



Preston's Gate, c1840 by Du Noyen (© Royal Irish Academy)

## Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan for Athy, Co Kildare

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to Project

Athy's Medieval Heritage and Walled Town status are an under-explored and under-exploited asset for the town. Though the Town Walls are no longer extant, their former presence is of enormous significance to the story of Athy's development from river crossing to major fording point to Medieval market town. That they are not immediately apparent offers a great opportunity to create an Interpretation Plan that makes the hunt for, and discovery of, their route, an engaging, educational, accessible and stimulating experience.

**The purpose of this project is to provide a set of suitable archaeological and conservation policies for the protection of the Town Walls, and to present an innovative plan for the interpretation of both the walls and the Medieval town as a whole.** In commissioning this project, the client is aware of the lack of obvious extant archaeology. A key component of the project outputs will be the interpretation recommendations specific to Athy, developed with the input of the steering committee and this should be reflected in the response to the brief and the personnel selected to address the project.

The aim of the project is to provide an understanding of Athy's Town Walls and their route and role in the medieval landscape; an assessment of why the town walls are significant, and how they are vulnerable or sensitive to change; and to provide material for a comprehensive interpretation and education plan related to the walls and their setting.

The findings of this Plan shall be used to:

- improve public awareness of, knowledge of and pride in the Town Walls of Athy and their Medieval significance;
- assess the location, extent and any possible hidden remains of the Town Walls;
- provide advice on day to day and long-term management of the route and any visible or buried remains of the Town Walls;
- give clear guiding principles against which any new development proposals or new ways of using the Town Walls can be evaluated;
- give a detailed plan for the preparation of initiatives for access, interpretation and education related to the Town Walls and their setting.

A steering group comprising representatives South Kildare Medieval Project, Athy Heritage Centre Museum Board, Liam Mannix from Irish Walled Towns Network and Bridget Loughlin, County Kildare Heritage Officer guided the development of the project. Stakeholders including Athy Tidy Towns, Regeneration Committee, members of Kildare County Council and organisations representing the interests of the waterways and tourism

were also consulted. Day-to-day contact was with the Heritage Officer [at the Project Inception Meeting this responsibility was delegated to Margaret Walsh of Athy Heritage Centre and Museum]. The Working Group met, as necessary, to agree the work programme and to review the progress of the project.

*Edited extract from the Project Brief, July 2016*

## 1.2 Site Location and Map

Athy (Irish: *Baile Átha Í*, meaning "town of the ford of Ae") is a market town at the meeting of the River Barrow and the Grand Canal in south-west County Kildare, Ireland (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2 below), 72 kilometres southwest of Dublin, centred on coordinates 52.99197°N 6.98698°W (Irish Grid Reference S680939). A population of 10,490 (2011 Census preliminary results) then ranked it the 6th largest town in Kildare and the 50th largest in the Republic of Ireland. From the first official records in 1813 (population 3,192) until 1891 (population 4,886) and again in 1926–46 and 1951–61 Athy was the largest town in Kildare.



**Fig 1.1** Location of Athy



**Fig 1.2** Athy Town (© Google Maps)

## 1.3 Statutory Context and Listings

### 1.3.1 Statutory circumstances and the appropriate legislative

An important component in understanding the context of Athy's Town Wall is its statutory circumstances and the appropriate legislative, planning and development considerations of potential changes to it, its setting and interpretation. As Town Wall's are usually regarded as archaeological monuments in the first instance and architectural features in the second, national archaeological legislation is the primary piece of law that safeguards them. Planning legislation is the second layer of protection afforded to Town Walls. Kildare County Council, as the Local Authority, is responsible for the enforcement of planning law and orderly development. To properly administer heritage legislation, particularly for the built heritage, the Local Authority maintains a Recorded of Protected Structures (RPS) and has established an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) for Athy, both of which are included in the current development plan (See *Athy Development Plan 2012-2018*, Chapter 12 "Architectural and Archaeological Heritage", pp141-174, attached as [Appendix 1](#)).

All archaeological legislation in the State is enacted under the offices of the relevant Minister with responsibility, with the advice of the National Monuments Service (NMS). The current ministerial portfolio under which the NMS operates is the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The National Museum of Ireland (NMI) is a prescribed state body that is also consulted on archaeological matters. The two primary pieces of legislation relevant to the Plan for the Athy Town Wall and the two National Policy documents by which Town Walls are regarded, are:

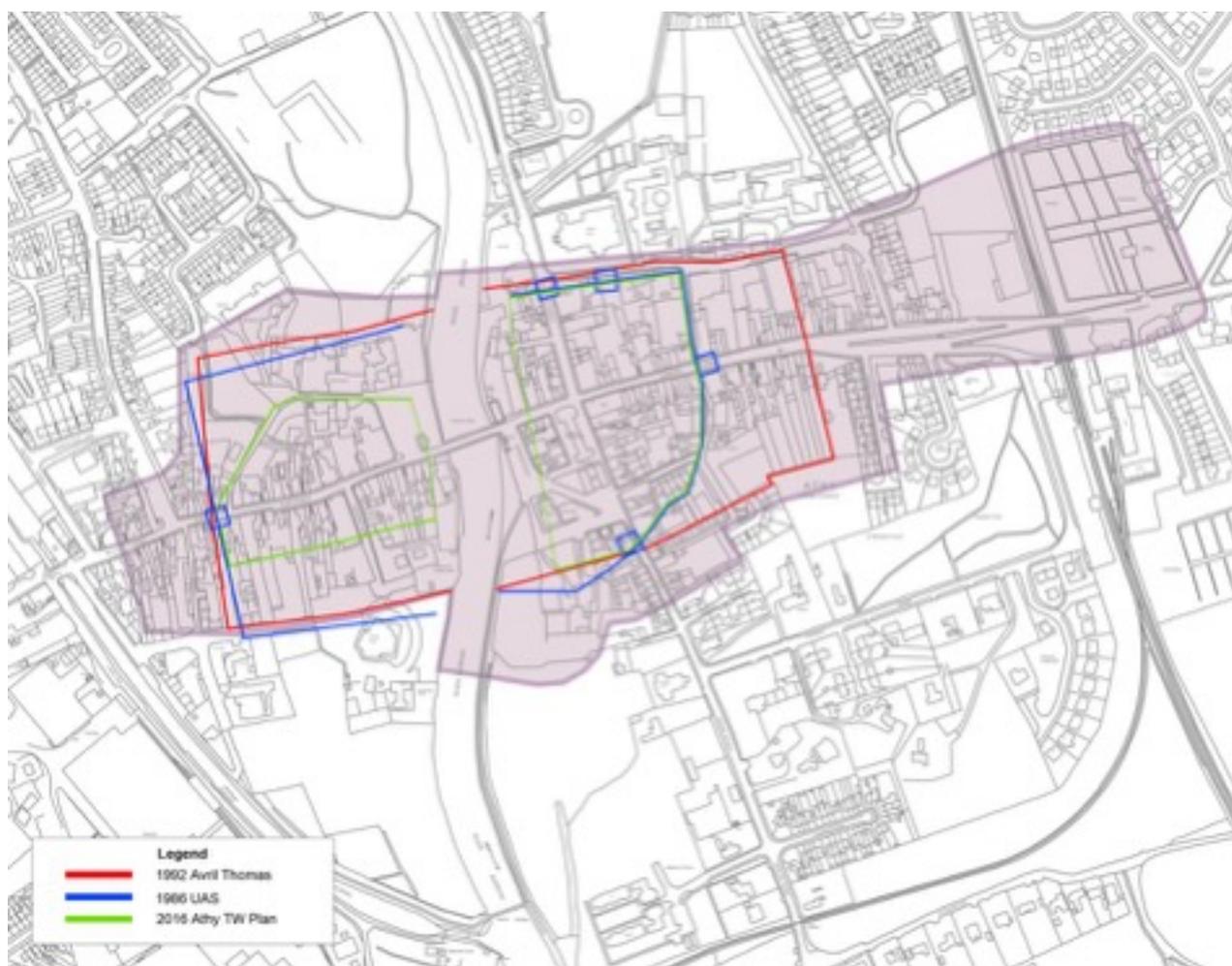
- National Monument Acts 1930 to 2014
- Planning and Development Act 2000
- Framework & Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage 1999
- National Policy on Town Defences 2008

### 1.3.2 Record of Monuments & Places

The primary listing of archaeologically significant places in Ireland is the Record of Monuments & Places (RMP), established under Section 12 of the National Monument (Amendment) Act 1994. This is a listing of monuments and places of archaeological interest in the State, on a county by county basis, with accompanying maps. Listing in the RMP provides legal protection to the monuments. Table 12.1 in the *Athy Development Plan 2012-2018* lists the eleven Recorded Monuments and Places within the Athy electoral area; including the core of the Historic Town (KD035022) in which the Town Wall is situated. Works to a Recorded Monument or within the Zone of Archaeological Potential (see section 1.3.3 following) associated with it, require two months notification to the NMS; to seek permission for the works. The policy of the NMS regarding works to archaeological monuments can be found in the *Framework & Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* document.

### 1.3.3 Zone of Archaeological Potential

As a tool to support the safeguarding of archaeology during the planning process in all historic towns, a delineating area known as a Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) was created based on the results of the Urban Archaeology Survey undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s. Works within the ZAP require notification to the NMS and planning applications within it are also referred to them. Map 12.1 in the *Athy Development Plan 2012-2018* shows the extent of the ZAP for Athy town. Figure 1.3 (below) overlays the suspected Town Wall location showing that the ZAP encompasses the suspected extents of the Town Wall together with a buffer zone beyond to the east, around the medieval St. Michael's Church. All investigation/research works on the Town Wall will therefore require notification to the NMS and permission. Any interpretation actions that involve ground breaking will also require notification. Given that Town Walls are regarded as National Monuments, Ministerial Consent may be required for any relevant works or actions arising from this Plan.



**Fig 1.3** Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) with overlaid suspected location of Town Wall

### 1.3.4 Town Walls as National Monuments

The Town Defences of all Walled Towns are considered to be National Monuments under amendments to the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014. This level of legal protection requires Consent, under Section 14 of the Act, from the Minister responsible. The relevant policy regarding how works to the Town Wall and its curtilage, and any resulting physical and visual impacts, can be found in the *National Policy on Town Defences* document. The policy considers that not only is the upstanding wall fabric important, but that equal weighting is given to any subsurface remains and the potential subsurface line of a town wall. Therefore, a good interaction with the NMS from early-on in the process, to enact any new interventions or interpretations developed in this Plan, would be a good policy.

### 1.3.5 Record of Protected Structures (RPS) & Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA)

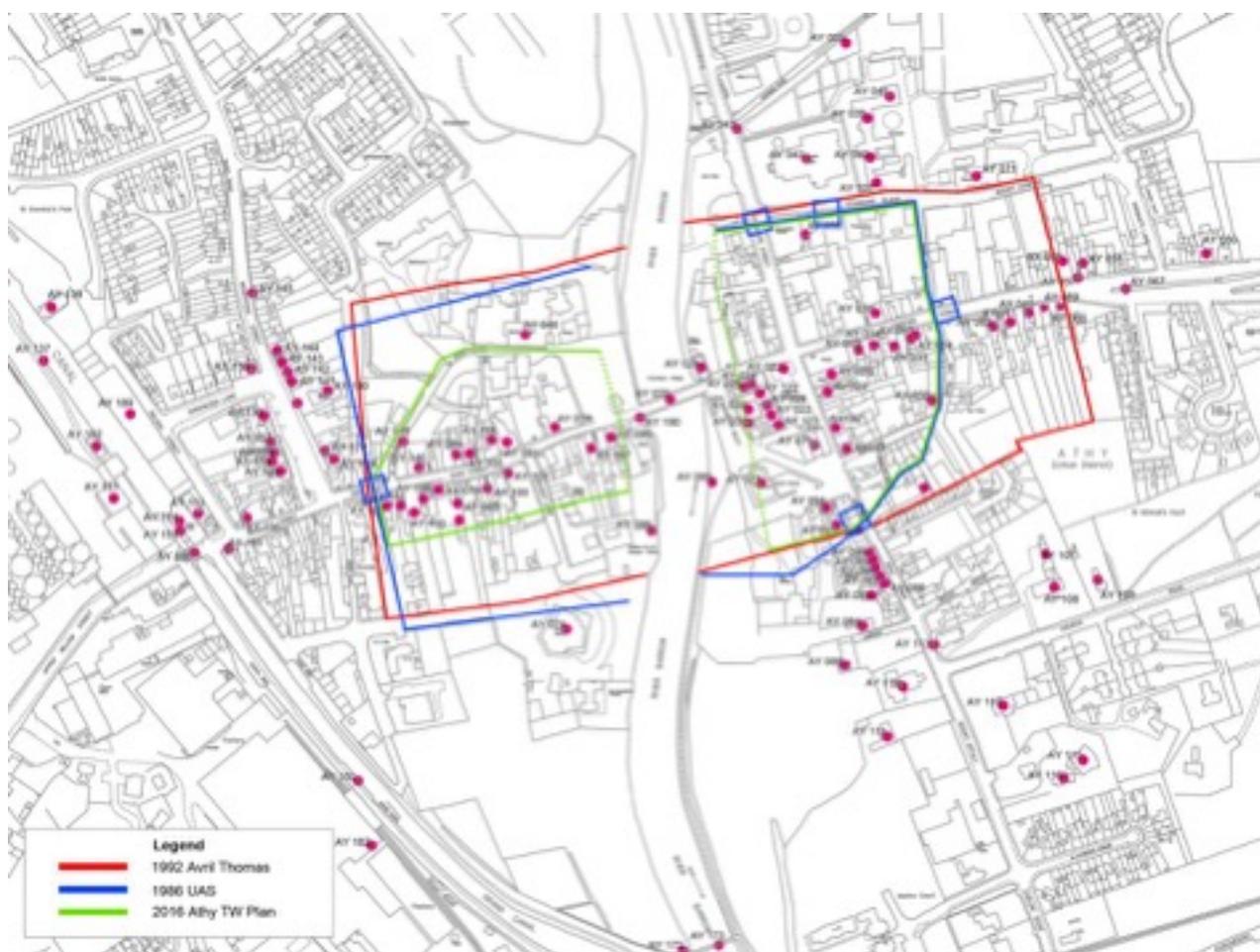
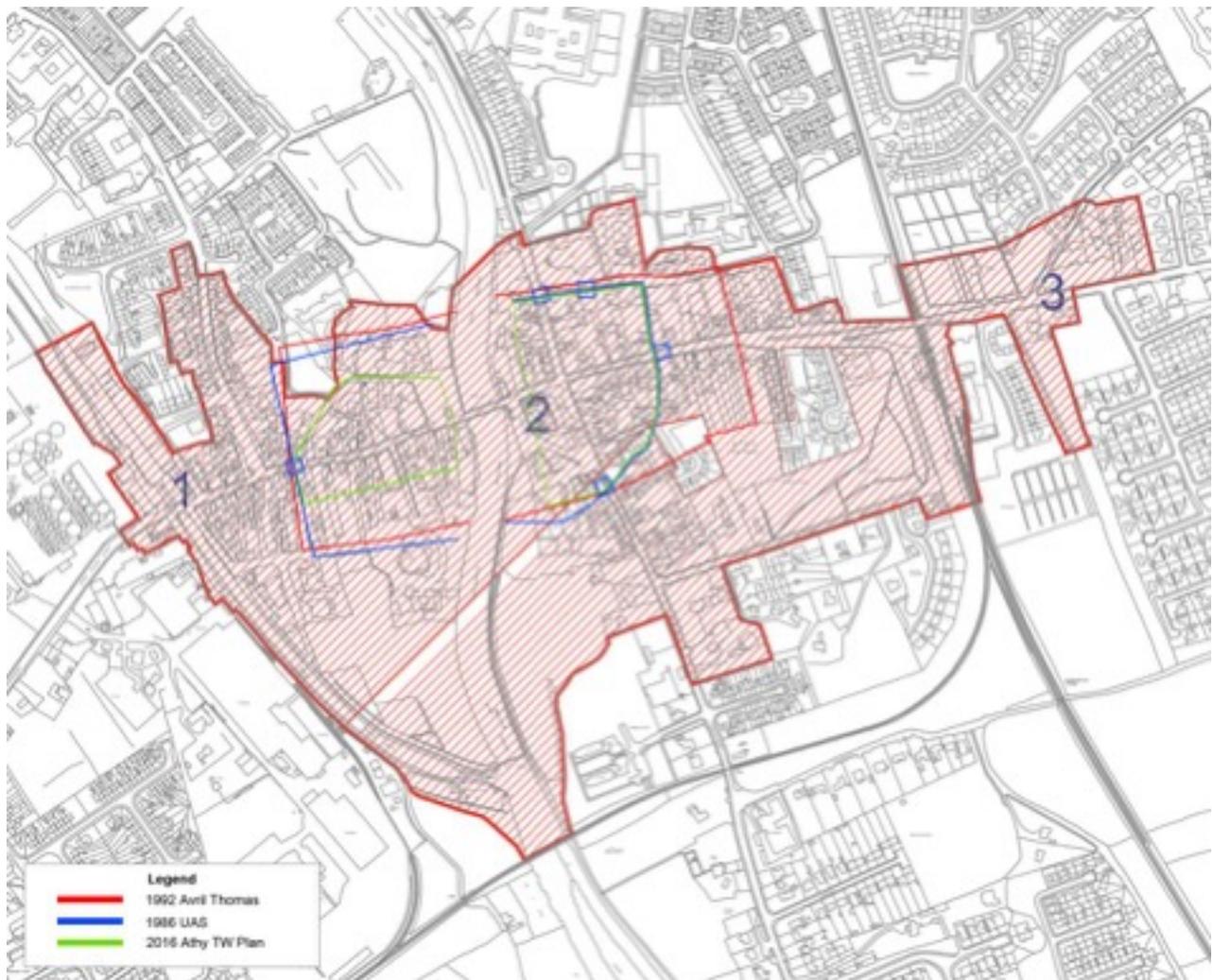


Fig 1.4 Recorded Protected Structures (RPS) with overlaid suspected location of Town Wall

The *Planning and Development Act 2000* sets out the requirements for a Record of Protected Structure (RPS) and for Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) by Local Authorities. There are 156 Protected Structures in Athy (see Figure 1.4 on previous page), selected under various criteria of their special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. If portions of the Town Walls were upstanding, they would be mapped and listed in the RPS. Changes to Protected Structures require Planning Permission of a Section 57 Declaration from the Local Authority of what works can be done, without requiring planning.



**Fig 1.5** Archaeological Conservation Area (ACA) with overlaid suspected location of Town Wall  
(1 = Grand Canal Area; 2 = Emily Square Area; 3 = Model Farm School Area)

The ACA is an area that has characteristic architectural, historic or other significances, the appearance and character of which are worthy of enhancing and protecting. An ACA can vary in size from a small cluster of similar-use buildings to an entire urban core.

The *Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018*, prescribed the current RPS and defined an ACA that includes all of the potential medieval walled area as shown in Figure 1.5 (previous page). Development and changes within the ACA must be appropriately sited and designed, so as not to be detrimental to the character of the buildings and townscape within it. Material changes to the exterior character of buildings or structures within the ACA will require planning permission. The Policies and Actions for this Plan have been prepared with cognisance of these requirements.

### 1.3.6 Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018

Along with establishing the requirement for an RPS and an ACA, the *Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018* takes cognisance of the importance of the archaeological resource, by detailing the RMP entries and incorporating the ZAP into its development constraint mapping. Importantly, it sets out various proactive archaeological and architectural objectives (*Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018*, Section 12.11, p.149), two of which are relevant to the enhanced amenity of the Town Walls and the sponsors of this Plan:

**AHO6:** To encourage, where practicable, the provision of public access to sites identified on the Record of Monuments and Places under the direct ownership or control of the Local Authority and the State.

**AHO8:** To support the Athy Heritage Centre and Museum as an important tourism and heritage resource for the town. To support its board of directors in progressing related programmes and proposals.

Although Athy Town Council is now gone, the *Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018*, remains an active policy document of the Local Authority in charge – Kildare County Council, until the forthcoming *Athy Local Area Plan* (LAP) is prepared. The Policies and Actions for this Plan have been prepared with cognisance to the forthcoming LAP.

## 1.4 Methodology

### 1.4.1 Aims and approach

The aim of the Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan for Athy, Co Kildare is to develop an understanding of the town's Town Wall and the influence it had on the medieval landscape into which they were set and the townscape development they influenced. Using an archaeological and historical analysis approach, the intent has been to provide an understanding of the Town Walls, despite a surface lack of them, to prepare a statement on their significance and the vulnerabilities that this important heritage resource faces.

From this archaeological and historical understanding of what currently is a non-tangible Town Wall, the comprehensive future policies for interpretational and educational opportunities in this Plan have been developed.

The approach adopted in creating the Plan has been one of international and national best practice. The Plan strives to present a practical understanding and interpretation; to ensure that the Town Wall is to the forefront in further developing the town's heritage potential, by enhancing, protecting and managing it for current and future generations.

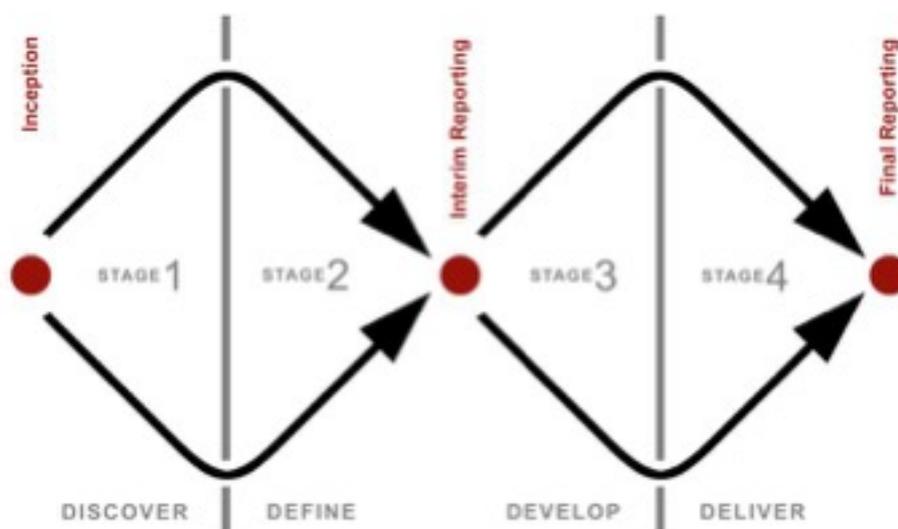
The standards of conservation understanding, policy and management applied in the creation of this Plan have come from the influence of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) *Venice Charter 1964* and the *Burra Charter 2013* and the guidance of James Semple Kerr's seminal work *The Conservation Plan* (2013, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition), on how to appropriately direct and manage the use of heritage resources.

#### 1.4.2 Outline Methodology

There has probably been settlement on the fording point of the River Barrow at Athy since before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans here in the thirteenth century. The Urban Archaeological Survey for County Kildare (1986) notes that in 1431, Athy was described as the "greatest fortress and key of the countryside". Today, the medieval town of Athy and its Town Walls are hidden, awaiting discovery. No physically tangible remains of the Town Walls survive above ground, nor is the true development and layout of the medieval town fully understood. However, the Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan for Athy presents an excellent opportunity to peel-away the layers of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century buildings, streets and lanes on both sides of the Barrow and look for the elusive Town Wall. Archaeologically-driven inspection and research, makes it possible to see the medieval within the modern town.

