, gives statutory powers to that effect. The legislation has obvious implications for rural landscapes but it equally raised the possibility of declaring large urban areas as having archaeological significance, whether the remains were visible or not.

5.7 Monuments of Tuam (Appendix 1)

5.7.1 In the context of this study, perhaps the most important monument is the town of Tuam itself, designated monument **GA029:199 & GA043:140**. It includes most of what is understood to be the historic core of the town. Furthermore there is a series of other monuments within this town, or monument, ranging from the shaft of a 12th century cross to the remains of an 18th catholic chapel. The most notable is the National Monument St Mary's Cathedral **029:179A** All such monuments are listed in the Archaeological Inventory for North Galway, 1999, which is based on the archaeological and urban archaeological surveys carried out by Dúchas.

5.7.2 Monuments outside the monastic town and within the environs are listed in the Sites and Monuments Record. Consequently, many, if not all, are listed in the record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as provided for in the 1994 Act. No works are permitted on monuments listed in the RMP prior to 2 months notification to the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands. The list, with maps showing the location of the monuments, is exhibited in the local authority offices and in one local library for a period of not less than three months every year.

5.7.3 The outlines of monastic town **GA029:199** conforms largely to the area outlined in the 1992 Urban Archaeological Survey of Tuam, as it is largely based upon information from it. The present Town Plan contains an outline of the area outlined in the 1992 Survey, and declares it a 'zone of archaeological potential'. The town is not however listed as monument itself, nor are the other monuments within it. Only the monuments protected under the planning acts are listed. This is a significant omission and greatly underestimates the historic significance of the town itself and the extent of the existing legislation, despite the reference to the 1994 Act in its policies and objectives.

5.8 Recommendations

5.8.1 The Tuam Town Plan should be amended to include the monastic town **GA029:191 GA043:140** in its list of Site and Monuments.

Reason: To ensure adequate protection to the town, and to the monuments contained with it.

5.8.2 The Tuam Town Plan should be amended to include all other monuments listed in the SMR Inventory within the monastic town (given above).

Reason: to ensure that adequate protection is given to them.

5.8.3 Consideration should be given to list all monuments within historic towns in the Record of Monuments and Places.

Reason: The absence of any reference to monuments within the town undermines their protection.

5.8.4 Consideration should be given to amend the legal definition of monuments to include historic 'spaces'.

Reason: To preserve historic urban market locations, fair greens, & lanes and streets that reflect earlier enclosures.

5.9 Built Environment

5.9.1 Apart from archaeological considerations the protection given to the built environment has generally been enshrined in the various Planning Acts since the seminal 1963 Planning Act. Most recently, the Planning & Development Act 2000 contained substantial and radical provisions for the protection and enhancement of the built heritage and the effect of the legislation in the future is likely to be a more stringent application of conservation policies in most areas.

5.9.2 An essential feature of the legislation is the replacement of the system of listing buildings drawn up by planning authorities as a consequence of the Planning Act 1963, with the *Record of Protected Structures*. All structures previously listed as worthy of being secured, or for preservation to be considered, are given equal protection under the quite detailed guidelines presently drafted by the Department of Arts, Culture, and the Gaeltacht to accompany the legislation. The local authorities have however retained the powers of entry to the RPS.

5.9.3 Another significant development is the provision for *Architectural Conservation Areas* to be proposed by local authorities. Although not envisaged as a replacement for the RPS, it is suggested that it should represent an integrated approach to conservation policy in a particular area. Proposals for an ACA may come from Dúchas or for other bodies, and the extent and nature of the ACA should consider the opinions of interested parties. An ACA would form part of the local Development Plan. The provisions for an ACA are likely to play a significant role in the future. There are also provisions for areas of special planning control within a designated ACA.

5.9.4 The survey and record of structures and buildings in any given area is therefore of vital importance. In Tuam, as in many other towns in Ireland the inventory drawn up by An Foras Forbatha 1973 forms the basis of subsequent lists of buildings to be preserved or considered for such. It is included in the 1994 Development Plan for Tuam. The additional survey funded by FAS in 1997 provided further information and the present development plan contains a more extensive list of buildings and structures.

