

Irish Walled Towns Network



Ezine

An Irish Walled Towns Network bi-monthly magazine. The IWTN is funded through the Heritage Council



The impact of Sieges

Learn more about the tangible traces of sieges found on your town wall.

Get to know Athenry!



Focus on Interpretation:
Archaeological Reconstruction Drawings.

New Video!

Watch the new video about the
Conservation of Athlone's Town Walls.

Welcome

Welcome to the Irish Walled Towns Network bi-monthly magazine where we feature news and events relating to the network.

Articles in the magazine will explore the history and development of our walled towns as well as practical advice on interpretation, promotion and conservation of our walled town heritage. A different member town will also be featured in each edition. We hope that this magazine will help to promote the fascinating stories that can be found in our towns and highlight the great work that is being carried out by local authorities and communities across the network. We would love to hear from you so if you would like to see any particular topic or aspect of walled town heritage featured, please do get in touch.

As Christmas is fast approaching, it is a good time to take stock and review the year that has been. 2020 was an incredibly challenging year for all of us and we look forward to a more positive 2021.

Despite facing lots of challenges, a number of IWTN grant funded capital works and interpretation projects and events were completed over the summer and autumn months.

This diverse range of projects showcase the many different ways to preserve, promote and protect the heritage of our walled towns. The completion of projects in very challenging circumstances is testament to the enthusiasm and determination of the many heritage professionals involved and our network members. We look forward to working with our members to discuss and progress new projects in 2021.

I hope you enjoy this ezine, if you have any questions or comments, or would like to promote any events taking place in your walled town in Spring, please do get in touch at irishwalledtownsnetwork@abartaheritage.ie

Róisín Burke - IWTN Project Manager

Stay safe and we hope you have a very happy Christmas!

IWTN Grant Aided Projects Completed in 2020

Capital Works Grants

- Conservation on town walls was undertaken at member towns: Limerick, Athlone, Rindoon, Carrick on Suir and Kilkenny.
- A conservation management plan was completed for the Tholsel in Carlingford, Co. Louth and for Kells Town Walls in Co. Meath.

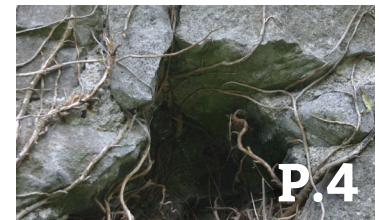
Interpretation / Events Grants

- Virtual medieval events were organised for Athenry, Loughrea, Athlone and Cork City.
- A detailed reconstruction drawing of medieval Kildare was produced.
- A collaboration between an artist and photographer created a brochure promoting the medieval heritage of Galway City.
- Interpretative panels were installed at Buttevant, Co. Cork.
- Booklets exploring the medieval heritage of Athenry and Loughrea were published.
- An animated video of the history and heritage of Derry's Walls was created.
- Videos showcasing ten years of archaeological excavation at Blackfriary in Trim, Co. Meath were created.
- The Guard Room in Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim received funding for an interpretative fit-out.
- Remedial safety works were carried out on steps at Athlone Castle.
- An ecological plan was produced for Ormond Park at Carrick on Suir, Co. Tipperary.

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Contributors to this edition:

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Damian Shiels, Archaeologist & Historian
Sara Nylund, Archaeological Illustrator

Designed & Produced by Abarta Heritage

Get to know your Walled Town: Athenry



Image Courtesy of Galway County Council - Athenry Walled town day 2014

Find out more!

To find out more about the story of Athenry, why not visit the **Athenry Heritage Centre** where visitors of all ages can discover Athenry's rich medieval history with a guided tour of the centre or try the 'Medieval Experience' by dressing up in medieval costume, a guided tour of the centre and archery.



Image Courtesy of Galway County Council - Athenry Walled town day 2010

29 wonderful towns from across the island of Ireland currently participate in the Irish Walled Towns Network. In each edition, we will introduce you to a walled town member.

First up is Athenry in Co. Galway, whose name derives from the Irish, '*Baile Átha an Rí*' or '*Ford of the Kings*'.

Medieval Athenry was once twice the size of Galway and its town walls rank amongst the best preserved in Ireland. Dating from c.1310, approximately two-thirds of the original 2500m of the town walls survive today. As a strategically significant Anglo-Norman out-post in an area dominated by Gaelic Irish families, the town saw its fair share of bloody battles and warfare.

The town's architecture is very much dominated by its medieval past with its walls, castle, abbey and market cross still standing as an evocative reminder of the town's rich and tumultuous history.

