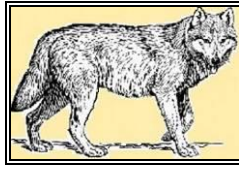


**PRELIMINARY REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION AND MONITORING
OF GROUNDWORKS
FOR CONSERVATION WORKS
AT
KILMANMAN CHURCH, CLONASLEE, CO. LAOIS.**

Author: Colm Flynn, Archaeological Consultant, Kilmainham, Mountmellick, Co. Laois

Client: Laois Co Co

Archaeological Licence: 19E0490



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SUMMARY

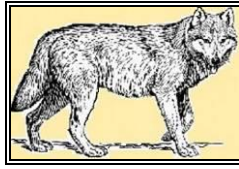
This report details the preliminary results of archaeological excavation and monitoring, carried out at Kilmanman Church, Clonaslee, Co. Laois in association with masonry repair works to the walls of the church.

The author of this report was commissioned by Laois Co Co to carry out an archaeological excavation and monitoring of site works for the masonry repair of walls of the church.

The archaeological work was carried out under the terms of Archaeological Licence 19E0490, issued by the National Monuments Service, the Method Statement submitted by the author to the National Monuments Service, the terms of the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), and in accordance with the document Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999).

The excavation of a foundation pad for masonry repair at Kilmanman Church resulted in the recovery of over 200 fragments of disarticulated human remains, and two decorated stone fragments, from the topsoil. No archaeological features were identified.

Specialist analysis of the artefacts from this project is ongoing, and will allow for the compilation of a Final Report on archaeological excavation and monitoring at Kilmanman Church, archaeological licence 19E0490.



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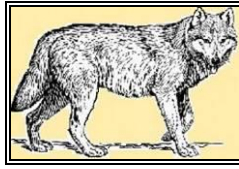
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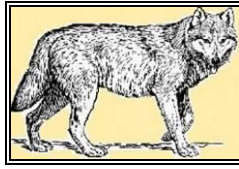
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1.0 Introduction

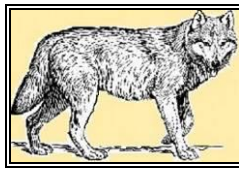
This report details the preliminary results of archaeological excavation and monitoring of groundworks, associated with the conservation of existing masonry walls at Kilmanman Church, Clonaslee, Co Laois (see Figs 1-5).

The archaeological monitoring that forms the basis of this report was carried out under Archaeological Licence 19E0490, issued by the National Monuments Service (NMS). The work was commissioned by the Laois Co Co, who are the owners of the site.

Kilmanman Church and graveyard are included in the Archaeological Inventory of County Laois (Sweetman et al, 1995) (see Fig 3, Plate 1). By their inclusion in the Record of Monuments and Places these archaeological sites are protected by law under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004).

The archaeological excavation resulted in the recovery of over 200 fragments of disarticulated human remains and two decorated stone fragments.

Specialist analysis of the artefacts is ongoing and will allow for the completion of the Final Report. All works took place in accordance with the terms of the archaeological licence 19E0490 and the Method Statement submitted by the author to the NMS, best archaeological practice, and in line with the documents Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Government of Ireland 1999), and the document Advice Notes for Excavators.



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2.0 Background

The conservation works for the masonry walls of Kilmanman Church, were proposed to reverse the effects of weathering, erosion, and neglect at the site (see Plate 1). Laois Co Co commissioned David Kelly Partnership CE (DKP) conservation specialists to oversee the works. Sheen Stoneworks (SHE) were appointed to carry out the conservation works.

3.0 Location

The site is located in Kilmanman townland, Clonaslee, Co Laois (NGR 630401E 712387N, see figs 1-3). Kilmanman Church is situated at the apex of a raised area of ground, that overlooks the land to the north, west and east. The Slieve Bloom mountains are situated to the south. The proposed works site is a known archaeological site (**RMP LA002-002001**), identified as a church in the Record of Monuments and Places, and the Archaeological Inventory of County Laois (Sweetman et al, 1995) (see fig 2).