A good walkover of the heritage town of Athy along the suspected lines of the Town Wall, and the town in general, has, coupled with research into the historical background of the town and the locations of suspected wall, allowed for a greater understanding the Town Wall and its route. From that point, the significance of Athy's Town Wall, the vulnerabilities it faces and more importantly the opportunities it presents, have been assessed. Equipped with this baseline information, policies for safeguarding this important heritage resource for Athy have be developed with all of the stakeholders.

Imaginative interpretation of the information presents the greatest opportunity to maximise the tangibility of Athy's Town Wall. From here, the accessibility to this heritage resource in terms of awareness, educational opportunities and potential economic spin-off for Athy can be developed. The interpretative design team has worked closely with the archaeological consultant to develop a series of proposals that will interpret and present the walls to a wide audience using a range of appropriate media, ranging from the simple graphic presentation to interactive fly-through simulations.



**Fig 1.6** The Design Council (UK) “Double Diamond” design process model

All JANVS | VIDAR projects are managed using the “Double Diamond” design process model developed by the Design Council (see Fig 1.6 above). This model divides any design project into four key stages: *Discover*, *Define*, *Develop*, *Deliver* and maps the divergent and convergent stages of the design process, reflecting the different modes of thinking that designers use, through each stage. The *Discover* phase (Project Stage 1) marks the start of the project. It begins with the exploration of an initial idea, inspiration or proposition (the client brief) and is informed by a thorough evaluation of client and user needs and expectations. The *Define* phase (Project Stage 2) requires a robust creative response to align these needs and expectations to the necessary interpretative and commercial objectives. Following a major presentation to, and evaluation by, the client and stakeholders, during the *Develop* phase (Project Stage 3) design-led solutions are developed, iterated and tested and the implementation and management of the project is planned in anticipation of the *Delivery* phase (Project Stage 4) of final reporting.

#### 1.4.3 Interpretative Design Methodology

The design and development of visitor *experiences* at attractions, sites and destinations is arguably the most important role taken by an interpretation designer. A successful heritage attraction must appeal to and attract a wide and inclusive visitor demographic yet at the same time be authentic, engaging, fun, and wholly sympathetic to the theme and location of the attraction. Complex educational objectives often sit alongside tough commercial targets. To find an effective design solution, the JANVS | VIDAR team challenges the familiar and overly simplified approach to heritage centre design and interpretative planning by addressing the complex relationship between four sets of variables:

- the **personal characteristics** of the visitor
- their **prior knowledge** of the subject
- their **perception** of the subject in relation to their own experiences
- the **physical and cultural attributes** of the site or facility.

The purpose of the Interpretative Plan - the key deliverable of the design process - is to create a clear road-map for 'building' the visitor experience, to ensure an *effective, enjoyable* and *consistent* communication of the message to the widest possible audience. These four sets of variables are at the forefront of our thought process during each of the seven steps to creating an effective Interpretation Plan:

- **Step 1** identify and position the brand; define the brand objectives
- **Step 2** deconstruct and define the 'Big Idea'
- **Step 3** expand the narrative themes, identify the 'personal' stories
- **Step 4** audit and evaluate the existing and proposed experiences
- **Step 5** distil the intended 'take home' experiences, messages and 'call to action'
- **Step 6** content development and identification of media mix
- **Step 7** evaluate, test and refine the interpretative design

### **Step 1 Identify and position the brand**

This is the most important step. It determines what it is that makes your site or attraction unique or distinctive; its character and experience. Brand positioning is the conceptual place you want to 'own' in the mind of your target consumer; the benefits you want them to think of when they think of your brand. An effective brand positioning strategy will maximise customer relevancy and competitive distinctiveness by maximising brand value. Fáilte Ireland identifies nine questions that should be asked when assessing interpretative positioning:

- What is your unique character or characteristic?
- What engaging, spontaneous and fun experiences bring this character and characteristics to life for visitors?
- How does your site or destination relate to other sites, destinations or experiences in the area?
- What connections with other sites or destinations add strength to the overall interpretative experience of the area for visitors?
- What opportunities are there for collaboration with others to provide a better visitor experience with wider benefit for all?
- Who are your target consumer(s) and what are their needs and expectations from their visit?
- What is the desired response you would like from this target visitor?
- How can you match your unique characteristics with these visitor needs?
- What phrase encapsulates your promise to your visitors for their experience of your site or destination?

Before Freeman Tilden's (1883-1980) principles of heritage interpretation had really taken off as a design and management function - by heritage bodies, tourism organisations, academic institutions, etc - exhibition designers would ask five simple questions - *Who? What? Why? Where? When?* - the answers to which would be all that was needed to set the client and designer on their creative journey:

- **Who** is this for?
- **What** do you want to give them?
- **Why** are you doing this?
- **Where** will you do it?
- **When** will you do it?

These five questions may not appear to be as 'scientific' and 'analytical' as more recent brand positioning models but they do still cover all bases and, for clients that are new to the heritage interpretation sector, can provide a very useful 'side door' to the same destination. In practice, both sets of questions are used!

### Step 2 The 'Big Idea'

All successful visitor experiences have a 'Big Idea' - it is the strong message that pushes the brand boundary and resonates with the visitors. It is not a question but a statement or a call to action.

The Big Idea will:

- creates an emotional connection with the public
- be distinct and re-imagine how the visitor thinks, acts or feels
- have resonance and meaning; it will have value as a topic for discussion
- pierce through any cultural and ethnical borders, connecting with people at a deeper level
- be universal and be capable of being communicated across many media platforms

Probably one of the most ambitious Big Ideas of all time was the manifesto of LIFE Magazine: "To see life; to see the world; to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things – machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see and to take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed."

### Step 3 Expand the narrative themes; identify the 'personal' stories

These flow directly from the Big Idea. They represent the skeleton around which the proposition - the visitor experience - will be developed. To really develop these, we need to look at Step 2 The Big Idea. It is only when the Big Idea has been identified and distilled that the narrative themes and personal stories can be developed. People engage with people ... and people like 'people stories' ... so themes that are people-centred will have greater appeal than more abstract themes.

One of the most important functions of this Step 3 is the identification of *connections* between themes, concepts, artefacts, events and places. The development of a network of connections can help visitors to navigate their own path through often-complex narratives.

#### **Step 4 Audit and evaluate the existing and proposed experiences**

For existing attractions we must ensure that the existing visitor mass is not alienated and that these visitors become ambassadors for the new proposition. The new proposition needs to be incorporated seamlessly into the existing interpretative brand where displays and exhibitions can be re-designed, re-newed or re-versioned (probably with minimal effort and at quite modest cost) to become a very significant component of the larger interpretative plan. We should not ignore what has gone before ... we need to evaluate what worked, what didn't work and what can be improved. Although this Step 4 is half-way through the Stage 2 Design Phase, it is vital that the Stage 1 Front-End Evaluation extends to undertake an evaluation of the existing and proposed experiences and that the results are fed back into the process to inform the subsequent Steps 5-6.

#### **Step 5 Distil the intended 'take home' experiences, messages and 'call to action'**

The most exciting ambition for an interpretative designer is to be able to change public opinion, perceptions or actions. JANVS | VIDAR has been involved with over 300 interpretative projects over the past 30 years. The members of the wider interpretative design team proposed for this project has been involved with over 1000 projects in over 30 countries. Each of these projects had one chance to 'get it right' and become a beacon for influencing change. To achieve this, we take little steps to achieving big schemes. For example, a child taking home a small bag of seeds from, say, a rural life museum may, through that experience, someday be inspired to be part of the greatest step forward for food production on a global scale!

#### **Step 6 Content development and identification of media mix**

Our Stage 1 Front-End work will have identified the key audience segments that the proposition will target and will have affirmed the needs and expectations of those audience segments. Working out from the Big Idea and the Themes & Stories of Steps 2 and 3 (above) we will develop the content. This content will remain true to the values established in our Stage 1 Front-End work and in Stage 2 Step 1 Brand Positioning.

The audience experience of any proposition is a journey that brings the visitor in contact with several 'touch-points' - the first (often online) exposure, the physical journey to the site, the arrival point, the site journey, the exit or departure point, the journey home and their post-visit life having had a changing and enlightening experience. The use and re-use of interpretative content will be considered at each of these 'touch-points' as the visitor experience will be impacted by the themes and narratives that are told at each stage. The messages should be authentic, consistent with each other, and reiterate and reinforce the 'Big Idea'.

As with the creation of content, the use of interpretative media will be considered at all 'touch-points'. As a team, we have a wealth of experience of designing and maintaining a diverse range of media. VIDAR Media (the parent company of JANVS | VIDAR) has experience of design and production of virtually every example of media from simple graphics to complex 3D multi-image time-based installations. Whenever we design a media matrix, we pay particular attention to the on-going maintenance requirements and costs so that the selected media is appropriate to the client's future management plans, practical capabilities and financial commitment.

### **Step 7 Evaluate, test and refine the interpretative design**

Regular evaluation and testing is an integral component of the design process. It ensures that the interpretative plan achieves its objectives and is authentic, meaningful, relevant and entertaining for the visitors. Each iteration of the interpretative design components will be evaluated and tested against its defined objectives. Positive evaluation will affirm the component and allow it to move forward to detailed design. Negative evaluation will feed back into the design process to ensure that, at the next evaluation, the component achieves its purpose.

This continual cycle of formal and informal evaluation, and the feedback mechanism that informs on-going design process, is essential to ensure that an effective interpretative design is achieved. At all stages of the interpretative design process, the process is reported to the wider team, the client and to stakeholders. At key stages, formal presentation and reporting is provided.

## **1.5 Consultancy Team**

### **1.5.1 JANVS | VIDAR**

**JANVS Design** (janvs.com) was formed in 1983 as a specialist provider of design and exhibition services to the cultural heritage sector. The practice remains intentionally small, with three principal designers (one Lead Designer and two Senior Designers) and four Associate Designers. The practice incorporated in 1997 and ten years later became a division of **VIDAR Media Group** (based in the UK and Ireland) where it continues as an award winning museum, gallery and heritage centre design practice. **JANVS | VIDAR** can provide either a design-only or a turnkey design-and-build service. With over 30 years of experience and over 300 projects to its credit, **JANVS | VIDAR** has won many regional, national and international awards for its cultural heritage projects. These include Museum of the Year, Best Heritage Attraction and Most Innovative Heritage Project.

The lead consultant for **JANVS | VIDAR** and for this project is

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### 1.5.2 DNAC

Daniel Noonan Archaeological Consultancy ([dnac.ie](http://dnac.ie)) was founded by Daniel Noonan in 2004 and is based in Youghal, Co Cork. DNAC has amassed a varied range of experiences in providing successful consultancy throughout Ireland on all aspects of archaeological, built and cultural heritage. DNAC has carried out numerous archaeological and architectural impact assessments, archaeological test trenching, archaeological excavations, standing building reports, conservation reports, conservation and management plans, thematic surveys and attendance to conservation works. The consultancy has also diversified into the development of the tourism and general heritage potential of locations, though the research and creation of heritage trails, signage, information plaques, pamphlets, pop-up museums and publications. This work has expanded Daniel's experience into the sphere of heritage-led regeneration projects and how they can help the current upturn in the economic climate. DNAC's clients vary from local authorities and state agencies, civil contractors, multi-national companies, commercial and retail chains, developers and private clients. DNAC's strength lies in our ability to give clear and focused advice and attendance to all of our clients in an efficient, practical and professional manner.

The lead consultant for DNAC is

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### 1.6 Limitations

The limitation to the creation of this plan has been the lack of upstanding Town Wall fabric; making it difficult to accurately comment on the nature, layout and extent of the town's defences. However, the known archaeological, historical, cartographic and documentary sources, coupled with an interpretation of the modern streetscape of Athy, does provide the Plan (as with previous assessments such as the *Urban Archaeological Survey*) with a capacity to understand where the Town Wall was likely to have been.

## 2. SITE HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

### 2.1 Site History

#### 2.1.1 The Ford at Athy

Today, Athy is arguably the leading town of south Kildare. In Ireland, it is a fine example of an urban centre with its origins in a medium sized medieval market town. Located at a strategic crossing point straddling the River Barrow, the town's position has always influenced its history and development (see [Appendix 2](#) for key historical events).

Since prehistoric times the ford at Athy, located around the site of the present Cromaboo Bridge (erected 1794 and replacing an earlier, potentially thirteenth century predecessor), was of great importance to people. In its simplest form, the ford was a shallow part in a river that allowed a relatively safe crossing on foot or by cart. In historic times, some fords had stone causeways with gaps to allow the water to flow, precursor to later stone bridges. The ford was an important infrastructural feature that allowed people traverse what would have been a hostile landscape of rough tracks, forests and marginal land. They allowed communication and trade and the movement of armies. Topographically, the ford at Athy crossed the Barrow between two areas of high ground relative to the surrounding low-lying land, which was in the floodplain of the confluence between the Barrow and its tributary Bennetsbridge and Moneen rivers. Crossing the Barrow at this location was probably possible all year round.

Some 22 stone axe heads from the new Stone Age or Neolithic (4000-2500BC in Ireland) were recovered from the Barrow (Bradley et al. 1986, 47). Metal objects from the Bronze Age (2500-500BC) include spearheads, swords and a dagger; and tools from the Iron Age (500BC-400AD), were also found. The recovery of these large numbers of prehistoric artefacts from the River Barrow during navigation maintenance works in the early part of the twentieth century does not suggest carelessness on a mass scale. Rather it strongly indicates a very deliberate dropping or deposition of the artefacts into the river as votive offerings – objects that were deposited for broadly religious beliefs and are not intended to be recovered. Similar to the more recent tradition of offerings of rosary beads, immaculate medals or coins at Christian holy wells, the deposited artefacts were to curry favour and appease the gods and deities.

The river was chosen because water is essential to life, and the river acted as natural boundaries and focal points. Immersing beneath the surface had a magical effect, possibly allowing entry into other, supernatural worlds. Depositing high value artefacts, such as carefully knapped stone tools or metal weapons that required significant effort and resources to create, was an act of great devotion and sacrifice. Thus, the discoveries at the crossing point mark out Athy as being a very sacred place and important place to the people of prehistory.

### 2.1.2 Placename Origins & Legends

Given its nature, the ford was a focus for important occurrences, particularly battles. According to Comerford (1892, 57-58), it was from the death of an Iron Age warrior in legendary battle at the ford in the early second century AD that Athy got its name. Sometime between 111 and 119AD a battle took place, between the armies of Munster and Leinster. In this battle a Munster chieftain called Ae was killed and the place was commemorated as *Áth Aé* or Ae's ford. The early nineteenth century topographer Samuel Lewis (1837) provides an alternative placename origin, from *an ancient ford called Athelehad, or anciently Athle-gar, the "ford towards the west"*.

Following the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, Donough O'Brien, son of the defeated Brian Ború, was leading their army back west to Munster, when they were met and challenged by the army of the kingdom of Ossory as they were about to cross the ford. Unable to stand, Donough's men tied themselves to stakes driven into the ground to support themselves for the expected battle. On seeing this brave act, Ossory's forces retreated and allowed the Munster army to pass (ibid., 58).

### 2.1.3 Surrounding Archaeological Landscapes

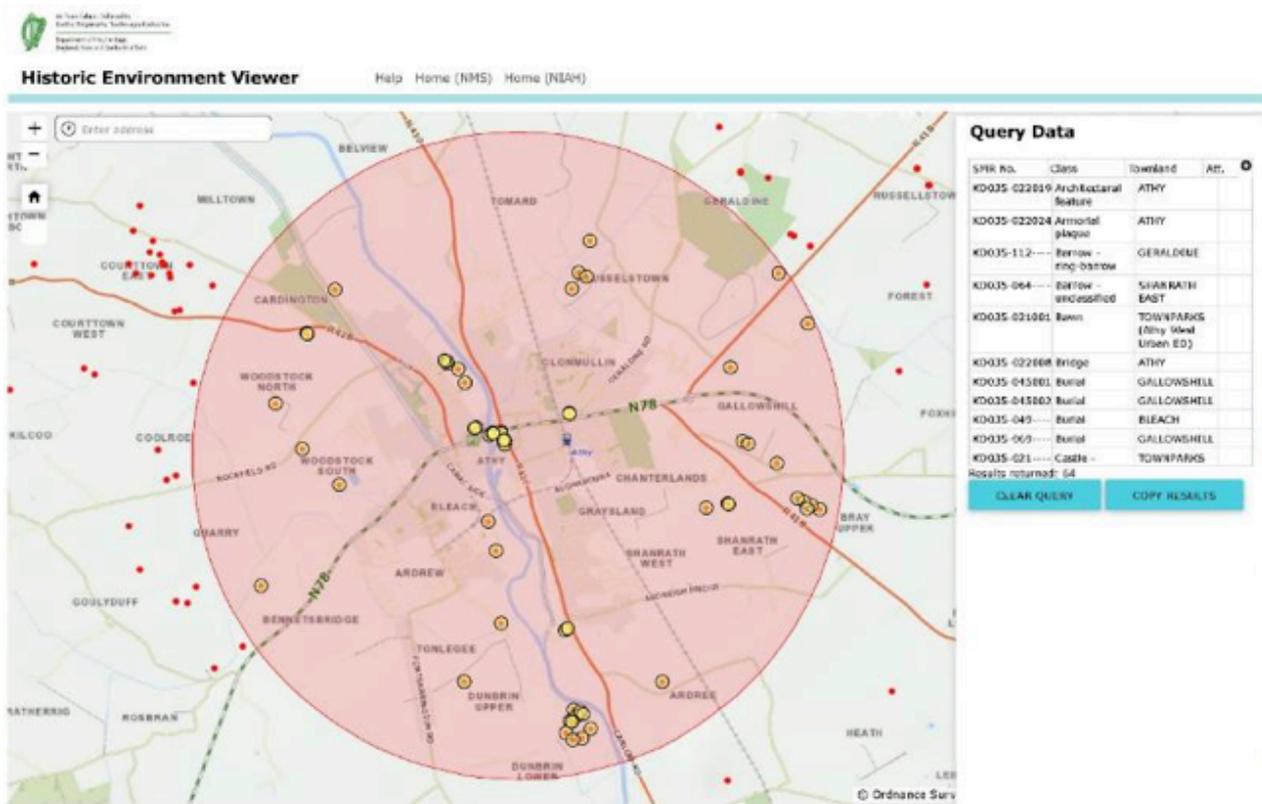


Fig 2.1 Query of the National Monuments Service database

While we do not yet have any evidence that people occupied the site of Athy before the 13th Century medieval town, it is quite possible that there was prehistoric settlement here. A query of the National Monuments Service online viewer (<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>; accessed 15th October 2016) shows that there are various archaeological landscapes within 3km of Athy. The prehistoric landscape of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages are represented by eight ring-ditches and two barrow monuments; while the Early Medieval (400-1167AD) landscape has two ringforts and 28 enclosures that potentially date to that period (see Figure 2.1 above).

Prior to the advent of the Anglo-Normans in south Kildare, following their arrival in Ireland in 1167-70, Athy and its environs were part of the minor kingdom of *Iarthar Líphi*, ruled by the *Uí Muireadaig* dynastic family. *Dúnlaing*, the last king of the *Uí Muireadaig*, retained local control of the area until 1178, when he was killed in battle with the Anglo-Normans (*Mac Shamhráin*, 1996).

#### 2.1.4 The Medieval Town

The arrival of the Anglo-Normans in the late twelfth century saw the development of a relatively new type of settlement, largely alien to the native Gaelic population, the walled town (Bradley 2005). There had been two earlier, limited phases of town development in Ireland: the 'proto-monastic' towns that formed around the ecclesiastical enclosures of monastic centres in the ninth and tenth centuries (such as at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly); and the contemporary Viking or Scandinavian coastal ports towns, the predominantly those at Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Wexford and Limerick. The agrarian Gaelic Irish followed a dispersed settlement pattern, which was very different from the defended farmsteads of the ringforts of the previous 600 years.

Europe of the tenth to thirteenth centuries was experiencing a boom in population, trade and expansion. The climate was good, leading to increased agricultural yields; with surpluses to allow trade and support economic development. For the Anglo-Norman nobility, who went to Ireland with a militarily supported programme of conquest in mind, the town was the key tool in the long-term securing of a viable colony. The towns they created were a development from the initial earth and timber built motte and bailey castle that were rapidly built to secure their new territories. Once secure, a suitable location could be developed, and defended as necessary, as a borough – an economic entity with various incentives set-out to attract colonists to the new venture. The settlers, or at least the male settlers, were offered properties known as burgages (hence burgage plots) within the town area – as distinct from the rural surrounds, to settle, build on and trade from. The town gave a ready market for trade and collective legal protection (local courts, set fair days, etc.) and physical security to its inhabitants, in an often hostile environment. The town could self-govern, elect officials and collect revenue from taxes on trade and customs for use to build and maintain the town, and importantly support its defence.

The Anglo-Norman overlords at Athy were the de St. Michael family, Barons of Narragh and Reban. Their stronghold was the Manor of Reban, located to the northwest of Athy, further upriver. They held the two relevant manors or domains that influenced the medieval development of Athy, those Woodstock on the west side of the Barrow and Athy on the east.

The de St. Michael's first attempted, and ultimately unsuccessful, settlement in Woodstock at a location some 600m northwest of the ford, with the building of Woodstock Castle in the mid-thirteenth century. This substantial hall-house castle was the focus of a small settlement or hamlet of surrounding houses, structures and field systems. The Down Survey map of circa. 1655 for the Barony of Narragh and Reban (see Figure 2.2 below) shows the castle with housing surrounding it, beside the river and north of Athy town; who's medieval Bridge and the commanding White Castle are shown prominently. Archaeological study suggests that they area between it and the site of the de St. Michael sponsored priory of St. Michael's and St. Thomas of the Crutched Friars, located west of the Bridge, was the site of the deserted medieval settlement. Recent research commissioned by the Athy Heritage Centre-Museum, using remote sensing and LiDAR data, has uncovered some very interesting potential features in the ground that suggest the possibility of an extensive settlement here (see Gimson 2015).

