MAPS

READING THE MAPS: A GUIDE TO THE IRISH HISTORIC TOWNS ATLAS

JACINTA PRUNTY ☀ H.B. CLARKE

an Irish Redoubt

6 Battering Peices

4 Peices playing to the Bridge

4 Mortar Peices

These Peices shot red hot Balls

Ireton's Fort

Peices to shatter ye Town

A ruind house an Orchard

4 Peices to dismount the enemys cannon

A house an Orchard

A new Irish Fort

THE SHANNON

Our Army encampt

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FOREWORD

The main title of this guidebook is an intentional echo of the phrase 'reading the runes'. Runes have a dictionary definition of characters or marks that have mysterious or magical properties attributed to them. Maps have some of the same characteristics. To many people they have an air of mystery about them; they make extensive use of symbols and of conventions that need to be explained. They convey messages about spatial arrangments in a three-dimensional present and early maps do this in a four-dimensional past. Such maps may themselves date from the past or they may be reconstructions of that past. The word 'reading' should be understood in its widest sense: not only to take meaning from textual matter on a map, wherever that applies, but also to interpret the conventions, signs and symbols that map-makers employ.

Now that a critical mass of Irish Historic Towns Atlas (IHTA) fascicles has been published, together with ancillary works, the richness of the resource can be exploited. It can be done in a number of ways, using this guidebook to assist the process. To start with, the four main sections can be read as a series of conventional book chapters, divided by headings and generously illustrated. Then a stop-go approach can be adopted by re-reading individual units and answering the questions in the 'test yourself' boxes. This method would suit teaching environments on all levels. Finally research programmes could be devised on specific topics, using the material in this book as a starting point. To that end, the book includes suggestions for further reading in addition to the IHTA publications themselves.

As editors of the IHTA it is our belief that the geography and the history of towns and of town life in Ireland need to be better understood. It is also our belief that, made accessible to the widest possible readership, maps are a fundamental tool in that endeavour. In addition, many early maps are beautifully executed works of art. They deserve to be 'read' correctly for what they reveal about the past, as well as to be enjoyed as remarkable products of human creativity. Readers will discover that every Irish town in the sample has an interesting story to tell; the IHTA tells those stories through a balanced combination of maps and texts. Hitherto the stories were told individually; now they can be told collectively as well. In this guidebook every town, no matter how small in size or short its history, is the subject of at least one case study featuring part of, or an aspect of, its particular geographical and/or historical story. Reading the maps is a universal exercise.

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UNIT D.5

The eighteenth-century town

The eighteenth century in Ireland was the age of the Big House. From mid century, great country houses were flourishing. A substantial income was generated by leasing land to tenants and much of it was spent on designing and building ever more palatial residences. Many of these, of course, were situated in the countryside, surrounded by boundary walls, but some were built on the edge of, or fairly near to, a town. One has only to think of Leinster House (now home to the Irish parliament), which is shown as Kildare House and garden on the eastern edge of John Rocque's map of Dublin (Figs 154, 155). In many such cases, the owner of the Big House took an interest, and sometimes a decisive interest, in steering the development of 'his' town. The grandeur and style that are associated with the eighteenth-century town in Ireland were very often due to the vision and resources of the local landlord. Under the influence of continental philosophies, towns were seen as central to the spread of all manner of civilising influences, such as respect for law and order. The town could quite literally be a monument to the enlightened local landlord, adding to his or her prestige and a worthy complement to the grand house set in its own demesne.