5.9.5 The National Inventory Of Architecture is currently being completed under the aegis of the Department of Arts Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands and it is envisaged that this will form the basis for subsequent policy by Dúchas in relation to the architectural heritage of any given town. The NIA for Tuam is currently being compiled but it is not

anticipated that it will be completed in the near future. The existing lists in the development plan will therefore form the basis for conservation policy in the immediate future.

5.9.6 The present list, of record or protected structures, for Tuam is reasonably comprehensive. There are several structures which however, have escaped attention and they are discussed elsewhere in the study. It is important to note however, that the definition of a 'structure' may include structures other than buildings and for that reason the protection of the remains of the Bishops Demesne within Tuam deserves special attention. The public park may well be eligible for inclusion the RPS. The demesne is after all one of the most significant features of the town and it has suffered a slow attrition over time.

5.9.7 Galway County Council currently employs a Conservation Officer primarily with a view to ensuring an informed response to planning applications concerning protected structures. The role of the Conservation Officer is a particularly critical one in providing a local dimension to the implementation of the current legislation. It is furthermore vital in insuring the proper implementation of the Building Control Act 1990, the Fire Service Act 1981, and the Building Regulations, insofar as they affect protected structures. There is obviously a need to ensure a sensitive implementation of the regulations and prevent the loss of character of individual structures.

6.0 Characteristics of Tuam & Recommendations

6.1 The following section is an outline of the principal historical characteristics of the town. It is not an exhaustive survey, but is intended to explain the greater part of the town's development for the purpose of future policy relating to its heritage. It is hoped the identification of its major characteristics will provide the basis for future policy. The identification of the characteristics is therefore accompanied by recommendations on how it might best preserved for the future. Please note that the Policies & Objectives of the Tuam Town Plan referred to are outlined in Section 7.

6.2 Early Christian Enclosures (Map 2)

A monastic settlement appears to have been founded in the early part of the sixth century, reputedly by Jarlath, or Iarlaith. Its location is undoubtedly influenced by the presence of a ford over the River Corchra, probably in the area of the present day Mill museum. The existence of steep slopes on either side of the ford probably gave rise to the name, Tuam dha Ghualainn, the two shoulders being the high banks on either side of the river.

The location of the monastery is not known but there are three enclosures identifiable in the present-day topography, Tobar Jarlath, Teampaill Na Scrine, and Teampaill Jarlath. Generally these monuments are particularly fragile and many survive only as reflections in the modern day map as curvilinear shaped roads and lanes. Tuam is particularly well endowed with these most significant archaeological features.

a) *Teampaill Na Scrine* was located at the north end of Bishop Street, which bisected it. It survives only in the form of a curvilinear lane on the west side of Bishop Street, and a gap between St Jarlaths College and the adjoining property. Both features are probably a reflection of an earlier enclosure.

The fragile reflections are increasingly vulnerable to redevelopment, and the closure of the lane from Bishop Street has been a severe loss to the character of the town's topography and streetscape. The characteristic curvilinear shape of the monastic enclosures is gradually being eroded and the recent zoning of the location for commercial development will probably place added stress to it.

b) *Teampaill Jarlath*: This is the most well known of the enclosures and is most easily discernible to visitors and local alike. It survives most notably as an oval shaped raised cemetery, close to the centre of the town, which includes the remains of a 12th century church. It is encircled for the most part by a curving roadway. The cemetery was vested to the care of Galway County Council in 1902 for preservation, and the remains of the church have since been declared a National Monument.

c) An additional enclosure was added to the monastery to include the grounds of St Mary's Cathedral. The curving pattern of Vicar Street and Church View probably reflects the enlarged enclosure. Excavations in the field adjacent to the cathedral uncovered evidence of medieval activity and the excavator suggested that the area probably embraced the Fair Green. St Mary's cathedral overlooks the green.

d) *Tobar Jarlath*: This is the most likely contender for the earliest monastic enclosure. It is situated c. one mile south east of the town centre. The enclosed area is clearly delineated by a set of wall and banks. It measures 175m east west, and appears to have been originally 210m north south. Parts of the wall may well be original, belonging to the earliest construction of the enclosure. A well with the field was covered in 1856, and local tradition recalls the existence

of a church within it. There are few, if any, references to the enclosure after Tuam had been raised to a bishopric suggesting that it is indeed an early construct, pre-dating the arrival of the O'Connors.

