

A Late Medieval to Early Modern Building

at No. 1 Canopy Street and No. 9 Bank Place, Cashel

by Joanne Hughes & Jean Farrelly

Abstract

The remains of a late medieval to early modern building (fifteenth to early-seventeenth century in date) were recognised in 2006 following a request from the owner of no. 1 Canopy Street, Cashel, Ms. Marjorie Noonan, to inspect the rear yard boundary wall. The remains comprise the internal face of an upstanding medieval structure, incorporated into later structures of eighteenth or nineteenth century date. The later structures maintain the orientation of the late medieval wall. The remains identified here may represent part of a late medieval gatehouse at Canopy Gate, one of five gates into the walled town.

Description (Plates 1-3)

The name 'Canopy Street' (Figures 1-2) is probably derived from the Irish name 'Ceann na Faithche' ('head of the green'), and is detailed in the Cashel Corporation Records as 'Choun a Fahie' in the early-eighteenth century.¹ The name 'Bank Place' came into existence only in the early-nineteenth century when the National Bank was established.²

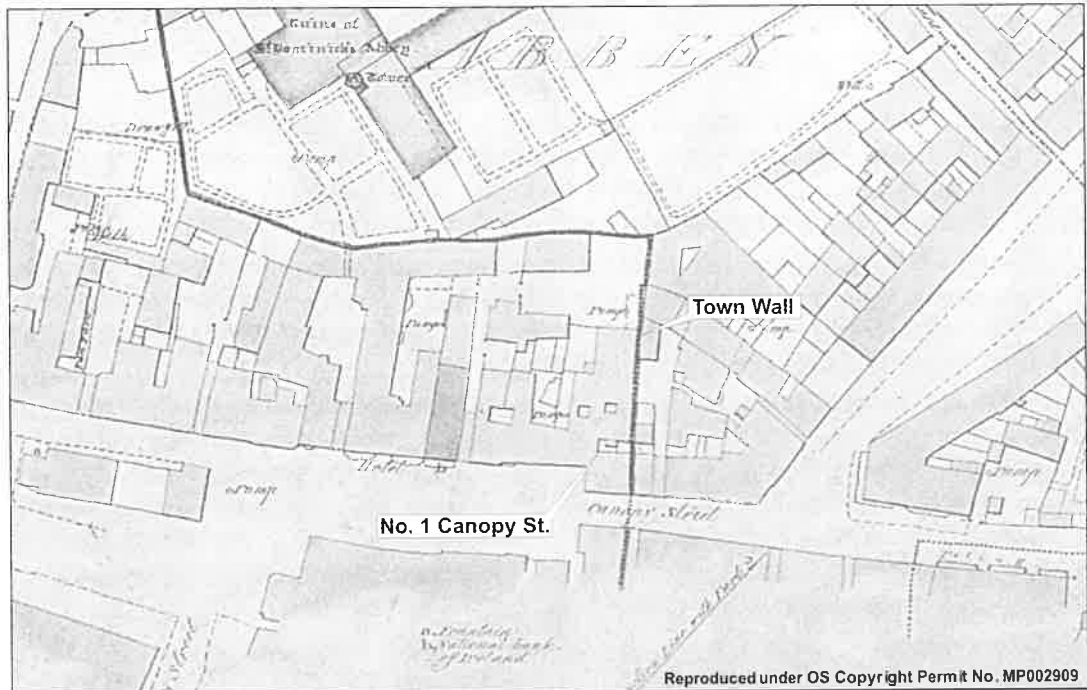


Figure 1: details from OS 1840 Map of Cashel with location of No. 1 Canopy Street



Figure 2: Details of OS 1884 map of Cashel with No. 1 Canopy Street location indicated

The medieval structure consisted of a building, at least three-storeys high, constructed of roughly coursed limestone rubble. Only a portion of the south-west wall (L 4.2m visible) survives incorporated into, but projecting from, the north-east gable end of no. 9 Bank Place, which also forms the south-west yard wall of no. 1 Canopy Street.

The medieval building extended north-east from the south-west wall, the north-east side of the surviving wall being an internal face (Figure 3). A modern one-storey extension has been built onto the rear of no. 1 Canopy Street and is built against the south-east end of the south-west wall of the earlier building (Plate 1).