As centres of industry as well as of trade, towns could become real generators of wealth. In short, a thriving and aesthetically pleasing town, with rising income from rents and market tolls and a strong demand for leases, was in the landlord's long-term interest. And the extended period of peace in Ireland that followed the end of the Williamite wars by the treaty of Limerick in 1691, with tillage prices and hence rental income high, provided the political and economic context that allowed an era of unprecedented landlord investment in town development to ensue (Fig. 126). Early eighteenth-century town planning ideals across Europe were for an ordered and integrated urban development, reflecting the stress placed by classical architecture on order, spaciousness and uniformity. Wide, harmonious malls, regularly planned open spaces, clear building lines and uniform frontages, straight axes and vistas geometrically framed were all preferred. Churches were often used as architectural set-pieces within the town plan, especially to complete axial vistas, while courthouses, market houses and other public buildings, in neo-classical style, could also serve as focal points. And an imposing entrance to the landlord's
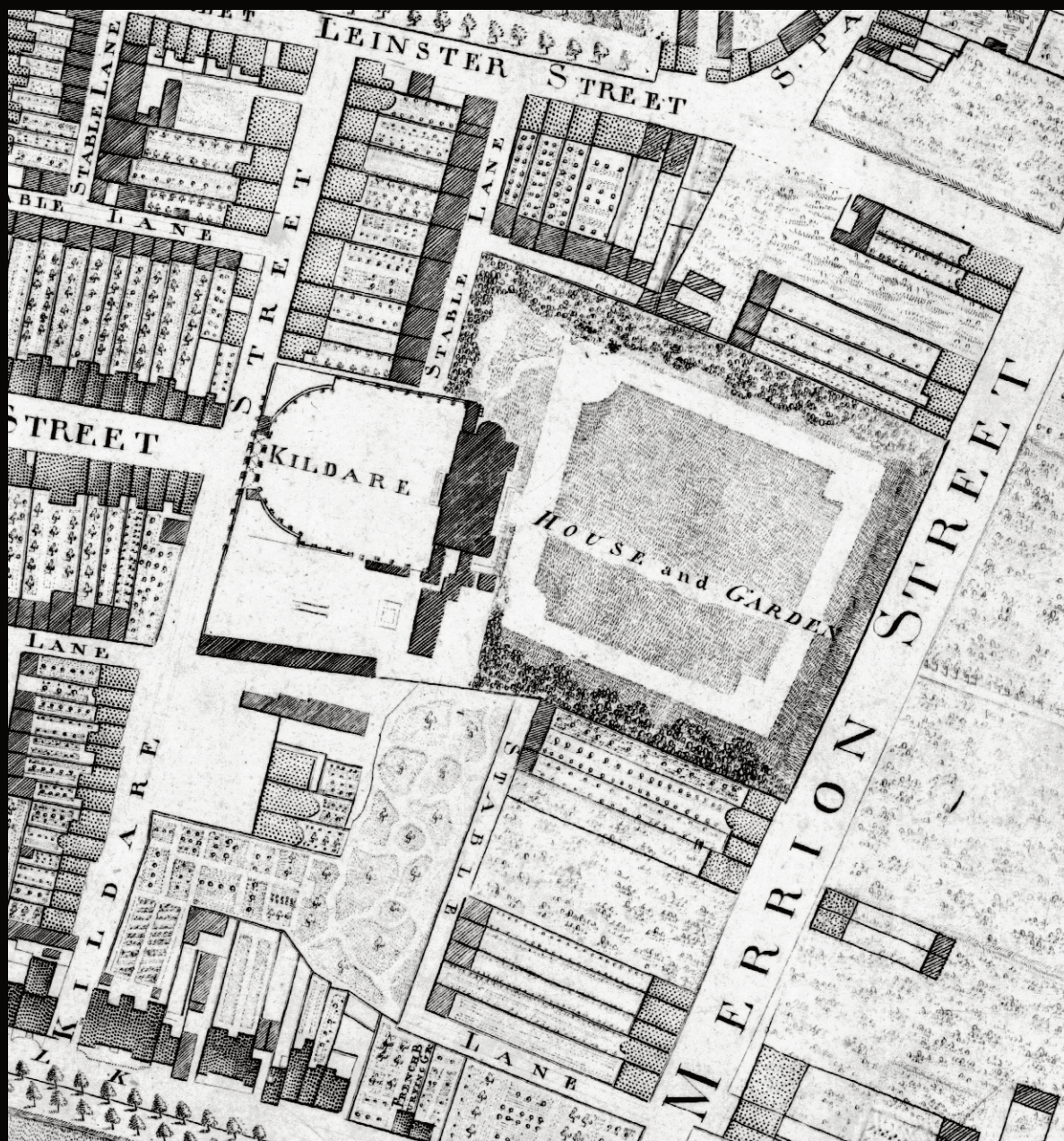
Fig. 154: *Dublin, part II*, map 16, 1756–70, by John Rocque.
Reproduced with permission of the board of Trinity College Dublin, extract.
Fig. 155: *Dublin, part II*, Kildare House, 1757. From John Rocque, *Survey of the city, harbour, bay and environs of Dublin*.
Reproduced with permission of the board of Trinity College Dublin.

own gracious residence, conspicuously set within the urban whole, underscored the relationship between the town and its patron, evidently a man of wealth and exalted social standing, whose paternalism and exquisite good taste were literally to be read in the townscape.