6.3 Recommendations

Teampaill Na Scrine

6.3.1 The reopening of the lane off Bishop Street should form part of Objective H2 (+UR3) for the preservation of way leaves and lanes.

Reason: To renew the outline of the enclosure.

6.3.2 Any subsequent development of lands adjoining the lane should respect its scale and character.

Reason: To highlight and enhance the enclosure as an intrinsic part of the town's heritage.

6.3.3 The lane on the opposite side of the road should be retained and any subsequent development should respect its scale and character.

Reason: To highlight and enhance the outline of the enclosure.

Teampaill Jarlath

6.3.4 Incongruous palm trees presently obscure the church and cemetery. Consideration should be given to their removal to allow the monument to be more visible.

Reason: To highlight Teampaill Jarlath as proposed in Objective Os 4.

6.3.5 Consideration should be given to the installation of CCTV at strategic points around the enclosure.

Reason: To prevent vandalism and encourage visitors to the site.

6.3.6 Any future developments in the streets around the enclosure should reflect the intimate character of the streets & lanes and their curvilinear shape.

Reason: To preserve the shape and character of the enclosure.

Vicar Street

6.3.7 The Fair Green is presently zoned for commercial purposes. Consideration should be given to rezone a substantial portion to amenity and recreation

Reason: To preserve the view of the cathedral from Vicar Street as proposed in Objective Os 1.

6.3.8 Consideration should be given to preserve a north portion of the Fair Green as open ground.

Reason: To preserve the character of the market town and provide a location for the markets and fairs as proposed in Objective T4.

6.3.9 The curvilinear nature of Vicar Street as far as Cloontoa Road or the present day entrance to the Mart, should be preserved.

Reason: To preserve the outline of the monastic enclosure.

Tobar Jarlath

6.3.10 The entire enclosure should be entered in the Register of Historic Monuments.

Reason: To notify the owners of the significance of the monument and to prevent unauthorised works on the site.

6.4 Ringforts

The curvilinear pattern of the ecclesiastical enclosures is mirrored in the particularly rich and plentiful heritage of ringforts and souterrains in the environs. Recent research on ringforts suggests that they were constructed almost entirely between 500-1,000 AD and when they are placed beside the ecclesiastical enclosures they can be seen as an integral part of the landscape, culture, and society of the remarkable Early Christian Era.

The *National Monuments Survey* of Galway has identified some 10 ringforts within the environs of Tuam, in addition to 4 other enclosures and 10 unclassified monuments. Most of them are concentrated in the northern part of the environs, particularly in the Forty Acres and Slievedarragh areas. This particularly rich archaeological landscape continues into the areas of County Galway.

6.4.1 The ringforts and other earthworks in the Tuam environs should be entered in the Register for Historic Monuments.

Reason: To notify the owners of the significance of the monument and to prevent unauthorised works on them.

6.5 The O'Connor Epoch (Map 3)

Tuam might well have remained an isolated and by now forgotten and possibly deserted monastic settlement were it not for the arrival of the O'Connors at some stage in the 10th or 11th century. The O'Connors were one of the great provincial families of Ireland but were traditionally based in Cruachain, County Roscommon. For reasons which are still unclear, they removed themselves from Cruachain and established a base by the ford of Tuam. They brought with them all the paraphernalia of a royal family, including military fortifications, markets, and ceremonial centres. The nearby monastery appears to have been casually annexed for their purposes, and replaced with Teampaill Jarlath. A large stone castle was constructed in 1040-60 AD overlooking the ford. The ford was a particularly valuable asset as it linked the seat of the O'Connors with all parts of Connacht, north, south, east, and west. It therefore provided an opportune location for the establishment of fairs and markets under their protective eyes. The holding of a market was a particularly significant responsibility of a 'royal' family as they were compelled to hold a fair or 'aonach', such as that in their old seat of Rath Croghan.

