

# Challenging the archaeology of decline in late medieval Callan: Excavations at West Street/Chapel Lane, Callan 2012

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## Abstract

The construction of an Aldi store at the edge of Callan, Co. Kilkenny, provided a wonderful opportunity to conduct an archaeological excavation within a medieval manorial town. This paper describes the archaeological findings, and reappraises the evidence for the defences of Callan, which were not found during the excavation. A new interpretation of Callan's defences raise the possibility that Callan did not contract during the late medieval period, as is generally assumed. On this basis the evolution of the site is interpreted with an emphasis on resilience and adaption rather than urban decline.

## A brief history of medieval Callan

Callan is an early Anglo-Norman colonial town founded in the first decade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Kennedy 2008, iii). The town formed part of a larger manorial settlement established by William Marshal, the Earl of Pembroke, who became Lord of Leinster. Callan was one of many manorial settlements established by the Anglo-Normans throughout Ireland. These manors were organised in a feudal system, and would have had their own court, parish church and fields (Simms 1997, 11). The centre of Callan manor was the demesne on the north side of the river. From his castle on the motte, the lord of Callan controlled the mills, kiln, forge and home-farm lands (the 'seigneurial monopolies') in his demesne (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 169; Clutterbuck *et al* 2006). A monastic site was also established on the north side of the river near the castle in the medieval period, perhaps from as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Lewis 1837, 244; Manning 1998, 67).

The manorial town of Callan was laid out on the south side of the river, opposite and overlooked by Marshal's castle. The town was arranged around the crossroads of Mill Street-West Street and Bridge Street, and surrounded by defences (Manning 1998, 50; 2007, 101). St. Mary's Parish Church on the crossroads was probably originally constructed during the founding of the town, though the present ruins date largely to the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century. An accurate measurement (based on digital mapping) of the extent of the town south of the river suggests it covered *c.* 30 ha, which is comparable to the size of Kilkenny Hightown and the walled extents of contemporary Dublin and Waterford (Clutterbuck *et al* 2006, 20; Manning 2007, 99). This paper argues that, contrary to previous assertions, this full 30 ha town boundary may never have been walled (e.g. Thomas 1992 i, 49, *ibid.* ii, 30-32).

The land inside the town would have been occupied by free burgesses, 'gabelar burgesses' and cotters, most of whom were probably immigrants of English, Scottish and Welsh origin (Bradley 1985, 421-2; Empey 2008, 20-22). The Irish, many of who would have been unfree '*betaghs*' (effectively serfs), would probably

not have lived inside the town (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 184) and instead lived in a separate settlement, perhaps to the west of Callan in Broadmore (Clutterbuck *et al* 2006, 10).

As with other Anglo-Norman settlements throughout Ireland, the town became a focus for the ongoing fighting between the native Irish and the new settlers. In 1261 the McCarthys attacked the town (Lewis 1837 i, 244), and it was burnt in 1286 (Farrelly *et al* 1993, 113). Battles between the Earl of Ormond and the Irish were fought near the town in the first decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Farrelly *et al* 1993 i, 113; Grace 2013, 45) and between the Butlers during the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Grace *ibid*).

By the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the town of Callan - '*le Irraght of Callan*' - seems to have gained some degree of independence from the manorial centre at '*Callan le Hille*' (Clutterbuck *et al* 2006). Over the course of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the demesne had been gradually divided between Marshal's descendants and in 1391 it was sold to the Butlers, and the manorial centre moved to Westcourt (Clutterbuck *et al* 2006; Empey 2007, 21-2). Callan town prospered in the late medieval period, with mentions of 'Spanish iron' in a murage charter from 1403 (Barry 1987, 108) and in the late 1500s the Butlers encouraged local merchants and artisans (Grace 2013, 46). The numerous 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century fortified tower-houses which survive in the town, for example Skerry's Castle on West Street, represent this period of prosperity (Carrigan 1905 iii, 292-3).

The town defences remained in existence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with a reference to the town ditch in 1583 and a communal fosse in 1595 (Manning 1998, 67). These defences were not enough to stop the town from falling to the attacking Cromwellian forces in 1650.

## Archaeological findings

The archaeological site was a green-field plot situated between West Street and Chapel Lane, to the east of the N76 Callan Bypass, at the western edge of Callan town, County Kilkenny (NGR 241152/143780; Callan South townland). It measured *c.* 180m north-south by 90m east-west (1.0342 ha). No structures were present on the site. The wall of a historic (possibly 17<sup>th</sup> century) barn building situated across West Street was not impacted (NIAH ref. 12314068).

## Testing

Thirteen test-trenches (all 2m in width) were excavated across the site in 2011, covering 1,200m<sup>2</sup> (12% of the site). Topsoil measured 400mm-600mm deep over a pale yellowish-brown stony clay natural subsoil in the south. The site sloped down towards the north, and here along West Street the stratigraphy comprised a thick layer of rubble 1.4m deep over natural subsoil.

The features identified during the testing programme were agricultural features of post-medieval date, ditched boundaries, and a medieval cesspit, all cut into the subsoil. The boundaries formed a series of narrow property (burgage or field) plots that predated the 1837 Ordnance Survey map. A stone wall found to the north suggested the plot had structures fronting onto West Street, with outhouses to the rear, corresponding with the town plan as depicted on the Stuish Map of 1681.

The truncated remains of possible structural features were noted at the northern end of the site. The discovery of the medieval cesspit was considered to be potentially very interesting, and further archaeological work was recommended.

No evidence for the projected line of the Callan town defences was found (Recorded Monument KK026-010007) within the site despite the fact that the southern end was extensively tested with six trenches placed at c. 10m intervals extending back from the Chapel Lane road frontage. The natural subsoil was exposed here and the testing programme conclusively proved that no large ditch or significant wall ever stood on the northern side of Chapel Lane within the site.

## Excavation

An excavation was subsequently carried out in 2012. An area 40m by 18m was stripped down to the top of archaeological deposits (600mm depth) by a mechanical excavator centered on the medieval cesspit. Upon cleaning of the stripped area, other medieval features and later (post-medieval and industrial-era) features were also identified.

The medieval cesspit was a large square pit, measuring 2.2m across and 1m in depth, situated in the centre of the archaeological site. It was filled from top to bottom by a loose moist dark greyish-brown silt with charcoal, deteriorated animal bone, medieval pottery and oyster shell. Thin lenses of sand provided evidence for multiple phases of deposition.