Features at ground-floor level include a blocked opening, probably a window embrasure (Wth 1.33m; H 1.6m), as there appears to be a slight internal splay and it is above the existing floor level (Plate 2). It has cut limestone surrounds. The depressed arched voussoirs for this embrasure are recessed in the wall, as is the wall itself above the embrasure feature. The recess (D 0.17m X 0.19m) may have been an offset to carry a wooden floor but it would seem more likely, and there is a slight indication, that a vault may have sprung from the wall at the level of the top of the embrasure.

At first-floor level, towards the south-east end, there is a crudely blocked opening (Wth c.0.6m; H c.1.2m) which would appear to be a doorway (Plate 3). It has cut limestone surrounds, some of which are broken.

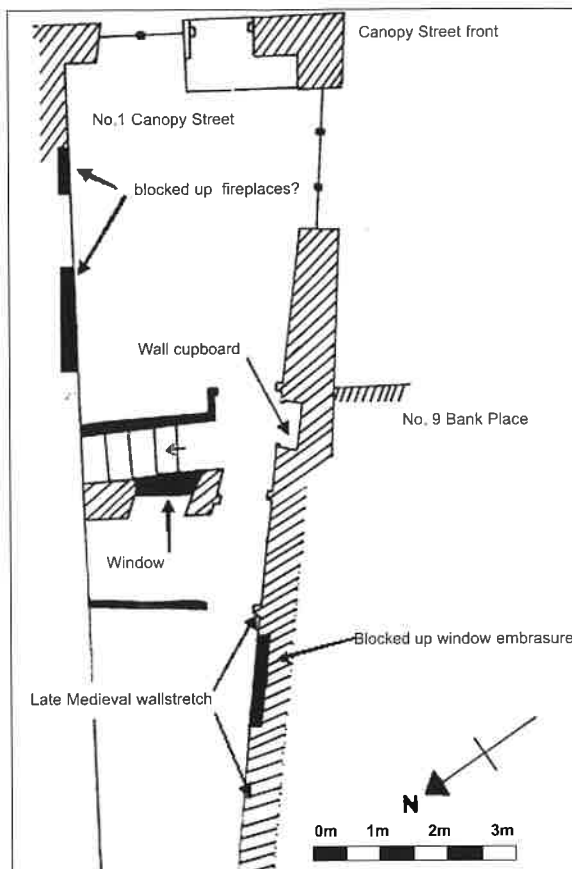


Figure 3: Ground floor survey of the building at No. 1 Canopy Street. Original scale 1:50 (J. Farrelly 2008)

Cartographic Evidence (Figures 1 & 2)

Detailed cartographic sources for the town of Cashel are scarce, with the first and second edition Ordnance Survey six-inch maps being the best known. However, the Ordnance Survey maps which show the greatest degree of detail and change at no. 1 Canopy Street are the 1840 and 1884 edition five feet to one mile (1:1056) Town Plan maps, detailed below (Figures 1 and 2).

The Town Plan map of Cashel town was surveyed in 1830 and published in 1840 and shows that the present residence at no. 1 Canopy Street was built by this time.³ This also implies that the late medieval building on that site was destroyed before this date. The south-western corner of the present residence seems to follow the line of the plot boundary, and more significantly the line of the late medieval structure. The yard space directly behind the residence is smaller than at present and an outbuilding separates it from a second open yard space to the north. The remainder of the plot is occupied by a roofed structure extending to a rear boundary wall. Although the town wall was not extant at this location in 1830, its position is clearly indicated running north-south orientated through the adjacent plot of no. 2 Canopy Street.

The third floor was carried on a wooden floor; two of this floor's corbels project from the south-west wall (Plate 3). Both are limestone corbels with margin tooling and punch-dressing. The most south-easterly is in better condition though the lower edge is broken away; the north-westerly corbel is quite broken.

Approximately 2m above the corbels there is a slight offset which appears to have a thin band of coping stones; this may be the surviving height of the original medieval wall. The wall continues above this for another 0.8m to 1m but this is probably later in date, contemporary with no. 9 Bank Place. The width of the medieval wall is uncertain as it was inaccessible from the no. 9 Canopy Street side, and wall widths are not suggested on any of the available cartographic sources. The present residence fronting on to Canopy Street has an average wall thickness of 0.6m which suggests a relatively late date for its construction, possibly in the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

The 1884 Town Plan map shows the present street front residential building at no. 1 Canopy Street unchanged from the earlier survey.⁴ However, there is considerable variation between the depictions of the rear yard between the two surveys. The small outbuilding directly behind the residence has gone, leaving a larger open yard space. A smaller roofed structure at the northern limit of the plot is evident, and survives to the present day. Also of note is that the building indicated at the plot of no. 3 Canopy Street is no longer extant, leaving the external line (north facing) of the town wall devoid of any upstanding buildings at present.