Athenry Town Walls are a major asset for the town as they are of national importance. The Heritage Council, through the IWTN has provided

funding for the conservation, interpretation and celebration of Athenry's town walls over the last twelve years. These projects have been supported by Galway County Council and the Rural Regeneration Development Fund.

Any conservation work undertaken on the walls is carried out in accordance with the **Athenry Town Walls Conservation & Management Plan**.

Altogether over 500 metres of town wall, the North West Tower & Guard House, the South East Tower and the North Gate have been repaired in nine phases since 2008.

In 2019 Athenry Town Walls Project won the Best Heritage Project at the All Ireland Community and Council Awards.

THE IMPACT OF SIEGES

As we all know, one of the key reasons Irish town walls were constructed was for defence.

Conflict and warfare often inspired additions and improvements to a settlement’s circuit, particularly during periods of extreme unrest. For the unfortunate, there were occasions when these defences were put to the test, as besieging forces marched over the horizon to batter at the gates.

One of the worst periods to find yourself on the wrong end of a siege in Ireland was during the 16th and 17th centuries. The series of devastating conflicts that engulfed the island during this period inflicted some of the most horrific violence ever witnessed by Ireland’s walled towns. Archaeological traces of that violence have been found in a number of defended towns and cities, ranging from that most stark form of evidence—human remains—through to layers of destruction and burning that speak to the

devastation of defeat. But there is one surviving trace that has tended to receive less attention in Ireland, even though it often has one of the most dramatic tales to tell—the story the combatants left written in stone.

Sieges dominated Irish conflict during the 16th and 17th centuries, and the weapon of choice for tackling our walled towns were those powered by gunpowder.

Many settlements had to face down an array of cannon and mortars on more than one occasion, and some echoed to the sound of gunfire again in 1798. The countless tons of iron and lead that were thrown at Irish masonry structures during these tumultuous times often left their mark in the form of damage that archaeologists refer to as “impact scars”. Where they survive, these scars provide us with a direct visual

“Sieges dominated Irish conflict during the 16th and 17th centuries...”



Possible impact scarring on Court Devenish House, Athlone

Find the impact scars on your walls

Why not keep an eye out for impact scars during strolls this Christmas holiday?

There has been no organised programme to fully document preserved impact scars on Ireland’s town walls.

Why not take a wander around your area and see if you can spot any?

Post online, and don’t forget to tag @irishwalledtown!

About the Author:

Damian Shiels is an archaeologist and historian. He is a specialist in conflict archaeology, a topic on which he has lectured and published widely.



Impact scars on the church on St John’s, Devizes, Wiltshire inflicted during the English Civil War in 1643 (englishcivilwar.org)

Towns under siege

Ireland's turbulent past has seen a number of its towns endure sieges. Is your town one of them?



Impact scarring in Limerick 1690/1



Athlone attacked in 1690/1



Clonmel's town walls were attacked in 1650



Drogheda's town walls were attacked in 1649

link to these dramatic past events, and offer us an opportunity to tell that story. In Britain ongoing research work is regularly revealing these scars, but as yet no similar programme of analysis has been undertaken in Ireland. But what is certain is that they are out there.

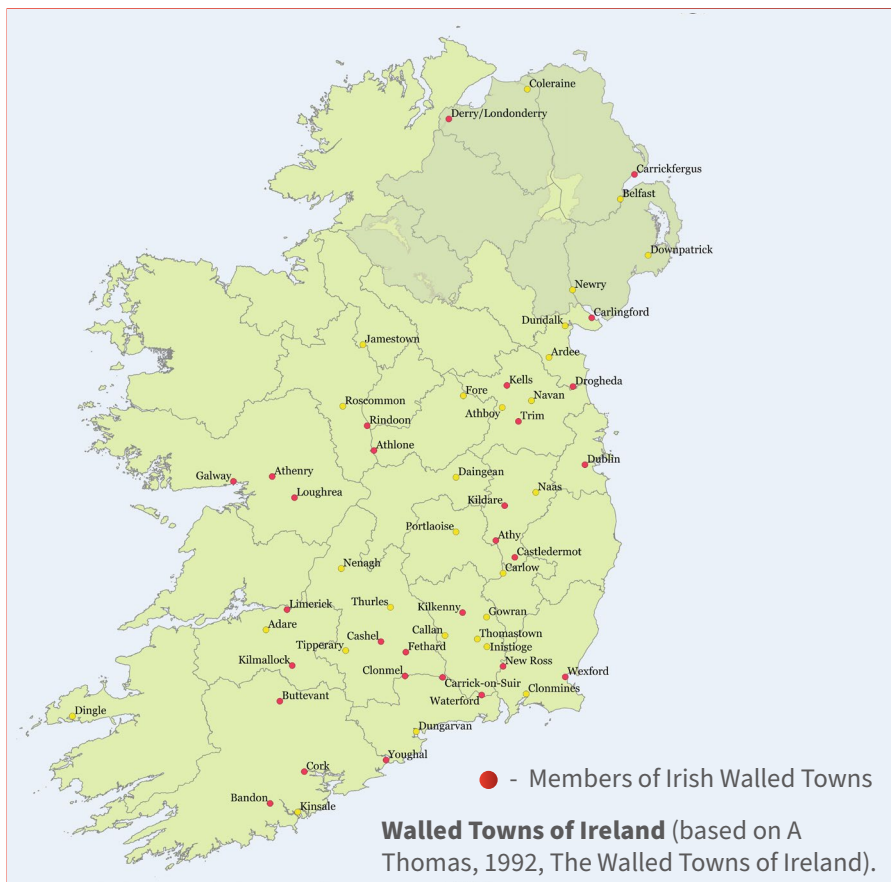
"...these scars provide us with a direct visual link to these dramatic past events..."