A posthole was located in the southeast corner of the cesspit. This cavity held the shape of a tapered and pointed wooden post of 200mm diameter that had been hammered into the corner of the cesspit. It does not seem to have rotted in place, and instead it appeared to have been removed in antiquity by levering it from side to side. This sent a great amount of natural subsoil into the empty cesspit. The posthole was filled with the same material as the rest of the cesspit.

A shallow north-south running drain ran along the eastern edge of the cesspit and across the entire site. It was filled by similar material as the cesspit with charcoal and deteriorated animal bone, medieval pottery and oyster shell. In the south, it had been recut and contained red brick, suggesting it had marked a medieval boundary that was partially recut in the post-medieval period. Two other truncated medieval drains or shallow ditches were also identified nearby. A barrel-lined pit, which also contained medieval pottery, was excavated nearby. The barrel had not survived, but a line of ferrous staining around the edge of the pit marked the presence of a decomposed iron barrel-hoop.

A number of larger ditches filled with 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century artefacts were also excavated, running along the same alignments as the medieval drains and small ditches. Limestone wall foundations of boundaries and outhouses were identified, again in line with the medieval and post-medieval boundaries.

The truncated remains of possible structural features were noted at the northern (West Street) end of the site, however these were heavily damaged by the realignment of West Street, and what material did survive dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The remains of the medieval and early post-medieval buildings

did not survive. This was disappointing, as one of the programme's aims had been to uncover evidence for the 17<sup>th</sup> century structures fronting West Street.

## Artefacts

36 sherds of medieval pottery from the excavation were identified as being Kilkenny ware or Leinster Cooking Ware. They were all of local manufacture, perhaps made in the pottery kiln such as the one excavated at McDonagh station in Kilkenny City (Devine and Ó Drisceoil forthcoming). The pottery assemblage broadly dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, though a 13<sup>th</sup> century date is also possible. It represents simple domestic utilitarian vessels including jugs and cooking pots.

255 animal bones from the excavation were analysed. This assemblage indicated the disposal of domestic refuse, representing kitchen waste, butchery waste and the remains of household animals. Both the animal bone and pottery from the medieval features showed signs of abrasion, weathering and gnawing. This suggests that they had been left outside for some time, probably in rubbish heaps, before being deposited in the fills of the pits and drains (*i.e.* secondary refuse deposition).

The animal bone assemblage suggested the medieval occupants of the site enjoyed a typical medieval diet, with their meats dominated by beef. Pork/bacon and sheep/goat were of lesser importance, and fowl and geese bones indicate these were occasional additions to the diet. The bones from the prime meat-bearing areas of animals were absent from the site, and many of the bones bore traces of pathologies indicating the animals were sick. Both of these indicators suggest the occupants could not afford the best meat, and had to content themselves with cheaper options. Some bones bore signs of having their marrow extracted, a practice often associated with a lower status diet.

A bone from a cat was found in the medieval cesspit, and the gnawing marks on many of the bones suggested the presence of dogs on the site. Evidence was also found that hens and goats were kept on the site, presumably for eggs, milk and cheese and eventually for meat and the sale of hides and horns to tanners and horn-workers elsewhere (no evidence for either of these crafts was found).

Five environmental soil samples from the medieval cesspit and barrel-lined pit were analysed for botanic remains. They contained charred wheat grain, indicating some level of crop drying (and thus probably crop growing) was being undertaken at the site. The pits also contained wood ash from probable fuel, comprising ash, alder, apple or pear tree, willow and blackthorn. These ashy deposits indicate that the cesspit had been used to dispose of various types of domestic waste, including from corn-drying kilns and fires.

Where are the defences?

One of the hopes of the excavation was that it would discover Callan's medieval town defences. Unfortunately, despite extensive investigation at the Chapel Street end of the site, these were not found.

The exact extent and nature of the Callan town defenses during the medieval period are difficult to establish. The Stuish map of 1681 shows a circuit south of the King's River covering an area of *c.* 30 hectares around the town, which is

reflected in the present street alignments of Chapel Lane and Fair Green Lane (Farrelly 1993, 116). Thomas (1992, 49) has pointed out that despite a reference to a 'town wall', the majority of references to the Callan defences from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards refer to a 'common ditch', and Manning (1998, 50) has proposed that this circuit was formed by a ditch and bank topped with a wooden palisade. Comparing the depictions of the Callan and Kilkenny City on the Down Survey map 1655, Kilkenny is shown surrounded by a stone wall, whereas Callan is shown with gates but no wall.

Previous archaeological excavations in Callan have also failed to find the outer Callan defence from either inside (Moran 99E232) or outside the town (Nelis 2007:888; McLoughlin 01E014), and perhaps it is worth considering the possibility that these outer defences were never actually constructed. Late medieval references to defensive walls may have referred to the inner town defences (see below) rather than the outer line. Northern Callan is labelled as 'Townditch North' on the 1681 Stuish map, which perhaps suggests that part of south Callan could have been called Townditch South. The town ditch is the subject of a 1583 reference whereby Richard Merry could enlarge his holding on Kenles Street [Bridge Street, on the north side of the river] *'on condition that he shall extend, hedge, cast and cut the town ditch outside the holding in good defensible and decent manner from time to time'* (Curtis 1932-43 v, 324, ref 365). An outer-town ditch and hedge may have had the primary function of marking the edge of the liberty of the town, rather than as a defensive line. This would have been a crucial boundary in the medieval period, as the burgesses within the town liberty were subject to their own town (*hundred*) court, as opposed to the manorial court (*leet*) that ruled outside the liberty (Grace 2013, 44). Similar non-defensive town boundaries marking borough limits have been noted in medieval settlements in England, notably Farnham and Midhurst (Jarvis 2017, 228). This interpretation would explain why the Callan defences have never been found by archaeologists.

There are clear 17<sup>th</sup> century references to a defensive wall at Callan, however. A 1648 letter by Lord Inchiquin, commander of the Parliamentarian besieging force, describes Callan as *'an old ruinous corporation walled in part...'* (Manning 2007, 101). A 'Middle Gate' near the centre of the town depicted on the Down Survey and Stuish maps suggest an inner defensive line. Manning has identified a mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Survey which refers to the 'the town wall' on West Street (Manning 1998; 2007, 'List A' Entry 53) in this location. This middle gate or inner defence has similarly never been found archaeologically (Moran 98E280; Pollock 99E232; Devine 04E1570), but Clutteruck (2006, fig 2) has suggested it might run along the existing townland boundary and proposes a second inner defensive line to the east of the town. The discovery of a ditch below an 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> wall in Tinahoona townland may represent this inner defensive circuit (Moran 99E232).

