

The Walled Town Crier



An Irish Walled Towns Network
bi-monthly magazine.

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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Kirwan's Lane, Galway.
Image: Tarsy Koentges/IWTN

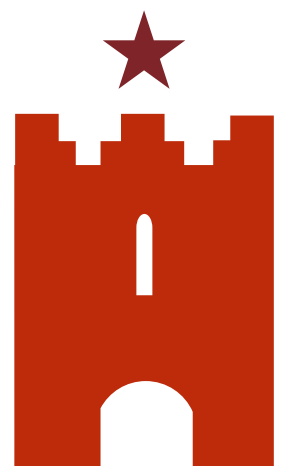
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Project Manager's Message

Hello everyone and welcome to the December 2023 edition of the Walled Town Crier.

As Christmas approaches, I hope everyone is starting to wind down towards year end and that a restful holiday season beckons.

All of the grants administration should be tidied away by now – bar an outstanding query or two – and the deadlines for the 2024 schemes aren't looming too closely just yet.

We had a great annual conference in Limerick at the end of November, and it was lovely to catch up with so many of you in person. Thanks to everyone

who contributed and attended. There's a conference report in this issue.

Our regular 'Getting to Know..' feature focuses on Galway this time around, and we have a quick round up of Christmas events in member towns as well as the usual news and updates.

On a personal note, I've thoroughly enjoyed working with you all in 2023 and I'm looking forward to even better things in 2024.

I hope you enjoy the latest issue of the Walled Town Crier.

Warmest Regards,

Eimear

Eimear O'Connell, IWTN Project Manager



Members of the IWTN and friends enjoy a tour of Limerick's city walls, led by Sarah McCutcheon, Local Authority Archaeologist. Image: Eimear O'Connell.

IWTN Annual Conference 2023



King John's Castle and Thomond Bridge, Limerick.
Image via irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie

IWTN members and friends gathered in Limerick on 24 November last for the network's annual conference.

Our theme this year was Early Building's in Our Historic Towns and we were fortunate to have a great line up of speakers.

Cllr. Joe Pond of Limerick City and County Council opened proceedings by welcoming us all to Limerick and reflected on the benefits that Limerick and Kilmallock have gained from IWTN membership.

Virginia Teehan, Heritage Council CEO, spoke about the value of the network and its role in helping to deliver the Heritage Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

Loreto Guinan, Deputy Chair of the IWTN, noted the impact of IWTN membership in member towns.

Our first presenter was Sarah McCutcheon, Local Authority Archaeologist at Limerick City and County Council, who gave a fascinating presentation on Kilmallock's early merchant houses and gave us a preview of some exciting plans for the particular early house known as the Stone Mansion.

Sarah was followed by Katharina Becker, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at UCC. Katharina spoke about an impressive digital humanities project called *Kilmallock - Derry - Bradford: Twinning North-South Irish Walled Towns & UK Cities of Culture*. This project has recently been awarded joint IRC-UKRI funding, which comes with access to cutting edge digital survey technology. The project team will digitally document two medieval walled towns in the South (Kilmallock) and North (Derry) of Ireland and link with historic records to reveal hidden insights into these settlements for wide-ranging use.



Katharina Becker, UCC, presents the Kilmallock-Derry-Bradford project. Image: Eimear O'Connell.



Daniel Tietzch-Tyler leads a tour of King John's Castle for IWTN members. Image: Eimear O'Connell.

After a coffee break, we heard from Francis Coady, Architectural Conservation Officer at Kilkenny County Council, about an ongoing project to document Kilkenny's early modern buildings, focusing on two particular houses in private ownership.

Paul Duffy from IAC archaeology gave a fascinating overview of recent archaeological discoveries relating to Dublin's early suburbs, some of which challenge what had previously been assumed about Dublin's early development.

After lunch, Aileen Murray from Youghal Socio-Economic Development Ltd., spoke about what she and her team – working alongside Cork County Council – have learned about running an annual festival on a medieval site, and identified some of the elements that make Youghal Medieval Festival such a success.

Melanie McQuade, Heritage Officer at Westmeath County Council, spoke about recent conservation works at Old Court Devenish House in Athlone. The structure dates to the early seventeenth century and survives as a ruin within the grounds of the newer, Georgian, Court Devenish House.