The structures and artefacts associated with the O'Connors are largely confined to a relatively small area around the town centre. They make up the bulk of the important archaeological and architectural heritage, whether they are extant or removed. The structures known to have been built between 1000-1250 AD include the following:

- The Wonderful Castle
- Early Stone (?) Castle
- Teampaill Jarlath
- Market Cross & four other carved stone crosses
- Premonastratensian Abbey of Holy Trinity 1204
- Priory of St John Baptist
- Augustinian Priory of St John Evangelist
- New Enclosure 1127
- St Mary's Cathedral

It is evident therefore that the ecclesiastical & cathedral status of the town was clearly established under the O'Connor hegemony. The market status was undoubtedly initiated by them, and endorsed by subsequent Anglo-Norman monarchs. Its military status, however, declined greatly, and the fortifications of the last High King of Ireland are now nowhere apparent. Their foundations have yet to be uncovered and the only reliable evidence for a portion of them was the appearance in the OS Town Plan 1839 when a small stretch of a battered wall was recorded in Shop Street.

6.5.1 Recommendations

6.5.2 Consideration should be given to publishing the lists and details of the monuments within Tuam and environs contained in the inventory of North Galway 1999 for local distribution.

Reason: To provide information to the local population on the significance of the town's history and monuments.

6.5.3 The scale and character of Egan's Lane and Chapel Lane should be carefully retained, to include its plot size and stone walls. Site assembly should be discouraged

Reason: To preserve their historical character.

6.6 The Stuart Town (Map 4)

The survival of the town is due primarily to the policies of the James 1, and his Stuart successors. The granting of borough status in 1613, and the gift of parliamentary representation, once more concentrated economic activity there. There are few if any material remains of the Stuart town, but it has been postulated that the existing street pattern of the present day Vicar, Bishop, Shop, and High Street, are remnants of a period of improvement dating to the 17th century.

It may well be the case that the Shambles, which continued to function as a market place until recently, was set aside in the early part of the 17th century. The Market Cross stood there until 1721. High Street, which bisected the enclosure of Teampaill Jarlath, gave a more direct route to the main road to Galway. Timber houses were probably the norm here but none are known to have survived or to have been exposed through excavation.

6.6.1 Recommendations

6.6.2 The Shambles should be added to the list of the Sites and Monuments, and to the Record of Monuments & Places.

Reason. The Shambles should be seen as an important 'site' and 'place' that previously contained the base and shaft of the Market Cross. It is furthermore a structure of 17th century date.

6.6.3 The Shambles should be retained as an area of open space.

Reason: To preserve the character of the town.

To provide a location for the markets and fairs proposed in Objective T4.

6.6.4 Consideration should be given to the erection of a replica of the Market Cross in the Shambles.

Reason: To enhance the character of the Shambles and to provide a reminder of the heritage of the Tuam

6.7 Georgian Era

The success of the borough became evident in the 18th century when a new bridge was constructed in 1735, and the market house in 1780. There is an impressive array of 18th century houses in Tuam town centre. Mention should also be made of the barrack building in High Street which provides tangible proof of the town's loyalty to the crown. In this regard, mention might be made of the remains of the catholic chapel off Vicar Street. Its modest construction, and inconspicuous location are a reminder of an alternative view of the Georgian Era.

By far the most impressive contribution to the town, however, was the laying out of the Bishop's Palace, with its accompanying aviary, kitchen garden and park. The latter was laid out along the lines popularised by Launcelot Brown in England with curving belts of trees, and the interiors formed of 'correctly undulating parkland varied with clumps and groves of trees' [Lamb & Bowe, *A history of gardening in Ireland*, p.41]. The park still survives intact for the most part. The entire demesne was sold to the Town Commissioners in 1950 and there has been slow attrition of its integrity since. The aviary has long since disappeared and much of the kitchen garden has likewise been developed for other purposes. A particularly fruitful challenge would be to restore the demesne to something of its former glory while maximising its potential as a civic centrepiece.

6.7.1 Recommendations (Map 5 & 6)

6.7.2 Consideration should be given to including the Demesne park, gardens, and old farmhouse in the record of protected structures:

Reason: It is a vital part of the town's heritage and should be the centrepiece of the town's amenity space. The redevelopment of the garden areas as gardens is still possible and might be rewarding from the point of view of tourism.

6.7.3 The remaining portion of the garden wall adjacent to the present day car park should be paced in the Record of Protected Structures.