Thus medieval Callan town may have had an outer town ditch (or hedge) marking the 30 ha extent of the town liberty, and an inner defensive wall and ditch protecting the central 8 ha core of the town. This suggestion is supported by an analysis of the Stuish map and 17<sup>th</sup> century surveys of Callan. Manning's research (1998; 2007) on these allows comparison of plots and properties listed in 1651 within the line of the inner defence, and outside the line.

On West Street, Manning (1998) has shown that properties 1-10 and 53-63 on the survey (Manning 2007, 'List A') were situated in the inner town, with the rest in the outer town. The 21 properties in the inner town include eight houses with

slate roofs, some of which are clearly grand, and incorporate a castle, a demolished castle, and an inn *'The Sign of the Bell'*; six houses or cabins with thatched roofs; one property with 'stone walls'; and six gardens, one of which has 'old stone walls'. Many of the slate-roofed houses are described as having 2-3 storeys and several chimneys, which implies a large house for the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The outer town comprises 42 listed properties, of which 15 are thatched houses or thatched cabins, 26 gardens or crofts, and one castle (at the gate at the west edge of town). Of the gardens, only three are on the north side while 23 are on the south side, whereas 10 of the thatched houses/cabins are on the north side versus five on the south. The northern gardens are usually wider (three roods - *i.e.* 15m) while those on the south side are generally two roods (c. 10m) or less.

The same distinction is also apparent on Mill Street, though in this case the north side of the street outside the inner defences is enclosed farmland. This represents a significant difference of use between the inner and outer defences of the town, at least in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The inner town contains the slate-roofed houses and important buildings, whereas the outer town contains crofts (enclosed farmland). The measurements given for these crofts, particularly on the north side of West Street, are regular medieval sizes for agricultural land, which suggest these plots were laid out as such, rather than being initially part of the town which contracted gradually over the course of the late medieval period.

## The archaeology of decline

At first glance, the archaeological site appears to represent two discrete phases of occupation: firstly in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and secondly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The 18<sup>th</sup> century boundaries were found to consistently recut 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century boundaries, which suggests a level of continuity. It might also suggest stagnation. Did the site become abandoned in the late medieval period? Other archaeological investigations along West Street in the outer town have turned up very little, and usually concluded the plots contained fields (e.g. Lane 01E274; Ó Drisceoil 04E166; Stafford 08E111). Even excavations within the inner town, just east of the Aldi site, concluded it had been a field during the entire medieval period (Moran 99E232), and at the West Street end of that plot excavations under a derelict building identified no earlier structures (Pollock 99E232).

Was the initial setting out of Callan in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by Marshal too ambitious, as Clutterbuck *et al* (2006) suggest? A century or two after its founding, was Callan's population shrinking, evidenced archaeologically by large parts of the outer western town being used as fields in the late medieval and early modern periods and a contraction in the city defences (Manning 2007, 99)? Clutterbuck *et al* (2006, 11) have demonstrated a catastrophic decrease in the value of Callan manor's mill returns between c. 1340 and c. 1360. They suggest this was due to mis-management of Callan demesne by absentee landlords. During the 14<sup>th</sup> century Britain and Ireland experienced dramatic climatic deterioration, international war and the Black Death, which swept through Ireland in 1348-9 killing over a third of the population (Simms 1997, 15-16). Kilkenny City experienced an economic depression and a desertion of its suburbs in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as a result of these factors (Ó Drisceoil *et al* 2008, 88-9), so is it any wonder that Callan was effected too?

Is the subject of this paper a plot which was abandoned after the 14<sup>th</sup> century, forgotten about until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, then abandoned again until Aldi built its

store here in 2012? Is the archaeology of western Callan an archaeology of decline, contraction and urban decay?

But what is the archaeology of decline? Do we always need to view the abandonment of urban plots negatively? The new boroughs created following the Anglo-Norman conquest, like Callan, could be crucibles of innovation, and spaces enabling new ways of living and interacting - and with the new definitions of personhood associated with feudalism - even new ways of being. Perhaps the archaeological evidence from the 'backlands' of Callan can be stretched out to encompass some of these more positive ideas, emphasising change and adaption rather than decline and urban decay.

## Medieval period

This plot became occupied just after the foundation of Callan town in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The medieval street-front structures on West Street do not survive, but a cesspit and barrel-lined pit that had been dug in the back yard were excavated, as well as the ditched boundaries forming long and narrow plots. These are the spaces Ó Drisceoil *et al* (2008, 110) call the '*medieval backlands*': '*the burgage plots, gardens and yards behind the street-frontages*', and the remains here in Callan are very similar to sites excavated in Kilkenny City (*ibid*, 111).

The pits, drains and some of the ditches had been backfilled by domestic waste, but not immediately. The waste had previously been left outside in rubbish heaps, and the cesspit was only backfilled with rubbish after it had completely gone out of use, as represented by the removal of a post.

We know that the household who lived on this plot were probably not Irish. They were immigrants of English, Scottish and Welsh origin (Bradley 1985, 421-2), who rented their long and narrow plot in outer Callan from the Lord of the Manor, which could have been William Marshal (or his representative). Although the inhabitants of the plot were not the wealthiest inhabitants of medieval Ireland – as reflected in their ordinary diet and ceramic assemblage – as residents of Callan town they held a relatively respectable position, at least in contrast to the Irish. Perhaps they were 'gabelar burgesses' (or even cotters) rather than full burgesses (Empey 2008, 20-6), but even still, holding a plot in town was an important position: rental of a burgage property came with civic rights such as electing the town council, and up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, voting. Their plot was situated outside the inner Callan defences, but still within the town proper. Their house was probably wooden, and probably thatched. The town ditch and hedge ran along the back of their land, and perhaps they were responsible for maintaining this stretch of it.