Finally, Nicola Matthews, Senior Architect in the Built Heritage Policy section at the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government, gave a comprehensive overview of surviving early buildings within Irish

towns and cities, based on work that she and her colleagues have been doing to produce guidelines for recognising and protecting early urban buildings.

Ian Doyle, Head of Conservation at the Heritage Council, gave some closing remarks, and it's safe to say we all went home with plenty to think about.

Those who stayed over were treated to a wonderful tour of Limerick's defences with Sarah McCutcheon on Saturday morning, as well as a visit to King John's Castle with Daniel Tietzch-Tyler, whose archaeological illustrations will be familiar to many of you.

Video recordings of the presentations are currently being edited and will be circulated to all members.

Getting to Know Galway



Spanish Arch, Galway. This surviving section of the town defences has become emblematic of the modern city.
Image: Tarsy Koentges/IWTN.

Ireland's fourth-largest city; internationally-renowned for its arts, theatre and film festivals - as well as its surviving medieval architecture - Galway needs little introduction. The city is located on the northern shore of Galway Bay, at the mouth of the River Corrib. The Corrib in ancient times was known as the *Gailleamh* (Irish: stoney river) and it is from this that the city takes its name.

The first reference to Galway dates to 1124 when the annals record that the Connachta erected a castle or fortification at Galway,

which is referred to as Bun Gaillimhe or Dún Gaillimh. Records indicate that following the Anglo-Norman Richard de Burgo's invasion of Connacht in 1230 he fought the O'Flaherty's at Caisleán Bhun na Gaillimhe. De Burgo subsequently withdrew but returned to Galway in 1232 and constructed a castle there. That castle became the 'caput' or administrative centre of the de Burgo estate. As the de Burgo lordship became more established, Richard de Burgo's son Walter was responsible for the development of a town at Galway and the construction of the earliest town defences.

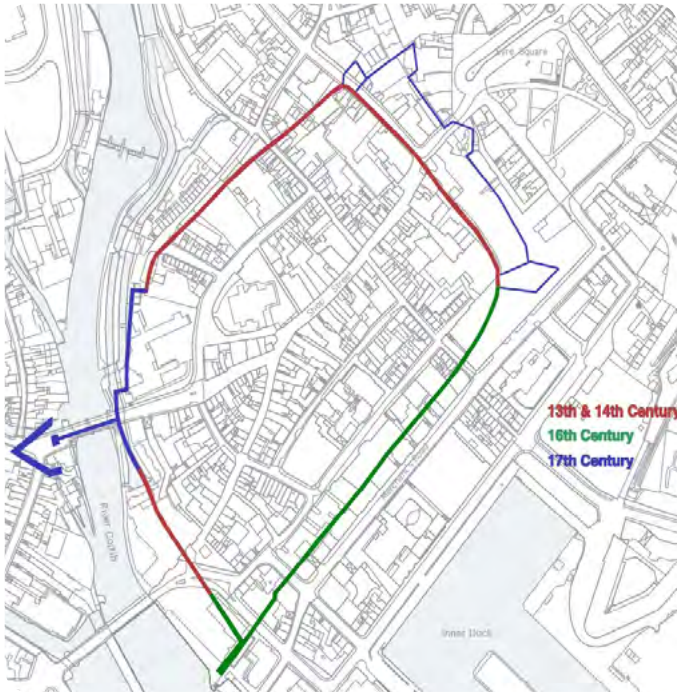


Image showing the main building phases of Galway's walled defences. Image: Extracted from the Galway City Walls Conservation Management and Interpretation Plan, by Howley Hayes Architects.

Construction of the defences

Murage returns dating to 1272-75 and 1277-80 indicate that murage charges were being collected and used for the purchase of lime and tools and the payment of tradesmen and labourers. Pre-existing watercourses, salt-water marsh and slobland were used in combination with curtain walls to enclose a roughly rectangular area at the end of the northern of two ridges of higher ground. The street pattern was probably established at an early stage with the main thoroughfare running along the crest of the ridge and then forking into two with Bridge Street, leading to

the fording point on the river in the west and Quay Street, leading to the quays and strand in the southwest.