Classical urban ideals were all very well, but many Irish nucleated settlements, with their medieval origins, were centred on constricted market places, a parish church with its irregular curtilage, and narrow, winding or otherwise uneven streets. Even those towns created or recreated in the early modern period still lacked the grace and geometry that were so highly prized in the eighteenth century. Landlords were constrained by the existing plot pattern and the rights of leaseholders; when leases came up for renewal, the landlord was in a strong position to implement changes, but otherwise change could be complex and expensive. Even where a single landlord dominated, there were often other owners such as the Established Church, the town corporation and others blocking efforts to redevelop the town in a geometric, integrated and pleasing whole. The inherited geomorphology could also bring challenges, requiring expensive engineering work: for example, before areas prone to flooding could be used for building. In practice, landlords worked with what they had inherited or had purchased, imposing regularity on the existing townscape where that was feasible and creating fashionable high-class extensions to the town in the form of malls and residential squares.

Urban life became truly stylish in eighteenth-century Ireland – at least for that section of the population who could afford to live in grand houses, to keep one or more splendid carriages and to enjoy the many fashionable entertainments that were now available. Popularly called the 'Georgian period', after the reigning monarchs George I (1714–27) to George IV (1820–30), many county towns and of course the capital city Dublin experienced a new lease of life in the eighteenth century, following on fashions set in England and on the Continent. Maps of the period, and the topographical information derived from these maps and from other contemporary sources, can give glimpses of the good life that was enjoyed by the privileged classes. The maps of John Rocque, the pre-eminent urban cartographer in eighteenth-century Ireland, are especially valuable; Irish towns that enjoyed his attentions include Armagh, Dublin and Kilkenny. Views or paintings of towns, especially where people are included, can also assist in conveying a sense of the grandeur and style of the age.

Display was enormously important to the urban elite of the eighteenth century, to demonstrate their social standing and to distance themselves conspicuously from other classes. The physical layout, including ornamental trees, tasteful railings and well-tended flower beds, as well as names such as

'garden', 'mall', 'parade' and 'walk', along with proximity to quality housing, are good indicators of high-status gathering places. The wheeled carriage was firstly a mode of transport for those who could afford the considerable expense involved, but it was also an important status symbol. With the family coat-of-arms or other distinguishing marks, the carriage was seen to best advantage on straight, wide streets, while the gentler the gradient and the fewer the sharp turns, the more comfortable was the journey for the privileged occupants. The manufacture of coaches was a complex but profitable business, using a wide range of luxury inputs such as braids, brocades and tapestries, and requiring the skills of ironworkers, leather workers and wheelwrights, amongst others. The grand town house was at the heart of fashionable urban life in the eighteenth century, with its endless round of social visits, dinners and parties.

Dundalk, a town transformed

Given the variety of landlords and their families, there are numerous variations in detail as to their influence on town development. In some cases an existing town, sometimes of great antiquity, was reshaped in part while preserving older elements. By way of example we can examine what happened to Dundalk. Having been occupied by a large force under the command of King James II prior to the battle of the Boyne, the town was totally wrecked by his troops as they departed in June 1690. The key to its subsequent recovery was the purchase of the Dundalk estate by James Hamilton of Tollymore, Co. Down, in 1695. He died in 1701 leaving his wife Anne and young son James. Anne Hamilton decided to sell off other family properties in order to fund improvements at Dundalk. Her son James was given an Oxford University education and travelled widely on the Continent. He married into a leading Dutch family. He became the principal shareholder of a shipping company trading between Dundalk and the Americas. The scene was set for urban transformation.