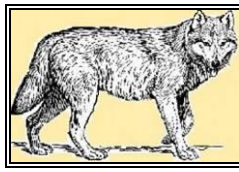
The site consists of a ruined late medieval church (**RMP LA002-002001**) and surrounding graveyard (**RMP LA002-002004**). The site is situated just east off a local road, in Kilmanman townland, 2.5km to the northwest of Clonaslee Village Co. Laois. Kilmanman Church (**RMP LA002-002001**) is situated in a graveyard that is bounded by the local road to the east, and by a low stone wall to the south, west and north. The land drops away to the west and south of the site. The Slieve Bloom mountains are 3km to the south of the site. The graveyard surrounding Kilmanman Church is also a known archaeological site (**RMP LA002-002004**), identified as a graveyard in the Record of Monuments and Places, and the Archaeological Inventory of County Laois (Sweetman et al, 1995) (see fig 2).

4.0 Archaeological Background

Receiving Environment-Archaeology & History

Kilmanman Church (**RMP LA002-002001**) is situated in Kilmanman townland, in the barony of Tinnahinch, located 2.5km to the northwest of Clonaslee Village Co. Laois (see fig 1). The name Kilmanman is an anglicisation of the Irish 'Cill na mBanbhán' which translates as 'church of St. Manman' (www.logainm.ie). The name Kilmanman first appears in written records dating to the seventeenth century (Calendar to Fiants of reign of Henry VIII. 1510-47...of Queen Elizabeth. 1558-1603).

Little is known about the prehistory of the surrounding area, although an unclassified megalithic tomb (**RMP LA006-001**) is situated 6km to the southwest in Killinaperson Townland, indicating that human activity took place in the vicinity of Kilmanman in the millennia prior to the arrival of Christianity. A



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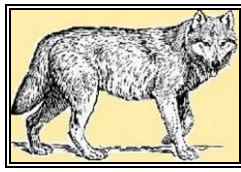
possible Bronze Age standing stone (**RMP LA002-004**) is situated 2km to the west of Kilmanman Church in Coolagh townland.

St. Manman was a seventh century religious leader who is reputed to have established two religious centres in Co Laois. One was a church near Clonaslee, at Kilmanman. The second was a monastery at Carrigeen (also known as Lanchoil), identified by O'Hanlon as being 'about 2 miles west of Kilmanman' (O' Hanlon, p.31), although no known early church site is situated this distance to the west of Kilmanman. The possible early Christian church at Ballynahown (**RMP LA002-013001**) and graveyard (**RMP LA002-013002**) situated approximately 5km southwest of Kilmanman Church has been identified as the likely site of the monastery of Carrigeen (anglicised from the Gaelic name meaning 'hermitage of the rocks'). This church and graveyard are within the parish of Kilmanman. Some early Christian cross-slabs (**RMP LA002-013003, LA002-013005, LA002-013006, and LA002-013007**) from the church and graveyard at Ballynahown were moved to Clonaslee Church. A possible early Christian ecclesiastical enclosure (**RMP LA002-013004**) is situated beside the church at Ballynahown.

The extant church at Kilmanman (**RMP LA002-002001**) is a later medieval parish church, that was likely constructed sometime in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. The church is constructed with roughly coursed sandstone rubble and measures 19.8m E-W, and 9m N-S. The south wall is almost completely destroyed. The east gable features a two-light tracery sandstone window. The west gable features a rectangular window, and the remains of a bellcote. The surrounding graveyard (**RMP LA002-002004**) in which Kilmanman Church is situated, is sub-rectangular in plan, and overlooks the surrounding landscape to the south, west and north. It contains some post medieval and modern grave markers. A stone wall encloses the graveyard, and a local road is situated immediately to the east. A possible early Christian enclosure (**RMP LA002-002006**) is indicated by the curving road and field boundary to the north of the church.

A holy well (**RMP LA002-002003**) is situated 90m to the SSW of Kilmanman Church (**RMP LA002-002001**) in the centre of a poorly drained flat field. The holy well is attributed to St Manmon, the patron of the parish.

