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# Medieval Town Wall at Emmet Street, Clonmel

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## Introduction

The survey of a portion of the medieval town wall in Clonmel was undertaken on Friday February 26, 1993.<sup>1</sup> The work was commissioned by the developer, Mr Dan Casey of Ballypatrick, Clonmel, who had acquired the site from Clonmel Corporation within the previous week and had hitherto been unaware of archaeological remains on the site.<sup>2</sup>

When the site was visited on Friday February 26 all existing buildings on the east side of the proposed development, Nos. 11-17, Emmet Street, had been demolished. A Georgian townhouse (No. 10) remains standing and is to be refurbished. It appears that the demolished buildings had cellars; traces of these were extant.

Previous work in Clonmel by Mary Henry under the supervision of Breandán Ó Ríordáin had uncovered a portion of the town wall and an extra-mural ditch at Dowd's Lane (M. Henry *pers.comm.*). An excavation by John Channing at the junction of Kickham Street and Emmet Street uncovered a mural turret (Fig. 1). This turret is still visible, and by projecting the line of the town wall from this turret towards Dowd's Lane and using the property boundaries as shown on the Ordnance Survey maps it was possible to determine the approximate line of the medieval town wall.

## Extra Mural Ditch

The first phase of the present development, which necessitates the use of pile-driven foundations, is to the east of the town wall. However, since Henry's work at Dowd's Lane uncovered an extra mural ditch, a trench was excavated across the site to determine if any archaeological layers/features existed in the area of the immediate development. This trench (12.0m in length) was excavated by mechanical digger and extended from the street front to the line of the town wall. The area had been considerably disturbed by the excavation for cellars, and up to 1.5m of rubble infill was recorded below the present surface.

The top of a black organic layer was recorded c.2.0m to the east of the town wall at a depth of c.0.70m below the present surface. In order to avoid excavating into any archaeological deposits, the depth of the trial cutting was reduced; but presumably this black organic layer continues to the outer face of the town wall. This is likely to be ditch fill. Since the maximum depth of the proposed pile caps is c.0.60m below the present surface, it is unlikely that pile cap construction will disturb underlying layers on the east of the site. The piles will, however, intrude on the ditch fill.

## The Town Wall

The town wall line is reflected in the property boundaries to the rear of buildings which fronted onto Emmet Street. The wall was exposed for a length of c.19m (Fig. 2). This was done to —

- 1) record as much archaeological data as possible, and
- 2) facilitate the developer so that the wall could be avoided in subsequent development.





The line of the wall also provides a convenient base line from which the zone of archaeological interest can be determined. Any area to the west of the wall is within the medieval town and must therefore contain the remains of medieval and post medieval archaeological levels. The upper level of the wall was between 0.30-0.60m below the present ground surface and the exposed height varied from 0.70m to 1.30m. The wall was constructed from roughly coursed masonry of old red sandstone blocks. This was quarried south of the River Suir (information from Margaret Rossiter).



Figure 1. Location map of exposed section of medieval wall.

The wall was well preserved along most of the exposed face except for the northern end, where the wall face had been removed in the past and only the rubble core remained *in situ*. However, here it was possible to see an underlying gravel layer which may have been the surface on which



the wall was constructed. Traces of a plinth were uncovered towards the southern end. This may have been a construction feature. The wall was also slightly battered on the external face.

A small portion of the inner wall face was exposed to determine its width, which was c.1.20. The excavation of a small cutting (0.40m wide × 0.30m deep) on the western side of the wall exposed a yellow boulder clay deposit just below the present ground surface. This cutting was made at junction C (Fig. 2). It is likely that this is a redeposited feature and the result of —

- 1) spreading the material excavated from the ditch along the western edge of the ditch, or
- 2) levelling a pre-existing bank which could have been levelled off to facilitate the construction of a wall.

Some areas of the outer face of the town wall had traces of mortar based plaster. This suggests that part of the wall had been incorporated into the cellars (?) of later buildings, or that the render may have been a primary feature of construction. The latter is most likely to be the case, as the cellars of the recently demolished buildings were on the eastern end of the site.

It is proposed that the extant remains of the town wall off Emmet Street will be incorporated into a car park development to the rear (west) of residential buildings. Further developments on the west side of the wall will undoubtedly intrude on buried archaeological horizons.

### Footnotes

1. Exact location: O.S. 6" Sheet No. 83, Co. Tipperary;  
35.7cm from W. margin; 17.7cm from N. margin;  
Clonmel Borough; Parish of St. Mary's.
2. I wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the developer, Mr Dan Casey.