The defences along the eastern side of the town were strengthened with an external fosse and the principal entrance gateway, fortified by a bulwark or barbican, was constructed along this section of the wall. Further murage returns are recorded from 1298, indicating that that William de Burgo's son Richard continued the process of the town's enclosure.

The builders of the wall needed to strike a balance between the provision of an enclosed area that would provide enough space for the settlement and allow for future growth while also satisfying the requirement of defence. Measuring approximately 1,330m in length, the wall enclosed an area of only 11ha which is considerably smaller than many of the other significant medieval port towns, such as Drogheda (43ha), Dublin (20ha), New Ross (39ha), Waterford (23ha) and Limerick (28ha). Galway was comparable in size medieval with towns such as Cork and Kinsale (14ha), Carlow and Kilmallock (both 13ha) and Athlone (11ha).

The first murage charter for Galway dates from 1361. It was provided for a period of five years and suggests that the enclosure of the town was substantially complete at this stage. This is supported by historical records referring to land lying without the walls of Galway and others indicating that entry and egress from the town could only be gained by one of the

Aerial photograph of modern Galway, with walled town shown in colour. Image: Extracted from the Galway City Walls Conservation Management and Interpretation Plan, by Howley Hayes Architects.



town gates. Monies collected as the result of another murage charter made in 1395 may have been used to strengthen inadequate or incomplete sections. From the middle of the fifteenth century there are records of fines collected in the town which were used for the repairing of the walls and other works.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The defences were expanded and refortified several times over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From 1499-1500 a section of the southern curtain wall was constructed adjoining the New Tower. This work continued towards the Quay in 1503-4 and a further section was built in the vicinity of Michael's Tower in 1519-20. A new opening, the New Quay Gate, was broken through the western curtain wall in 1536-7 to ease traffic on the quays. A school located in the area of the Spanish Arch was converted into a fortification around 1586-8. This area was known as *ceann an bhalla* or wallshhead.

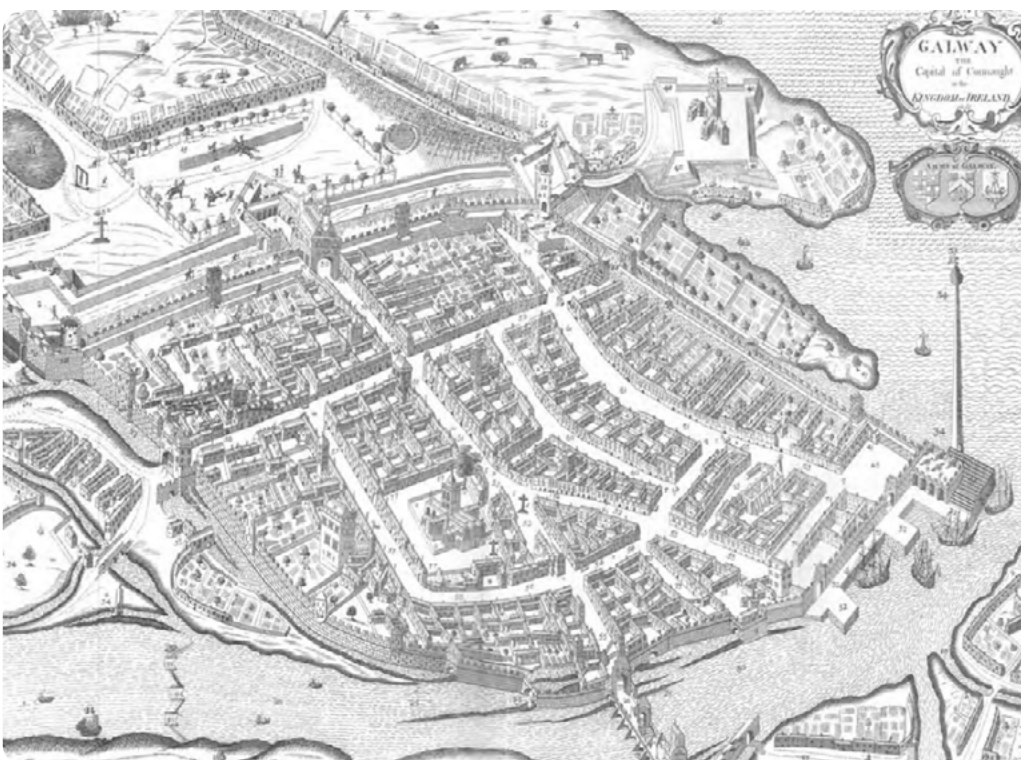
The continued threat of Spanish invasion in the early seventeenth century led to Galway, and other strategic Irish ports, constructing additional defences. Substantial improvements to the city defences, including the introduction of the bastion system, were undertaken to