Perhaps the most dramatic example we know of is the pock-marked scarring at the Citadel, St. John's Hospital in Limerick, inflicted by the Williamite bombardment of the city. There are a handful of others known from the period, but many more must surely await discovery on the surviving portions of walls and buildings that surround us. Programmes of work to remove vegetation from our town walls—such as those part-funded this year by the IWTN along some of the St. John's Hospital stretch in Limerick—will greatly increase our ability to identify features like these impact scars in the future.

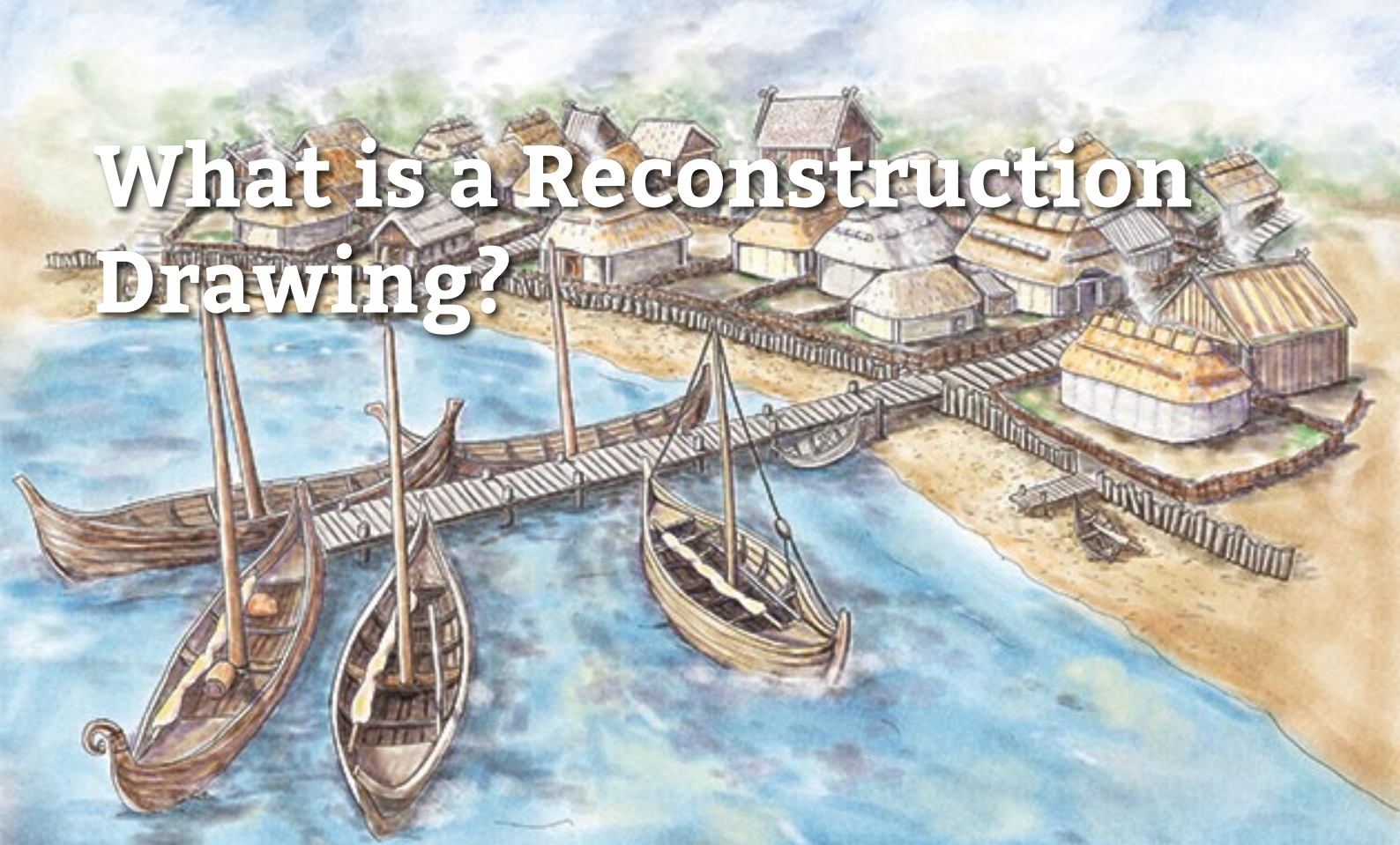
Impact scars are not the only traces of violence that can be left to us on our walled circuits. Sometimes it is in the evidence of repair that we see where damage was inflicted, or where a breach was made.