Documentary Sources

Various documentary sources detail foundation dates for many of Cashel's medieval buildings (Figure 4). These foundations can be summarised as follows: the Dominican Priory was founded in 1243; the Justiciar Robert d'Ufford built a prison in 1245; the Chantry of St Nicholas was founded in 1254; the Franciscan Abbey was founded in 1265; Hoar Abbey was founded in 1270; the town wall was under construction by 1319. The parish church of St John the Baptist was in existence by the late fifteenth century, but its foundation date is uncertain. Kearney's Castle on Main Street is fifteenth century in date, as is the Archbishop's fortified tower on the Rock of Cashel. The large domestic four-storey stone building in Wesley Square is fifteenth or sixteenth century in date.

Little by way of source material describing buildings from the late fifteenth or sixteenth century survives for Cashel. However, in 1480 the re-building of the Dominican Priory in Cashel, which had been destroyed by fire, attests to the presence of highly skilled stone masons working in the town. Around the same time other significant large buildings were being constructed in Cashel (see below), and it is not difficult to imagine the building at no. 1 Canopy Street being constructed at this time. Similarly, features such as two armorial plaques on Main Street indicate the presence of significant buildings in Cashel in the first half of the seventeenth century, but the location of these buildings within the town is unknown. One of these buildings may have been the 'Studia Generalia' or University established by the Dominican Order in Cashel following the 1644 General Chapter in Rome.⁵

Cashel's seventeenth century urban story is well documented in source material. John Davis White records that these sources '*... serve as a picture of the ruinous state in which Cashel was in at this period.*'⁶ One particularly interesting source included in White's 'Cashel of the Kings' provides a plot by plot description of Cashel in the seventeenth century; the descriptions for Canopy Street are as follows:

'[to] Capt Gilbert Rawson and Capt. Henry Brume [grantees]...-a parcell of old walls and waste walls, with a roof joining to the east gate, and a stone house slated over ye gate in Conafoy qr., 13s - a house stone walled and slated a court or backside, a garden and a shedd, 12s - large old stone walls on ye north side of Conafoy, behind ye same, another pair of old stone walls, 5s - old walls to ye street wherein is a smiths shop, 11s & 6d - old waste walls to ye street, some part thatched, 2s 6d - old stone walls with a backside, 2s 6d - a little garden joining to the town wall, to ye said garden, a stone house slated, all in Conafoy qr. aforesaid, 7s-a house to the street with a backside and garden, 7s 9d - a low new built house, with a thatched house behind it, 3s - a garden behind that which to ye town walls, and a pair of old walls, 3s a small thatched house with old walls behind it, 3s 6d - a large house slated and garden, 19s 3d - a large house and a range of buildings running to Wicked gate, a small court and walls where a house hath been, at one end

whereof, is a thatched shedd and stone walls behind the former house, 16s 6d- a stone house, shedd, backside, cabbins and garden in Conafoys quarter, 14s – a house with stone walls, old Walls with a backside a cabbins, a garden and a small thatched house, 8s 6d – old stone walls with a cabbins in them, other old walls and ruined walls, and waste plotts joining to ye garden, 5s – a house, a court and cabbins with old walls and void plotts of ground, 19s – old workes with a cabbins, a parcell of old walls and waste plotts at ye lower end joining to the bishop's garden all in Conafoys qr., . . . 1s 6d-part of 6 garden plotts, north on Conafoys gate, with 7 old cabbins thereon, all on Conafoys qr. without Conafoys gate, 1s 5d ---city of Cashell ---In trust for ye (49) officers'.⁸