A starting point is Robert Richardson's map of the town in 1680 (Fig. 156). Here we see the essentially medieval layout, with a straggling, roughly north–south main street, burgage plots on both sides, and tentative development towards the bay and the open sea. The medieval town walls were still standing. James Hamilton, now Lord Limerick, began work on draining the South Marsh in 1725 by constructing a sea rampart along the shore of Dundalk Bay,

TEST YOURSELF

1. Why does the background to urban development in the eighteenth century seem so different from that in the previous century?
2. What sorts of urban improvement were favoured by landlords and members of their families?
3. What do names such as 'mall', 'garden', 'parade' and 'walk' suggest about social activities in eighteenth-century towns?
4. What impact did the widespread use of horses and carriages have on urban design and layout?
5. What advantages did county towns have over other towns in this period?

A map of Dundalke and Sea-
towne in the County of Louth
togeather with the houses gardens
& Backsides thereunto belonging
Being the Propriety of the Rt Honble
Ann Vice Countesse Dungannon
&c formed by Robt Richardson 1680.

Dundalke · Bridge

Ryuer

Water gate

Blind gate

Castletown gate

N

W   E

S

Cow Market

Church

Seatowne gate

Dundalke towne land.

Price

S.J.B

Leuin   Leuin

Leuin

Dracot

St Leonard's

Abbey

Sir J Bellew

Bathe   Commons

Abbey

Bath

Mill

Sir J. Bellew

UPPER SEATOWNE GATE

Small Parkes

Dundalke towne land

S.J.B.

WARREN'S GATE

Mill Race

S.J.B.

S.J.B.

S.J.B.

Reduced to
⅓ the size of
the Original.

S.J.B.

UPPER STREET

Ardeeroade

Droghoda Rode

S.J.B.

Reduced under the directions of
John Neville, County Surveyor of
Louth, by M. Moore Graham
1863.

A Scale of 10
Perch in the inch
& 21 foote to the inch

Forster & Co Lith Dublin.
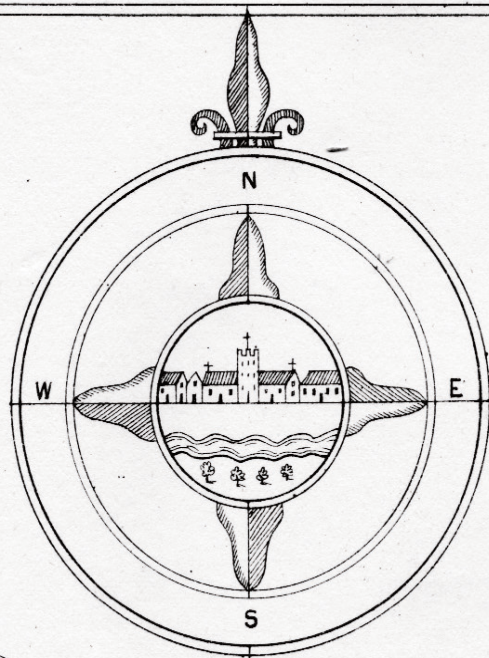
Opposite page: Fig. 156:
Dundalk, map 10, 1680, by
Robert Richardson. From
John Dalton and J.R.
Flanagan, *History of Dundalk*.
Fig. 157: *Dundalk*, map 9,
1766, by Matthew Wren.
From *A topographical map of
the county of Louth*.
Fig. 158: *Dundalk*, plate 2,
Market Square, looking
north, *c.* 1875. Courtesy of
the National Library of
Ireland, Lawrence Collection.

Fig. 159: *Dundalk*, map 11, 1777, by Bernard Scalé. In private possession, extract.

using stones from the demolished medieval walls, gates, tower houses and other fortifications. Nearly 800 acres of ground were reclaimed and a new road was laid down from the Dublin road eastwards to the rampart. This is known today as Avenue Road and Green Avenue. The harbour towards the north was improved in the period 1740–58, with a pier extending into the river as we can see on a map dating from 1766 (Fig. 157). Now vessels of up to 130 tons could dock and unload safely. Inside the old town derelict buildings were cleared and their ground offered as building leases. A modified road network radiating from Market Square at the southern end of Clanbrassil Street was laid down. The square was furnished with new buildings – a market house to the west, a sessions house to the east and an inn to the south – as a photograph taken just over a century later reveals (Fig. 158).