The ditches in the back of the plot defining the burgage were probably dug by the household themselves. A much later survey from 1681 (Manning 1998, 2007) records the sizes of the plots in this area as 'a garden plot 1 rood 30 perches' (No. 42) and 'a garden plot 2 roods' (No. 45). In pre-modern times a rood was a standard unit of measurement equating to a quarter of an acre, and generally comprising a long narrow plot 1 perch (c. 5m) wide and 40 perches (c. 200m) long. The length of this standard plot equated to how far a ploughing team could reach using medieval technology before resting (a furlong).

The two medieval burgage plots at Aldi measured 20m (4 perches) in width, but were subdivided closer to West Street into 10m strips (2 perches), and 200m (40

perches) in length. These measurements are the same as those on the 1681 survey, suggesting the boundaries of the plot did not change. The size is the same as 4 perch wide medieval burgage plots excavated at Newcastle Lyons in Dublin (Giacometti 2015) and in Wiltshire (Wiltshire 2014). As described in the preceding section on the Callan defences, this evidence can suggest that the plot was originally laid out to be cultivated as crofts (enclosed fields), rather than as land marked out for future urban development. Thus the use of the plots as crofts into the post-medieval period does not need to indicate contraction: this is what they were initially laid out to be used as.

## Late medieval period

By the time of the 1681 survey it would appear that the medieval cottage on West Street no longer survived, and perhaps it became abandoned from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This would correlate with the lack of late medieval evidence for occupation on the site as a whole.

The absence of a late 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century phase at this site is not unusual. This is also frequently noted in the archaeology of Kilkenny City, for example (Ó Drisceoil *et al* 2008, 156). However, whilst war, plague and climate change are undoubtedly to blame on some level, this phenomenon is also recognised as being one of archaeological visibility (e.g. Fitzpatrick 2004, 361-362; McNeill 2007, 12).

In the case of the Aldi site, the absence of pits filled with broken household objects from the 15<sup>th</sup> century or later could be due to a change in the way that the site was used, or changes in waste disposal practices (Dyer 2003, 104-5; Jarvis 2017, 214), rather than abandonment. Jarvis (2017, 219) points out that processes of pit digging and waste disposal reflect urban improvisations as people confronted waste material and conflicting uses of space, and that their density and locations in relation to living spaces varies with changing approaches to managing the urban environment.

The household may have held onto the plot and exploited it to supplement their income, while moving house, perhaps to a recently-vacated stone house in the centre of town. The upheavals of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century created winners as well as losers, and perhaps our household took advantage of the new opportunities in the town in the late medieval and early modern period. For example, the collapse in the value of the manor's grain mills documented by Clutterbuck *et al* (2006) could partially be due to a re-orientation of agriculture towards pasture, as noted in northern Surrey in the same period (Jarvis 2017, 229). Wider economic changes could be reflected in the changing use of these outer-town plots.

The plot could have remained in use during the period and continued to play an important role in the socio-economic life of Callan. Medieval burgage plots could be subdivided, or engrossed (merging adjacent plots into a single larger one), and the archaeological evidence for the latter could be misinterpreted as abandonment. What we interpret as urban decay and contraction may not have been interpreted as such by the medieval inhabitants: perhaps maintaining the same population of English families in the town was seen as much more important than allowing Irish to enter and grow its density - the English enclave 'holding their own' (Jarvis 2017, 213). This interpretation also correlates with other evidence for remarkable wealth in Callan during the late medieval period



reflected in architecture and documentary records (e.g. Empey 2008, 32-33; surviving tower houses). Ó Drisceoil *et al* (2008, 89) describes how the dissolution of the monasteries was a bonanza for Kilkenny's well-to-do merchants, and the same could be true for Callan.

At some point in the late medieval period the plot was taken over by the Butler family. Plots owned by Pierce Butler in 1681 are depicted on the map drawn by Thomas Stuish in 1681, and preserved in a copy by Richard Frizell from 1756 (National Archives M2841; Manning 1998, 62). The property marked 'B5' on the Stuish map equates to the plot excavated on the Aldi site. Pierce Butler (an 'Irish Papist'), was one of the richest and most important nobles in Callan and Kilkenny City on the eve of the Cromwellian invasion, and a member of the Catholic Old English families who effectively ran the County (Carrigan 1905 iii, 307; Ó Drisceoil *et al* 2008, 118). Pierce's chief residence in Callan was at a castle at the East Gate (Manning 2007, 106).

That the plot was owned by such an important family, and was recorded as such, suggests it was not viewed as irrelevant wasteland. The absence of archaeologically-visible domestic waste on the site from this period can be seen as correlating with the increasing importance (to lord Butler at least) of the plot, rather than its abandonment. Perhaps it is reflective of a conscious effort being made to keep the space clear, providing evidence for co-operation in the management of private or in public spaces and the respecting of claims to them. This reflects a process of urban transformation rather than one of urban decay.

## Cromwellian period

By 1655 Lord Butler remained in technical ownership of the plot, but by now it had been effectively confiscated by the Cromwellian Government and redistributed to Protestants following Cromwell's conquest of Callan. These are recorded in mid-17<sup>th</sup> century surveys. Although it excludes the Ormond properties, using Manning's calculations we can identify Nos. 42 and 45 as the site. The new tenants are listed as John Corbitt and Pat Vance ('Protestants') *c.* 1662 (Manning 1998; 2007).

Pat Vance is listed as a tenant at a large number of other properties in Callan. He was a tenant at 22 other properties on West Street, at least one of which had a substantial house (No 6 on the survey, perhaps his chief residence), and the inn *'The Sign of the Bell'* which had formerly belonged to the Neal family. He also held nine properties on Kennie Street [Bridge Street], three on East Street [Mill Street] and a plot on South Street [Green Street]. On a number of these he is listed as a co-tenant with John Corbitt and another individual called John Pressick.

Manning (1998, 70) has identified some of the tenants mentioned in the Civil Survey in the 1659 Census (Pender 1939). *Patrick Voice [Vance], gent[leman]*' is listed as a *'titulado'* in the town of Callan (Pender 1939, 430). 'Titulado' here refers to the fact that Vance is claiming a title on land he occupied and that title was in question, because it had been confiscated from an Irish Catholic owner. Vance was thus part of a small property-owning class. Patrick Vance is listed among *'...persons ... nominated and appointed to be Commissioners ... [for the Poll-Money Ordinance of 1661] in the Burrough of Callan'* (Pender 1939, 638-640). Patrick Vance was clearly a man of some importance, and his holding of the Aldi plot at the edge of Callan town must have been important to him.