Kilmanman is in the Barony of Tinnahinch, and was formerly known as the kingdom of Oregan. In the medieval period this area of Laois was controlled by O'Connor Faly, the O'Regan and O'Dunne Gaelic dynasties. Until the later medieval period Tinnahinch was part of the Kingdom of Failge (Offaly). Although the ruling Gaelic dynasties controlling Tinnahinch resisted encroachments by the Southern Uí Néill kingship, the O'Connor Faly, the O'Regan and O'Dunne dynasties were subservient to the Southern Uí Néill kingship. The O'Dunne's ruled from their castle at Tinnahinch, 3km southeast of Clonaslee.



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The townland of Kilmanman is listed as unfortified Protestant land in 1641 and 1670, and consequently was not subject to survey as part of the Down Survey works.

Returns from the Hearth-money rolls in 1765 by Barnabas Jackson record that Kilmanman had 51 Protestants, 1470 Papists, and one Mass-House in good repair.

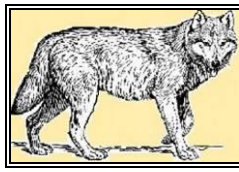
5.0 Archaeological Monitoring and Excavation Results

Archaeological monitoring

Archaeological monitoring of site works for the masonry repair works took place on intermittent dates during Sept 2019. Written notes and photographs were taken to document the progress of the works. The works crew comprised three conservation stonemasons from SHE equipped with hand and machine tools.

Work commenced with the author, DKP conservation engineer and SHE masons identifying and marking out the exact location of the proposed masonry repairs. These areas were focused on the southern ends of the west and east gables, and the existing bulkhead in the southern wall of the church. The author inspected the areas and made sure no archaeological material was present. SHE masons worked on the west gable firstly, then on the east gable, and then on the bulkhead in the southern wall.

A large section of the west facing elevation of the southern end of gable C02 had previously collapsed (see Plate 2). This collapse undermined the structural integrity of the west gable C02. SHE masons commenced removing the loose stones, mortar and vegetation from the works area at the southern end of the west gable (C02). These stones were rough limestone blocks, cobbles and angular stones. The west gable wall (C02) comprised west and east facing elevations of these stones with a central rubble and lime-mortar core. A decorated stone fragment (19E0490:02:01) was retrieved from the rubble core of the junction between the west gable wall (C02) and the southern long wall (C03). Once the loose material and damaged courses had been removed, the author carried out a small localised excavation (see below for details) through the topsoil (C01) at the southern end of the external side of the west gable wall (C02). This excavation was required to provide an area for a foundation pad for the masonry repairs (see Plate 3). When the excavation was completed the SHE masons laid a foundation pad and commenced rebuilding the west elevation of the wall using the original stones. Some helical ties and steel rods were used to stitch masonry sections together (see Plate 4). No other artefacts were recovered during the masonry repair works to the west gable.



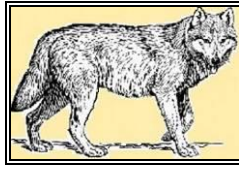
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Work on the east gable (C04) then took place. This work focused on the southern end of the east gable where a collapse of this wall had previously taken place (see Plate 5). Several of the quoins from the southern end of the east gable wall had been removed from the collapsed material. SHE masons commenced removing the loose stones, mortar and vegetation from the works area at the southern end of the east gable (C04). These stones were rough limestone blocks, cobbles and angular stones. The east gable wall (C04) comprised west and east facing elevations of these stones with a central rubble and lime-mortar core. A decorated stone fragment (19E0490:04:01) was retrieved from the collapsed material from the southern end of the east gable wall (C04). Once the loose material was removed, SHE masons commenced a rebuilt of the east gable using the loose stones. The rebuild was bonded with lime-mortar mix (see Plate 6). No other artefacts were recovered during the masonry repair works to the east gable.