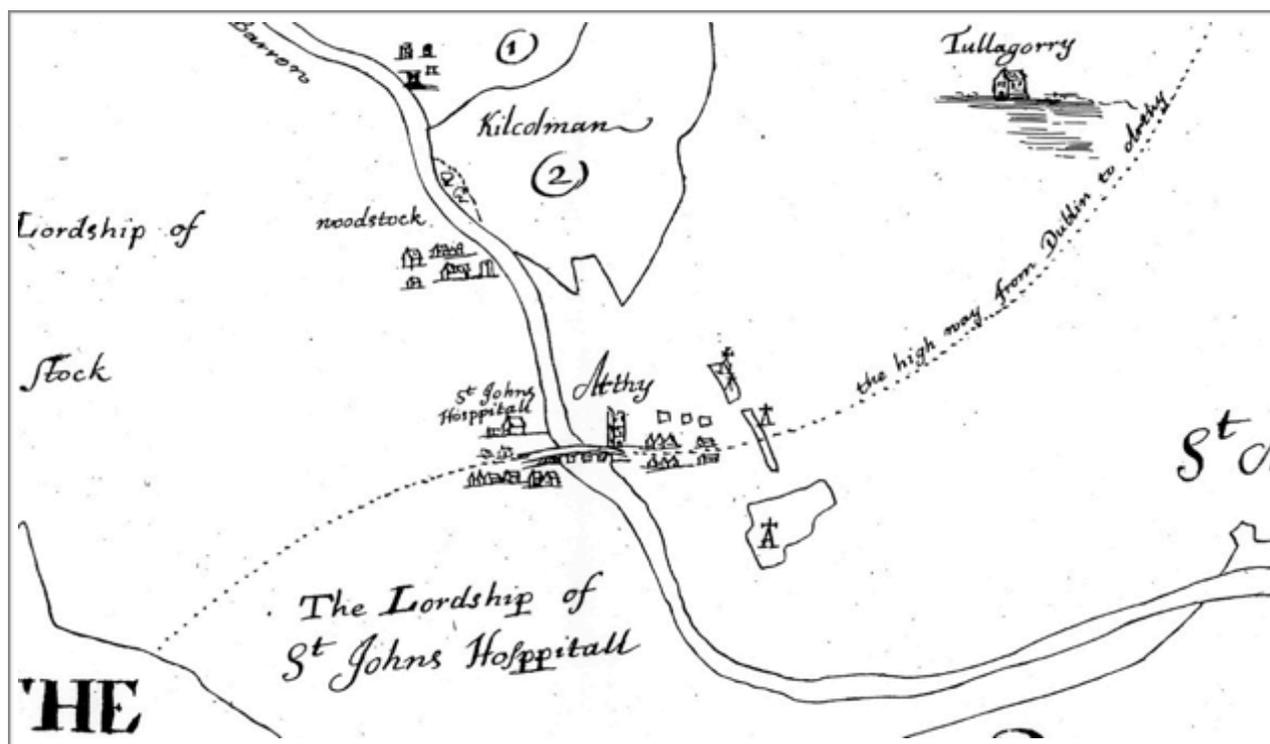


Fig 2.2 Extract from the Down Survey, circa. 1655, of the Barony of Narragh and Reban

No documentary sources have yet come to light about the earliest foundation of the core of medieval Athy, as it straddles the Barrow. However, by the late thirteenth century it was well established town, with two monasteries on either side of a stone bridge across the river, with a possibly enclosed settlement on the east bank, a parish church located to the east beyond the walls and the possibility of further enclosed areas on the west bank, near the aforementioned priory of St. Thomas and hospital of St. Michael's of the Crutched Friars (henceforth St. Michael's priory).

Athy's strategic advantages are obvious; while it was equally economically important. The town operated as an inland port, with a direct connection downriver to New Ross and the sea.

St. Michael's priory was located on high ground on the west bank, in the general location of St. John's Graveyard, at the top of the curving St. John's Lane. Its foundation is attributed to the Lords of Reban but there appears to be confusion as to whether sponsored in the late twelfth or mid-thirteenth century (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 210; Bradley 1986, 68). A fraternal order, the monks at St. John's were charged with the care of the sick and in a late thirteenth century documentary source the monastery was described as "the priory of St. Thomas the Martyr with its hospital containing brothers, sisters and sick" (Bradley *ibid.*). The monastery, its church and ancillary buildings are likely to have been enclosed in some form, by either an earthwork and timber palisade or even a stone wall. However, the form and shape of the enclosure is unknown. Neither is it known whether it was inside or outside some form of Town Wall on the west bank, nor is it currently possible to test a hypothesis that the monastery's precinct formed part of the defencing walling here.

The foundation of the second monastery, the Dominican priory on the east bank, in a location south of the Bridge, close to present-day Emily Square, is variously attributed to the Anglo-Norman the Boisles or Ouganos (Wogans) or the de St. Michael's in either 1253 or 1257 (Taaffe 1999, 21; *ibid.*)

The first Bridge over the ford at Athy was probably built in the thirteenth century, either by the de St. Michael's or possibly by one or other of the monasteries under their instruction. The strategic value of the river crossing was apparent from prehistory, as it facilitated trade, communication and also rapid deployment of armies. It also represented a source of income, from pontage – a toll to cross the bridge. The income was put towards the upkeep of the Bridge.

Thus far, the strongest evidence for the walled town comes from the east side, where it appears that the burgage plot arrangements from the early town survive (Thomas 1992, Volume 2, 17-19). However, it is also likely that there was settlement on an unknown scale on the west bank, in the vicinity of St. Michael's. The distinctive east to west linear layout of Athy, divided by the Bridge, can be dated from this time. The present market place is a post-medieval feature and the original market place may have been a simpler linear arrangement located on the main street.

The borough of Athy first appears in the documentary record in 1326, when Geoffrey de Hereford, is referred to as burgess of the town (Bradley 1986, 48). It is most likely that the de St. Michael's, Lords of Athy established the borough in the thirteenth century.

Apart from a reference to Thomas the janitor or gatekeeper of Athy in 1297, there is no other documentary evidence to suggest an enclosure or walling of the town from its foundation. However, a strategically important town such as Athy, on an increasingly busy trade route, in a frontier location on the Barrow corridor, there can be no doubt that it was protected. A stout timber palisade and external ditch would be expected at a minimum, probably with stone built gates. The Anglo-Normans would not have taken such a chance on such a strategic investment. The form and layout of the town's defences are discussed below in Section 2.2.

The successful Manor of Athy had passed by marriage into the house of the Fitzgeralds in the late thirteenth century, thereby starting Athy's long association with the Earldom of Kildare and future Dukedom of Leinster (Killanin & Duignan 1967, 77). However, the town was very much located in a hostile, frontier environment that the Anglo-Normans had not totally conquered. The Barrow corridor, the communications route provided by the river to Dublin in the north (site of the central medieval administration in Ireland), and to Kilkenny and Waterford in the south, was essential.

Athy's was relatively prosperous in the context of a small frontier town; in 1331 the Red Book of Kildare showed the town having ten Burgesses paying £23 in dues to the Earl (Taaffe 1999, 21). However, its fortunes fluctuated, with sporadic attacks coming from the Gaelic septs that surrounded the town, throughout the troublesome fourteenth century. Uncertainty and insecurity were ever-present at the frontier.

The town was burnt by the O'Moore's in 1308 and again in 1370 and 1374. During the Bruce Wars, the town was plundered by the army of Edward Bruce in 1315, after his victory over the Anglo-Normans at the nearby Battle of Ardscoil. This event was followed by the European-wide famine of 1315-17, which led to a significant population decline across the Continent, from which Ireland was not immune. In 1374 the town and the Dominican priory were burnt (Bradley *ibid.*, 49). Little is known of how Athy fared with the arrival of the Black Death in Ireland in 1348. However, it did survive this calamity, which effected all of the urban centres in Ireland, particularly the port towns.

The events of the fourteenth century of Gaelic Irish unrest, wars, famine and disease, led to a significant contraction in the size of the Anglo-Norman colony in Ireland, and the population that supported it. Conversely, the resultant Gaelic resurgence put places like Athy into an almost constant state of siege. The Pale, the newly contracted Anglo-Norman, or now more properly English, area of influence around Dublin and outlying areas the south coast, was far away. Athy was on the frontier, almost in isolation on the edges of what had become known as the Marshes of Kildare.

Athy remained very much a frontier town for the remainder of the medieval period, until the late seventeenth century when relative stability arrived and the town began to grow beyond the confines of the walled town, into a prosperous market town.

In the early fifteenth century, English attention turned towards increasing the defence of the Bridge and security of the river crossing; thereby maintaining the Barrow corridor. This remained their primary strategic goal for Athy through to the end of the sixteenth century (Murtagh 2011, 145-147). Two defensive structures appear at either end of the Bridge, with the sixteenth century White Castle built on the site of the eastern tower (ibid.). The motivation behind this new defence was to deny the use of the Bridge to the Gaelic Irish, as a stepping stone over the river to the midlands and opportunities to raid the Pale. In 1431 a military governor was appointed to Athy by the Lord Justice of Ireland (Lewis 1837; Bradley 1986, 49), with a permanent garrison of troops. Bradley (ibid.) records that it was at this time that Athy was described as the “greatest fortress and Key of the countryside”. Now, the English were using Athy and the crossing as a base to launch their own raids and missions against the Gaelic Irish of the midlands.

What state the Town Walls were in during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is not known. However, the first recorded Royal murage grant (a permit to allow the collection of taxes to fund the building and maintenance of the walls) appeared in 1431 and again in 1448 (Thomas 1992, 18). In 1515 a new town charter from Henry VIII is the first actual direction for the construction of the walls, and is discussed below. Despite this attention, the Dominican priory buildings had been burnt in June 1539 by Donald McCare Kavanagh; and the town was attacked and burnt in 1546 by the O'Moore's.

Athy was one of the strongholds of the rebellious 'Silken Thomas', 10th Earl of Kildare, who revolted against the Crown. Following the end of the rebellion and execution of Thomas, Athy was forfeited. The level of damage the town experienced at this time is not known.

Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries saw both St. Michael's and St. Thomas' dissolved by 1540. The inquisition into monastic possessions of 1542 described the St. Thomas' as a “friary with a church and belfry, a chapterhouse, dormitory, hall, three chambers, a kitchen, a cemetery, and a garden and orchard” (Bradley 1986). A deed of 1603 noted that in 1568 the Priory of St. John consisted of a church, a hall, a garden, a stable, five cottages and a ruinous tower (ibid.).

In 1556 Athy was put forward as an operating base, for the mixed success Leix-Offaly Plantation 1556 (Murtagh 2011, 145).

### 2.1.5 Post-Medieval Athy

Athy remained a place of strategic importance in securing English control across the Irish midlands into the seventeenth century; with military garrisons of 150 men stationed there in 1602 and 100 men in 1608 (cited in Bradley et al. 1986, 50-52). The politically astute King James I (1566-1625) included Athy in 1613 in his regranting of borough status to Irish towns and cities. By imposing an English model of urban centre organisation, James was able to control the political franchise and have members returned to an Irish Parliament that would be sympathetic to his objectives. The 1613 charter permitted a Sovereign, two Bailiffs, twelve Burgesses (appointed by the overlord Earls of Kildare, later Dukes of Leinster) and free or common men, to form the franchise to run the town and return two members to Parliament. The borough remained in place until the 1800 Act of Union.

The Irish Rebellion of 1641-42 led to an almost decade-long period (up to April 1652) of hostility and warfare, based on political, economic and religious animosity, which variously became known as the Eleven Years War or the Confederate War. It was part of the larger scheme of civil wars in England, Scotland and England, called the 'Wars of the Three Kingdoms' (Ohlmeyer 1998, 73). As a frontier English town, Athy was, to use a colloquialism, "in the thick of it", as a point of friction between the loose confederation of Catholic Gaelic and Old English factions and the New English colonists and Commonwealth forces from England. The town was garrisoned with three companies of 100 men each in 1642, with a further company in the White Castle to secure the Bridge (Bradley 1986, 51). By 1648 the castle (White Castle on the Bridge) and the remains of the Dominican priory were under the control of the Catholic Confederate general Owen Roe O'Neill, of the famous O'Neill dynasty of Ulster. O'Neill refused to accept the terms of the peace treaty brokered in 1646 by the Duke of Ormonde, between the Confederation and the Crown. Remaining hostile, he held Athy against his former ally General Thomas Preston, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Tara. Preston led an unsuccessful and bloody siege of the town and bombarded the castle and the Dominican monastery with cannon, and probably the standing walls of the town. Further damage to the town occurred in 1650, when the castle and the bridge were blown up, to deny their use and control to approaching Cromwellian forces (*ibid.*).

Following the destruction of the 1640s, Athy recovered stability, as an English town; and with a population of 509 in 1659, was the largest of any town in Kildare (Horner 1970, 22). It still remained an important military garrison throughout the remaining years of the seventeenth century. Although, the condition of its Town Wall defences is not known, it is probable that they were not in great repair. Two substantial fires occurred in the town in 1670, which led to the destruction of much of the timber-built building stock of the town. Rebuilding of the town by the inhabitants, described as "English tradesmen", was carried out with the support of the Earl of Kildare and King Charles II. The King granted two annual fairs to help in "rebuilding their town and renewing trade there" (Bradley et al. 1986, 52). It appears that any remaining town defences were removed at this stage; with the stone from the walls reused to build new houses and fill-up the external ditch.



**Fig 2.3** Rocque’s Survey of Athy (1756-1768); East of the Barrow (top), and West of the Barrow (bottom)  
 (Photo: Simon Hill 2016; of survey copies courtesy of Seamus Taaffe)

Large scale destructive trials and tribulations were a thing of the past in the eighteenth century. Athy became a prosperous town over the course of the century, with increased trade and local industry, built on improvements in agricultural production, communication and infrastructure. Developments like the new Turnpike Road system, of good quality tolled roads, meant better movement northwards to Dublin and south towards Kilkenny. This allowed the increased agricultural produce to be moved. Raw material for several industries that developed and prospered in Athy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as tanning, brewing, distilling, malting and linen production, was readily available from its agricultural hinterland. This prosperity led to the reordering of the town centre, with a new market place (Emily Square) to the southeast of the Bridge, with a new Market House completed in 1740.

By the time Athy was first accurately mapped, through measured survey by the cartographer John Rocque (eastern part in 1756, western in 1757 and 1768), the town had grown significantly beyond what may have been the confines of the medieval walled area (see Figure 2.3 above). The population in 1756 stood at 1,700 (Taaffe 1999). The town expanded both east and west along main road axis of Athy, centred on the Bridge. New housing developed east along the Dublin Road, what is now the extensive Leinster Street, from High Street, along Bore Buoy through the turnpike and onwards through the Fair Green. To the west, the new military barracks was completed in 1710, on the high ground north of the site of the former monastery of St. Michael's. Today's Duke Street, marked as St. John's Street has taken its modern form, with further westward development through the turnpike gate formerly located at the junction with Woodstock Street, along Beggar's End - today's William Street, on towards where the Grand Canal would eventually arrive. None of the Town Wall appears to survive or at least is marked on these maps; apart from Preston's Gate at Emily Row, on the road south to Carlow, from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century market place at Emily Square.

The completion of the link between the River Barrow and the Grant Canal in 1792 and the arrival of the Railway in 1846, were the two major infrastructural projects that ensured Athy's commercial success into the nineteenth century and beyond.

## **2.2 Archaeological Potential**

### **2.2.1 Athy's Elusive Town Walls**

#### **2.2.1.1 The Nature of the Town Walls of Athy**

'Elusive' may be the best term to describe the current whereabouts of the Town Walls of Athy. Exhaustive study, assessment and searching by antiquarians, historians and archaeologist over the past hundred years has so far failed to discover any surviving parts of them above the ground. However, like any good detective story, by piecing together various sources of evidence, information and theories about the walls, together with the promising results from recent archaeologically directed geophysical investigations, a case for making them tangible again in the present-day townscape can be made.

Local historian Frank Taaffe makes an astute point in his history blog for Athy, *Eye on the Past* (<http://athyeonthePast.blogspot.ie/>), on the value of studying what others may see as a paucity of evidence for Athy's Town Wall. Avril Thomas' seminal study *The Walled Towns of Ireland* (1992) devised two lists of urban locations that have evidence for walling. List A contains 56 towns, selected on the criteria of having known physical remains/documentary evidence such as murage grants, or a combination of both. List B contains 38 locations that have unproven evidence for walling; while a supplement to this list contains a further 20 sites that have doubtful evidence. With such a large number of potential walled locations – 114 in total – an undoubted diversity exists in the amount of surviving fabric and other evidence. This can lead to inherent common problems of understanding, access and unexceptional visibility. The study of Athy's missing Town Walls is an opportunity to learn and gain insights into the issues of understanding, access and visibility of a town with not apparent town wall features.

Historically, Athy has straddled the Barrow, with the Bridge and the route it carried through being the most important and long-lived feature of the medieval town; one that has come down through history to use today. It is accepted that there was settlement of some form on both sides of the river. Given the late twelfth/early-thirteenth century frontier landscape into which the new colonists were being located, the settlement would undoubtedly have been defended by enclosing features, be they of earth, timber, stone, or a combination of all three. It is only in the early sixteenth century that the first confirmed direction for the building of the Town Walls is issued, in the 1515 town charter of Henry VIII. However, since the foundation of the town borough by the de St. Michaels in the late twelfth/early-thirteenth century, the settlement at Athy must have been enclosed in some form. Not only would the enclosing have been defensive, it defined the borough as a commercial and residential space, with controls and common customs and rights. It also acted in a tangibly symbolic capacity, showing the authority and power of the Anglo-Norman arrivals and that they were here to stay.

The enclosing may have initially only been around the two monasteries on either bank, to which the inhabitants feel back in times of strife. However, it is more likely that settlement was a small village or a collection of smaller hamlet-sized establishments on both sides of the river, which fronted onto a short road frontage or common trading/activity area to form streets. The Anglo-Normans planned their towns with regular allocations of ground, in the form of burgage plots given to the new the colonist, called a burgess. The plots tended to be narrow and rectangular, usually running from the narrow street frontage towards either the town wall or another physically defining feature, such as a river. The burgage plots and the streets that formed around them became the plan of the medieval town; and over time the original street and burgage layouts became fossilised and potentially recognisable in our modern townscapes. Reading these features in modern townscapes can, along with documentary and cartographic evidence, aid in the identifying of the invisible medieval walled areas at the core of many of our older towns.

### 2.2.1.2 Documentary references to the Town Walls of Athy

So, what are the sources and evidence for Athy's Town Walls? The following table is a chronological list of the documentary references, direct or indirect that have been gleaned from research published in the *Urban Archaeological Survey* for County Kildare (1986), Avril Thomas' study (1992) and the work of various antiquarians and historians listed in the references to this Plan.

Date	Event
1287	Reference to ' <i>Thomas janitor of Athy</i> ' or gatekeeper, suggesting that the town was enclosed in the late 13th Century, with at least one gate for control. Ref. UAS 1986.
1431	' <i>expenses of 100/- for the defence</i> ' of Athy. A tax rebate of 100 sovereigns on the borough was granted by the Irish Parliament in Dublin as a murage measure to support the building of town defences. Ref. Thomas 1992; Taaffe 1999
1431	Sir Richard Wellesley was appointed military governor of Athy, which was described as the ' <i>greatest fortress and key of the countryside</i> '. Ref. UAS 1986.
1448	A secondary sources tells of a murage dictate that tolls for murage could only be collected on goods traded in the town and not on those in transit through. Ref. Thomas 1992; Taaffe 1999
1515	The Charter of Henry VIII, issued for Athy, to its owner Gerald Fitzgerald 9th Earl of Kildare directly instructs the inhabitants, through it provost and elected officials to erect defences of walls and ditches, to defend the town against the Gaelic Irish and fund these and other improvement works through the collection of tax on trade in the town. The text is as follows: <i>Henry by the grace of God King of England and France and Lord of Ireland...for the greater safety and security of the town of Athy in the County of Kildare within our land of Ireland which lies in the frontier of the march of Irish Enemies. Have granted and given licence and by these presents for us and our heirs do give and grant licence to the inhabitants of the said town of Athy in the county of Kildare that they may erect construct build and strengthen the same town with fosses and walls of stone and lime And that the said inhabitants and their heirs and...And likewise of all the goods of infangthef and outfangthef for ever for the building repair and fortification of the walls and fosses of the town aforesaid and the pavement of the same town without the impediment of any kind of us our heirs and successors...And further of our own more abundant grace we have given and granted and by these presents we do give and grant to the aforesaid provost and his successors for ever for enclosing and paving the aforesaid town in opposition to the malice of our Irish enemies that they by themselves or by their deputies may take and receive, all the customs hereunder written videlicet one penny from every horse put to sale within the town aforesaid and the franchise thereof, and one penny from every cow put to sale, one penny from every horse load of boards put to sale, one half penny from every sack of corn put to sale, one halfpenny from every hide put to sale, one penny from every body of a cat put to sale...And the aforesaid provost and his successors for the time being shall render yearly a reasonable account of the same customs and profits to the aforesaid Earl Of Kildare his heirs and assigns how and in what manner the aforesaid provost shall distribute or expend the said customs and profits on the building and repair of the walls fosses and pavage of the town aforesaid. Ref. Transcription of the Charter, courtesy of Clement Roche.</i>

Date	Event
1532	A letter in the Calendar of the Crew Manuscripts, correspondence from Piers Butler, Earl of Ossory to Thomas Cromwell, chief minister to Henry VIII - ' <i>the gates of the earl's town of Athie</i> '. Ref. Thomas 1992.
1598	Description of Athy and Castledermot as 'only important towns of Kildare, walled and now ruined'. Ref. UAS 1986
1849	<i>Athy &amp; Its Recollections</i> by John Henry. A handwritten history of Athy in the National Library of Ireland, MS 16172; which gives a description of the circuit of the Town Wall and its features, particularly the east side of the town. Described by Frank Taaffe as being a little inaccurate. Copy of manuscript courtesy of Clement Roche.

**Fig 2.4** Table listing the documentary references to Athy's Town Wall

What can be concluded from the sources in Figure 2.4 above is that Athy was enclosed and possibly walled from at least the late thirteenth century. The town defences were built by the collection of murage, via a licence granted by the King and the overlord, to collect taxes from trade to support the construction and maintenance of the walls. The reaffirming of murage in 1431 and 1448 supports the presence of pre-existing wall; while the 1515 Charter reaffirms and instructs the building of a new stone wall and external ditch, to augment this. The language and tone of the latter reference also confirms the strong civic and social visibility of the town wall as a primary feature in the lives of the inhabitants.

The usefulness of the John Henry's manuscript is discussed along with the previous assessment of the circuit of Athy's Town Walls in Section 2.2.1.4.

### 2.2.1.3 Cartographic and illustrative sources

Although limited in number and detail of the town defences, the cartographic and illustrative sources for Athy's Town Walls are useful in understanding the debated layout of the Town Wall. The earliest depiction of Athy is found in *A Coloured Map of Offalia, now forming King's and Queen's Counties*, of 1563 (see Fig 2.5 overleaf). This is sometimes known as the Cotton map, as it was drafted on cotton, or the Mercator map, as it was reproduced by the cartographer Gerard Mercator in 1564.

This map was prepared to better define the boundaries of Laois and Offaly (Queen's and King's county respectively), and shows *Athee*, with the Bridge crossing the Barrow, defended by towers at either end. The east tower is the surviving White Castle, while the now gone tower at the west end may be, it is vaguely conjectured, the castle of Athy mention in the town's history. What is notable is that the main body of the town is shown on the east side of the bridge, with a line coming from the vicinity of the White Castle that suggests a wall. The curve to the southwest in the building line is reminiscent of the curve in today's Meeting Lane.



depictions of walled towns, such as that of the Pacata Hibernia view of Youghal. The blocks to the east of the gap appear to be single storey rectangular cabins, positioned with their long axis parallel to the street. Could the north to south gap in the blocks be the line of Chapel Lane and Meeting Lane, as they intersect Leinster Street (the reputed site of St. Michael's Gate, the main landward gate to the east) and be confirmation the theory that the Town Wall ran on this axis? On the west side the building pattern is more fragmented, with buildings shown to the north and south of the Bridge and St. John's monastery is shown as extant. Further upriver Woodstock Castle and the settlement around it is also shown. The indication of the road from Dublin to Athy, which continues south across the Bridge, is a considered feature, reinforcing the strategic value of Athy's crossing over the Barrow.