Vance is an unusual name in this part of Ireland. Griffiths Valuation (1847-64) has none in Kilkenny, and Reany (1976) notes that the name is '*Ulster generally etc. English, 17<sup>th</sup> century*'. This correlates with Vance having arrived in Callan with Cromwell's forces. Ó Drisceoil *et al* (2008, 122) suggest that the New English (people like Vance) in Kilkenny City made up about half the population inside the walled town, and concerned themselves with puritan fanaticism, caring little for civic improvement. Perhaps Vance was acting similarly in respect to Callan. He notably paid no taxes on the hearth money rolls of 1664 (Manning 2008, 112; Walton 1975, 172), and is not named as a burgess in the 1687 Charter of James II (Carrigan 1905 iii, 295). No further mention of Vances were identified in Callan during this study, but an Alexander Vass (possibly a relation?) is mentioned on a list of Callan jurors in 1736 and 1737, and as a tenant on the Callan Estate Map of 1756, residing at Bolton and Castletobin (Kennedy 2013, 326-7).

## Post-medieval period

After the Restoration the Aldi plot seems to have been returned to Pierce Butler. Butler was declared *innocent* in 1663 (Manning 2007, 96) and his property was returned to him, and from the lack of references to Patrick Vance after this date it seems Vance discontinued his 'tenancy'.

The excavation found evidence for 18<sup>th</sup> century structural remains at the west end of the plot, suggesting a new building was constructed, presumably for a new tenant. This may be the same structure depicted on the 1841 *Map of the Town and Corporation Land of Callan...* and labelled as No. 25, belonging to Viscount Clifden. This was Henry Agar-Ellis, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Clifden (1825-66), an Irish courtier and race horse owner, and member of the British nobility (Chisholm 1911). The tenants of the property during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century are not recorded, but they constructed walls along the ancient plot boundaries that had been established in the medieval period, and probably farmed the rear of the plot.

The building on West Street was demolished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map the croft is shown engrossed with its neighbours, representing an enlargement of land holding and the demolition of the old medieval plot boundaries. The demolition of the West Street building may represent depopulation after the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Famine, but it must also relate to the engrossment of the plot. There are many possible reasons for this, including the adaptation of the Aldi site to use for a new sort of cultivation following the Great Famine and the repeal of the Corn Laws.

## Conclusion

The Aldi plot at the western edge of Callan has been involved in many of the most important historical events in the town's history, from the medieval foundation of the town, to changes in the late medieval period, the Cromwellian conquest and Restoration, and the Famine and repeal of the Corn Laws. Throughout these times the plot has remained in use as an active part of Callan's urban fabric, even when it contained no houses, and it has managed to retain its urban spatial integrity into the present. This is an archaeology of urban resilience, rather than of stagnation and decline.

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## Biographical Note

Antoine Giacometti is project manager with Archaeology Plan consultancy. He has worked as an archaeologist since 1995, and specialises in the archaeology of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and industrial archaeology. He established Archaeology Plan consultancy in 2011.