counter the threats posed by artillery. A large fort was constructed on a ridge of high ground to the south of the city in 1602. Named St. Augustine's Fort, it was constructed on a site containing the remains of the Augustinian Friary.

The construction of another new fort, located at the West Gate into the city, began in 1625 but was stopped in 1628 when the hostilities between England and Spain ceased. Excavation on the site of the Galway Arms Hotel at Dominick Street revealed the remains of a substantial stone wall which may have formed part of this structure.

A strategic rethink of the city defences was undertaken in the mid-seventeenth century. The programme of works included the construction of substantial stone-faced batteries to protect the east side of the city. Bastions were constructed around the Lions Tower in 1646 and the New Tower in 1647, located at the north-east and south-east corners of the eastern curtain wall. Following the curtailment of work due to an outbreak of plague, the construction of two further bastions was undertaken.

The Parliamentary forces of Charles Coote laid siege to Galway in 1651 and after holding



17th-Century Pictorial Map of Galway, redrawn by James Hardiman in 1820, showing the walled town.

Image: Extracted from the Galway City Walls Conservation Management and Interpretation Plan, by Howley Hayes Architects.



Surviving sections of city wall in Eyre Square Shopping Centre. Image: Extracted from the Galway City Walls Conservation Management and Interpretation Plan, by Howley Hayes Architects.



out for nine months the city surrendered. The Cromwellian army subsequently constructed two citadels at the main entrances to the city. The Upper or East Citadel was constructed at the east end of the city at the Great Gate, while the Lower or West Citadel was constructed at the west end of the city by the West Bridge. Both were square in plan with corner bastions projecting into the streets. Local houses were confiscated and incorporated into the citadels. Both citadels were recorded as being in poor condition by the 1680s.

Eighteenth Century

No additional large-scale works were undertaken after 1690 and the existing fortifications were only maintained when the need arose. The establishment of the Barrack Board in 1697 was a pivotal point in the history of the city defences and emphasis moved away from providing a defensive wall circuit to providing accommodation within the city for horse and foot soldiers. By this time, the condition of the wall was quite poor with collapsed gates, breaches in the curtain wall and collapsed sections of the older city wall to the east. There is evidence that holes and passageways through the wall were made at various locations by smugglers.

Removal of the city wall and fortifications

The second half of the eighteenth century saw a period of rapid decay in the walls of Galway and by the end of the century almost all of the fortifications had been demolished. Sections of the city wall were built upon and property along the wall was let by the corporation or taken over by private individuals. Merchant's Road was laid out in 1779 alongside the wall and warehouses were built up against it.

During the early nineteenth century when Galway was beginning to recover its position as a major Irish port and mercantile centre, the old remaining fortifications were considered to be an impediment to progress.

By the end of the nineteenth century the only substantial sections remaining at that time were the North Bastion, the stretch of city wall south of Williamsgate Street, which formed the main boundary wall of Castle barracks, and the wall at the Spanish Arch. The twentieth century saw further destruction of the surviving sections. In 1970, the Lion Bastion fell victim to development and was demolished and in 1971 the last surviving bastion of the Upper Citadel was removed after a fire gutted the neighbouring premises.



In addition to its surviving defences, Galway boasts a significant number of early buildings. Images show Blake's Castle, Quay Street (15th-century) and carved stone details to Lynch's Castle, Shop Street (largely 16th-century). Images: Tarsy Koentges/IWTN.

Since the mid-1980s there has been a growing interest in the city's heritage and a number of archaeological excavations have been undertaken during urban renewal schemes. These schemes have involved the preservation of the eastern curtain wall within Eyre Square Shopping Centre and the Spanish Arch as part of the Galway City Museum complex.

Surviving sections of town wall have also been identified at Ball Alley Lane, Eyre Street and Bowling Green Car Park.