Reason: To protect the walls from damage in any subsequent development.

6.7.4 Consideration should be given to the removal of unnecessary structures in the park.

Reason: To enhance the character of the park

6.7.5 Consideration should be given to the erection or railings or vegetation on the Bishop Street car park where the car park faces Bishop Street. Consideration might be given for the erection of railings on the edge of the old garden, now a surface car park.

Reason: To enclose the space and enhance the character of the town.

6.8 The Market Town

The fortunes of Tuam were inextricably linked to its markets and fairs. The initial impetus for the fairs probably came from the O'Connors, but it continued under the Anglo-Norman rule, and was given further impetus in the 17th century. Many of the houses and retail outlets of the town owe themselves to the continued success of the markets in the last two hundred years. Furthermore, it is inconceivable that the town would have retained its status as an administrative centre were it not for them.

In terms of topography, both the shambles and the cattle market provided the focus for dealing, and the opening of the railway station in 1860 was ideally located to enable the goods and livestock to be transported elsewhere.

The town is fortunate to possess the open spaces up to now, but the pressure of development is dramatically increasing. Because of their location, and the absence of any building on them, market squares and Fair Greens have come under considerable developmental pressure in Ireland and Britain and the preservation of a substantial portion of the market spaces in Tuam should be considered. Other markets included the fish and meat markets in Chapel Lane but there are no mementoes of them surviving.

6.8.1 Recommendations

6.8.2 Consideration should be given to preserving a substantial portion of the Fair Green as open space.

Reason: to provide a location for the markets and fairs as proposed in Objective T4 & to enhance the character of the town.

6.8.3 The Shambles should be retained as an area of open space.

Reason: To preserve the character of the town & to provide a location for the markets and fairs proposed in Objective T4.

6.8.5 The Shambles should be added to the list of the Sites and Monuments, and to the Record of Monuments & Places.

Reason. The Shambles should be viewed as a 17th century structure that previously contained the base and shaft of the Market Cross.

6.8.5 Consideration should be given to the erection of a replica of the Market Cross in the Shambles.

Reason: To enhance the character of the open spaces and to provide a reminder of the heritage of Tuam.

6.8.6 The unique streetscape of nineteenth and early twentieth century houses and shops should be preserved.

Reason: To preserve the character of the town.

6.9 The Era of Reform & Victorian Government

The reform of government and its administration were key aspects of the British government during the 19th century. Furthermore, Ireland became an integral part of the United Kingdom due to the Act of Union in 1800. The latter brought an end to the privilege Tuam possessed of electing parliamentary representatives.

In general the Victorian era is marked by the steady improvement in religious freedoms and the extension of the franchise. In addition the reform of the police, the administration of Justice, the new Poor Laws, and improvements in health, education and civic administration reflecting the ever enlarging role of the state. These changes had a distinct physical shape and many of the most notable features of the town are a consequence of them, including the *Workhouse*, the *Bridewell*, the *Courts*, the *Town Hall*, and the *RIC barracks*.

With the exception of the Town Hall, all the other structures were built on the Dublin Road. The police barracks was later transferred to Grove House, Vicar Street.

Tuam's workhouse undoubtedly aroused painful collective memories and has been destroyed for some time, as have many other workhouses throughout the country. The courthouse and the Town Hall retain much of their character.

6.10 The Catholic Revival

Perhaps the most astonishing development of the last two centuries has been the survival and flowering of catholic institutions in the town. The seminary, St Jarlaths College appears to have begun in 1800 in the Mall but was transferred to the location of the proposed new Cathedral shortly afterwards. The latter building was initiated in 1823 and was completed in 1837. It provides the focus of many of the other institutes that give this Bishop Street / Dublin Road quarter a unique character. The ardour of the catholic revival has considerably cooled, but the growth of the church, initially by Archbishop Kelly, and more controversially under the aegis of Archbishop McHale, is a particularly significant characteristic of the town.

The list of buildings in this category include the following: St Jarlaths College (Bishop Street), the Bishops House (Bishop Street), and the Sisters of Mercy Convent (incorporating Cornfield House). These buildings merit particular attention for heritage purposes.