Works for the repair of the bulkhead in the southern wall (C03) commenced with the SHE masons carefully removing the existing bulkhead. This part of the southern wall (C03) had been repaired in 1966 by local workmen. Unfortunately, this work had used concrete mortar to repoint this part of the southern wall, which can damage masonry fabric. A substantial crack had developed to the west of the bulkhead since this repair. The SHE masons removed the loose stones, and concrete mortar from the works area around the bulkhead (C03). Angle grinders were used to 'chase out' the concrete mortar from the bulkhead. Once the loose stones had been removed from the area of the bulkhead, a small localised excavation was carried out by the author (see details below). This excavation was required to provide an area for a foundation pad for the masonry repair works. When the excavation was complete, the SHE masons laid the foundation pad, and reconstructed the bulkhead with the original stones, using natural lime products. Some helical ties and steel rods were used to stitch masonry sections together. The SHE masons then repointed and flanchued the bulkhead with natural lime mortar (see Plate 9).

Archaeological Excavation

A localised archaeological excavation was carried out at the external side of the southern end of the west gable wall (see Fig 5 and Plate 3). This excavation measured 2m N x S, 0.6m E-W and was 0.1m deep (max). The author marked out the location of this excavation and cleaned back the area. The author carefully excavated topsoil (C05) from the excavation area using hand tools, to a depth of 0.1m. This allowed the masons to construct a foundation pad for the repair and rebuilding of the west gable (C02). No features and no grave cuts were identified within the excavation area in this location. Approximately 40 fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered from the topsoil (C05) in this

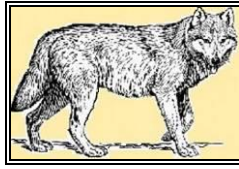


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location. These artefacts likely resulted from previous disturbance of graves within the surrounding graveyard.

A second localised archaeological excavation was carried out beside the bulkhead part of the southern long wall (C03) (see Fig 5 and Plate 8). This excavation area measured 1.6m N x S, and 2.8m E x W, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.3m. The author marked out the area, and used hand tools to excavate the topsoil (C05) within the area. No features or grave-cuts were identified in this excavation area. Approximately 150 fragments of disarticulated human bone were recovered from the topsoil (C05) within this excavation area. The assemblage includes adult cranium, long-bones, and pelvis fragments, as well as finger and toe bones. A clay pipe stem was also recovered from the topsoil (C05) in this excavation.

Once the excavation was completed the SHE masons constructed the foundation pad and rebuilt and repaired the bulkhead (see Plate 9).



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6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

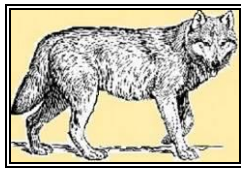
Archaeological monitoring and excavation works for the repair and conservation of masonry at Kilmanman Church, Clonaslee, Co. Laois was carried out by the author on behalf of Laois Co Co in September 2019. The works took place under archaeological licence 19E0490, issued by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. All on site archaeological works associated with this development have now been completed.

All works took place in accordance with the terms of the licence, and the associated Method Statement submitted by the author, and also the terms of the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), and in accordance with the document Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999).

The works resulted in the recovery of approximately 200 fragments of disarticulated human skeletal remains and two decorated stone artefacts.

Recommendations

Specialist analysis of the artefactual assemblage from this excavation is ongoing. This will allow for the compilation of a Final Report on the archaeological monitoring and excavation at Kilmanman Church under Archaeological Licence 19E0490.



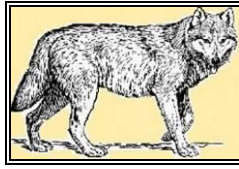
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National Monuments Service