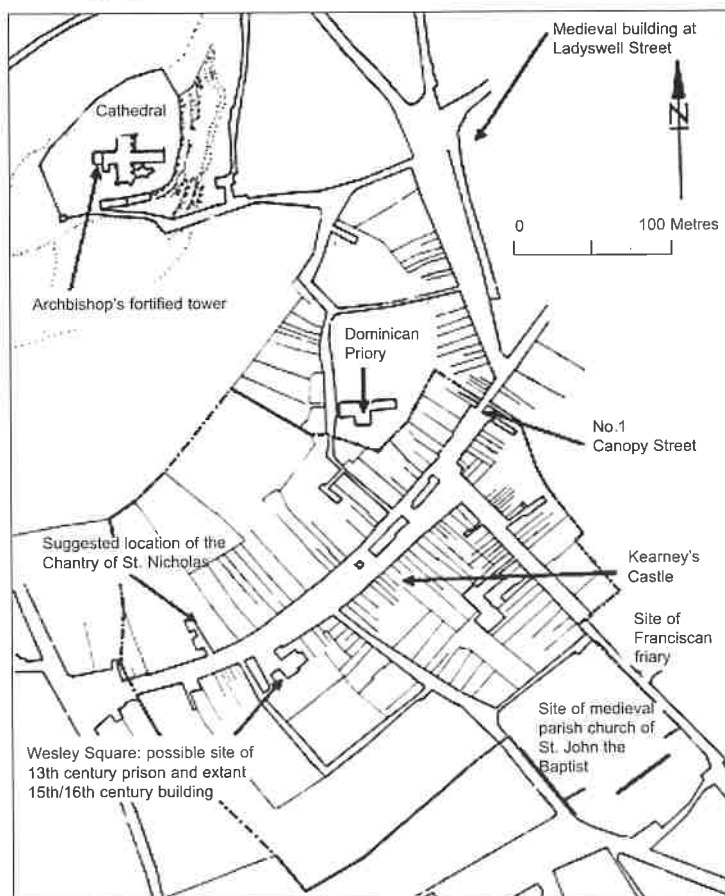


Figure 4: Location of significant medieval buildings in Cashel. Based on Bradley's (1985) street and burghage plot map of Cashel.

evidence was identified during excavations on the site of nos. 6 and 7 Bank Place approximately 25m to the west of and exactly three modern plots from no. 1 Canopy Street. Bradley suggests the width of Cashel burghage plots at 7m wide along the street front,¹⁰ inferring a total width of 28m from the town wall to the western limit of the plot of no. 6 Bank Place. It seems likely, therefore, that the first described ruinous property joining to the town gate and adjacent to the stone house over Canopy gate, whose annual rent was valued at 13 shillings, could be the late medieval building at the site of no. 1 Canopy Street.

This account refers specifically to the area of Cashel town around Canopy Street (referred to as 'Canopy Quarter'), and the description appears to describe the plots from the north side of Canopy gate towards the town centre. This is deduced using the above account in tandem with results from recent archaeological excavations at Bank Place.⁹ The first plot includes a slated stone house above Canopy Gate, adjacent to older walls and a roof (in a ruinous condition) adjoining the town wall. The second plot contains a slated and stone walled house with garden and shed; the third plot contains two sets of old walls whilst the fourth extends to the street front and contains a 'smiths shop'. The specific reference to the smiths shop is particularly significant as corroborating

In the Hearth Money Records Laffan gives another insight into the number of significant buildings extant in Cashel in the third quarter of the seventeenth century.¹¹ The premise used in recording each building was that the owners/occupiers have functioning . . . *'fire hearth or other place used for fireing and stoves within their respecitve houses and edifices.'*¹² If as suggested above the building at No. 1 Canopy Street was in ruins by the mid-seventeenth century it would not have been recorded in the Hearth Money Records. If this hypothesis is incorrect and it was a substantial functioning structure it might be assumed that in excess of two hearths were present. The recorded owner/occupiers of buildings with three or more hearths in the City of Cashel for the year 1665-6 are as follows:

	Civitas De Cashel	hearths	s.
Thomas Ld. Arch bppe, Cashel	"	11	22
Richard Lehunt	"	8	16
William Lacy	"	6	12
Corporal Adams	"	4	8
John Sall	"	4	8
Francis Logg	"	4	8
Payton Lohuns, Major	"	3	6
John Nene, junior	"	3	6
Thomas Jagger	"	6	12
William Craddocke	"	5	10



*Table 1: list of owner/occupiers of properties containing three or more hearths in Cashel in the year 1665-6.*¹³

In the same records for the next year a surprisingly enlarged list of properties in the Parish of St John the Baptist (Parochia De St Baptistgrainge) in Cashel town were recorded as having three or more hearths, perhaps suggesting some regeneration of previously derelict properties or the construction of new buildings:

Plate 1: view (looking south-east) of the medieval wall in the rear of no. 1 Canopy Street. Note the possible coping stones at roof level of the present residence which may indicate the surviving height of the original wall.