**Fig 2.6** Extract from John Speed's map of Leinster, 1612

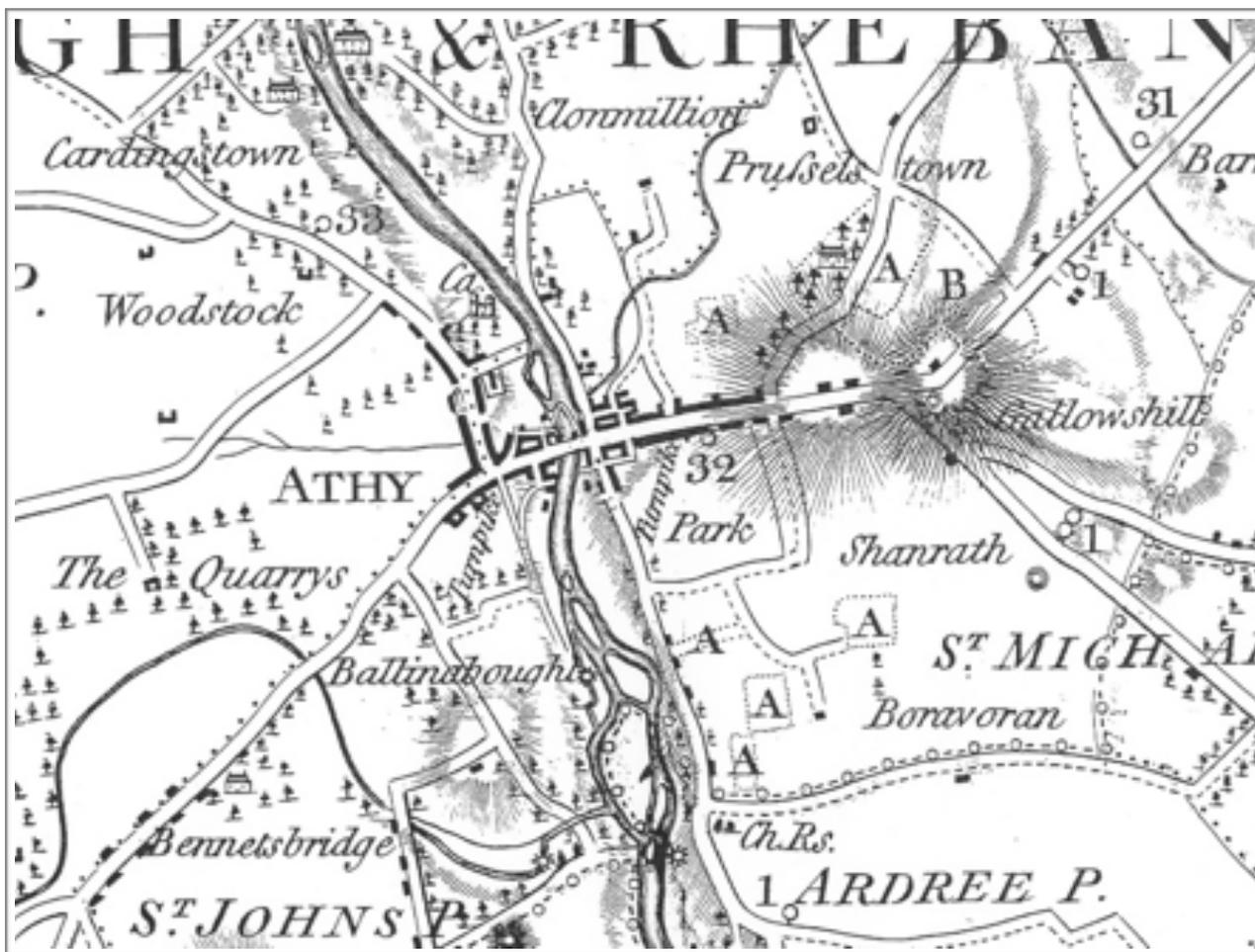
The woodcut from the pamphlet by Mr. Hierome extolling the severe 'atrocities' committed at Athy during the Rebellion of 1641, shows a very fanciful view of a walled Athy. This image has been correctly critiqued by both Frank and Seamus Taaffe (Athy's Eye on the Past; Taaffe 1993), as to its faults. It shows a river, a bridge, a town wall and a church, all features that Athy had. However, it is much stylised, showing angular stone and earthwork defences surrounded by a moat-like watercourse that would be typical of seventeenth century fortification features. However, the depiction of defences does support the existence of the Town Walls into the middle of the seventeenth century.



**Fig 2.7** Extract from the pamphlet *Treason in Ireland* by Mr. Hierome 'Minister of Gods Word at Athigh in Ireland', published 1641.

The surveys of Athy created by John Rocque in the late eighteenth century (Fig 2.3 referenced earlier) were the first accurately measured maps of Athy, in terms of today's standards of cartography. They show an Athy that has changed greatly from a rundown frontier town of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century. The town has grown east and

west, beyond the extents of the medieval walled town, taking the Town Walls down with it. However, there is one small part of wall fabric shown, a gate at the end of today's Offaly Street and Emily Row, marked as 'Preston's Gate'. Also note the diagonal line in the garden boundary that leads northwest away from Preston's Gate to today's Meeting Lane and on to Leinster Street; this pattern recorded by Rocque is important to the assessments of the potential layout of the Town Wall presented below. The second survey of the western part of Athy does not show any readily discernible pattern to identify the enclosure on that side of the Barrow.



**Fig 2.8** Detail from Alex Taylor's County of Kildare, 1783

In Taylor's map of Kildare for 1783 (Figure 2.8 above) the modern form of the town can be seen, prior to the development of the Grand Canal. No indications of any surviving Town Wall are shown. Note the turnpike gates marked at either end of the town, which are also shown on the earlier Rocque maps.



**Fig 2.9** Extract from the Ordnance Survey 6 inch Sheet 035 for Kildare, 1838

The first edition, 1838, of the Ordnance Survey for Athy (Figure 2.9 above) shows the town at a good level and detail; with the Grand Canal visible to the west. The Town Wall feature of note on this map is the location on Offaly Street of the ‘Postern Gate’ or ‘Preston’s Gate’ as it was styled by Rocque in 1756. This feature is the final piece in the cartographic and illustrative jigsaw for Athy’s Town Wall.

A watercolour by George Du Noyer from 1837 (see cover image, page 1 and Fig 3.1 following) shows the remains of ‘Preston’s Gate’. Working for the Ordnance Survey as a topographical draughtsman and illustrator, Du Noyer captured the only upstanding fabric of the Town Wall to have survived into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; until it was removed in 1860. Local folklore associated with its removal holds that it was prompted by the unfortunate death of local Reverend Trench, who died after colliding with it, with his horse and trap.

The watercolour shows a rectangular gatehouse, with an inner and outer gate, it may have been part of the works carried out following the 1515 murage charter of Henry VIII. The structure straddles the full width of the street and appears to be constructed of rubble stone, with cut stone quoins and arch voussoirs. A figure on the left slightly obscures what may be a base-batter on that side of the gatehouse.

2.2.2 Previous Assessments

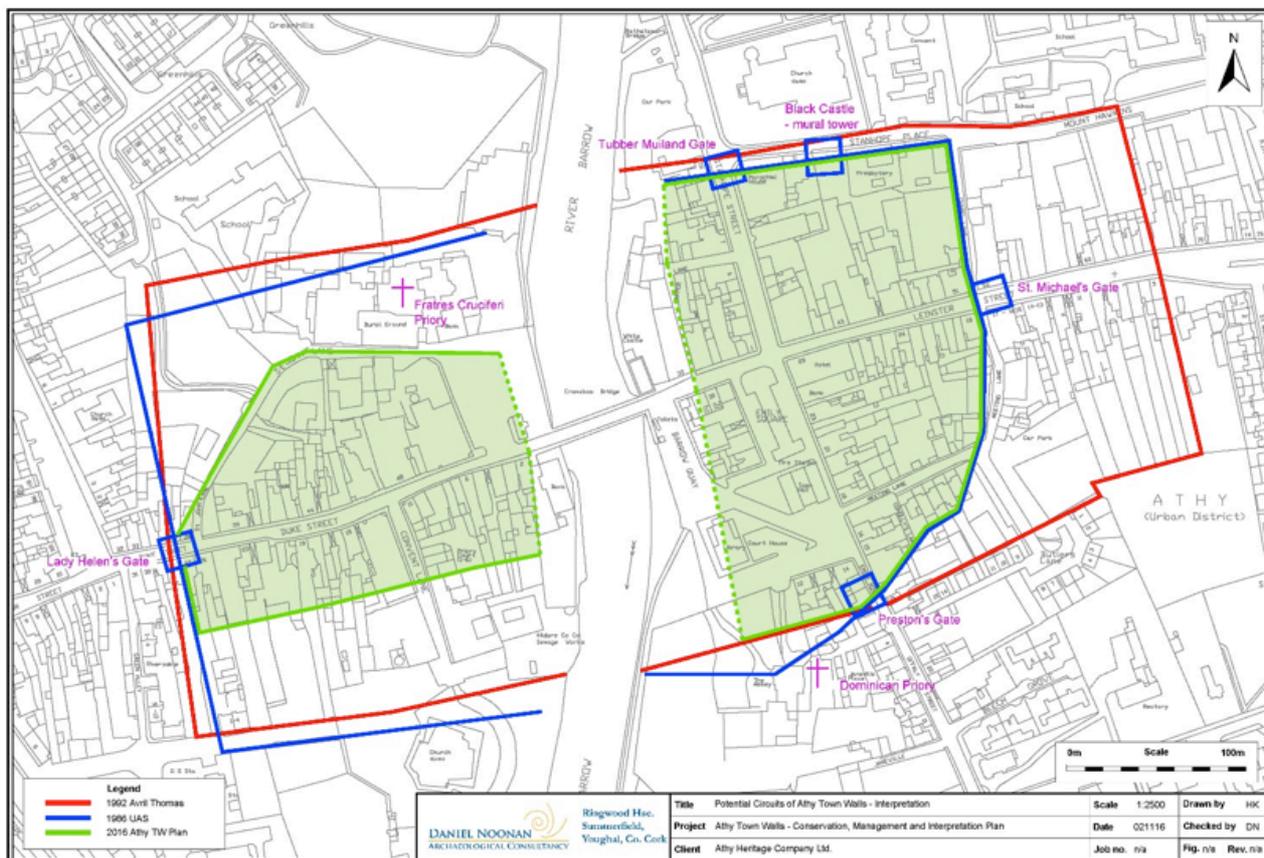


Fig 2.10 Interpretations of the circuit of Athy Town Walls (1986, 1992 and 2016)

2.2.2.1 Urban Archaeological Survey (UAS) assessment of the Town Walls (1986)

The Urban Archaeological Survey of County Kildare (UAS), completed in 1986, is the primary source for our current thinking on the form, shape and circuit of the Athy Town Walls (see Figure 2.10 above). The survey's assessment was based in part on the surviving street layouts, burgage or property plots, documentary material, analysis of the available historic mapping, including the late eighteenth century surveys by John Rocque, and the manuscript history of 1857 by the local historian John Henry.

The UAS assessed the defences on east bank of River Barrow as comprising a D-shaped area, approximating 290m north to south by 200m east to west, totalling an area of around 9ha. The wall was present on the landward side and pierced by three gates: Tubber Muiland Gate near the junction of Stanhope St. and Stanhope Place; St. Michael's Gate at the east end of the medieval walled area, which straddled what is now

Leinster St., at its crossing with Chapel Lane and Meeting Lane. The final gate was Preston's Gate, to the south on Offaly St. The location of a mural tower known as the Black Castle was also identified, almost mid-way along Stanhope Place, east of the Tubber Muiland Gate. It is uncertain, perhaps unlikely that the riverside parts of the medieval town were walled; the defence here would primarily have been the river, probably supported by a timber palisade and maybe an external ditch.

No information on the form of the gates and the mural towers is contained in the known documentary recorded, apart from the details of Preston's Gate from the Du Noyer painting. The Henry manuscript does describe Preston's Gate as consisting of two potential phases of building, with the earlier of better build quality. There is debate as to the name of the gate. An obvious theory is that it is named after the Confederate General Thomas Preston, who failed in an assault that caused the deaths of 200 men, when he attacked the town in 1646, focusing his efforts on this gate. Alternatively, it could be a corruption of 'postern gate', relating to a potential secondary gate into the closure of the Dominican priory that was located in this area. This is unlikely, as a minor gate of the monastery may not have been prestigious enough for the landward entrance to the town from Carlow to the south. The third theory concerns the tradition of naming town gates after their occupants.

The conclusion that the UAS arrived at to for the circuit of the medieval walled town on the east side of the river is that the enclosing wall, or wall and ditch, ran from the northwest at the river, in an eastward direction, before returning south at the junction of Stanhope Street and Chapel Lane. It then ran southwards to the junction with Leinster Street, forming St. Michael's Gate. The name of St. Michael's Gate may be in reference to the proximity of St. Michael's medieval parish church, 400m to the east. The wall then continued southwest, following the curve still to be seen in Meeting Lane, before (according to the Rocque map) moving diagonally through land that is now occupied by modern houses on the south on the lane as it turns westward, before meeting with Preston's Gate and then continuing to the riverbank. The Dominican priory probably immediately outside its line.

The evidence for the walling of the western area is less convincing and more conjectural. This has led to the identification of a large potential area for the walled town here. It is projected to extend from the potential precinct of St. John priory on the north, as far south as Green Alley street, to include the burgage plots shown there on the Rocque map of this area from 1768. This gives a roughly area of approximately 7ha, with dimensions of around 200m north to south by 200m east to west. One potential gate, Lady Helen's Gate, on for Duke Street, marks the westernmost expanse of the enclosed area. This gate site is located at the meeting of Duke Street and the curving St. John's Lane. The lane travels in a northeast direction towards the site of St. John's priory. Both the UAS and Avril Thomas both broadly agree on this potential interpretation of the western medieval walled area of Athy; but it is all subject to archaeological confirmation.



**Fig 2.11** White Castle, viewed from the west bank of the River Barrow (Photo: Simon Hill, 2016)

White Castle (Figure 2.11 above), which defended the Bridge along with a corresponding tower on the west side from at least the sixteenth century, is not part of the Town Wall. However, it must be regarded as being part of the wider town defences, given that the strategic importance of the river crossing was the reason why a settlement first developed at Athy.

The Rocque mapping of the east end of the town suggests the possibility that the walled area may have been extended in the seventeenth century, as evidenced by the burgage plots along Leinster Street (an interpretation shared by Avril Thomas) and by the narrowing of the roadway near St. Michael's Terrace, suggesting a tower or gate. This hypothesis is subject to future archaeological investigation. The conclusions of the UAS survey of Athy's Town Wall are rigorous and remain accurate.

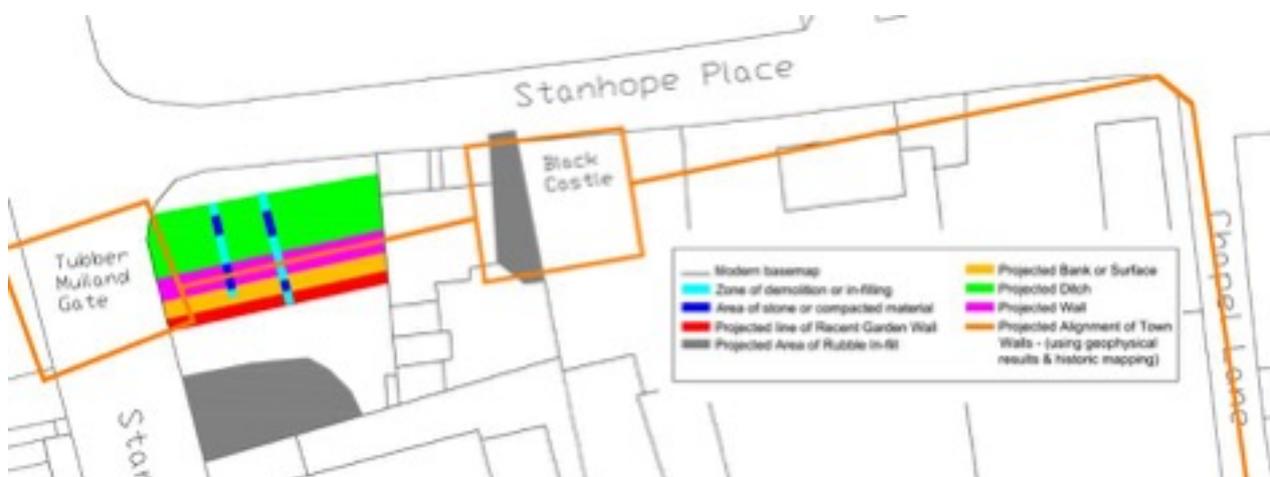
#### *2.2.2.2 Avril Thomas *Walled Towns of Ireland* (1992)*

Avril Thomas' work on the *Walled Towns of Ireland* (published 1992) broadly agrees with the analysis of Athy's Town Walls by the UAS and places more particular emphasis on the potential for an seventeenth century extension eastward along Leinster Street. This possibility cannot be absolutely ruled out until archaeological evidence for or against this hypothesis is uncovered. Any candidate sites for geophysical survey here should be considered for future investigation. Thomas also identified a flat area of elevated ground in the northeast of the walled area to the west, as being a good candidate site for an early castle at Athy, referred to in documents from the late thirteenth century. Again, this hypothesis is subject to archaeological investigation.

### 2.2.2.3 Geophysical Survey at Stanhope Place (2013)

The most significant results from the search for Athy's Town Wall to-date has come from the 2013 geophysical survey carried by Earthsound Archaeological Geophysics, in the grounds of the Parochial House at Stanhope Place (see Figure 2.12 below). The very promising and clear results here confirmed the suspect line of the Town Wall, from near the site of Tubber Muiland Gate, along the south side of Stanhope Place and also suggests that subsurface remains of the Black Castle survive.

The interpretation of the survey indicates that evidence was recorded for the presence of the town wall, running slightly south-southeast to north-northwest, some 12m from the Parochial House garden boundary wall. The wall footprint was estimated at 2.8m wide; but this may be masked by rubble from the demolition of wall that covers the feature. A possible external ditch was also recorded, with a potential width of 7.5m. A possible elevated bank or walking surface some 2m wide is suggested by the results for the inside of the wall. Ground penetrating radar data of the wall and ditch suggests that the ditch may be filled with pockets of rubble. This could indicate that town walls were demolished and the ditches fill with rubble; although the best stone must have been retained for new building around the town. These feature appear to be buried at least 1.2m below the present ground level of the garden. A potential depth for the external ditch was not presented in the report.



**Fig 2.12** The interpreted results from the geophysical survey of Stanhope Place (Gimson, 2013)

The results of this investigation has made the subsurface walls tangible. The information on dimensions, depth below ground level and the sequence of wall, external ditch and internal walkway will be invaluable in identifying further parts of the circuit of the wall. The findings also lend support to the 1515 Murage Charter from Henry VIII, which directed that the townfolk '*erect construct build and strengthen the same town with fosses and walls of stone and lime*'.

#### 2.2.2.4 Excavations in the vicinity of the Town Wall

As part of the archaeological assessment for the Plan, a review of all recorded excavations on the line of or in the vicinity of the supposed circuits of the Town Wall was carried out. The review was a two-stage process, with an initial review of the online excavations summaries database. This was followed by a research visit to the National Monuments Service (NMS) Archive, to review the paper copies of selected reports, to glean more information, particularly accurate locations. The body of the information gained from the review is contained in [Appendix 3](#).

A total of 29 archaeological test excavations, assessments and minor excavations were carried between 1990 and 2013 within the Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) for Athy. Of these, 18 were selected for further review at the NMS Archive, as they had potential relevance to the possible location of the circuit of the Town Wall. The locations tested varied from significantly areas were tested (such as the Pettit supermarket area and the Shaw's store area on the west side), as where smaller areas across the Zone of Archaeological Potential.

Excluding the geophysical survey results from Stanhope Place, none of the excavations unearthed any evidence for subsurface survival of the Town Walls in their subject sites. However, it must be borne in mind that test excavations by their nature usually vary in the area of a site they evaluated, sometimes depending on the site, at an estimated 12-30%.

One notable observation was made by an archaeologist (Martin Byrne) who, over a number of years assessed and monitored works on the west side of the river, in several adjoining properties at the west end of Duke Street (which run as intact plots from Duke Street to Green Alley street). These properties are supposed to contain the Town Wall, with the possibility for the south side, the southwest corner and west side as it returned to go north.

Having examined the properties, he concluded that none of the upstanding boundary walls in the area were Town Wall, nor contained fabric that could be associated with it. More interestingly, when test trenching the southern end of the properties the excavator concluded that the Town Wall was further north than the existing east to west run of Green Alley. The same archaeologist monitored a service trench along Green Alley towards the former Dominican church and did not uncover any signs of the wall.

This observation amongst others, suggests a possible third new interpretation of the potential circuit of Town Wall on the west side of the river. The results of the review, along with the findings of the previous assessments and the geophysical results from Stanhope Place, have been utilised to form the discussion of the potential for the nature, location and circuit of the Town Wall in Section 2.2.2.

### 2.2.3 Archaeological Potential for the Town Wall

A key component in preparing the Plan was to walk the potential circuits of the Town Walls that are outlined above. The purpose was to assess them and add more information where possible. This section must be read with the detailed, photographically illustrated walkabout of the circuits to be found in [Appendix 4b](#). It was hoped during the walkabout that possible upstanding wall fabric may be identified, but unfortunately, no fabric or potential upstanding fabric was observed.

The walkabout started on the west side of the river, where the first new observation made was the potential for a gate location at the west end of Leinster Street, where it meets the Bridge and the White Castle. Given that the White Castle was primarily used for the defence of the Bridge and not the town, it is conceivable that there was some other form of control to enter the settlement area, such as a gate. There is a physical distance separation from the castle/bridge, which from historic mapping sources (Rocque's two surveys of Athy and the Ordnance Survey) was a constant feature; so this gap would support the hypothesis of a gate.

The walkabout followed the potential wall circuit, along Garter Lane, which is potentially the closest modern property line to the medieval riverbank, and continued in a clockwise direction. It follows both the UAS circuit and Avril Thomas', finishing back at the Bridge. Apart from a potential change in the building line on the north side of Leinster Street that may support a later, seventeenth century extension of the walled area, no other observations were made on the east side of the river. The question as to whether there was an extended walled area or merely a development of a post-medieval eastern suburb is worthy of future study.

Archaeological investigation, both non-invasive geophysics and excavation, together with research into the property deeds and other documentation, may resolve this conundrum.

The walkabout for the east side of the river moves anti-clockwise, starting from the public car park near the Bridge. St. John's Graveyard and St. John's House mark the location of the medieval monastery on the west side of the river. Is it unsure as to whether St. John's was inside or outside the Town Walls? Monastic orders did dwell within walled towns; however, they tended to build outside the walls of medieval towns, as it allowed them to maintain control of their precinct. It is probable that St. John's was outside the walls, as it arrived very early in the Anglo-Norman development of Athy, possibly in advance of all walling.