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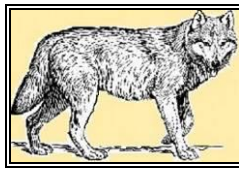
Google aerial photography

www.excavations.ie

Database of Irish excavation reports

www.IAI.ie

Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland



Figs and Images

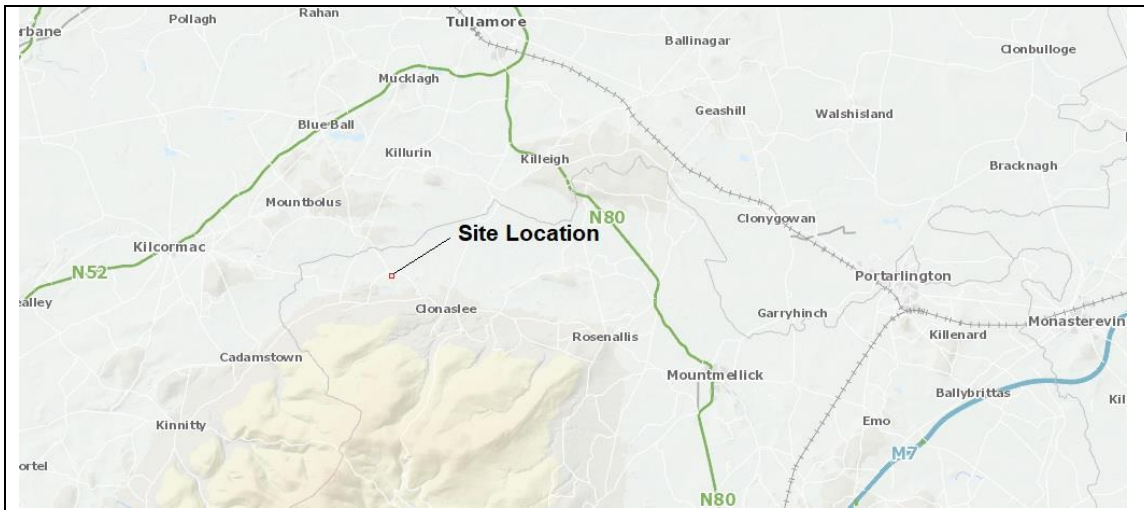


Fig. 1 Site Location map Kilmanman Church, Clonaslee, Co. Laois



Fig. 2 Location map showing Kilmanman Church and known archaeological sites, north to top of image.

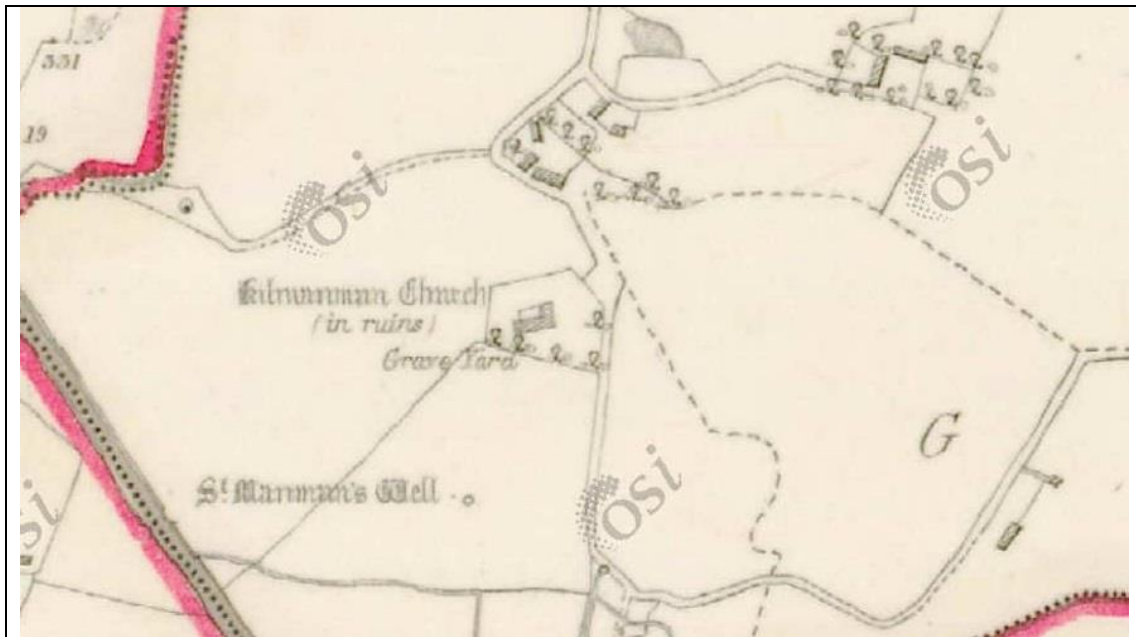
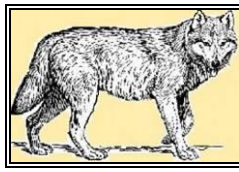


Fig 3: Extract from 1st Ed OS (6 inch to a mile) map of the area dating to 1830s, showing Kilmanman Church.