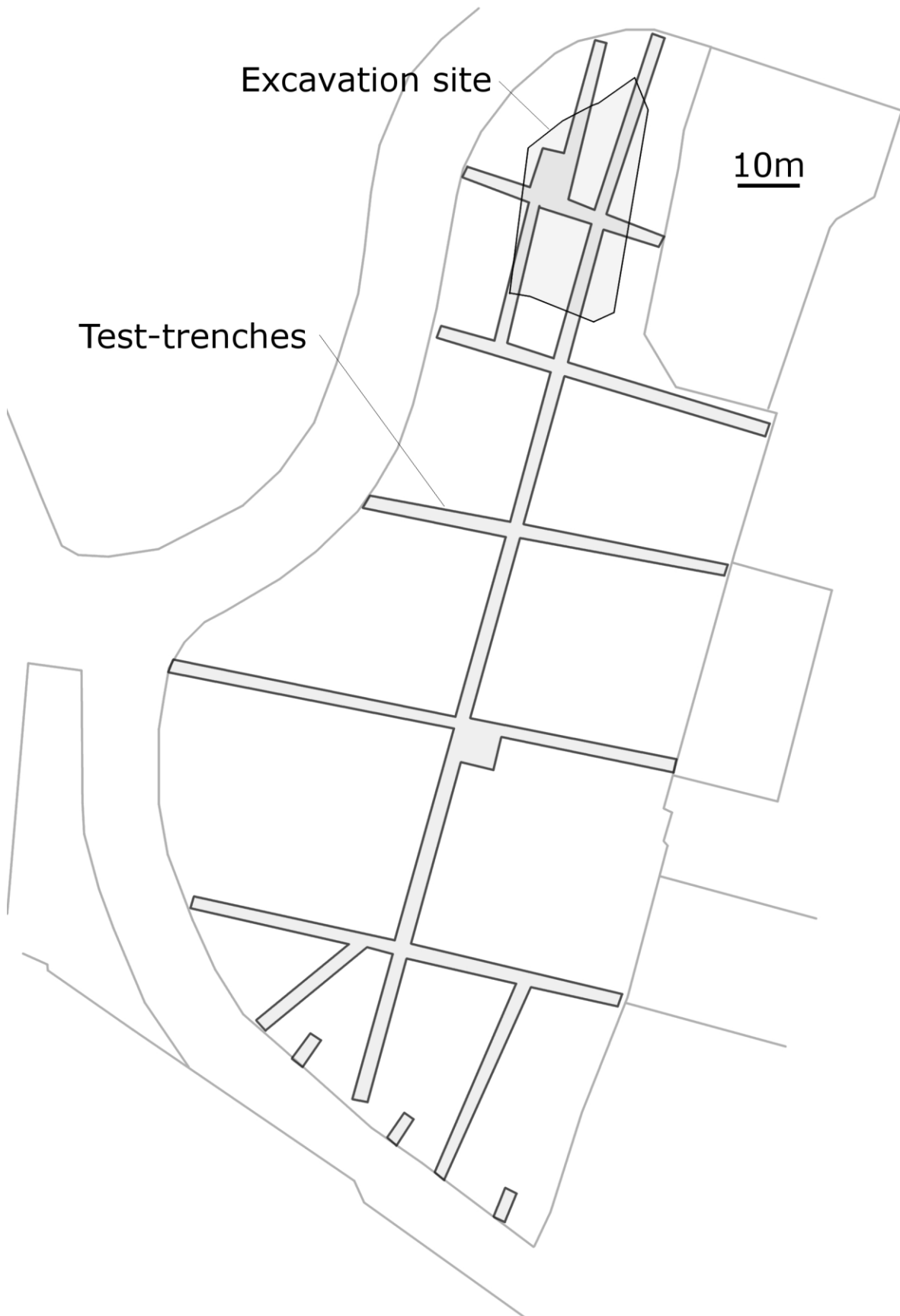
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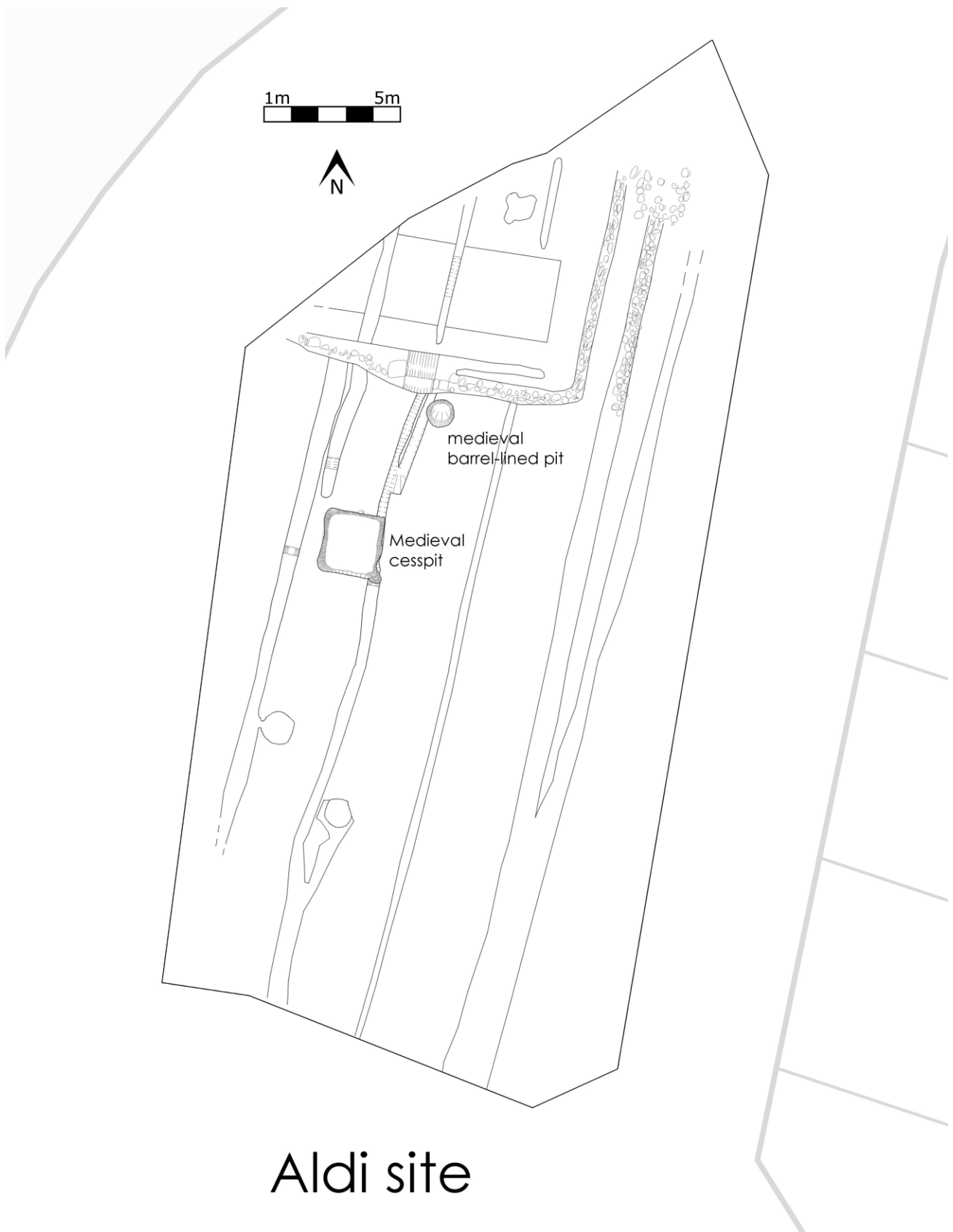
1. Site location map on satellite image, showing reconstruction of town defences (inner town) and town limits (outer town).
2. Site map showing location of test-trenches and area of excavation.
3. Post-excavation plan showing key archaeological features.
4. Section drawings of medieval cesspit and medieval barrel-lined pit.
5. Photograph of medieval cesspit.
6. Photograph of medieval barrel-lined pit.
7. Photograph of medieval shallow ditch marking medieval plot boundary, with 18<sup>th</sup> century stone wall built over the same line.
8. Stuish map of 1681 showing site location correlating to plots '5B' (Butler lot 5).
9. Reconstruction of medieval plot boundaries from excavation. The boundaries show that the site was divided into two 20m wide plots almost a furlong in length, corresponding to the standard 2 rood size of medieval burgages.
10. 1839 Ordnance Survey map showing site location.



1. Site location map on satellite image, showing reconstruction of town defences (inner town) and town limits (outer town).



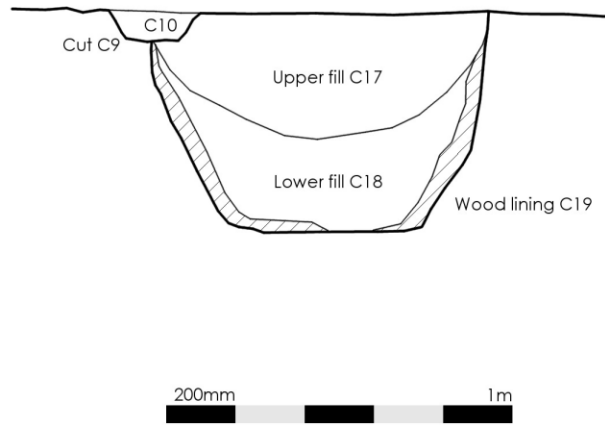
2. Site map showing location of test-trenches and area of excavation.