Whilst all this activity was going on towards the east, a demesne of nearly 400 acres was being laid out towards the west. The residence itself was situated on the western side of Church Street, opposite the parish church; it may have been an adaptation of an existing high-status house. Both residence and demesne were designed by Thomas Wright of Durham, a leading architect and landscape planner. The eastern part of the demesne in which the house was situated was laid out as a decorative and landscaped garden. It was provided with 'modern' amenities: an artificial stream, a Chinese bridge, a thatched open-sided house and fine plantations and hedges. Towards the west the grounds were divided into fields each containing 23 acres. American sheep, turkeys and a variety of vegetables were being farmed. A survey made in 1777 shows many of these features (Fig. 159). The intention was to advertise the high culture and exquisite taste of the landlord. Dundalk was not just a place of manufacture and trade; it had been 'civilised' in an eighteenth-century mode.

Maynooth, a village transformed

Maynooth has a different story to tell, though with strong parallels to that of Dundalk. From the late twelfth century, when the first castle was erected, Maynooth was a manorial village, though quite a substantial one. From the fourteenth to the sixteenth century the number of landholdings seems to have remained fairly constant at just over fifty. What changed was the FitzGerald castle, the family having been granted the title of earls of Kildare in 1316. At the height of their power either side of 1500, Maynooth Castle was one of the most impressive in contemporary Ireland and even boasted a famous library. The family's fortunes were undermined temporarily in the siege of 1535 and the subsequent execution of Silken Thomas; they were restored under Gerald FitzGerald from 1553. The aristocratic descent continued eventually through a junior branch until we get to George in 1620. By one of those twists of historical fate that are so common, his guardian was one of the most powerful men in Ireland at that time – none other than Richard Boyle, the earl of Cork and developer of Bandon.

Having rebuilt and refurbished his own castle at Lismore in Co. Waterford, Boyle set about a major restoration of Maynooth Castle which, according to a plaque erected by himself, was 'totally ruined and ready to fall'. The first known map record of any part of Maynooth depicts the redeveloped castle complex

Fig. 160: *Maynooth*, fig. 1, Maynooth
Castle and its surroundings, *c.* 1634.

(Fig. 160). The old medieval keep was retained while new buildings were erected so as to form a courtyard arrangement. The enclosed space was much enlarged and a green area extended southwards to the church, which was also repaired at Boyle's expense. Once again, however, warfare undid much of what had been achieved: in the conflicts of the 1640s the castle was largely dismantled and left ruinous. It was never to be reoccupied.
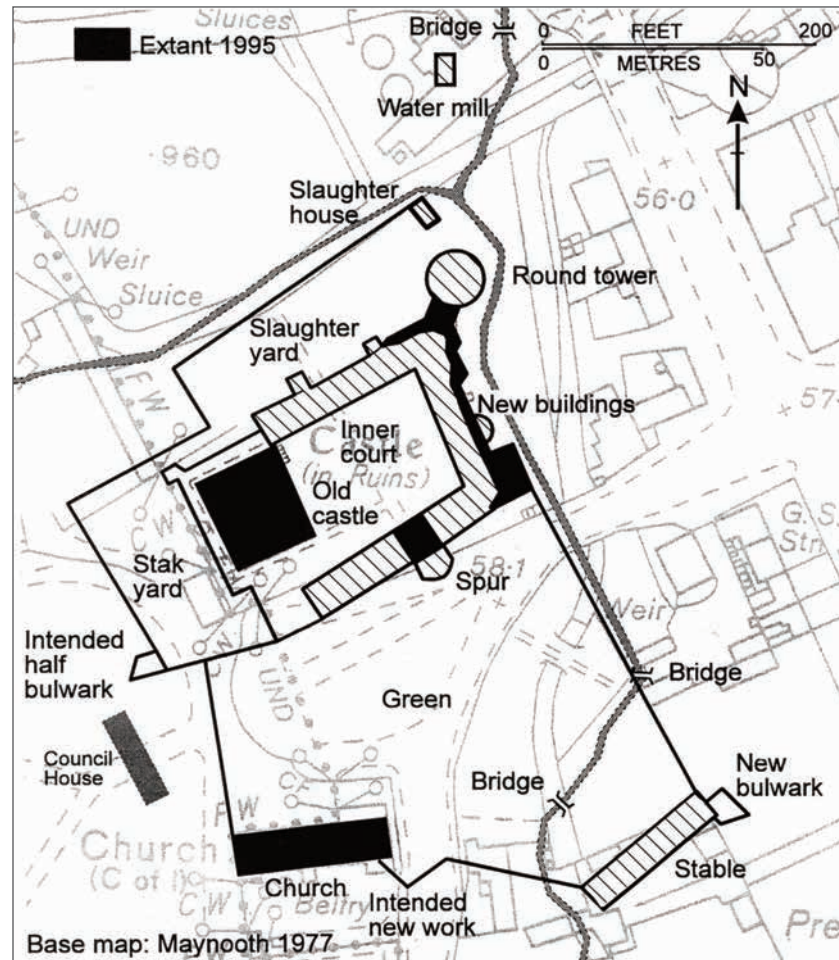
Our first really detailed picture of Maynooth as a settlement comes in the time of George FitzGerald's great-grandson, James (1744–73), who was created duke of Leinster in 1766. In the previous decade the famous cartographer John Rocque had produced a beautiful hand-coloured map accompanied by a survey of house types (Fig. 161). The latter tells us a great deal about the village as it still was (Fig. 162). It contained around 120 dwellings, two-thirds of them mere cabins. Only a few buildings had any commercial, industrial or public function.