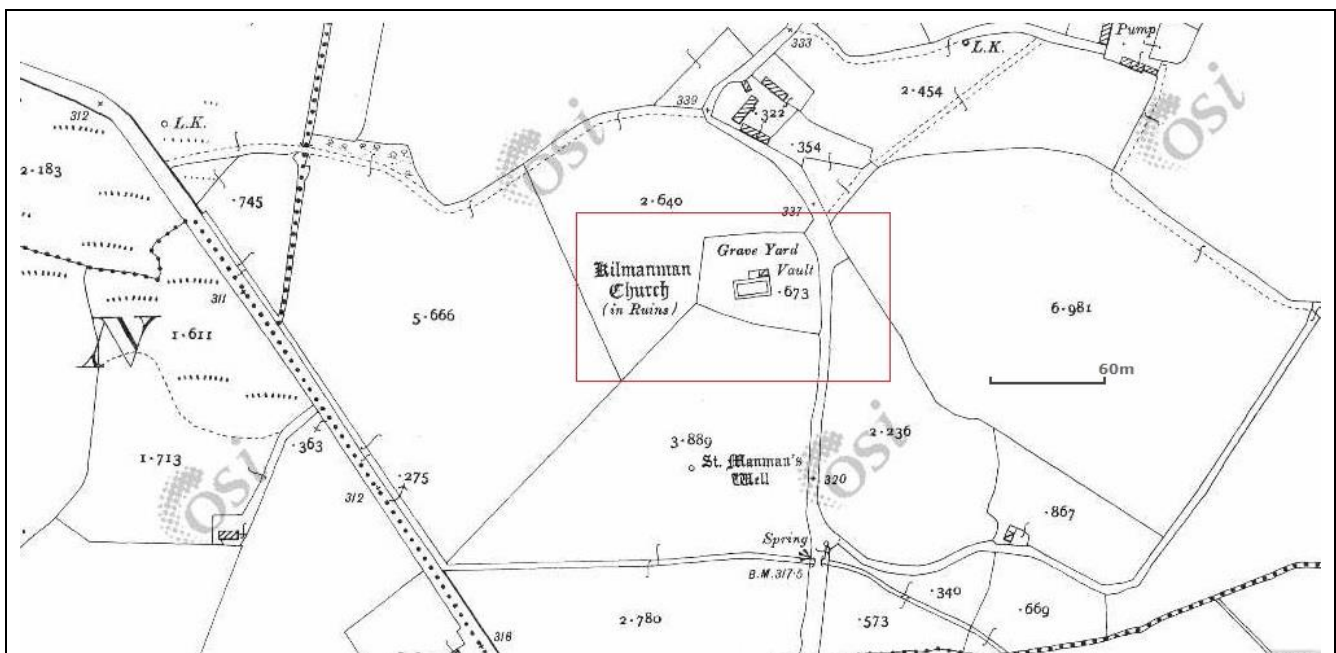
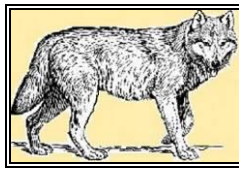


Fig 4: Extract from 1st Ed OS (25 inch to a mile) map of the area dating to 1900s, showing Kilmanman Church.