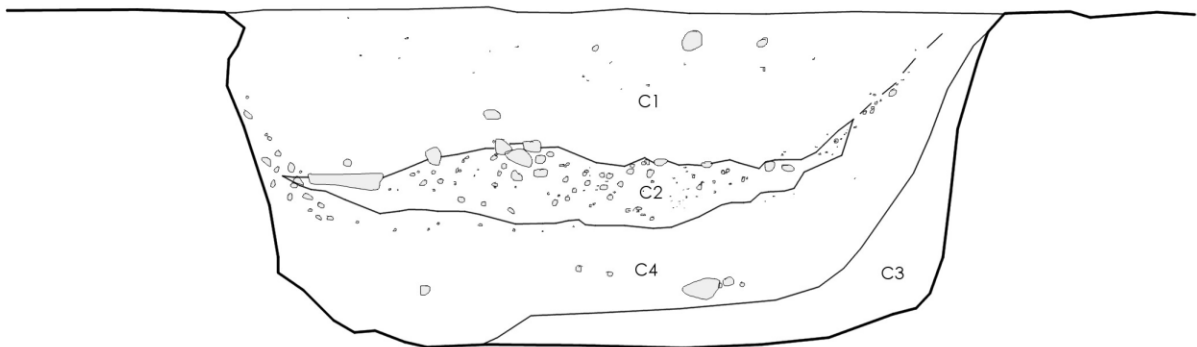
## Aldi site

3. Post-excavation plan showing key archaeological features.

South-facing profile of barrel-lined pit C16

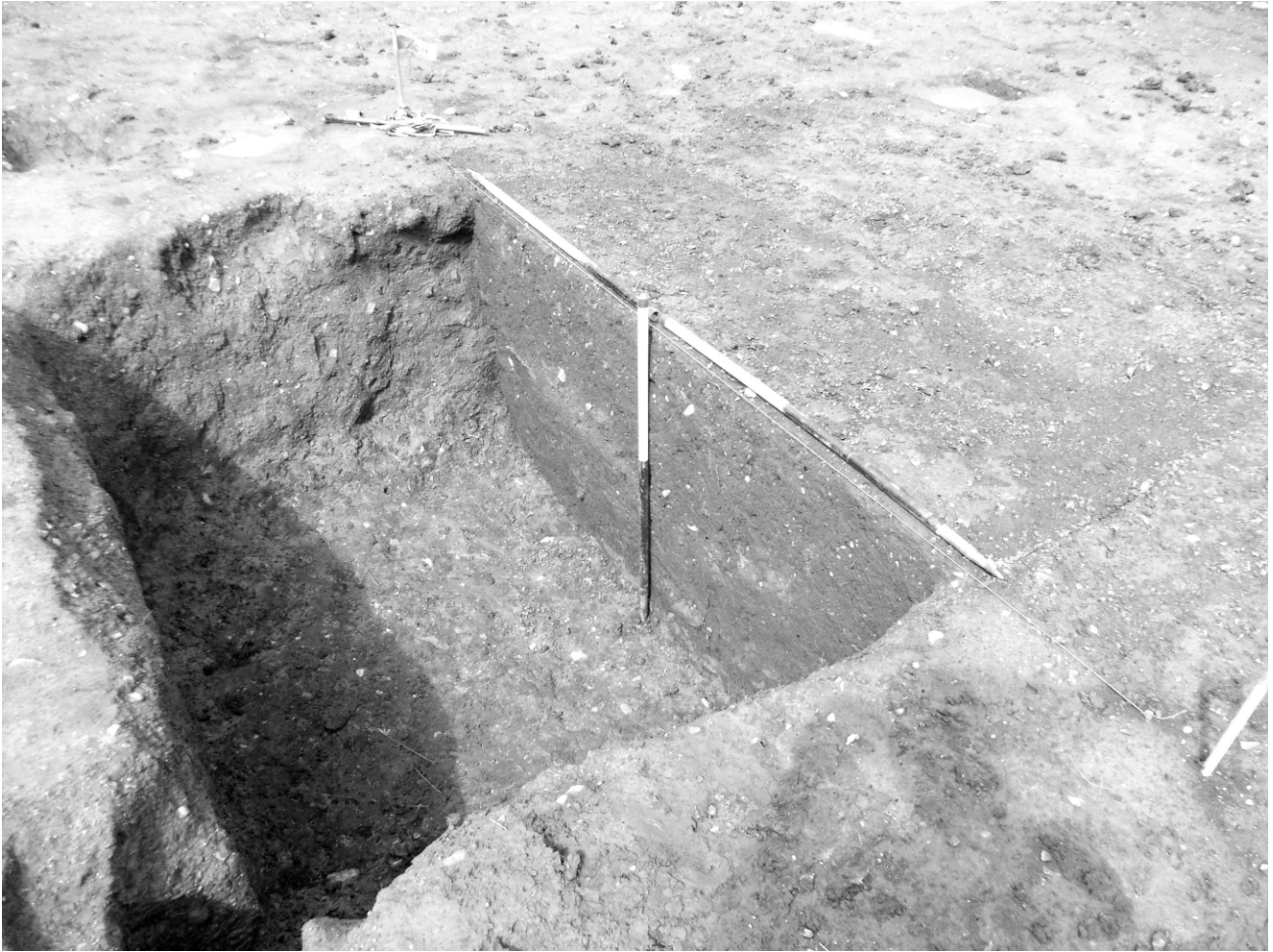


South-facing profile of cesspit C5



4. Section drawings of medieval cesspit and medieval barrel-lined pit.





5. Photograph of medieval cesspit.



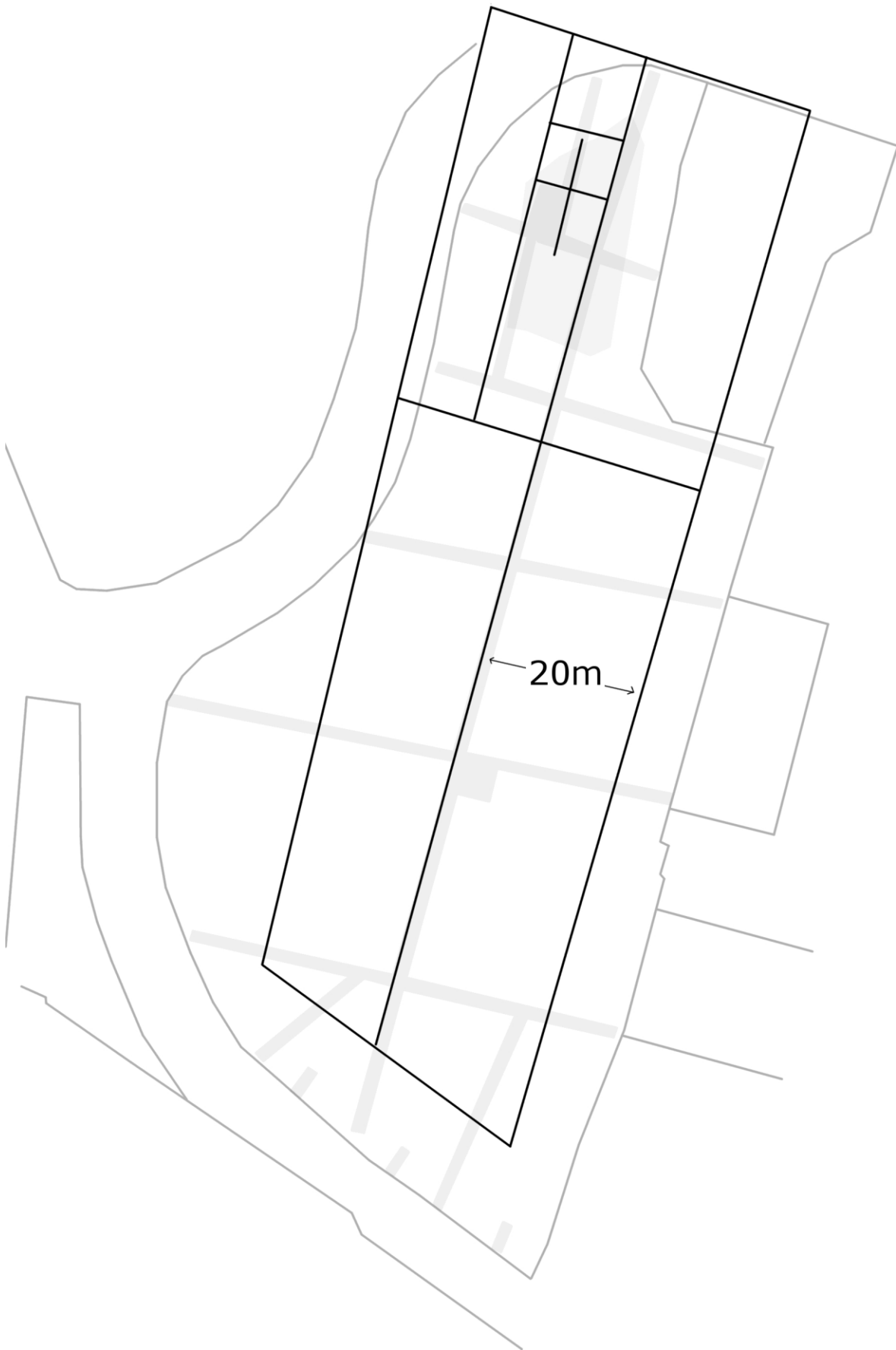
6. Photograph of medieval barrel-lined pit.