The Protestant church remained on the site due south of the ruined castle, whilst a Roman Catholic chapel occupied a back-street position, befitting the age of the penal laws. The layout of the settlement was basically haphazard, with a mixture of buildings, gardens, streets of varying width, lanes and open spaces. But there is one sign of future developments – The Avenue leading towards Earl James's new country residence at Carton House. In the mid 1750s a new main street started to be laid out on the same alignment and westwards in the direction of the castle. The street was straight and 80 feet wide. Regular building plots were set out on both sides. Another rectilinear unit was laid out north of what was then known as Stable Lane (now Back Lane).
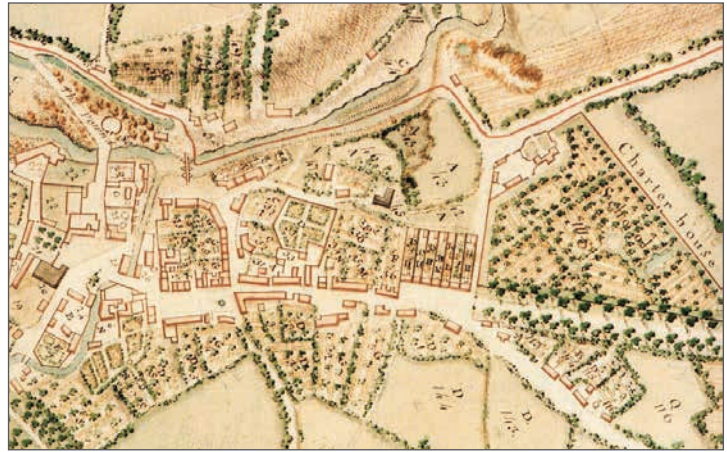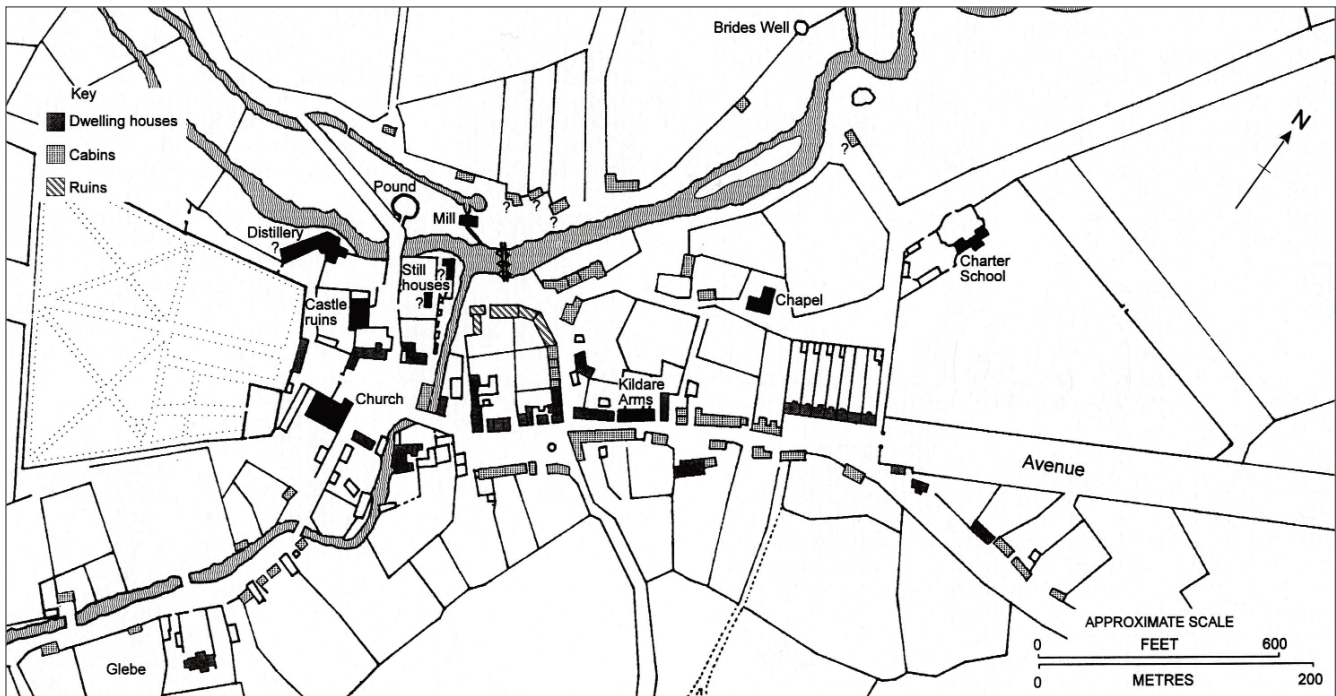