(photo J. Hughes)

	Parish of St John's in the Cittie of Cashel	hearths	s.
Edward Robinson	"	5	10
Peiton Le Hunt Macoer	"	3	6
Mary Comerford	"	3	6
Thomas Meagher, merchant	"	3	6
Connell Carew	"	5	10
Patrick Sall Fitz James	"	3	6
Richard Milsome	"	7	14
William Crodock	"	6	12
Thomas Perch Bishopp	"	11	22
Richard Lehunt	"	8	16
William Lary	"	6 an oven, & hearth	16
Thomas Willis	"	3 & a kilne	8
Corporall Edward Adams	"	5	10
John Sall	"	4, an oven, & hearth	12
Francis Legg	"	6	12
Christopher Perkins	"	3	6
John Hones	"	3	6



Plate 2: detail of blocked possible window embrasure at ground floor level.

(photo J. Hughes)

Table 2: list of owner/occupiers of properties containing three or more hearths in Cashel for the year 1666-7.¹⁴

Using the John Davis White source, Thomas records that in 1680 the house over Canopy Gate had fallen into disrepair and the owner was required to make good the damage and rebuild the town wall at this location.¹⁵ It would appear that any repairs made to the building were not long lived however, as the Corporation Records for 22nd June 1732 state that ' . . . twenty shillings a year given to Charles Minchin, Esq., not to build over Canafie Gate, but to leave it an open passage ye full breadth of the street, from Weldon's House at one side to Charles Wogan's concern on ye other.'¹⁶ So it is clear that in 1732 there

were two occupied properties at either side of Canopy Gate, suggesting that at least one building plot described above as ruinous in the seventeenth century had been rebuilt by this time.

Records of rent received for properties in Cashel documented in 1779 include a rent of 13 shillings for a 'Gatehouse' in Cashel for the year 1774, and an unknown quantity for a 'Holding near the town gate', but it is not specified which gate is referred to. It is also recorded that the sum of £1,8s.6d was received for 'several holdings formerly in hands of Mr. Wogan . . .', a tenuous link to the Wogan property mentioned in the Corporation Records in 1732.

Other late medieval buildings in Cashel

The upstanding remains of a large late fifteenth or early-sixteenth century domestic building dominate Wesley Square, just off Main Street in Cashel, and represent the best comparative local building for the late medieval structure at no. 1 Canopy Street. Recent excavations in Wesley Square identified the external walls of this building which varied between 1.45m and 2m wide and survived up to 3 courses deep.¹⁸ Evidence for two rectangular ground floor rooms were exposed; these varied between 5m by 6.75m and 3.5m by 7m internally.

The most complete late medieval building in Cashel is the six storey towerhouse on the south-east side of Main Street, known locally as Kearney's Castle. The Urban Archaeological Survey records the castle's average internal dimensions at 5.15m by 4.85m.¹⁹ A first floor window embrasure in the north-east wall of the castle measures 1.3m wide and 1.16m high and contained a single light window 1m high and 0.27m wide.

The stone tower house abutting the west gable of the Cathedral on the Rock of Cashel is well documented as a fortified Archbishop's residence and is fifteenth century in date. Gleeson records the external dimensions of the tower as "43 feet by 28 feet; it is five storeys high".²⁰

Recent archaeological excavations at Bank Place and Ladyswell Street, Cashel

Archaeological excavations were undertaken at nos 6 and 7 Bank Place and on a larger site to the rear spanning the width of nos 6 to 9 Bank Place.²¹ The larger site fronted on to the Dominican Abbey and abutted the site of the town wall to the north-west of Canopy Street. Some of the features identified on this excavation are clearly contemporary with the late medieval wall at no. 1 Canopy Street, but

Plate 2: detail of first floor level features including blocked up doorway and the two corbels which carried the third floor.
(photo J. Hughes)



no substantial wall foundations representing a late medieval stone building were identified.