Absence can also be evidence, as areas of major damage might never have been rebuilt, leaving us a visual reminder of

turbulent times through what is not visible. Indeed, even where we don't have significant standing remains, the drama-filled story that sieges offer us can provide interpretative opportunities to explore our surroundings in a unique way. A major legacy of our early modern sieges is the amount of historical information they left behind, detail that can provide us with often highly accurate details about 'what happened where' in our modern streetscapes. By further exploring these visible and invisible traces of such history-defining moments, we can open up an exciting and engaging pathway towards further understanding our urban past.



What is a Reconstruction Drawing?



Artist Sara Nylund discuss the relevance of reconstructions

About the Author

Sara is an illustrator and content designer. She has almost 20 years' experience working as a specialist illustrator for the archaeological and heritage sector in Ireland.

Anyone interested in the past will be familiar with reconstruction drawings. They are used to catch the viewer's attention and imagination and are a superb tool to convey a large amount of information in a compact format.

But what distinguishes a reconstruction drawing from historical art? While both aim to be visually engaging, a reconstruction image conveys information about the past based on primary sources

and scientific evidence. This is often archaeological evidence, backed up with historical research, which is then composed into a visually appealing image.

To produce such an image, the artist needs to combine image production skills with the ability to collate raw data and then translate this into an image. The old adage 'a picture is worth a thousand words' is very true and an engaging reconstruction drawing is often a critical factor in sparking an interest in heritage. A well-executed image produced to showcase a specific site or event will enhance understanding and engage a wider audience than text alone.

How to Plan a Reconstruction Drawing Project:

Ideally, engage with an experienced reconstruction artist from the outset. The process of reproducing an accurate representation of a site or historical event will often reveal questions that have not been considered before. For example: what



Portmarnock interpretative timeline panel. By: Sara Nylund and Hannah Sims

was the roof of the building like, how were the roads paved, was there a render on the castle walls? These queries, when revealed by the artistic process, can help to enhance the interpretation of the site.

“...consider the audience, the intent of the image, the setting and overall look...”

During the initial stages of the process, consider the audience, the intent of the image, the setting and overall look. Primary and secondary sources should be identified and utilised. If available, reference imagery should be provided to the illustrator. Depending on the setting, a site visit by the artist may be necessary.

How to Use a Reconstruction Drawing:

Once an image has been produced for a site, it can be used in many different ways. Traditionally, a reconstruction drawing will appear on an

interpretative panel at a site combined with text. While well-constructed and well-placed panels are still relevant, it is worth considering that some locations might benefit from an alternative approach. One increasingly popular option is

to print a reconstruction drawing on a Perspex panel. The panel is then placed at a particular location on a site and when the viewer looks through the panel, they can see the reconstructed site or specific event where it occurred.

Other options are to utilise online technology through QR codes, augmented reality, or publish online. One common thread with these options is that images take centre stage in communicating with audiences.



Panel at Lusitania memorial and graveyard, Cobh Co, Cork
Photo by: Sara Nylund

The use of technology such as QR codes can provide additional layers of information or interactive opportunities



Find out more!

For more information and ideas about interpreting sites, please see the IWTN publication: **Bored of Boards!**

Image from “Bored of Boards!”

Athlone Walls - Video



Find Out More:

To discover more about the story of Athlone, why not take a stroll through the streets of the town to explore the remaining sections of the medieval defences and make sure to visit Athlone Castle Visitor Centre. The story of the Castle is told through exhibitions, artefacts and a 360 degree cinematic experience of the Great Siege of Athlone.