The elevated area to the west of St. John's was walked and no surface indicators to support Avril Thomas' theory of a castle at location were observed. Archaeological investigation may answer this question in the future. Moving along St. John's Lane, the curve of the street is noticeable. This is similar to the curving of Meeting Lane, which has been interpreted as being indicative of the circuit of the Town Wall on the east side of the river. Modern lanes and streets, particularly ones that are not straight, but which are suspected to follow earlier boundaries, historically developed on either side of well-defined features such as town walls. It is possible that St. John's Lane follows an earlier track or route to St. John's monastery, which may skirted along the outside of a boundary such as the Town Wall?

Moving south, across Duke Street and passed the site of Lady Helen's Gate, the potential line of the walls disappear into the properties on the south side of the street. The redeveloped rear of 28-29 Duke Street, with visual access to the adjoining properties, was accessed from Green Alley. It was here that the works by Martin Byrne led to his conclusions above the circuit of the wall in this area. Again, on our visit no upstanding fabric was noted. The walkabout concludes along Green Alley, as far as the riverbank, with no observed features of note.

To conclude on the western walled area, the curve of St. John's Lane and the archaeological observations about the southwest corner of the walls on Green Alley, coupled with the layout of the burgage plots (first recorded on the Rocque map of 1768, after the removal of the walls and expansion of the town beyond their restriction) have led us to suggest a new, smaller interpretation for the potential circuit of the medieval walled town to the west (see Figure 2.10 above). This interpretation reduces the earlier ones to roughly D-shaped area, with extents of 150 north to south by 200m east to west.

A final point on the archaeological potential for Athy's Town Wall, the very encouraging results of the geophysical survey work at Stanhope Place has the greatest potential to identify more of the circuit and features of the wall in the future, and every opportunity should be availed of to expand this knowledge.

**Please Note**

It must be noted that new interpretation of Athy's Town Wall circuit is an academic theory and has not been proved. It should not in any way be interpreted as superseding the legally defined Zone of Archaeological Potential for Athy and the location of Recorded Monuments or archaeological features within it, nor any other listing or analysis that is used for planning and development purposes.

### 3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF MONUMENTS

#### 3.1 Upstanding and Possible Remains

Extensive research into the potential routes of the Athy Town Walls, as part of this Plan and previous analyses such as the Urban Archaeological Survey (1986) of Kildare, Avril Thomas' corpus on the Walled Towns of Ireland and several development-driven archaeological assessments (see [Appendix 3](#)), have regrettably confirmed that there is no known surviving or clearly visible upstanding fabric of the monument.

Indeed, there is little definitive documentary or other recorded information about the actual form of the wall and that available relates primarily to the eastern part of the town. Du Noyer's nineteenth century (c1840) painting of Preston's Gate prior to its removal in 1860 (see Figure 3.1, below) and the mid-nineteenth century account of the town - *Athy and its Recollections* by John Henry (see Figure 3.2, overleaf) - do constitute a fragmentary record of the walls.



Fig 3.1 *Preston's Gate*, c1840 by Du Noyen (© Royal Irish Academy)

However, the physical layout of the walls can be read in the modern streetscape of Athy and the results of recent geophysical surveys at Stanhope Place indicate a potential for extensive subsurface survival.

One caveat must be issued before dismissing a surviving town defence. The White Castle, which at its core is an urban tower house, built to defend the bridge and crossing point at Athy, was a *de facto* part of the defences.

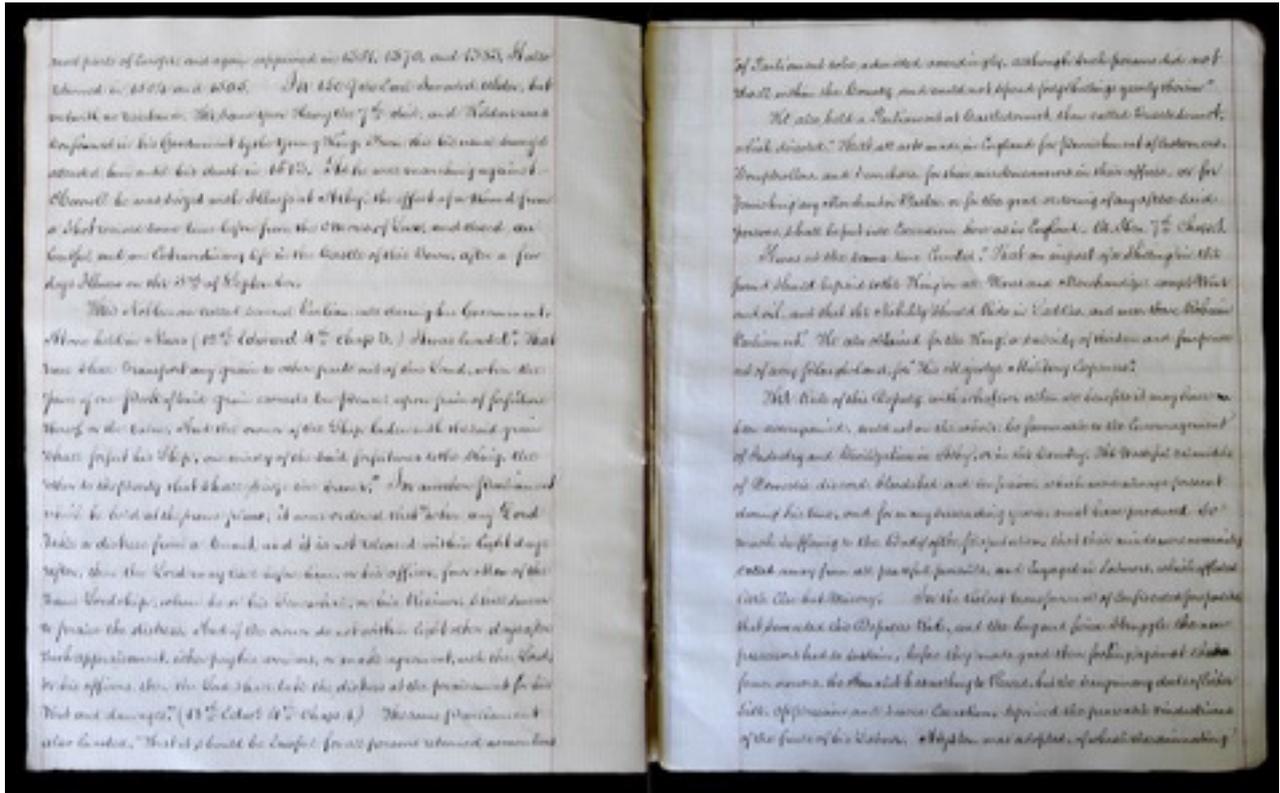


Fig 3.2 Pages from *Athy and its Recollections* by John Henry

### 3.2 Interventions and Phases

Due to the total lack of extant remains, it is not possible to provide measured drawings showing different interventions and phases.

## 4. PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND INTEGRITY

### 4.1 Upstanding and Possible Remains

Although no upstanding fabric of the Town Wall remains, commentary on its condition and structural integrity is not merely academic. The results from the geophysical survey in the grounds of the Parochial House at Stanhope Place are promising, in terms of both subsurface potential for wall survival and physical integrity. The interpreted results suggest that long runs of the wall survive subsurface, with an external ditch up to 7m wide. The results for Black Castle suggest that mural towers and gateways also survive. Such a possibility is more than likely a probability, as evidenced by the corpus of many excavated towers and gates from historic towns across the country. A major doubt does remain over the physical integrity of such features, particularly gateways that are now beneath junctions, such as St. Michael’s Gate at the crossing of Chapel Lane and Meeting Lane with Leinster Street or Tubber Muiland Gate at the junction of Stanhope Street and Stanhope Place, where historic and modern services would have caused significant impacts.

The results of the geophysical investigations (see Figure 4.1, below) argue strongly for more such investigations at other suitable locations across Athy. They more obviously argue for assessing the feasibility of the next logical step at Stanhope Street – a research excavations to confirm the results. Without archaeological excavation, no further comment can be made, beyond speculation as to true extents, locations and phases of construction of Athy’s Town Wall.

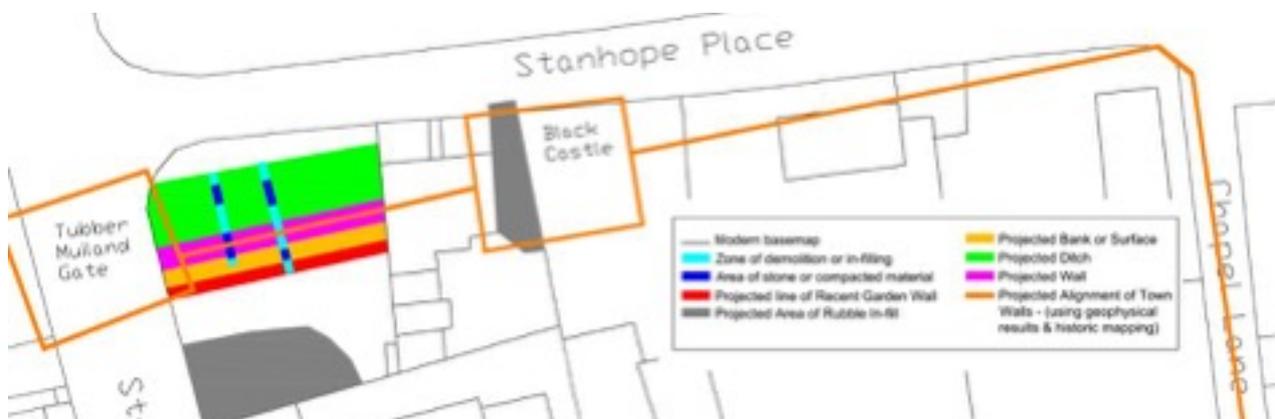


Fig 4.1 Combined and projected interpretation, geophysical survey, 2013 (© Earthbound Archaeological Geophysics)

### 4.2 Appraisal of Condition

Due to the total lack of extant remains, it is not possible to provide an appraisal of condition.

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 5.1 Previous Assessments

There are no previous studies that have formally assessed the Cultural Significance of Athy's Town Wall and the wider medieval town within the now established ICOMOS based framework of evaluation, as enshrined in the Burra Charter 2013 and the Ename Charter 2008. The *Urban Archaeological Survey* (1986) does assess the problems and potential of Athy in purely archaeological terms, identifying the lack of surface wall fabric and therefore an understanding of the layout of the town defences. However, it does highlight the important archaeological research potential that Athy has, as an unusual example of a medium sized Anglo-Norman town on the frontier of the marshes of Kildare; which survived as an inhabited location through the turbulent later Middle Ages, through to today.

The evaluation of Athy by Avril Thomas, as part of a larger study of the corpus of Walled Towns in Ireland, is confined to a focused academic research on the site type, and is therefore limited in an overall evaluation of significance.

The current *Athy Town Development Plan 2012-18* does not contained a specific assessment of the Town Wall, nor does it mention it in Chapter 12 - Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (see [Appendix 1](#)). This is a policy weakness in terms of dealing with the specific issues and constraints that the Athy Town Wall faces in regard to proactive conservation, interpretation and management. Overall however, the development plan has strong archaeological and built heritage related planning and development policies and objectives. An aim of the Athy Town Wall Conservation, Management and Interpretation Plan is to supplement Kildare County Council's heritage policies in the forthcoming *Athy Local Area Plan*.

### 5.2 Assessment of Significance of Athy Town Walls

#### 5.2.1 Historical

Historically, the walled town of Athy was a strategic outpost of major importance. It was initially laid out during the first phase of the Anglo-Norman Colony in Ireland, and after its contraction following a calamitous fourteenth century, Athy became the southernmost frontier station of the Pale. The Bridge at Athy crossing the Barrow was key to the stability of the region and any faction that wished to control it. The rebuilding of Town Walls stipulated by the 1515 Charter of King Henry VIII was explicitly directed at a as defence against the Gaelic Irish. The relative peace in Ireland in the eighteenth century saw Athy, like many Irish towns, lose the need and constriction of its Town Walls; yet their layout still remains partially fossilised in the streets and historic buildings that dot the town today.

### 5.2.2 Archaeological

As an historic, built place, Athy and its defences (including the White Castle defending the Bridge) are of archaeological significance. As highlighted by the Urban Archaeological Survey, the town is has important archaeological research potential, given that it is as an unusual example of a medium sized Anglo-Norman town that operated as an outpost on the frontier of the marshes of Kildare a vulnerable buffer to the Gaelic Irish that threatened the late medieval Pale. The current lack of upstanding remains is now being significantly tempered by the research work of an enlightened, self-motivating group of local archaeologists and historians, using modern non-invasive archaeological techniques to rediscover the Town Wall – possibly a unique approach to town wall studies across Ireland.

### 5.2.3 Artistic

No upstanding walls for Athy is unfortunately coupled with a lack of historic illustrations of them. However, the Du Noyer watercolour of Preston's Gate before it was removed shows the aesthetic quality that Town Walls can have. Mr. Hierome's cataclysmic view of Athy under siege in 1641, although somewhat fanciful, is part of the pamphleteering tradition that developed out of the new, free-thinking, free-worshiping worlds of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Pamphlets were like blogs and social media posts are today; the authors were trying to get garner sympathy, support and popularity for their opinions. The maps of Athy, produced by John Rocque, one of the prolific surveyor/cartographers of eighteenth century Ireland, are works of science and art in themselves. Measured survey was applied to art to produce a snapshot of Athy in time; unfortunately too late to accurately record the Town Wall, but did map the street layout that allow us to assess where they were.

### 5.2.4 Technical & Scientific

While not upstanding, the construction nature and details of the subsurface remains of the Athy walls may be comparable to similar sites. Such information can advance the understanding of town defences as a technology and bulwark against hostility. Variation in the quality of the wall, when coupled with identifiable historical events may added to our interpretations of those happenings. Increased knowledge of them may also shed light on why there were removed when they were no longer needed. Was it because they could not be incorporated into new buildings? Were they too restrictive, like the gates or dangerous, as was the case with Preston's Gate? Perhaps too valuable a source of good building stone?

The archaeologically driven geophysical survey of suitable points along the route of the Town Wall has already produced exciting results. This scientific, non-invasive approach to understanding the walls has its obvious result, but when coupled with involving members of the public, it can open-up a different understanding of the use of the science of magnets, electric and radio waves to give us a look into the past.

### 5.2.5 Social & Cultural Interest

While the Town Walls are of established academic interest, their story, and how it is told also serves to tell the public in general how Athy came to be. How in the past urban dwellers spent their lives and lived in a society that was sometimes under threat and was otherwise prosperous. How, as rule of thumb, those within the walls were predominantly newly arrived people with different customs, language and clothing, to that of the Gaelic Irish outside. How the Gaelic Irish would have treated them with distrust and vice-versa. However, there was still interaction between the two peoples, over time leading to the development of complex interactions and alliances; the genesis of the adage of the colonist becoming 'more Irish than the Irish themselves'.

Within the walls, the lives of the inhabitants was structured, with places for living, trading, worshipping all defined by an infrastructure of houses, streets, shops, a market place and churches – Athy had three, St. Michael's parish church to the east outside the town defences, the Dominicans on the east bank and the Crutched Friars of St. John's on the west.

Removal of the walls was not only a physical act, it also brought down social boundaries, allowing for an expansion of the town's living space and greater mixing of its peoples. Undoubtedly, the walls remained in the collective social memory or folklore for generations after that event, and may be there still.

The story of Athy, defined by its walls, can promote a sense of interest and pride in its past. This pride is already manifest in its active heritage movement and the work it undertakes to understand and promote it. The Town Walls can provide an excellent opportunity for the community celebration of the history and heritage of Athy.

### 5.3 Assessment of Upstanding Wall Remains

An assessment of upstanding town wall fabric is not possible, as current knowledge holds that nothing remains upstanding. However unlikely, given the levels of research and searching over the years in Athy, the possibility for wall fabric to be identified in the future, hidden within the townscape, cannot be ruled out. Strong planning policy from the Local Authority, based on a good research agenda will maximise this potential.

### 5.4 Statement of Significance

Athy's Town Wall is a town-wide heritage asset, despite being underground. It has local and national significance in terms of its cultural heritage value. From an archaeological and historical research standpoint, its study and interpretation presents an opportunity to understand the origins and changes that a medium sized, late medieval Anglo-Norman walled town, located in a frontier zone between the Gaelic Irish and the new colonists, experienced over a long period of up to 800 years. The town underwent many changes in that time,

with its defences at the forefront of historical events, as Athy became a strategic outpost of the Pale; centered on maintaining the Bridge over the Barrow and communication to the rest of Ireland. The town defences' origins, development, influence on its streets and buildings, and eventual removal, is set to a background of the continued interaction between the Gaelic Irish and the morphing of the colonist into the English, the Planters and finally into the Ascendancy of the eighteenth century. While the route of the Town Walls is not fixed, there is an educational and adventure-seeking opportunity, for inhabitants and visitors alike, through continued research, excavations, proper development and interpretation, to find the wall again and place it in its modern, inclusive context.

### **5.5 Threats to Significance**

The most significant threat to the significance of Athy's Town Wall, and heritage in general, is that of inertia. If the ideas and policies in this Plan are acknowledged but not exercised, then it is an opportunity lost. The Town Wall would remain lost. Should the local authority not be able to support the policies devised here and elsewhere, then that is a threat. Unmitigated development will have a dramatic, direct and irreversible effect on the non-renewable archaeological and built heritage. The Town Walls present an excellent educational and promotional opportunity on which to build Athy's overall heritage offering. Lose them, and so goes, the chance to create a vision, awareness, understanding and appreciation of Athy, past and present.

## 6. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

### 6.1 Constraints arising from Significance

The principal constraint arising from the assessment of the significance of Athy Town Wall is that of its legal status and permissions to work with it. As stated previously (in Section 1.3.1), the Town Walls are, in terms of National Monuments legislation, regarded as National Monuments. This means that Ministerial Consent, under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act 1930 to 2014, will be required for any works that can impact on the Town Wall, both directly from activities such as ground disturbance associated with new developments or infrastructural works such as pipe laying for water and electrical services, and indirectly by works in close proximity to it.

There is no formal 'buffer zone' around town defences, but as a rule of thumb any works within 30m of an upstanding town wall or the subsurface line of it, will require Consent. It is best to consult with the NMS well in advance of any works to clarify this. It should also be borne in mind that it is part of the NMS's *National Policy on Town Defences* that no works or new developments be allowed to occur above or across the subsurface line of a town wall. This is a particular consideration for Athy.

The Ministerial Consent process can be lengthy, with a formal application for Consent required, detailing the location, nature and extent of the proposed works and an archaeological assessment of the potential impacts it may have on the town wall and any proposed mitigation measures. The application needs to be made by an archaeologist or other competent person, acceptable to the NMS, on behalf of the developer/promoter. Often, when developments are in connection with a planning application, it is advised that the application for Consent is made after a Grant of Permission, as the proposed development will have been finalised and the Consent application can be made of a completed application. This offsets any need for variation in the consent process and the ensuing time delays that can occur. The costs associated with a Consent, including the preparation of the application and any subsequent professional attendances are bore by the developer.

In terms of the interpretative opportunities for this Plan, Ministerial Consent may be required for some aspects of the installation of signage and displays that may involve ground breaking. It is recommended that once the Plan is adopted by the stakeholders, it is circulated to the NMS for discussion and the establishment of a rapport and support.

Given that the historic core of Athy is contained within an ACA, any changes pertaining to accessing the Town Wall, through new interpretation ventures, may also require some form of declaration or acceptance from Kildare County Council.

## 6.2 Relevant Guiding Heritage Principles

Key to understanding the significances and vulnerabilities of the non-renewable archaeological resource that Athy Town Walls are, is to place them in a principled, cognitive framework based on established national and international standards and conventions for safeguarding our archaeological and built heritage.

The relevant national policy regarding works to the Town Wall and its curtilage, and any resulting physical and visual impacts, can be found in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government's *National Policy on Town Defences* (2008) document. The policy considers that not only is the upstanding wall fabric important, but that equal weighting is given to any subsurface remains and the potential subsurface line of a town wall. This document is the key piece of interpretation of the legal status of town defences and the approach that National Monuments Service takes in safeguarding them. The declared policy is:

*The known and expected circuits of the defences (both upstanding and buried, whether of stone or embankment construction) and associated features of all town defences are to be considered a single national monument and treated as a unit for policy and management purposes. There should be a presumption in favour of preservation in-situ of archaeological remains and preservation of their character, setting and amenity.*

Protection of the built heritage is guided by the *Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (2011), produced by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The guidelines sets out the following as to what built heritage is to be protected:

*Our architectural heritage is a unique resource, an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of our past. Structures and places can, over time, acquire character and special interest through their intrinsic quality, continued existence and familiarity. The built heritage consists not only of great artistic achievements, but also of the everyday works of craftsmen. In a changing world, these structures have a cultural significance which we may recognise for the first time only when individual structures are lost or threatened. As we enjoy this inheritance, we should ensure it is conserved in order to pass it on to our successors.*

For Athy's Town Walls, the architectural guidelines become relevant to this Plan when architectural assessments of proposed development locations in the town are requested and their scope of works includes an inspection of the existing standing buildings. Modern alterations, extensions, renders and treatments can hide earlier wall fabric and there is always the possibility of Town Wall fabric remains hidden in this way or unnoticed in rubble stone boundary walls. The requirement for a good architectural assessment during the planning application period for a relevant development proposal, has potential to rediscover the walls that cannot currently be found.

As a member of the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN), Athy has committed itself to the primary objective of the organisation which is "... to ensure that Ireland's unique cultural and archaeological heritage in relation to its walled and fortified towns and cities is protected and managed in a sustainable and appropriate manner in the long-term" (<http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/irish-walled-towns> - accessed 15th October 2016).

The international standards of best practise for the understanding, conservation and management of the archaeological and built heritage are contained within two key conventions of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) – the *Venice Charter 1964* and the *Burra Charter 2013*. Core to the conservation philosophy of these conventions are the principles of the need for:

- (a) good understanding of the subject monument or site;
- (b) carrying out of appropriate works; with
- (c) minimum intervention; which are
- (d) legible and
- (e) reversible if required.

Irish national policy on heritage resources such as town defences, has been developed with these conventions in mind. Similarly, the IWTN is committed to these principles.

### **6.3 Owners Requirements / Access**

Given that no upstanding Town Wall fabric is known, it is not currently possible to readily define a list and distribution of owners. However, the town population has a 'collective' common ownership of the Town Walls, through the mechanism of the local authority. The analysis of the possible route(s) of the defences, shows that the walls have potential to travel beneath definable modern properties that have owners. Once the presence of the Town Wall beneath a property is confirmed, as in the case of the Parochial House at Stanhope Place, then specific owner requirements become relevant. At this remove, the most basic requirement for an owner is:

- (a) knowledge or not of whether the walls are present beneath their property;
- (b) access to this knowledge; and
- (c) an understanding of the foregoing implications of this presence, particularly should there be future development proposed for the site.

The importance of increased knowledge of the location, nature and extent of Athy's Town Walls, through further archaeological research and investigation, is readily apparent here.

## 6.4 Heritage Planning Context

Kildare County Council has a significant role to play in safeguarding the future of Athy's Town Walls. As the main planning control mechanism, the local authority controls the nature and type of development the town experiences, through its policy, objectives and zoning created in the current *Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018* and the forthcoming *Athy Local Area Plan*. As the initial arbitrator of the planning process, the Council also assess development proposals against the values expressed in the development plan. Of the proactive archaeological and architectural objectives described in Section 12.11 of the development plan, the two most relevant to the heritage planning context are as stated earlier, in s1.3.6, and are repeated here for convenience:

**AHO6:** To encourage, where practicable, the provision of public access to sites identified on the Record of Monuments and Places under the direct ownership or control of the Local Authority and the State.