Medieval architectural fragments (including part of a chamfered window) were identified in the boundary wall between nos. 8 and 9 Bank Place during site inspections prior to recent development taking place.²² An archaeological excavation was conducted at no. 8 Bank Place in late 2008.²³ No other evidence for a substantial late medieval building or foundation trenches indicating robbed out walls were identified during the excavation. This suggests that the late medieval building at no. 1 Canopy Street did not extend southwest beyond the plot of no. 9 Bank Place, and also that part of the demolished building may have been incorporated into the later post-medieval boundary walls.

The remains of a medieval stone building were identified c. 250m north of the site of Canopy Street's town gate, outside the town wall, at Ladyswell Street.²⁴ Two walls forming a right angle were identified and an internal floor surface was revealed. A portion of a fourteenth to fifteenth century medieval strap handle (provisionally identified as Cashel Type Ware), animal bones and six roof nails were recovered from a sealed context between the floor level and later structural collapse.

Discussion

The entire property at no. 1 Canopy Street is trapezoidal in plan; its long axis is c.15m, and it narrows considerably from c.5m at the street front to just over c.2.5m at its north-western limit. The boundary between nos. 1 and 2 Canopy Street comprises a modern 0.2m wide concrete block wall, with no earlier inclusions evident. Part of the south-west wall forming the back yard of no. 1 Canopy Street clearly represents the internal face of a late medieval or early modern building that extended north-east towards the town wall. The northern and southern limits of the building are uncertain, and it remains unclear as to exactly how far the building extended towards the street front. The presence of a blocked up doorway at first floor level of the late medieval wall indicates that the building also extended to the south-west, into the site of the present building at no. 9 Bank Place. The first floor of the medieval building therefore straddles at least two modern property divisions, but the ground floor would appear to maintain the western line of the long medieval plot boundary.

The size of the building represented by the late medieval wall at no. 1 Canopy Street is debatable. The fact that at least three storeys survive suggests a substantial building, especially considering that the large contemporary example in Wesley Square is four storeys high. The internal layout is not evident, but again comparisons with other late medieval buildings in Cashel suggests that anything between one and three rooms might have existed at ground-floor level. The size of the blocked window embrasure at ground floor level (1.6m by 1.33m) parallels that of the first floor embrasure in Kearney's castle (1.3m by 1.16m), and it might be expected that a single light window would have occurred at this level. The surviving portion of medieval wall at no. 1 Canopy Street is 4.2m long (and incomplete) but it is reasonable to assume that the late medieval building was at minimum 5m long. The internal dimensions of rooms in contemporary buildings in Cashel vary considerably, from 3.5m by 7m at Wesley Square to an average of 5.5m by 4.85m in Kearney's Castle. The width of the upstanding medieval wall is unknown, but based on the Wesley Square example might be estimated at between 1.45m and 2m. The distance from the newly identified medieval wall to the suggested line of the town wall on the 1840 Town

Plan is little more than 9m. Taking the minimum room width (3.5m) and adding the minimum width of an external wall (1.45m) from Wesley Square as an example and applying this detail to the Canopy Street wall would result in a building which extends 4.95m eastwards towards, and less than 4m from the suggested line of the town wall on the 1840 OS map. Bradley suggests that most of the medieval gate houses in Ireland would have been rectangular in plan.²⁵ It seems not unreasonable therefore, to suggest that the late medieval building at no. 1 Canopy street backed onto the town wall and may represent a gatehouse at Canopy gate.

Conclusions

The present building fronting on to no. 1 Canopy Street is probably eighteenth or nineteenth century in date. It incorporates part of a medieval plot boundary and the internal face of a late fifteenth to seventeenth century structure at its western limit. The eighteenth-century documentary evidence shows that both the town wall and buildings at either side of Canopy Street were extant in 1732, but it is unclear whether or not these buildings include the residence at no. 1 Canopy Street in its present form.

Cartographic sources for Cashel before the nineteenth century are rare, but by superimposing the detail from the documentary sources onto Bradley's suggested medieval street and burgage plot layout, a useful conjectural plan of the town for this period would result. Similarly, a synthesis of results from all archaeological excavations in the town should provide particularly interesting and supporting evidence for the documentary evidence.

It seems likely that many of the apparently eighteenth or nineteenth century buildings in Cashel could hide a much earlier core, having been expanded or contracted as the need arose. It would not be surprising therefore to find that much more of Cashel's medieval architecture survives undocumented behind its street façades.

Acknowledgments.

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