Fig. 161: *Maynooth*, map 4, 1757, by John Rocque. Cambridge, University Library, extract.

Fig. 162: *Maynooth*, fig. 2, house types in Rocque's survey, 1757.

The final outcome is best seen on another high-quality estate survey of *c.* 1821, composed of both a map (Fig. 163) and a terrier or numbered listing of the houses and their occupants (Fig. 164). Many, but not all, of the landlord's ambitions had been implemented. The main street was complete and provided

Fig. 163: *Maynooth*, map 8, *c.* 1821, by Sherrard, Brassington and Greene. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland, MS 22,004 (12), extract.

with a market house and an inn with a ballroom (now the Leinster Arms Hotel) on the south side. Between 1788 and 1799 the old road to Kilcock had been totally remodelled as a north–south axis at right angles to the main street and crossing the Lyreen tributary by means of William Bridge. This road, serving long-distance traffic, was the last major initiative of the redevelopment programme. South of the castle the old sinuous curvature of Parson Street was preserved and indeed reinforced by a boundary wall of Riverstown Lodge, built by John Stoyte the elder, a retainer of the duke, by 1780 (Fig. 4). His son constructed a large, three-storey, five-bay residence known as Stoyte House nearby, closing and enhancing the vista at the western end of the main street.

The general effect of these various initiatives was that the village of Maynooth had been transformed into a small town. As the century drew to a close the new town was ready to accept the most impressive and long-lasting of ducal initiatives – the Roman Catholic college – officially designated as the Royal College of St Patrick. Its original nucleus was the recently constructed

Stoyte House, to which other buildings were attached for teaching and student accommodation, forming three sides of a quadrangle. The foundation stone for the college was laid in 1796 and Riverstown Lodge was also acquired as part of the seminary complex. Formal entrance gates and railings curved across the space between the Protestant church and what remained of the castle. An energetic start had been made on what remains by far the biggest topographical feature of the present town, St Patrick's College and the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Fig. 164: *Maynooth*, fig. 3, house types in Sherrard, Brassington and Greene's survey, 1821.

TEST YOURSELF

1. What influence did the FitzGeralds have on Maynooth during the middle ages?
2. Why was the castle the main focus of new initiatives at Maynooth for so long?
3. What sort of settlement was inherited by James FitzGerald in 1744?
4. What sorts of step were taken to convert Maynooth from a village to a town?
5. Why do you think Maynooth was chosen in 1795 as the location for the Royal College of St Patrick?