The Heritage Council through the IWTN, with support from Westmeath County Council funded the video production and the conservation works were funded through the IWTN capital works grants programme 2020.

Conserving Athlone's Town Walls

A Behind the Scenes Video

In September 2020, conservation works were carried out on a section of medieval town walls in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Every step of the conservation process was captured in a behind-the-scenes video which the Heritage Council have just released. Comprising of beautiful shots of Athlone and insider knowledge, this video is a must-see for anyone interested in the conservation process.

Conserving Athlone Town Walls Video

This video features specialists who were tasked with conserving the stretch of medieval wall at Court Devenish / Railway View in Athlone. Arborist Seamus Culbert (Culbert and Cons Tree Care) discusses the careful removal of an invasive sycamore tree. Stonemason John

Lonergan (Revamp Conservation) and conservation engineer Kevin Clancy (PUNCH Consulting Engineering) speak about the tools and methods used to preserve medieval masonry walls and the importance of ongoing maintenance. Westmeath County Council Heritage Officer; Melanie McQuade, discussed the history of the town walls and the process of conservation. Ian Doyle (Head of Conservation for the Heritage Council) and Róisín Burke (project manager, IWTN) also discuss the importance of this project.

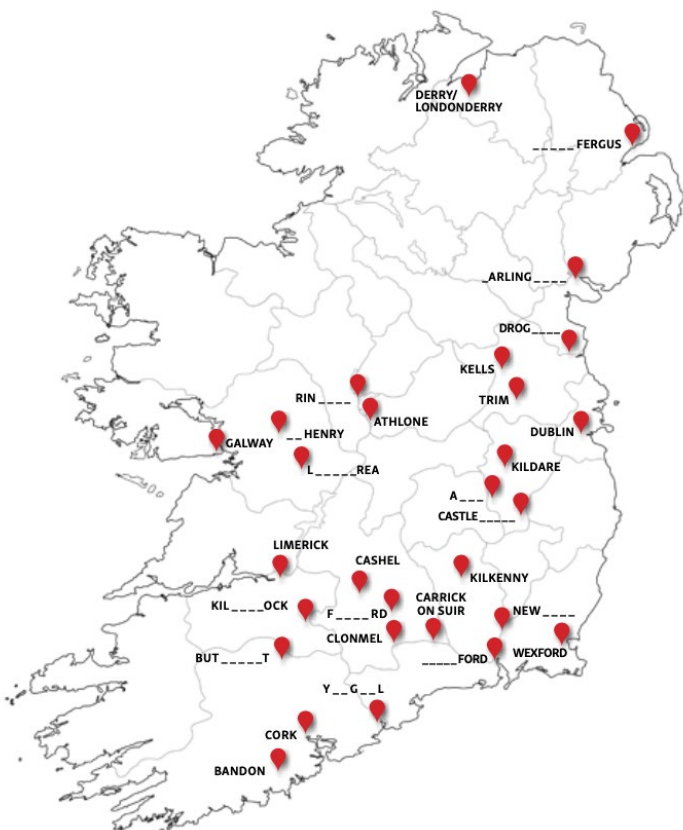
[Athlone Town Walls and Defences Conservation Plan can be found here](#)



IWTN CHILDREN'S WORKBOOK

Now that the Christmas break is almost here, there might be time to sit down over the festive season and enjoy the IWTN Children's Workbook which explores the wonderful heritage of our 29 walled town members.

The workbook contains lots of beautiful illustrations of Ireland's towns in centuries gone-by, such as our early towns, Viking settlements and the carefully planned Norman towns. The workbook aims to cater for a broad range of ages with lots of great activities such as colouring-in, word puzzles and quizzes!



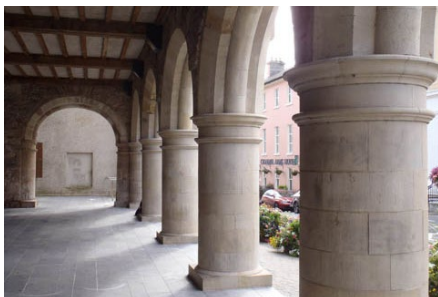
To download your free copy of the workbook, visit:

<https://irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie/news-article-1/>

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



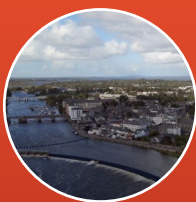
Image: Aerial View of Kildare



Contact Us!

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

Coming up in our next issue!



Visit a Walled town - Athlone



Plan a virtual festival and learn more about our walled towns



Meet the IWTN Committee

The IWTN is funded by the Heritage Council and delivered in partnership with local authorities. Project management is provided by Abarta Heritage.