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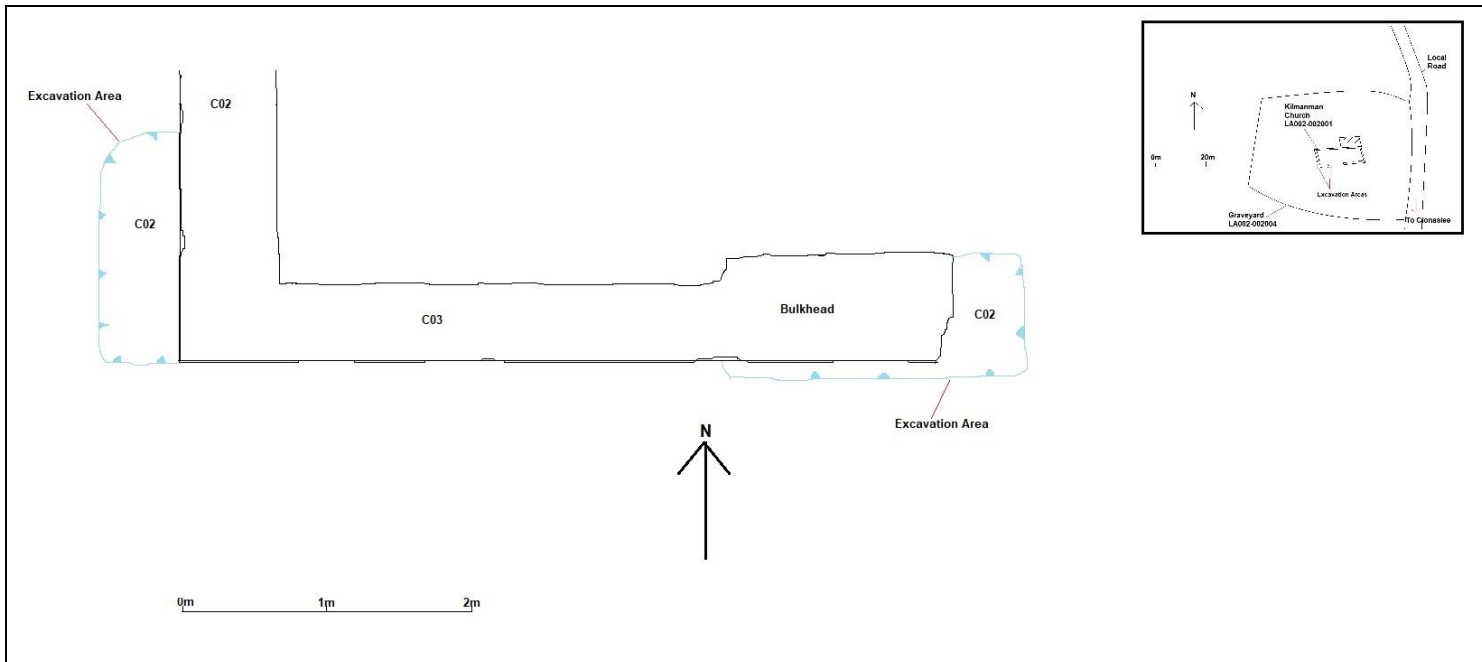
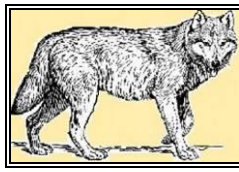


Fig 5: Site plan showing location of excavation.



Plates



Plate 1 Showing Kilmanman Church prior to works taking place, facing NW.



Plate 2 Showing west gable (southern end) prior to repair works, facing east.



Plate 3 Excavation area at west elevation of west gable, facing north.



Plate 4 Repaired west gable wall, facing north.

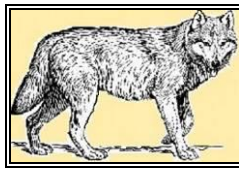


Plate 5 East gable wall (southern end) prior to repair works.



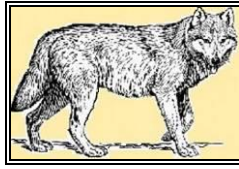
Plate 6 Repaired east gable wall, facing west.



Plate 7 Bulkhead in southern wall prior to repair.



Plate 8 Excavation area at bulkhead in southern long wall.



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Plate 9 Repaired Bulkhead in southern wall, facing northwest.