The fortunes of the Church of Ireland were less successful. Tuam diocese was incorporated with those of Killala & Achonry, as a result of a fall in numbers. The revision of the dioceses, however, enabled funds to be raised for the restoration of St Mary's Cathedral to the design of Sir Thomas Deane. Against his wishes a significant portion of the older 14th century cathedral was retained, in addition to the magnificent Romanesque chancel arch. Other evidence of a revival included the removal of the Diocesan School to Grove House, Vicar Street in 1860.

6.10.1 Recommendations

6.10.2 The old schoolhouse in the Mall should be added to the Record of Protected Structures.

Reason: To enhance the character of the town and to prevent any damage to the structure.

6.11 The Modern Era

Few changes to the physical fabric and shape of the town can have been more welcome than the provision of housing, via the new formed Irish State, for the working class. The clearance of some of the older houses, many of them dating back to pre-famine times, probably proved to be a painful process for many of the inhabitants. The earliest of the new estates were in Gilmartin Road, Tobarjarlath, and the Athenry Road. The sale of the Bishops Demesne in 1950 provided land for more such schemes. There are now few traces of the hovels and mud cabins that once housed thousands on the main roads leading into the town.

Perhaps less welcome has been the clearance of large areas and alterations to the streets as a result of motor traffic. The provision of large-scale private housing estates, apartment buildings, and industrial zones is a more recent phenomenon that needs further discussion. Equally, the rise in population, a welcome development, will inevitably put pressure on the fabric defining the character of the town.

7.0 Heritage Appraisal of Tuam Town Plan

The Tuam Town Plan is a complex document with a relatively detailed vision of how the town should be developed in the near future. It does however have significant shortcomings from the point of view of heritage considerations despite the obvious good intentions in this policy area.

7.1 General Observations

7.1.1 The Town Plan underestimates the full significance of the 1994 National Monuments Act, particularly in relation to the designation of the town as an historic monument under the terms of that act. The Town Plan correctly identifies the requirement to refer planning applications to the Department of Arts, Culture, the Gaeltacht and the Islands for proposed works on structures included in the record of Monuments & Places, two months prior to the commencement of works (Section 12, National Monuments Acts 1994). It omits the important designation however of the town of Tuam itself as a monument. An area of archaeological potential is outlined but there is no outline or further information on the town. In many respects, the more detailed outlines of the 1992 Town Plan are a more useful indicator of the archaeological remains.

7.1.2 The plan does not take the 2000 Planning & Development Act into account (or its predecessor Planning Act 1999); the legislation coming into force after the plan was approved. It therefore does not refer to the detailed draft guidelines issued by the Department of Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht & the Islands that accompany the legislation. The guidelines are obviously of benefit to those involved in the development of Protected Structures, but they are equally valuable in providing guidelines for the better management of historic areas generally where the retention of the character of a town is an agreed policy. Furthermore, they underline the significance of the retention, where practicable, of the detail of particular features, in addition to the structure as a whole.

7.1.3 Finally, its historic sensibility is limited. This is probably owing to the relative lack of published and accessible historic accounts of the town's development. The information contained within the published SMR Inventory for North Galway is very useful and perhaps should be more widely disseminated. An obvious example of the lack of detailed knowledge of the town's history is the failure to firmly locate its Objective T4 to encourage festivals, markets, and fairs for tourism purposes to a particular place or places. The failure to associate this laudable objective with a specific place denies the objective the credibility which a tangible association would provide it.

7.2 Town Plan Aims

The intention of the plan is to provide a sustainable urban environment in keeping with the Local Agenda 21 of the Rio Summit 1992. This is highly compatible with heritage priorities.

7.3 Town Plan Strategy

The strategy of the plan is an inherent part of a wider policy of encouraging and directing economic growth to Tuam. The town is to be facilitated as the main service centre for North Galway. This is an outcome of the Galway Transportation and Planning Study that sets out a long-term strategic plan for the entire county, principally from the point of view of Galway City. The merits of the policy are beyond the brief of this project save to mention that such a policy has the potential to erode the unique character of the town itself. Greatly increased levels of development and uses of the physical fabric will undoubtedly result in erosion of the fabric and threaten the town's shape. A counter balancing local dynamic is necessary to prevent the loss of character and there is no doubt that a thoroughly informed historical sensibility provides a strong counter balance.