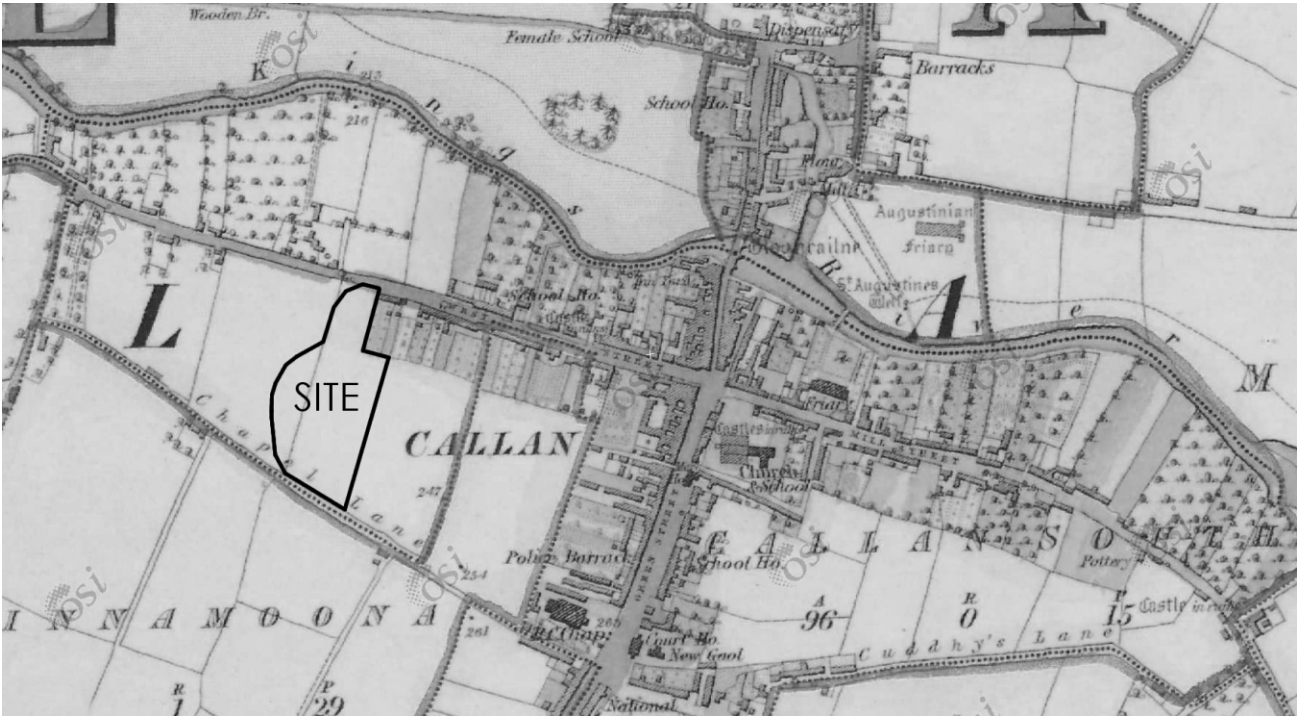
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7. Photograph of medieval shallow ditch marking medieval plot boundary, with 18<sup>th</sup> century stone wall built over the same line.





9. Reconstruction of medieval plot boundaries from excavation. The boundaries show that the site was divided into two



10. 1839 Ordnance Survey map showing site location.