**AHO8:** To support the Athy Heritage Centre and museum as an important tourism and heritage resource for the town. To support its board of directors in progressing related programmes and proposals.

Both objectives seek to improve the public's awareness of Athy's heritage, a knowledge of and pride in the town walls of Athy and their contemporary and historical significance. The Council is supportive of initiatives, such as this Plan, which encourage research, understanding and interpretation of this significance. It also works on a partnership approach with interested groups, as here the Athy Heritage Centre and the Irish Walled Towns Network.

## 7. CONSERVATION POLICIES & ACTIONS

### 7.1 Policy Aims

The policies outlined in the Plan aim to make tangible and support the significance of Athy's Town Walls, by encouraging awareness, understanding and protection of the subsurface and any upstanding fabric that comes to light in the future. In the past the defences were of varying influence and impact on the town's inhabitants. For the people of today's Athy, visitor and local alike, they can be a key focus of public awareness and appreciation of the long enduring history and heritage of the town.

The policies support the enhancements actions proposed for the defences, their circuit and setting within the modern townscape.

### 7.2 Proposed Site Uses and Stakeholder Needs

- All of the Stakeholders in Athy's Town Walls, have a Duty of Care to ensure the safeguarding into the future this non-renewable heritage resource. It is acknowledged that all Stakeholders have differing needs regarding the walls. Landowners on whose property it may be beneath have concerns for implications this may have; particularly if they are looking to alter or develop their properties in the future. The National Monuments Service has needs as regards being the State organisation charged, in consultation with the relevant Minister and under the terms of the National Monuments Act 1930-2014 legislation, with ensuring that this National Monument is protected. Kildare County Council as the planning authority is charged with the orderly development of Athy, in line with various legislation, State policies and stated development plan aims and objectives, and with taking a balanced view of all proposals. Organisations such as the Irish Walled Towns Network are focused on the correct appropriation of the Town Walls for many uses; but all must be within keeping with heritage best practise and inclusive of all strands of society. Interested individuals and groups are also stakeholders in Athy's Town Walls, particularly those who amassed significant research and knowledge of the heritage asset, and their contribution must be acknowledged and encouraged.
- All proposals to create an awareness of the Town Wall, through investigations, interpretation, branding and marketing should take into account the needs of all stakeholders.
- The site uses as proposed by the interpretational actions of the Plan have been arrived at with the needs of all stakeholders in mind.

- The proposed uses should be appropriate in terms of location, design, scale, potential for mitigation of impact on the subsurface wall and the integrity of the circuit of the Town Wall. Assessments of all proposals should be carried out and appropriate mitigation measures sought.
- The Plan should be regularly reviewed, to ensure it maintains its relevance, as new information comes to light, priorities for actions move and any changes in legislation that occur.

### **7.3 Future Conservation Policies and Actions**

- Ensure that all stakeholders are made aware that all archaeological activities in relation to Athy Town Wall take cognisance of the provisions of the National Monuments Act 1930-2014 and the walls, both subsurface remains and any potential upstanding fabric is regarded as a National Monument. State policy on the status and treatment of town walls can be found in the *National Policy on Town Defences* 2008 document, as produced by the National Monuments Service.
- Given the lack of known upstanding Town Wall fabric, it is crucial to maintain awareness of the circuit of the wall's layout, both east and west, in Athy's streetscape. Any proposed future developments within the core of the historic town, regardless of scale, should take cognisance of the subsurface potential for the wall, its surface circuit and any impacts it may have, and propose mitigation measures that are acceptable to the Planning Authority – Kildare County Council and the National Monuments Service.
- Good design principles should be applied to any proposed development in the vicinity of the Town Wall's circuit, regardless of its subsurface situation.
- Seek, when opportunities permit, and or when the interpretation proposals of the Plan allow, to mark the circuit of the Town Wall, with appropriate pavement treatments and road markers.
- Look to the possibility of creating some form of 'Town Wall Precinct' in the core of the historic town, which complements the interpretational actions of the Plan and can contribute to the heritage branding of Athy.

### **7.4 Archaeological Management Policies**

- Ensure that all stakeholders are made aware that all archaeological activities in relation to Athy Town Wall is subject to the provisions of the National Monuments Act 1930-2014 and the walls, both subsurface remains and any potential upstanding fabric is regarded as a National Monument. All works in vicinity, on or to town defences requires Consent from the relevant Minister whose Department is charged with caring for this national heritage resource.

- Acknowledge State policy on the status and treatment of town walls, as stated in the *National Policy on Town Defences* 2008 document. The preferred policy is for the in situ preservation of town defences, including maintaining their character, setting and amenity. Developments above the wall, such as new roads and structure is not desirable, as they can injure the integrity of the Town Wall circuit.
- Ensure that the requirement for consultation with the National Monuments Service on matters relating to developments in the vicinity of the circuit of the Town Wall is maintained.
- All planning applications must take cognisance, through appropriate archaeological assessment, of the proposed development site in question, both for its location in the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Athy in general and specifically if it is close to any part of the Town Wall circuit.
- Support the strong archaeological and built heritage policies of the *Athy Town Development Plan 2012-2018*; and those of the forthcoming *Athy Local Area Plan*, in preparation by Kildare County Council.
- Encourage the continued non-invasive geophysical survey investigations on appropriate points along the circuit of the Town Wall. This approach to understanding the location, nature and extent of the circuit of the defences is already proving its worth. Seek the continued support of the National Monuments Service in this endeavour.
- Developed a 'Statement of Research Design for Athy Town Walls', to guide future research, investigation and access to the Town Walls. This guidance document will bring together all of the questions of location, construction, history and extent that are being asked of the Town Walls; where and how the answers can be sought; and how to go about this. The development of the document should be archaeologically-led, with contributions from historians, engineers, architects, state agencies, the local authority and the various interested local organisations and individuals that can positively contribute to it.
- Support, in consultation with the National Monuments Service, archaeological research excavations on the promising parts of the circuit of the Town Wall, as indicated by the geophysical surveys and other sources of research. Such excavations are an excellent opportunity for community archaeology and the development of inclusiveness in Athy's heritage.
- Create a local archive, accessible to researchers and interested individuals, consisting of all current and future knowledge and information relating to the Town Wall, and Athy's heritage in general.

## 8. APPLICATION OF INTERPRETATION

### 8.1 Interpretation as a Conservation Process

Through interpretation, understanding;  
through understanding, appreciation;  
through appreciation, protection.

Freeman Tilden in *Interpreting our Heritage*, 1957

#### 8.1.1 What is interpretation

The Department of Conservation of New Zealand provides one of the most readily accessible definitions of the concept of 'interpretation':

*Interpretation communicates what is significant about places, people or events. The essence of interpretation provides insight for visitors about what's special and how and why it's valued. It's a celebration of place and things, of culture and nature, creativity and folklore, great successes and failures in our history. Interpretation is connected to sites and objects, artwork or living things and it can happen anywhere; in parks, visitor centres, historic sites, city streets, museums, zoos or galleries, at special events or promotions, and in publications.*

Interpretation Handbook & Standard

Department of Conservation

Government of New Zealand, Wellington, June 2005

Communicating to visitors what a people, land, site or history means helps to enrich their life experience and, by transfer, helps to enrich the lives of those around them. Interpretation communicates **what** is special about people, places or events, and explains **why** it is special and of relevance. Good interpretation provokes people to think and wonder, which leads to meaning and ultimately a greater understanding of the world around us.

*Heritage Interpretation is the art of revealing - on the spot - the meaning of natural, cultural and historical heritage, to an audience that is visiting a specific place in their leisure time.*

Spanish Association for Heritage Interpretation

INTEPA Project for the Transfer of Training, Madrid, 2010

### 8.1.2 Benefits of Interpretation

Interpretation turns factual information about a place or theme into something meaningful for a visitor. It is an explanation of the natural, cultural or historic values attached to people, places or events. It enables visitors to gain insight and understanding about the reasons for conservation and ongoing protection of our heritage.

#### Benefits for visitors

A traveller may not know what “interpretation” is but the experience it offers is what they are usually in search of. Interpretation enhances visitor experiences by:

- being relevant and interactive
- fulfilling their curiosity
- creating meaning and provoking thought
- being entertaining

#### Benefits for operators

Good interpretation will almost always enhance a visitor experience which leads to greater satisfaction and to visitors who are more likely to:

- promote your business through word of mouth
- create repeat business
- purchase something as a memory of the place
- stay longer

Tours based on an interpretive approach can also help to:

- attract higher customer numbers
- distinguish your operation as offering something different
- establish your operation’s environmental credentials
- to encourage actions which help protect the environment your business is based on
- gain more job satisfaction

#### Benefits for conservationists

Interpretation helps to build a relationship between the visitor and the environment. This has many benefits for conservation:

- evokes curiosity about the environment
- raises awareness of our unique flora, fauna and cultural history
- educates about looking after those values
- encourages visitors to treat sites respectfully
- can subtly direct attention to less fragile sites
- promotes discussion and talk about conservation
- leads to behavioural changes of people which support conservation

## 8.2 Principles of Interpretation

A sound knowledge of factual information is required for interpretation, but there is more to interpretation than just facts. Interpretation gives those facts context, elaborates on them and weaves them into stories.

In developing visitor experiences at attractions and tourist sites, Fáilte Ireland has identified interpretation as a key element in this development:

*Interpreting the stories of our attractions and destinations in a fun and engaging way is an important factor in enlivening visitors' experience of Ireland and in bringing it to life for them. This will enhance their overall experience and increase their satisfaction levels, encouraging them to stay longer and spend more in the area, and lead to positive word of mouth and repeat business both for providers and the wider area.*

Interpretation Planning Guidelines, Fáilte Ireland, 2014

Professor Sam H Ham is professor emeritus of Communication Psychology and Conservation Social Sciences at the University of Idaho, USA. Ham's approach to thematic communication (developed from that originally advocated by Professor William J Lewis of the University of Vermont) is now considered best practice in a wide variety of communication fields, in particular the field of heritage interpretation. Ham suggests, with much evidence in support of his suggestion, that there are four important qualities which underpin the principles of interpretation and, if all four qualities are in place, successful interpretative is almost guaranteed. The four qualities of effective interpretation are that it should be:

- enjoyable
- relevant
- organised
- thematic

### 8.2.1 Interpretation should be **enjoyable**

To hold people's attention, any form of communication must be entertaining to some degree.

Incorporating some of the following will help to make interpretation more enjoyable for visitors:

#### **Provide means of interaction**

Keeping people actively involved will hold their attention and make it more fun for them and you. Utilise as many of their senses as possible including touch and taste where possible. Group discussions, question-asking and reflection requires people to form their own opinions and share them. Demonstrations and activities also get people interacting with their environment and with each other.

### Vary the method of interpretative (learning style)

Different people engage with information in different ways. It has long been recognised that different people prefer different learning styles and techniques. Learning styles group common ways that people learn. Everyone has a mix of learning styles. Some people may find that they have a dominant style of learning, with far less use of the other styles. Others may find that they use different styles in different circumstances. There is no right mix. Nor are a person's styles fixed.

The National Trust (UK), for example, when briefing its interpretive designers, encourages interpretative schemes that address all of the seven styles of learning. The following descriptions help to identify which visitors will benefit from particular learning styles and, therefore, will be most comfortable with specific styles of interpretative communication:

- **Visual-spatial**

If you use the visual style, you prefer using images, pictures, colours, and maps to organize information and communicate with others. You can easily visualize objects, plans and outcomes in your mind's eye. You also have a good spatial sense, which gives you a good sense of direction. You can easily find your way around using maps, and you rarely get lost. When you walk out of an elevator, you instinctively know which way to turn.

- **Aural-auditory**

If you use the aural style, you like to work with sound and music. You have a good sense of pitch and rhythm. You typically can sing, play a musical instrument, or identify the sounds of different instruments. Certain music invokes strong emotions. You notice the music playing in the background of movies, TV shows and other media. You often find yourself humming or tapping a song or jingle, or a theme or jingle pops into your head without prompting.

- **Verbal-linguistic**

The verbal style involves both the written and spoken word. If you use this style, you find it easy to express yourself, both in writing and verbally. You love reading and writing. You like playing on the meaning or sound of words, such as in tongue twisters, rhymes, limericks and the like. You know the meaning of many words, and regularly make an effort to find the meaning of new words. You use these words, as well as phrases you have picked up recently, when talking to others.

- **Physical-bodily-kinesthetic**

If the physical style is more like you, it's likely that you use your body and sense of touch to learn about the world around you. It's likely you like sports and exercise, and other physical activities such as gardening or woodworking. You like to think out issues, ideas and problems while you exercise. You would rather go for a run or walk if something is bothering you, rather than sitting at home. You are more sensitive to the physical world around you. You notice and appreciate textures, for example in clothes or furniture. You like 'getting your hands dirty,' or making models, or working out jigsaws.

You typically use larger hand gestures and other body language to communicate. You probably don't mind getting up and dancing either, at least when the time is right. You either love the physical action of theme park rides, or they upset your inner body sense too much and so you avoid them altogether.

When you are learning a new skill or topic, you would prefer to 'jump in' and play with the physical parts as soon as possible. You would prefer to pull an engine apart and put it back together, rather than reading or looking at diagrams about how it works.

The thought of sitting in a lecture listening to someone else talk is repulsive. In those circumstances, you fidget or can't sit still for long. You want to get up and move around.

- **Logical-mathematical**

If you use the logical style, you like using your brain for logical and mathematical reasoning. You can recognize patterns easily, as well as connections between seemingly meaningless content. This also leads you to classify and group information to help you learn or understand it.

You work well with numbers and you can perform complex calculations. You remember the basics of trigonometry and algebra, and you can do moderately complex calculations in your head.

You typically work through problems and issues in a systematic way, and you like to create procedures for future use. You are happy setting numerical targets and budgets, and you track your progress towards these. You like creating agendas, itineraries, and to-do lists, and you typically number and rank them before putting them into action.

Your scientific approach to thinking means you often support your points with logical examples or statistics. You pick up logic flaws in other people's words, writing or actions, and you may point these out to people (not always to everyone's amusement).

You like working out strategies and using simulation. You may like games such as brainteasers, backgammon, and chess. You may also like PC games such as Dune II, Starcraft, Age of Empires, Sid Meier games and others.

- **Social-interpersonal**

If you have a strong social style, you communicate well with people, both verbally and non-verbally. People listen to you or come to you for advice, and you are sensitive to their motivations, feelings or moods. You listen well and understand other's views. You may enjoy mentoring or counselling others.

You typically prefer learning in groups or classes, or you like to spend much one-on-one time with a teacher or an instructor. You heighten your learning by bouncing your thoughts off other people and listening to how they respond. You prefer to work through issues, ideas and problems with a group. You thoroughly enjoy working with a 'clicking' or synergistic group of people.

You prefer to stay around after class and talk with others. You prefer social activities, rather than doing your own thing. You typically like games that involve other people, such as card games and board games. The same applies to team sports such as football or soccer, basketball, baseball, volleyball, baseball and hockey.

- **Solitary-intrapersonal**

If you have a solitary style, you are more private, introspective and independent. You can concentrate well, focusing your thoughts and feelings on your current topic. You are aware of your own thinking, and you may analyze the different ways you think and feel.

You spend time on self-analysis, and often reflect on past events and the way you approached them. You take time to ponder and assess your own accomplishments or challenges. You may keep a journal, diary or personal log to record your personal thoughts and events. You like to spend time alone. You may have a personal hobby. You prefer traveling or holidaying in remote or places, away from crowds.

You feel that you know yourself. You think independently, and you know your mind. You may have attended self-development workshops, read self-help books or used other methods to develop a deeper understanding of yourself. You prefer to work on problems by retreating to somewhere quiet and working through possible solutions. You may sometimes spend too much time trying to solve a problem that you could more easily solve by talking to someone. You like to make plans and set goals. You know your direction in life and work. You prefer to work for yourself, or have thought a lot about it. If you don't know your current direction in life, you feel a deep sense of dissatisfaction.

### 8.2.2 Interpretation should be **relevant**

Keeping things relevant will help people make a personal connection to what they are seeing.

When a visitor can connect new information to something they already know or have experienced, then it is more readily understood and retained.

#### Use comparisons

Comparisons can highlight differences and similarities. This allows people to form connections to new places, animals, plants and landforms by seeing them in relation to what they know.

#### Get to know your audience

Find out where they come from, learn their names if possible and find out their level of knowledge on your topic. If you have someone who is already very well informed then get them to help you out by encouraging them to share their knowledge with the group.

#### Avoid jargon and technical terms

Fancy terms don't necessarily hold a lot of meaning so avoid their use where possible. Use analogies and comparisons to explain things your audience are not familiar with.

### 8.2.3 Interpretation should be **organised**

Information presented in a confused and non-logical order is not easily absorbed. By planning ahead, an interpreter can help visitors to get the most out of their time at an attraction.

#### Determine your objectives

Knowing what you are trying to achieve with your operation is crucial. Think about why you are running this tour and what you would like your audience to come away with. This will help you build objectives for your operation and help provide the framework and themes to build your talks or tours on.

### Do some planning

Think about how you will structure your tour. Following the story-book structure of beginning, middle and end is a good idea and draft out what each will consist of. Make sure you have researched your content well and can include stories about people or places with only occasional facts and figures woven in. Ensuring your ideas and sub-topics flow on from each will help them make sense to people too.

### 8.2.3 Interpretation should be **thematic**

People may easily forget isolated facts and figures but they will remember elements of a presentation based on a message or theme. A theme can be considered to be the moral of the story you are telling. Themes provoke visitors to think and wonder, and these are the starting points for changes in attitudes and behaviour. Just as a good book makes you think and leaves you with a lasting impression, so should good interpretation.

The theme contains the message you would like people to go away with and provides the thread for linking your information together in a meaningful way. A theme which your interpretation is based on is usually written as a sentence (with a verb) and has an action element. To help create themes for your topics, ask yourself, "So what?" about your topic.

Thematic interpretation is at the hub of Ham's model of effective interpretation. In the thematic approach, an interpreter relies on a central theme (i.e., a major point or message) to guide development of a communication activity or device. In presenting the activity or device, the thematic interpreter develops the theme in such a way that it will be highly relevant to an audience. According to studies, presenting a strongly relevant theme greatly increases the likelihood an interpreter will succeed in provoking an audience to think about theme-related issues.

Beginning in the early 2000s, the thematic approach has been adopted widely in persuasive communication campaigns aimed at impacting environmental behaviors, especially those related to energy and water consumption, and in occupational safety and risk communication programs. In the broader fields of sustainable development and risk communication, the term thematic communication (rather than thematic "interpretation") is often used. The two approaches, however, are identical, and both are linked largely to Ham's (1992) book, *Environmental Interpretation*.

### 8.3 Associated People

Relevant and well-executed interpretation can have many benefits beyond providing interest, education and entertainment for the visitor.

For people directly and indirectly involved in the management and delivery of the heritage asset, new and/or improved interpretation can offer significant benefits such as increased revenue, either directly to the heritage attraction and business and economic opportunities for local businesses associated with tourism.

Some benefits, such as increased tourism revenue are tangible and can be measured easily, whereas, arguably equally significant benefits such as local pride are more difficult to measure but can improve lives. Lack of pride of place is an issue in Athy as evidenced by attendees at the stakeholder workshop. The awareness and reputation of a place can be greatly enhanced by good quality heritage interpretation.

Interpretation can make an attraction more sustainable by incorporating environmentally appropriate and friendly media. It can aid efficient visitor and heritage asset management and can also encourage greater involvement from the community. Interpretation can leverage investment into an area and in some cases, create employment, both directly at an attraction and indirectly via other tourism support services. In Athy's case, improved interpretation could support and be supported by the Ireland's Ancient East brand.

Interpretation can increase local footfall and domestic and international visitor numbers but it is important to remember that very few attractions are able to sell themselves based purely on the draw of the attraction, and appropriate, coordinated and targeted promotion is needed in order to maximise visitor numbers. Some direct benefits such as an increase in overnight stays and revenue to restaurants, cafes and pubs are dependent on these facilities meeting visitor expectations and being of sufficient number to accommodate increased visitors. Also evidenced at the stakeholder workshop was the need for more and better accommodation and restaurant facilities and longer opening hours. Although it was acknowledged by participants, that this is something of a 'chicken and egg' situation.

We consulted a number of local hotels and bed-and-breakfast providers in Athy to find out whether they had spare capacity and what their customers came to Athy to do. The following is a section of responses:

#### Hotels

Their busiest times are generally May to August and December. The **Clonard Hotel**, for example, has 37 bedrooms and reported that they are frequently full and have to turn bookings down. Their guests visit mainly to go to Kildare Village Designer Outlet and for weddings and other family/social functions.

### Bed and Breakfasts

The busiest time of the year is July to September when almost all are at full capacity and have to turn bookings down. [Aurora B&B](#) say they also get very busy at 'out-of-season' weekends when there is a wedding or an event. Most of their guests stay for weddings and functions and many are using Athy as a 'stepping stone' into or out of Dublin.

### Guest Houses

The busiest period is July to September. All are generally fully booked every Saturday throughout the year. Their busiest weekends are when there are events in the town, for example The Shackleton Weekend and triathlons. An example is [Dollardstown House](#) where guests say they are staying there because the property has an interesting history and is quiet. The majority of guests are usually visiting to "get away for a weekend" rather than to visit Athy. Several guest houses recommend Athy as worth a visit in its own right and guests are pleasantly surprised by the history of Athy; others say they find the town "run-down" or "dirty" and are disappointed by the opening times of restaurants and cafes.

## 8.4 Audience

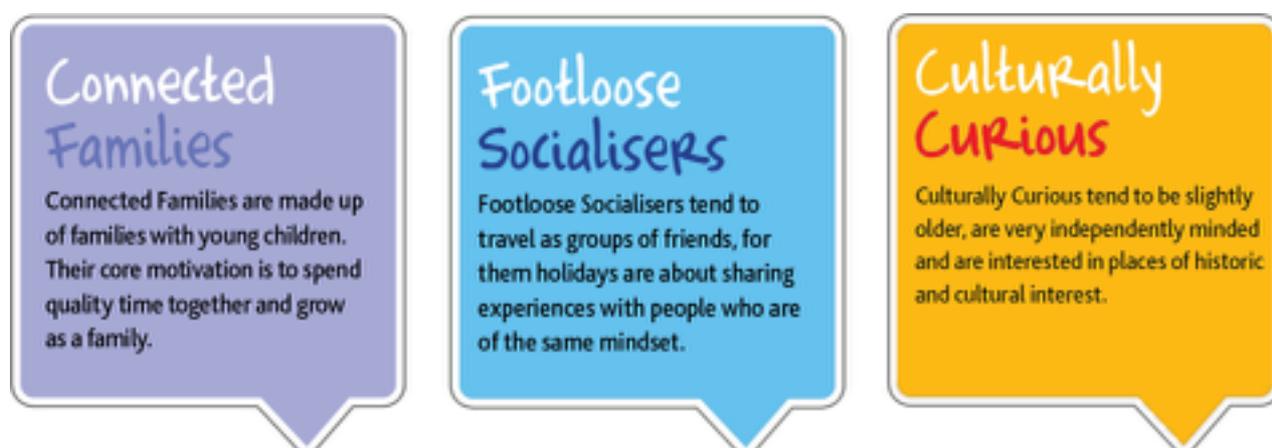
The key benefit from new and improved interpretation is to bring history alive through interesting and exciting storytelling and to do that in a way that reaches and inspires all audiences. Through interpretation, access, be it intellectual, physical or social can and should be widened.