7.4 Plans & Objectives

7.4.1 Residential

7.4.2 The proposals for greater densities within the town and for increased residential developments in the environs underwrite the entire plan. The merits of the policy lie outside the brief, but from a heritage perspective, the proposals will inevitably present difficulties in relation to the archaeological monuments in the environs, and to the preservation of the town's built heritage and character.

7.4.3 Developmental pressure as a result of the large scale zoning for residential use will inevitably put pressure on the survival of the monuments in the environs. There does not appear to be any established policy to ensure their survival beyond recognition of the role of the National Monuments Acts. A more specific local objective to protect the monuments is probably the most suitable method required to ensure their survival.

7.4.4 Greater densities and the proposals in relation to derelict sites, upper stories, backlands, and lane ways, will inevitably increase the threat to the existing historic fabric, including plot size, site integrity, and heights of buildings. The policy in relation to protecting the town's character needs to consider the overall impact of urban regeneration and not merely protected structures alone.

7.4.5 The proposals for protecting local place names are highly compatible with heritage criteria.

7.4.6 The proposal to encourage development within town structure is not entirely clear but insofar as it serves to prohibit radical alteration of the historic shape and form it is highly compatible with heritage criteria.

7.5 Road Infrastructure

7.5.1 The objective to provide multi-storey car parking at Abbey Trinity should provide some relief to the present system of open car parking which is detracting from Bishop Street in particular. The proposed car park should also have the effect of increasing the pedestrian usage of the Chapel Lane / Teampaill Jarlath area. This will contribute to raising the profile of both and maximising their value to the urban fabric.

7.5.2 The Shambles might provide a suitable location for car parking in the near future, although this should not detract from proposals to at least improve its appearance without diminishing its historical significance.

7.5.3 The restrictions on ribbon development should not prohibit the possibility of creating new and longer streetscapes leading into the city.

7.6 Traffic management

7.6.1 The Bishop Street car parks create a severe eyesore. The vista from the cathedral to the Bishop's House car park should be broken, perhaps with railings on the perimeters of the car parks. Consideration should be given to enclosing the portion of the Demesne gardens presently used as a car park.

7.7 Amenity & Recreation

7.7.1 The proposals linking open spaces are valuable but there is little open space set aside in the plan. The retention of the Fair Green, the Shambles, and the Public Park, in addition to lands skirting the River Nanny would do much to redress this.

7.7.2 The proposals for amenity and recreation could be well served by an appropriate action plan for the public park as set out in Objective **OS5**.

7.8 Town centre

7.8.1 Proposals for the orderly development and the protection of residential contents with the town are compatible but the direction of large shopping centres towards the centre may be unwise. The scale of residential rezoning in the environs suggests that large retail centres may be better suited there, adjacent to the proposed new ring road. It is difficult to see how large scale retail centres will enhance the character of the town, especially given the need for parking.

7.8.2 The proposals in relation to shopfronts are highly compatible.

7.9 Urban renewal

7.9.1 The integrated area plan with respect to Chapel Lane and the Shambles should be mindful of the significant historical associations of these urban features. Both features may have an important role to play in the objectives relating to tourism.

7.10 Urban Design

7.10.1 The stated proposals of the town plan are highly compatible with heritage criteria but the Objectives **UD 1 & 2** are limited and do not support other objectives outlined elsewhere. The Objective to protect a view of St Mary's Cathedral from Vicar Street seems contradicted by the zoning of the entire Fair Green / Mart area for Commercial use. The Objective, which is supported here, will be best realised by the zoning of the upper, northern part of the Fair Green area as open space whether for communal or amenity uses.

7.11 Tourism

7.11.1 The proposal to prepare a tourist Development Strategy is likely to include proposals for the promotion of Tuam as an ecclesiastical centre, along with other known centres including Clonmacnois & Clonfert. This appears to be a sensible strategy and will heighten the significance of the treasures of St Mary's cathedral, and provide a compelling reason to protect and enhance the outline of the monastic enclosures.

7.11.2 The proposals for encouraging festivals seem sensible and justify the preservation of the Fair Green & the Shambles in particular.