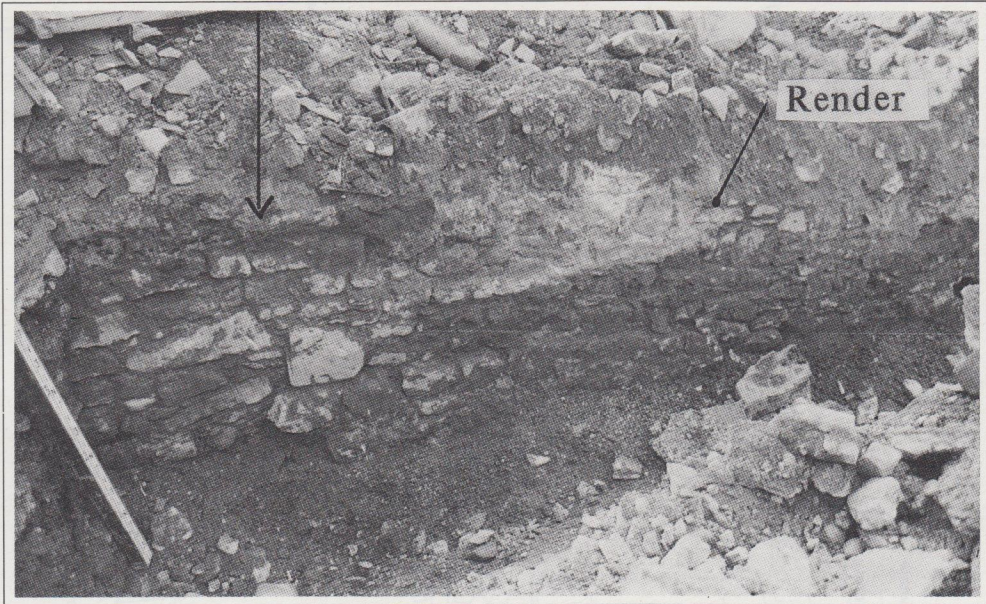
### Medieval Wall



*Location of Extra-Mural Ditch*



### Medieval Wall-Detail



**Page 196.** *General view of medieval town wall, off Emmet Street.*

**Above.** *Detail of medieval wall.*



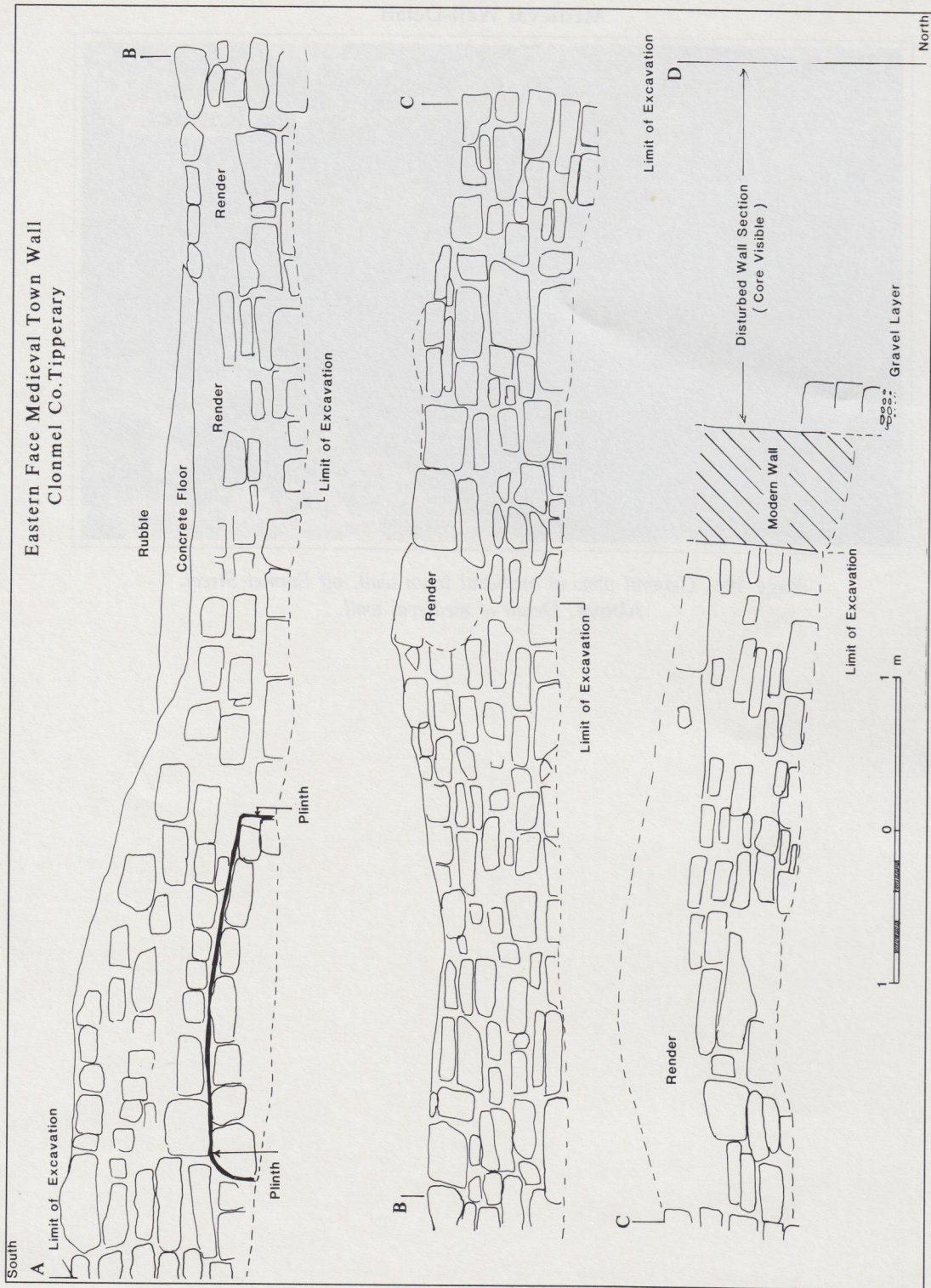


Figure 2. Elevation of exposed section of medieval wall off Emmet Street, Clonmel.