Interpretation should improve the visitor experience and draw new visitors either via direct promotion or through word of mouth recommendation, ultimately resulting in repeat visits to the attraction. Interpretation planning may reveal new stories, or new and better ways of telling stories people already know. Old and tired exhibitions and narratives can be given a new lease of life. There may also be opportunities to link with other attractions offering a similar proposition.

As evidenced in the Stakeholder Workshop (See Stakeholder Workshop, Workshop Session 1, attached as [Appendix 6](#)), Athy attracts domestic visitors, who are primarily day-trippers or people visiting other counties rich in heritage such as Waterford. Many of these people will know the stories associated with Athy but stand to learn more and have their experience heightened through better and/or more extensive interpretation. This is true for the education sector, in this case primarily primary schools but also academics and visitors with an interest in medieval history and walled towns (see [Appendix 8](#) for a draft Brief for an Education Strategy and Plan for Athy). The stakeholder group identified coach tour groups, business and conference events and a greater share of the Failte Ireland, Ireland's Ancient East target audience as the visitors the town should be seeking to attract in greater numbers in the future.

The Failte Ireland domestic and international visitor segments were discussed at the stakeholder workshop (See *Stakeholder Workshop, Workshop Session 1*, attached in [Appendix 6](#)). Accurate segmentation of visitors to Athy would require a specific data collection and analysis research project. The scope of this current project does not extend to market research and visitor segmentation. However, anecdotally, the domestic segment **Connected Families** is represented in the current visitor to Athy; there also is likely to be some representation of **Footloose Socialisers** but there doesn't appear to be anything within the town's offer that would attract Indulgent Romantics; of the international segments the **Culturally Curious** appear to be most significantly represented, although it is not possible to quantify numbers (see Figure 8.1 below).

Interpretation is successful when word of mouth recommendation brings new audiences and 'brand ambassadors' are created. Qualitative and quantitative monitoring to show levels of visitor satisfaction and to monitor visitor numbers should be put in place and used to give guidance for new and improved interpretation and tourism services. Good interpretation should leave the visitor with a desire to learn more and to know where to go to get information.



**Fig 8.1** Visitor segments likely to be significantly represented in interpretive provision in Athy Medieval Town

## 9. NARRATIVE THEMES FOR INTERPRETATION

### 9.1 The 'Big Idea'

As referenced earlier in this report, Section 1.4.3, the 'Big Idea' is defined as being a strong message that resonates with visitors. Based on our research for this project and an audit of the current heritage offer in Athy, we developed several working 'straplines' to encompass what we believe is the 'Big Idea' for Athy's heritage and tourist proposition.

Following some discussion during the Stakeholder Workshop held on 24th October 2016 (See *Stakeholder Workshop, Workshop Session 5*, attached as [Appendix 6](#)) a slight reworking of one of our working streamlines was proposed by Gerry Carbury:

**Athy: The Bridge to the Heartlands of Ireland**

This neatly summarises Athy's offering, speaks on an emotional and rational level and requires no explanation, it can be used as a focus for all heritage planning activities, programmes and events. It can also be used in all digital and printed communications and marketing initiatives to link all heritage and tourism activity together and present the visitor and residents with an holistic brand statement for Athy. The Big Idea for Athy promises the visitor an opportunity to discover Athy, its history and surroundings and thereby offers an opening from which to discover the surrounding region, the Heartlands of Ireland. Whether they are local people who have always lived in Athy, or visitors coming for the first time en route to or from Dublin, the interpretation at Athy helps their orientation within the wider interpretation of Ireland and its history.

### 9.2 Principal Interpretive Theme (Narrative Statement)

The stakeholder workshop identified several themes associated with Athy, many of which are unrelated to the Medieval Town or the Town Walls (See *Stakeholder Workshop, Workshop Session 2*, attached as [Appendix 6](#)). This report is concerned with the interpretation of the Medieval Town and Town Walls (section 1.1, para 2) and not with the interpretation of other stories. However, as there are no physical remains of the Town Walls, the interpretation of Athy must be broadened to attract new visitors and as such, other themes and stories identified in the workshop would need to be the subject of further study before an holistic interpretive proposition for Athy is established. The stories will need to be evaluated for their potential to come to life through associated artefacts, links with and references to other sites and where possible oral history. Particularly, people like 'people' stories and those with the potential to engage the broadest visitor group should form the backbone of an interpretation plan.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is possible to establish the overarching narrative statement (principal interpretative theme) within the tightly defined 'Medieval Town and Walls' scope of this project.

This Narrative Statement is:

*The position of Athy, at a strategic crossing point straddling the River Barrow, has for over 6000 years influenced the history and development of the principal town of South Kildare. As an Anglo-Norman fortified market town and inland river port, Medieval Athy was, and remains, the bridge to the Heartlands of Ireland.*

### 9.3 Secondary Interpretive Themes

The Later Medieval period of Irish history covers the period from the arrival of the Anglo-Normans (AD1169) to the reign of Henry VIII (1491-1547) which includes the creation of the Kingdom of Ireland. It is during this period that Athy assumes its commercial and socio-political significance. The period provides a rich tapestry of themes that can be interpreted beneath the over-arching narrative statement (see section 9.2 above).

Significant amongst these are these seven themes:

- (1) Development of town fortification - from timber palisade **(before 1297)** to stone walls **(1515)**
- (2) Religious houses **(late-12thC / early-13thC)**
- (3) Life in a Medieval town; social order, trade and commerce, politics, burgesses **(13th-14thC)**
- (4) Battle of Ardscoil (aka Battle of Skerries) and plundering of Athy **(1316)**
- (5) The FitzGerald: Earls of Kildare **(1316-)**
- (6) The Bridge over the River Barrow **(1417-)**
- (7) 'Silken Thomas' **(1534)**; the Crown of Ireland Act and the creation of the Kingdom of Ireland **(1542)** \*

\* Silken Thomas's revolt caused Henry VIII to address the matter of Ireland and of its governance which was ultimately a factor in the creation of the Kingdom of Ireland in 1542.

### 9.4 Narrative Themes beyond the scope of this project

Although the Medieval history of Athy may be the central and principal interpretive theme in any reworking of the interpretive proposition for the town, the interpretation of the history of Athy must be approached in a holistic way, including prehistory, pre- and post-Medieval history, and modern history. Session 2 of the Stakeholder Workshop (see [Appendix 6](#)) identified several interpretive themes (not an exhaustive list) that should be considered in a subsequent project scope.

## 10. EXISTING INTERPRETIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

### 10.1 The “SHINE ATHY” Initiative

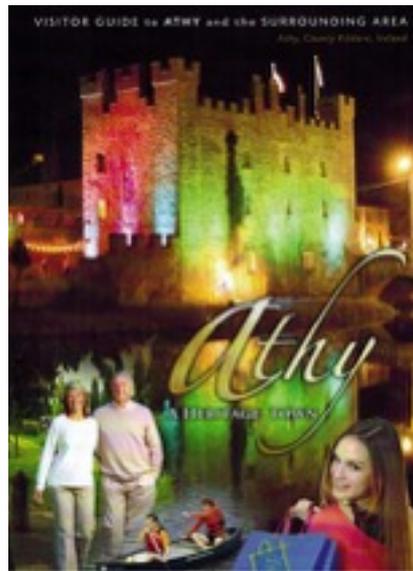
‘Shine Athy’ was the pilot for a new (2009), but now defunct, national tourist initiative which aimed to “reinvigorate the traditional Irish welcome offered to overseas visitors” with the overall objective being to ensure that tourists visiting Irish cities, towns and villages experience the best possible service wherever they go. The entire community of Athy was to be involved in the programme, not just those who are working in tourism. Through the SHINE initiative - developed by Tourism Ireland in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland in response to approaches from local tourism interests - it was hoped that everyone the visitor meets will deliver the best possible customer experience and will be striving to display the four key behaviours of the original SHINE programme:

**S**-omeone who is **H**-appy, **I**-nterested, **N**-atural and **E**-xpert.

Commenting on the initiative at its launch, Brian Twomey - Tourism Ireland’s Head of Marketing Communications - said: *“In our marketing overseas, Tourism Ireland promises potential visitors an experience that is unique and full of spontaneity, engagement and fun. When those visitors arrive, the people they meet around Ireland are the ones who actually deliver on that promise. They can do this by performing at their best - by being happy, interested, natural and expert. The message is simple: when our people shine, Ireland radiates.”*

During our research stages of this project we have been unable to find anyone who was familiar with the SHINE initiative let alone anyone who had actively applied the SHINE initiative to their tourism business venture, whether in attractions, retail or hospitality. That is not to say that the *objective* of the initiative had not been selectively applied, only that there had been a lack of a concerted town-wide awareness of, and application of, the initiative.

Notwithstanding that, the town of Athy appears to be actively promoting its heritage proposition to the visitor. The museum and heritage centre has an exciting programme of exhibitions and, throughout the year, there are many cultural and sporting events, and some interesting festivals, that bring visitors to Athy. There appears to be an over-reliance on the voluntary sector for the delivery of interpretation in many spheres; if a robust and economically beneficial interpretive proposition is to be delivered in Athy, there must be a local and regional commitment to the creation of a professional skills base with the creation of specific and targeted salaried posts in the sector for both creation, delivery and support.



**Fig 10.1** *Athly - A Heritage Town* (Fáilte Ireland and 'Shine Athly', 2010)

The A2-size double-sided colour pamphlet (Figure 10.1 above) *Athly - A Heritage Town* (produced in 2010 by Fáilte Ireland in conjunction with 'Shine Athly') remains today probably **the most useful and informative document for the visitor to Athly**. However, at almost seven years old, the design style - and perhaps the content - is looking very tired and does not reflect the contemporary ambitions of Athly. None-the-less, the pamphlet does provide an effective summary of "What To Do" when visiting Athly. The information summarised in ss10.2 to 10.4 (below) is from this source although noting that the information may not now be current.

## 10.2 "What To Do" in Athly

- Athly Community Arts Centre: 110 seat theatre, workshop and exhibition space
- Athly Community Library: public library with free internet access
- Athly Heritage Centre: museum, exhibitions, tourist office
- Barrow line Cruisers: weekly and short break canal boat hire
- Castlefarm: organic farm - tours and farm shop
- Gardens: Ballintubbert House and Burton House
- Heritage Trail / Walking / Cycling: town trails, canal/riverside trails
- Fishing / Watersports: canal and river fishing, canoeing, boating
- Golf: a range of golfing facilities including one of Kildare's finest courses
- K-Leisure: a state-of-the-art leisure facility with pool, gym and classes
- Night Life: restaurants, bars and disco bars
- Retail Shopping: an array of independently-owned retail shops

### 10.3 Festivals and Events

- St Patrick’s Day Parade: floats and bands pass through the town
- South Kildare Medieval Festival: living history, archaeology, workshops, exhibitions
- Cecil Day Lewis Literary Awards & Festival: short stories, poetry, dramatic works
- TriAthy Event 1: SwimAthy is an open water swim
- TriAthy Event 2: Ireland’s largest and favourite triathlon event
- Gordon Bennett Festival: held annually in June to celebrate the 1903 rally
- County Show: displays, exhibits, trade stands, art and craft, competitions, etc
- Athy Bluegrass Music Festival: the home of Ireland’s first ever Bluegrass festival
- Shackleton Autumn School: a 4-day event, Ireland’s only forum for Polar research
- Christmas Chocolate Festival: storytelling, street theatre, craft workshops, etc
- Women’s Integrated Network: empowerment for positive integration
- Athy Film Club & Festival: work and classic cinema



**Fig 10.2** Local attractions in the area of Athy, from *Athy - A Heritage Town* (2010)

## 10.4 Attractions in the Area

### 10.4.1 Attractions close to Athy

- Ballitore Quaker Museum: in the home of Mary Leadbeater
- Gordon Bennet Driving Route: route of historic 1903 car rally
- Bitfield Equestrian Centre: off-road riding, cross country course, floodlit arena
- The Moate of Ardscull: 13thC Norman earthwork
- Moore High Cross, Castledermot Abbey, Round Tower and High Cross
- Vicarstown: port on the Grand Canal
- Stradbally Woods and Mullaghreelan: woodland walks

### 10.4.2 Attractions within a 20 minute drive of Athy

- Clubs and Night Life: variety of music and theatre venues
- Golf: 20 courses in Co Kildare, five within 20 minutes drive of Athy
- Irish National Stud, Japanese Gardens, St Fiachra's Gardens
- Kildare Village Outlet Shopping: unrivalled shopping experience
- Newbridge Greyhound Stadium: one of Kildare's premier entertainment events
- Newbridge Silverware: design, manufacture, sales of designer silverware

### 10.4.3 Attractions close to Athy

- Blessington Lakes: 500 acres of lakes from the Poulaphouca Dam power station
- Carlow Garden Trail: 16 different gardening attractions
- Castlecomer Discovery Park: 80 acre woodland and lake park
- Donadea Forest Park: 243 hectares of mixed woodland with remains of a castle
- Emo House and Gardens: neo-Classical house set in beautiful 18thC gardens
- Glendalough: world famous monastic site with round tower in a landscape setting
- Horse Racing: a number of superb tracks in easy reach of Athy
- Kilkenny Castle: castle and parklands managed by the OPW
- Lullymore Heritage and Discovery Park: social history centre
- Mondello Park: motor racing circuit

## 11. INTERPRETIVE POSITIONING

### 11.1 Aim of Interpretation

Just as the Venice Charter established the principle that the protection of the extant fabric of a cultural heritage site is essential to its conservation, it is now equally acknowledged that interpretation of the meaning of sites is an integral part of the conservation process and fundamental to positive conservation outcomes.

A significant number of charters, principles, and guidelines – including the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), the Burra Charter (1999), the International Charter on Cultural Tourism (1999), and the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China (2002) – have emphasised the fundamental role of sensitive and effective interpretation in heritage conservation.



The ICOMOS Ename Charter has perhaps most significance and relevance to the Athy Medieval Town and Town Walls project. The aim of the ICOMOS Ename Charter is to define the basic objectives and principles of site interpretation in relation to authenticity, intellectual integrity, social responsibility, and respect for cultural significance and context. It recognises that the interpretation of cultural heritage sites can be contentious and should acknowledge conflicting perspectives. Although the objectives and principles of this Charter may equally apply to off-site interpretation, its main focus is interpretation at, or in the immediate vicinity of cultural heritage sites.

The Charter seeks to encourage a wide public appreciation of cultural heritage sites as places and sources of learning and reflection about the past, as well as valuable resources for sustainable community development and intercultural and intergenerational dialogue.

For the purpose of the present Charter, “interpretation” is considered to be **the public explanation or discussion of a cultural heritage site, encompassing its full significance, multiple meanings and values.**

“Interpretive infrastructure” refers to all physical installations, publications (guidebooks, videotapes, digital applications, etc.) and communications media devised for the purposes of interpretation, as well as the personnel assigned to this task.

## 11.2 Key Objectives of Interpretation

In recognising that interpretation and presentation are part of the overall process of cultural heritage conservation and management, the ICOMOS Ename Charter seeks to establish seven cardinal principles, upon which Interpretation and Presentation — in whatever form or medium is deemed appropriate in specific circumstances — should be based.

**Principle 1** Access and Understanding

**Principle 2** Soundness of Information Sources

**Principle 3** Attention to Setting and Context

**Principle 4** Preservation of Authenticity

**Principle 5** Planning for Sustainability

**Principle 6** Concern for Inclusiveness

**Principle 7** Importance of Research, Evaluation, and Training

Following from these seven principles, the Key Objectives of Interpretation are to:

### Objective 1

Facilitate understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage sites and foster public awareness of the need for their protection and conservation.

### Objective 2

Communicate the meaning of cultural heritage sites through careful, documented recognition of their significance, through accepted scientific and scholarly methods as well as from living cultural traditions.

### Objective 3

Safeguard the tangible and intangible values of cultural heritage sites in their natural and cultural settings and social context.

### Objective 4

Respect the authenticity of cultural heritage sites, by communicating the significance of their historic fabric and cultural values and protecting them from the adverse impact of intrusive interpretive infrastructure.

### Objective 5

Contribute to the sustainable conservation of cultural heritage sites, through promoting public understanding of ongoing conservation efforts and ensuring long-term maintenance and updating of the interpretive infrastructure.

**Objective 6**

Encourage inclusiveness in the interpretation of cultural heritage sites, by facilitating the involvement of stakeholders and associated communities in the development and implementation of interpretive programmes.

**Objective 7**

Develop technical and professional standards for heritage interpretation and presentation, including technologies, research, and training. These standards must be appropriate and sustainable in their social contexts.

**11.3 The 'Big Idea' ... The Medieval Experience, Athy**

The obvious interpretive constraint in Athy is the lack of any physical evidence of the Medieval town walls and that has driven our design for the interpretation positioning. We have, however, provided interpretive proposals that draw together the River Barrow, White's Castle, and the bridge - which together present the most iconic image of Athy and provide a synergetic environment in which many local, regional and national organisations, and several funding bodies, could work collaboratively to execute project intentions.

We have suggested interpretation that has the potential to position Athy as a 'must-see' medieval tourist destination and experience, underpinned with integrity and authenticity. The central interpretive recommendation or idea re-creates **Medieval Athy**, combining hands-on experiences, re-enactments, leisure and recreation, performances and historic interpretation. **The Medieval Experience, Athy** links the core interpretive elements of the town, being, the footprint of the **Medieval walls, White's Castle, River Barrow** and **Woodstock Castle**.

Outlined below are interpretive elements that support the proposition, **The Medieval Experience, Athy** that will give Athy a 'WOW' factor and position the town as a significant tourist destination domestically and internationally. Each element would stand on its own as a credible heritage attraction, increasing visitor numbers to Athy and improving the sense of 'pride of place' in for residents.

**The Medieval Experience, Athy** supports the overarching recommended brand theme, or strapline, '**Athy, The Bridge to the Heartlands of Ireland**' and serves to create an interpretive bridge between contemporary Athy and Medieval Ireland. Key to all the interpretive elements behind the proposition is authenticity, which underpins at every level, the leisure experience and interpretation, combining education with excitement.

**The Medieval Experience, Athy** has the potential to provide new revenue streams by way of paid-for ticketed attractions and new activities and through increased bed nights and increased spend in shops, restaurants and cafes.

The holistic visitor experience offered by **The Medieval Experience, Athy** creates a trail through Athy town to White's Castle, incorporating a river journey along the Barrow River and on to Woodstock Castle, incorporating permanent installations, exhibitions and medieval themed events. The proposition is designed to encourage repeat visits to Athy and/or overnight stays. It is unlikely that all elements of the proposition could be experienced in one day. People within easy travelling distance of Athy could partake of the experience element by element over time, those travelling from further afield would need to take a weekend or two day trip to partake in all the elements offered.

### 11.3.1 White's Castle Performances

Inspired by 'Kynren' in Bishop Auckland, England, White's Castle would host a spectacular and entertaining display of medieval life in the form of musical performances with high production values (see *elevenarches.org*). Performances, taking place in afternoons and evenings and bookable on-line, would showcase medieval life as it was lived in Ireland and other parts of the world. Medieval stories with music and humour, sometimes traditionally bawdy, would tell tales of love, life for nobles and peasants alike, folklore, heroes and plagues and would be performed by singers, dancers, minstrels, minnesingers, troubadours and jongleurs.

**White's Castle Performances** would feature a cast of professionally trained volunteers and guest appearances from Irish actors. The content would be authentic and true to the period but with state of the art production, lighting effects, video projections and authentic but grand stage sets.

White's Castle would be the perfect place to show a *son et lumière* show, either as an element of the performances or as a standalone attraction. A *son et lumière* show is an extremely popular all-weather nighttime attraction that has the potential to draw large crowds, especially during the winter season.

To create a complete day and evening out, White's Castle could also host medieval banquets.

#### **Audiences and their needs**

White's Castle Performances could be a huge draw for visitors from Dublin and the rest of Ireland as independent travellers and could also be an extremely attractive proposition for tour bus companies, having very broad appeal. The performances could family friendly content and tie in with the educational curriculum. They could also involve audience participation. There would be enormous opportunities to involve the local population in performances themselves and as volunteers supporting the infrastructure and operation of the events.

### 11.3.2 Medieval Riverboat Trip

The Barrow River is a defining feature of Athy and passes through many significant Medieval Irish towns, it is therefore an integral element in **The Medieval Experience, Athy**. A **Medieval Riverboat Trip** would provide a further dimension to the recreational use of the river around Athy and would be a medium for the interpretation of the river and its role in the establishment and success of Athy as a medieval town.

The **Medieval Riverboat Trip** would be part interpretation and part recreation, combining authentic music, food and drink with stories about Medieval Athy, told by costumed musicians and story-tellers. The trip could operate during the day and be used for special events and rented for corporate events during the day or evening in the summer months. The boat itself would be constructed and decorated as it would have been in the period.



**Fig 11.2** An artist's impression of the Medieval Experience, Athy, with all its activity, colour and pageantry. Performances in and around White's Castle, a *son et lumière* show, riverboats ferrying travellers between Athy town, White's Castle and Woodstock Castle. The traveller experiences the full immersive splendour of the Medieval Experience, Athy.

### **Audiences and their needs**

As with the White's Castle Performances, the Medieval Riverboat Trip would have broad appeal, although catering for smaller numbers. The trip could form part of a single visit to Athy that took in other aspects of The Medieval Experience, Athy or as an experience in it's own right. All audiences other than those with small children could be targeted and the boat trip would have potential to be marketed as a corporate event venue. It would be a unique experience to Athy with the potential to draw domestic and international visitors.

#### 11.3.3 Woodstock Castle Medieval Exhibition

Much of **The Medieval Experience, Athy** combines experience and entertainment with interpretation. The vision for Woodstock Castle is to install a permanent medieval exhibition using state of the art design and interpretive media. The highly acclaimed Medieval Museum in Waterford has been successful and is well established on the tourism map. An exhibition of equal standing is envisaged for Woodstock Castle. The **Woodstock Castle Medieval Exhibition** would require an expert curator and the acquisition of medieval artefacts, either owned by or loaned to the museum. Certain elements of the exhibition such as medieval houses and scenes of life could be re-constructed. The permanent exhibition could house a valuable research facility with on-line access to research material and displays.

A museum design featuring engaging narrative and stories, linked with the national curriculum, quality displays, audio visual installations and an authentic shop would create an offering to complement the Heritage Centre and reinforce Athy's credentials as a medieval town of significance.

### **Audiences and their needs**

The Woodstock Castle Medieval Exhibition would attract a traditional museum profile audience being primarily, ABC1 adults, families with older children, education and special interest groups, schools, tour groups and academic researchers. Guided and independent tours could be offered and a schools curriculum-specific tour would enhance the offer to the schools sector. As always, the volunteer sector is important to the operation and success of many exhibitions and in this case would offer an opportunity to involve and train local people.