The above text was drawn from the Galway City Walls Conservation Management and Interpretation Plan, prepared by Howley Hayes Architecture for Galway City Council in 2013. It has been edited by the IWN Project Manager for inclusion here. Any errors or omissions PM's own.

Festive Events in Member Towns



Congratulations to Waterford, which was recently named ‘European City of Christmas for 2024’

Waterford was commended by the judging committee as “an extraordinary jewel of Christmas harmony and aesthetics”. Winterval, the city’s annual Christmas festival, is now in its 11th year and includes everything from Waterford on Ice to a funfair, circus, music and theatre and a Polish Christmas village.

www.winterval.ie

A Narnia Christmas, by Broken Theatre.
Image: winterval.ie

Not to be outdone, many of our other member towns have festive events programmed. See next page.



In **Kilkenny**, Yulefest is an annual festival that runs from late November til Christmas Eve. This year's festival features music, street entertainment, fireworks and much more – including the much-loved Christmas Tree Festival in St. Canice's Cathedral.

<https://yulefestkilkenny.ie/>



There's also a full programme of events in **Limerick**, with aerial acrobatics, ice skating and circus performances, street shows, Santa visits and pantos all featuring.

www.limerick.ie/christmas

As well as these bigger festivals and events there are a host of smaller local events taking place in towns and villages around the network. Some of these will have already taken place by the time the e-zine is issued, and we hope the hardworking organisers are already taking a well-earned Christmas break.

Congratulations to everyone who has contributed to organising events in their town this December. Hosting events and generating footfall in historic towns is an important contributor to town regeneration, at any time of year.



Athenry Heritage Centre held their annual Nollaig Beo event in December.

www.athenryheritagecentre.com/index.php/events-all



In **Youghal**, Cork County Council held two Christmas markets.

<https://youghal.ie/youghal-christmas-markets-10th-17-2022/>



Kells Colmcille 1500 held an event to mark St. Colmcille's birthday on December 7th as well as some beautiful new illuminations.

www.facebook.com/kellscolmcille1500/

News and Updates

Grants 2024



IWTN Capital Conservation Grants 2024 are currently open for applications. The closing date is 29 January. For 2024 the scheme will continue to emphasise the conservation of town walls (including new and revised town wall conservation plans and town wall maintenance plans).

Historic Towns Initiative



Heritage-led regeneration works in Letterkenny, funded through the Historic Towns Initiative. Image: The Heritage Council.

The Historic Towns Initiative scheme for 2024 is currently open for applications. In support of Town Centre First: a policy approach for Irish towns (2022), the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council which aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of Ireland's historic towns. A webinar will be held by the Heritage Council on Thursday 25th January 2024 for local authority personnel interested in applying for the HTI 2024. The deadline for receipt of online applications is 5pm on Friday 16 February 2024.

www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding/historic-towns-initiative-2024

Online Buildings Archaeology Course

A new online certificate in Buildings Archaeology may be of interest to some members. The course will begin in January 2024 and is aimed at those who wish to upskill in this area including:

- Practising professionals (archaeologists, county heritage officers, county conservation officers, architects, engineers, local authority staff i.e. roads, planners, housing, waterways) who wish to gain CPD.
- Owners, or prospective owners, of historic buildings (Listed Protected Structures) who wish to understand the guiding conservation principles and practice utilised in the research, recording, reuse and restoration of the historic built environment in Ireland.
- Members of archaeological and historical societies who wish to broaden their knowledge.

For further details see:

www.itsligo.ie/courses/certificate-in-buildings-archaeology-online/



Burnchurch Castle, Co. Kilkenny. Image: Liam Mannix/IWTN.

Social Media

Thanks to everyone as always for sending on social media content. Please continue to use the hashtag **#IWTN** on all network-related posts and to tag the relevant Heritage Council account:



@HeritageHubIRE



TheHeritageCouncil



@theheritagecouncil

Spanish Arch, Galway.
Image: Liam Mannix/IWTN.



Contact Us:

Please do get in touch at iwtn@heritagecouncil.ie if you would like us to promote news or projects happening in your walled town over the coming months.

www.irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie



The IWTN is funded by the Heritage Council and delivered in partnership with Local Authorities and community groups.



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