#### 11.3.4 Construction of a Medieval House

Inspired by the project at Guedelon Castle, Treigny, France, the smaller scale **Construction of a Medieval House** would be a unique, long-term and media-worthy project for Athy (see *guedelon.fr*). Guedelon is branded a '**21<sup>st</sup> century medieval adventure**' and is an ambitious project involving the construction of a medieval castle using only medieval construction techniques and tools. Started in 1997 with a completion

date of some time in 2020's, the process of building the castle is a visitor attraction in its own right involving guided tours and with progress being filmed and documented on their website and in the French media. The **Construction of a Medieval House** in Athy, also using only medieval tools and techniques would involve collaboration from historians, archaeologists, architects and craftsmen with an interest in medieval history and has the potential to immerse the community and create pride in Athy. Specialist training and employment and volunteering opportunities could be created. It could create links with other medieval sites across Europe, pool expertise and resources and gain recognition for Athy. There would be multiple opportunities for promotion through a dedicated website documenting the building, PR, TV and social media coverage.

#### **Audiences and their needs**

Visitors would be drawn to the project as an on-going work in progress attraction in its own right. It could create long-term employment opportunities, a myriad of volunteer positions and create new skills in the local population. The project would have the potential to appeal to all visitors, including academics and businesses involved in construction as well as all tourist segments and would appeal to the education sector. Enthusiasts and followers would be able to watch progress on-line as well as visiting the site. The feasibility and build stages would provide opportunities to involve historians, archaeologists, architects and builders with an interest in heritage preservation from all over Ireland and beyond. Athy could forge a relationship with Guedelon to draw on and share their experience.

#### 11.3.5 Pageant Wagon Performances

To complement the **White's Castle Performances**, smaller scale **Pageant Wagon Performances** of plays from medieval Ireland would be performed around Athy. Traditionally performances were a simple way to impart the message of the Bible to the people. They also had the purpose of relieving the monotony of life and would have been 'mystery' or religious plays, taken from biblical texts and stories of local trades and tradespeople.

Performances were accompanied by music such as Gregorian Chants. **The Pageant Wagon Performances** in Athy could perform existing scripts, alternatively a competition to write scripts could be held, creating opportunities for promotion and PR. Local and national theatre groups, employing volunteers from the local community, could run the performances. The Pageant Wagon performers could also stage *ad hoc* 'flash mob' performances around Athy to add a sense of spectacle and excitement to the heritage walk.

#### **Audiences and their needs**

The **Pageant Wagon Performances** would appeal to special interest groups, theatregoers, historians, local people and families, providing a cultural and enjoyable experience.

### 11.3.6 Annual Athy Medieval Festival

To complete **The Medieval Experience, Athy** proposition, the town could hold the **Annual Athy Medieval Festival**, establishing the town as the centre of medieval history in Ireland. The festival would be an event of epic proportions, spread across a weekend and offering authentic experiences and activities.

The visitor would be transported to a place where history and fantasy meet to transform Athy into a medieval wonderland. This period of history is so far removed from modern life that it is hard for most people to visualise and the **Annual Athy Medieval Festival** would, through a combination of authenticity and fun, immerse the visitor in the reality of a polarised world of nobility and peasantry. The festival would engage all generations and profile of visitor. The **Annual Athy Medieval Festival** would be a multi-sensory experience evoking the sights, sounds, smells and atmosphere to transport people through time and bring history to life.

The potential elements of the festival are limitless but some of the essential elements would include: Jousting and falconry; tournaments; banquets; simple food; musical entertainment; dancing; pop-up medieval village and market; authentic costumes; weaponry; pop-up tavern; clothing and craftsmanship; demonstrations of crafts such as, calligraphy, book binding, leatherwork, jewellery making, metalwork and blacksmithing, enamel and pottery, carving, glasswork and stained glass, painting, stonemasonry, spinning, weaving and dyeing; cooking demonstrations and sampling.

There could be a tent specifically offering entertainment and activities for children such as: Painting a knight's shield; digging up medieval treasure and crafts such as creating a stained glass window; dressing up in outfits; brass rubbings and archery. For the more academic and special interest groups an area could be provided for talks on medieval history. The possibilities are endless and only a few ideas have been suggested here. The festival would also offer commercial opportunities for retailers at stalls and through paid-for demonstrations.

#### **Audiences and their needs**

The Annual Athy Medieval Festival would have very broad appeal and would literally offer something for every potential visitor segment. The opportunities to involve local people in the planning, organising and clear-up of the event would be enormous and a successfully run event that drew crowds from all over Ireland and beyond would give people something to be proud of.

11.3.7 ‘Order of Magnitude’ costs

Whilst a detailed cost-benefit analysis and business plan for the ‘Big Idea’ is outside of the scope of this report, it is useful to look at likely costs expended by similar offers elsewhere. Although actual costs are difficult to find - most often because of commercial sensitivity - it is possible to determine ‘order of magnitude’ costs from news reports, public declarations of costs, and, of course, from our involvement with similar scale projects elsewhere. These are provided below.

Interpretive Output	Similar Offers	Location	Order of Magnitude Cost (€)
<b>Whites Castle Performances</b>	Kynren Puy de Fou	Bishop Auckland, UK Les Eposes, France	5~30mn
<b>Medieval Riverboat Trips</b>	Medieval Boat Tour (although not replica boat)	Binnendieze, Holland	1mn
<b>Woodstock Castle Medieval Exhibition</b>	Bunratty Castle Mauterndorf Castle	Bunratty, Ireland Mauterndorf, Austria	2.5mn
<b>Construction of a Medieval House</b>	Barley Hall Guedelon Castle	York, UK Treigny, France	2mn
<b>Pageant Wagon Performances</b>	York Medieval Pageant & Mystery Plays	York, UK	200,000pa
<b>Annual Medieval Festival</b>	Renaissance Festival England’s Medieval Festival Medieval Festival Historical Burgenfest	Tortosa, Spain Herstmonceux, UK Horsens, Denmark Manderscheid, Germany	250,000pa

## 11.4 Interpretation Plan: a modest start

The 'Big Idea' (see 11.3 above) is the ideal and significant 'one-hit' offer to establish Athy as the 'must-see' Medieval experience in Ireland. However, this requires massive initial capital investment and will require substantial on-going (years 1 through 5 in decreasing proportion) capital and revenue funding until the offer becomes established in the wider tourism proposition of Co Kildare and Ireland as a whole.

Consequently, with some measure of prudence, we also propose a series of more modest offers that can be implemented individually or collectively on a more modest timetable and funding requirement. These are not mutually exclusive to the 'Big Idea' and could, in fact, greatly benefit a more significant 'one-hit' offer by establishing the destination of Athy in the cultural tourism sector. These offers are described below.

### 11.4.1 Interactive Medieval walking tour (Athy Town Trail)

The Town Wall - although no longer extant - is central to the interpretation of Athy's medieval history and we propose that a **re-creation of part of the wall** is built, integrated into a compelling interpretive proposition, the creation of a **Medieval walking tour**. This could be the single-most important all-weather and all-year element of Athy's tourism offer, it would provide a 'wow factor' for the town and would generate increased visitor numbers and a sense of pride of place for Athy. The walking tour could start and finish in a **reworked public realm** in front of the museum.

The Medieval Walking Tour would follow the circuit of the boundary of the wall, based on where we understand the wall to have been. It would be an interactive experience with information and activities, points of interest and re-creations placed along the walk that will engage all audiences, offering something for everyone from Connected Families through to academics. Key points of interest along the walk would be 'commemorated' - recreated elements of the wall, turrets, battle scenes, sites of pagan rituals, stories of the impact of Christianity and how it changed lives and examples of Medieval family life, giving visitors an opportunity to engage with living history.

Showcasing both myth and reality, and based on robust narrative research, the tour would also include a **ghost walk**. The tour would accommodate adult interaction and children's activities and could be guided or self-guided via a **smartphone app** or an **illustrated map** that would encourage discovery and learning. An active **picture library** would facilitate this and other initiatives. To help with the visualization of what Medieval Athy may have looked like, **apertures or 'windows'** will be positioned at key locations along the walk. A medieval street scene representing the spot where the visitor is standing would be illustrated in frosted glass on the 'window'.



**Fig 11.2** A reconstruction of a section of the Medieval Town Wall - a stopping-point on the self-guided (map-and-guide or smartphone app) Town Heritage Trail and on the costumed re-enactors' Town Trail of Medieval Athy. Small plaques set into the wall provide an opportunity for younger visitors to collect "brass rubbings" of narrative icons, and commemorative plaques set into the floor punctuate the town trail line around the town.



**Fig 11.3** To help with the visualization of what Medieval Athy may have looked like, apertures or ‘windows’ will be positioned at key locations along the walk. A medieval street scene representing the spot where the visitor is standing would be illustrated in frosted glass on the ‘window’.

**Directional numbering** would be placed in the ground along with **'commemorative' plaques** and, next to them, **brass rubbing plaques** to occupy children and generate their interest in Medieval history.

There would be **'living history' re-enactments** taking place along the walk in dry weather and relocated indoors, possibly in the museum in wet weather, to bring Medieval life alive.

Positioned along the walking tour would be a **medieval play park** of a high specification, giving children an opportunity to learn through playing games such as soft-play jousting and 'discovering' Brian Boru's sword.

The play park could also feature a helter-skelter, high ropes, climbing frames and a slide and thereby offer a quality outdoor leisure facility currently lacking in Athy.

### **Audiences and their needs**

The walking tour would be designed to meet the needs of as many of Athy's current and desired audiences as possible. It would have broad appeal and most likely be the first interpretive reference point for visitors to Athy. It would be extremely family-friendly, providing visual entertainment across the generations whilst being informative and rich in well-researched historic data. It would therefore meet the needs of Connected Families. By marketing the walk in conjunction with other local Medieval attractions such as 'Kildare Medieval Town' and 'Kilkenny - the 'Medieval capital of Ireland'', along with promotion through Fáilte Ireland's 'Ireland's Ancient East' initiative, the Culturally Curious could add Athy to their tour of historic Medieval sites. The interpretation, particularly through the app, would provide reference points for further research, thereby leaving the visitor with more to discover beyond their visit and providing more resource material for academic and special interest groups.

The walking tour would bring a much-needed enhancement to the appearance and interpretation of Athy and would therefore generate interest with residents of Athy and the surrounding area, leading to a greater sense of pride in their town and perhaps a desire to learn more and engage in heritage. The walk would contain information that many people, not previously engaged with the town's heritage, may not know. It would also be a draw for people who visit friends and family in Athy.

Effective marketing of the tour should include bus tour companies. Athy would be an easy add-on to a tour of Dublin or of Ireland's Ancient East.



**Fig 11.4** Positioned along the walking tour would be a medieval play park of a high specification, giving children an opportunity to learn through playing games such as soft-play jousting and ‘discovering’ Brian Boru’s sword. The play park could also feature a helter-skelter, high ropes, climbing frames and a slide and thereby offer a quality outdoor leisure facility within or on the Medieval boundary circuit of the Town Wall, currently lacking in Athy.

#### 11.4.2 Temporary and permanent medieval exhibitions

Bespoke **temporary and permanent exhibitions** and displays could be created on a temporary or permanent basis. These could be toured or exchanged with **twinning towns** that share Athy’s history or heritage. Temporary exhibitions are a powerful interpretive tool as they generate spikes in interest and provide opportunities for marketing messages to be put out more regularly. Example themes would be linked to **commemorative events** around themes including: the Earls of Kildare; White Castle (which has a 600 year anniversary in 2017); the Battle of Ardsclull and significant **events in the Medieval calendar**. Exhibitions require reliable and professional curatorial and administrative resource but will generate their own revenue.

### Audiences and their needs

Temporary exhibitions have particular appeal to local audiences that engage with the town on a regular basis. They provide something new and interesting to do and encourage repeat visits whilst keeping interpretation fresh. Specific exhibitions draw special interest groups that many not otherwise visit the town.

#### 11.4.3 Special medieval events

As with temporary exhibitions, commemorative and special events are a way to keep interpretation fresh and to draw new and repeat visitors. The museum already runs many successful events and the town runs sporting and cultural events. These could be augmented with themed events such as **Medieval banquets** and offers potential for **Medieval festivals** based around music, art, crafts, weaving, food and drink.

### Audiences and their needs

Special events such as medieval banquets can introduce new audiences to heritage who would not normally engage with interpretation. A medieval festival with a mixed offering of activities would appeal to various visitor segments - Connected Families, Footloose Socialisers (younger couples and groups of friends) looking to try something new, and to the Culturally Curious who would want to see living history.

#### 11.4.4 Digital and printed media and guides

The touch-points through which people can engage with history, culture and interpretation are varied and increasingly accessible as digital media take over from traditional forms of communication. The interpretation within and about Athy has the opportunity to be better integrated and more far reaching through the use of relevant **social media**.

We have suggested the development of a **smartphone app** to allow people to discover the Medieval walls and to guide them around the walled trail. This app should also include information on all the heritage attractions and activities within the town and be linked to other sites of medieval importance in the region, the rest of Ireland and in other parts of Europe.

**Social media** such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter should be used to communicate and promote the heritage offering in Athy and could be linked to **websites** such as the museum's site. It will be important to ensure that the identity of all social media and web-based communications are uniform in design, imagery, font and writing style. **Networks of supporters** of Athy and groups interested in medieval history could be built-up, using forums to share information and promote events.

Most visitors like to pick up a free **flyer or pamphlet** as part of a heritage experience, even if they use smartphones. We propose a flyer or small guide to accompany the Medieval walking tour. A children's version with activities that encourage them to explore the tour should also be produced. For people who want to learn more about Medieval history and like to have a souvenir of their visit, we would suggest producing a quality **guidebook**, written, photographed and researched professionally.

### **Audiences and their needs**

Social media and digital information sources are used across a broad demographic. Most people will expect to find information, news and data via their phones, regardless of their age. They will also expect to be able to plan their visit, purchase tickets and book events on-line and those facilities need to match the quality of the interpretation. It is no longer just the young or 'early adopters' who will use digital media, it should be assumed that all potential audiences will want to research and engage on-line.

#### 11.4.5 Sources of funding

There will need to be considerable private sector funding or public-private partnerships to implement any of the 'Big Idea' initiatives, whereas a 'heritage grant' potentially from a number of sources may cover some of the more modest initiatives. If or when Athy Town decides to proceed with any combination of these initiatives, it would be beneficial to seek the appointment of a professional fundraiser with experience of securing funds from public bodies and private grant-making trusts. Some of the relevant funding sources that may be considered are:

**Failte Ireland: New Grants Scheme for Large Projects** over €200k to a maximum of €5mn with match-funding of at least 25% of total project budget.

**Failte Ireland: Regional Festivals and Participative Events Grant** for grants of €2500-3000.

**Failte Ireland: Ireland's Ancient East** initiative offers business support to heritage attractions, enterprise support, workshops.

**Failte Ireland: Ancient Spaces Grant Scheme** which is intended to be the first phase of funding to ensure that the Ireland's Ancient East brand delivers on its promise to visitors.

**Heritage Council: Heritage Management Grant Scheme** the objective of which is to support projects that apply good heritage practice to the management of places, collections or objects (including buildings).

**Department of Arts, Heritage etc: Arts & Culture Capital Scheme** offers grants to enhance the existing stock of arts and culture centres.

## 11.5 Interpretation Matrix

Interpretive Output	Objective	Features	Order of Magnitude Cost (€)
<b>The Athy Brand</b>	To fully develop the unique brand and the associated guidelines to ensure a uniform presentation of the 'Athy brand' ... <b>"Athy - The Bridge to the Heartlands of Ireland"</b>	A complete and robust guidelines framework for the use and control of the Athy brand that will encourage 'take-up' but maintain the integrity of the brand.	15,000
<b>Town Trail</b>	To direct visitors around the Medieval Town and the presumed circuit of the Town Walls.	A physical line set into the pavement; punctuated with metal floor plaques and other interpretive interventions to highlight people, places and events.	250,000
<b>Directional and numbered Way-markers</b>	To enable easy routing through Athy, acting as a reassurance that the visitor is on the correct route.	Each way marker is numbered and focuses interest on a person, feature or event from the historical narrative.	120,000
<b>Recreation of Medieval Wall</b>	To show the scale and construction of the Town Walls.	A full-size accurate rebuilding of a section of the Town Wall on the likely position.	100,000-150,000
<b>Public Realm</b>	To create a physical focus in the centre of Athy that celebrates the Medieval history of the town and provides the longer-term impetus for the regeneration of Athy.	Functional, unique and thought-provoking design that celebrates and promotes the Medieval heritage of Athy.	n/a
<b>Guided Walks</b>	To provide guided interpretative walks that can be tailored for generic or specific audience or specialist-interest groups.	Reveal the 'hidden' secrets of Athy; capitalising on the fact that the walls cannot be seen but their influence is still evident today.	20,000 excluding staffing costs
<b>Smartphone App</b>	To enable the individual or couple visitor to take a self-guided tour of Athy. Also enables pre- and post-visit engagement with Athy heritage.	Historical record, re-enacted audio, animation, augmented reality, links to other sources of information, social media links to facilitate real-time promotion.	60,000

Interpretive Output	Objective	Features	Order of Magnitude Cost (€)
<b>Illustrated Maps, Leaflets and Guidebooks</b>	To service the more 'academic' visitor but with features that will encourage intellectual exploration of Athy for the lay visitor and academic alike.	Heavily illustrated publications drawing on a vast archive of images and authoritative text to 'dive deeper' into the history of Athy. Providing a 'souvenir' of a visit and an 'advert' to potential visitors.	10,000
<b>Photo Library</b>	To provide a growing resource of positive imagery from and of Athy that can be free accessed and used by local, national and international publishers.	High-Quality contemporary photography of people, places and events, archaeological works and artefacts, locations and special celebrations.	€5,000 first year, then €2500pa
<b>Windows' to Medieval Athy</b>	Medieval Athy has long since disappeared but these simple and replicable interpretive units provide a very accessible way to 'view' Medieval Athy.	A Medieval window reveal into which is set a 'frosted glass' illustration of the Medieval scene behind the modern viewpoint in and around Athy. Provides historical fact and a 'social media' photo opportunity to promote Athy.	200,000
<b>Commemorative Plaques</b>	To highlight the 'jewels' in the crown of Athy - historic and modern people, places, buildings, events. Extending scope of existing heritage plaques.	Based on the 'heritage blue plaque' initiative, these plaques - with a unique branding for Athy - provide an obvious and very visible identity to important buildings and historic events.	60,000
<b>Brass Rubbing</b>	To encourage children to 'search out' places of significance and, indirectly, to gain an understanding of the unique history of Athy and to appreciate the importance of historic people and events.	Cast alloy with bronze or brass finish in a Medieval style. The 'series' provides a complete narrative of the history of Athy for the younger audience.	75,000
<b>Living History Re-enactment</b>	To provide first-person experience of the sights, sounds and smells of Medieval life, answering the question "What was it like to live in Medieval Athy?"	Costumed re-enactors 'living' the Medieval life; recreating Medieval dress and furnishings; growing Medieval foodstuffs and preparing and eating Medieval meals.	25,000 (promotion costs)

Interpretive Output	Objective	Features	Order of Magnitude Cost (€)
<b>Commemorative Events</b>	To promote year-round tourism and a periodic 'focus' for local and visiting audiences that over time will establish the brand of Athy and encourage wider 'take-up' and involvement.	This should be explored without the constraint of 'traditional' commemorations and should link otherwise unrelated events to the continuum of the Medieval narrative.	25,000 (promotion costs)
<b>The Medieval Calendar and 'Town Twinning'</b>	To transfer the Medieval and early Renaissance "Labours of the Months" into rural events and activities that continue today through the agricultural economy of the county.	A different event each month, inspired by an activity from a simple Medieval calendar cycle of 'labours'; link with Irish, English and European walled towns and shared experiences of the monthly labours.	30,000 -70,000pa (inc. staff costs)
<b>Medieval Play Park</b>	To enable an accessible route - for children - into the Medieval history of Athy through themed play activities that will appeal to local and visiting children.	A high specification themed play area in which the design of each play feature is inspired by an historic person or event.	180,000
<b>Temporary and Permanent Exhibitions</b>	To mount special exhibitions that celebrate or commemorate an historic person or event timed to coincide with other events in the town; to encourage new and repeat visitors to the existing museum.	High-quality exhibition design including artefacts on loan from private collections and public institutions; employing a range of media and presentation styles that avoid repetitive design and encourage an acceptance of Athy as a leader in the playing of the Medieval historical narrative.	20,000 -150,000 per exhibition
<b>Medieval Banquets, Festivals and Functions</b>	To enthral participants with a 'fun' experience of Medieval-themed social functions; to extend from evening banquets to musical events, from Medieval-themed weddings to craft and fashion shows. Extending the brand of Medieval Athy into as many events as possible.	Join the Earl of Kildare or a Medieval Monk for a themed event that is more fun-focussed than narrative-based. Medieval dress, food, song and dance, will provide a different 'twist' to events but with a 'background' of authenticity.	self-financing

Interpretive Output	Objective	Features	Order of Magnitude Cost (€)
<b>Social Media, Website</b>	To reach both a younger audience and a more tech-savvy adult audience with fun media 'posts' that promote the features and events of Athy whilst encouraging a 'network' of supporters at home and abroad (Athy diaspora).	A regular and co-ordinated 'official' regular stream of media posts, across several platforms, encouraging the public to engage and promote the proposition; linked to the official "Medieval Athy" web presence.	50,000pa (incl. staff costs)
<b>Network of Supporters</b>	To encourage local, domestic and international 'ownership' of the Athy proposition.	Special 'supporters' events and publications; maybe even a "volunteer archaeological dig"!	25,000 (promotion costs)
<b>Third-Party Publications and Merchandise</b>	To encourage and facilitate 'endorsed' publication of 'Athy' branded material by third parties - including local companies, institutions, schools and colleges, special interest groups, pubs, shops, hotels, B&Bs, etc...	An endorsement or certification scheme that authenticates a product or publication as being from Athy; could be limited to outputs that have a 'historical' emphasis.	15,000 start-up costs then self-funding through modest certification costs

The order of magnitude costs given above are based on comparable projects undertaken elsewhere. We are grateful to Tony O'Regan of Tony O'Regan Associates for his help in providing these costs.

## 12. APPENDICES

### **12.1 Appendix 1**

*Draft Athy Development Plan 2012-2018*, Chapter 12 "Architectural and Archaeological Heritage", pp116-135

### **12.2 Appendix 2**

Athy - Key historical events (DNAC, 2016)

### **12.3 Appendix 3**

Archaeological Excavations Relevant to the Town Wall (DNAC, 2016)

### **12.4 Appendix 4a**

*Town Walls Plan (2016)*, Historic Mapping (UAS 1986, Avril Thomas 1992, DNAC 2016)

### **12.5 Appendix 4b**

*Town Walls Plan (2016)*, Historic Mapping, DNAC Walk-Round (DNAC, 2016)

### **12.6 Appendix 5**

*Stakeholder Workshop (24 October 2016)*, Powerpoint Presentation (JANVS | VIDAR)

### **12.7 Appendix 6**

*Stakeholder Workshop (24 October 2016)*, Outcomes (JANVS | VIDAR)

### **12.8 Appendix 7**

Academic published references consulted during the preparation of this report

### **12.9 Appendix 8**

Brief for Education Strategy and Plan for Athy (JANVS | VIDAR)



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