The Ancient Walls of Limerick.

AN ACCOUNT WITH A SPECIALLY PREPARED MAP.

By H. O. Leask, M.R.I.A.

"The City Walls," says Dineley, speaking of Limerick in 1680—"are fair and strong with a paved walk thereon, as are those of Shrewsbury and Chester in England." He speaks, too, of Bastions, Fortifications and Bulwarks, to say nothing of Inscriptions. Writers since his time have recorded much of the history of the old city which had "borne zealously the most harsh things of war," but no one, except the cartographers, seems to have studied the fortifications as a whole. To do this is the aim of the following account, which is based upon examination of the extant fragments and a study of maps and records which survive. The writer wishes to place on record here his great indebtedness to the Reverend Michael Moloney, P.P., of St. Patrick's, Limerick, who accompanied him in his inspections and has since directed him to valuable evidence on the subject.

The course or "trace" of the ancient walls of the city of Limerick is remarkably well defined, not only by the considerable fragments that still remain but by the map of circa 1590 (in the Hardiman collection, T.C.D.), and the French map of 1691 (British Museum, 54.14. P. 26825). When the latter, in particular, is applied to the modern Ordnance map, the coincidence of the lines of many of the present-day streets with the lost walls is very clear.

The French map is surprisingly accurate in relation to the Irish Town, but it is evident that the walls of the English Town, to say nothing of its cramped and irregular streets, presented a much more difficult problem to the surveyor: the western boundary on this map—if the lines of the eastern walls be taken as a basis—stands at least a hundred feet too far to the westward, well out into the waters of the Shannon. The northern extremity of the walls is also shown about fifty feet out of place in that direction. What may be called the estuary of the Abbey River was an obstacle to the accurate survey-connection of the two towns and the whole outline of the map, though correct in general, is slightly distorted in shape.

It will be convenient to start the perambulation of the walls of the English Town at King John's Castle and Thomond Gate and proceed in a clock or sun-wise direction, noting in order the fragments and features that remain and the course and position of those that have disappeared.

King's John's Castle (B. on Map), the fortress facing Thomond and dominating the town and the famous bridge, appears to have been erected between circa 1200 and 1207. Like other great works, it was not built in a day and its beginning may date as far back as the charter which John, "Dominus Hiberniae," gave to Limerick in 1197, the ninth year of the reign of his brother, Richard of the Lion Heart. John is credited by Stanilhurst with the foundation of an "agreement castellum" and a bridge. In the native annals the "bawn" of Limerick is mentioned in 1200 and a castle there in 1202. In 1216 repairs were called for and in 1226 it was held for the king when all other castles were held against him. The later references, annalistic and otherwise, tell but a long tale of neglect and necessary repairs, which does not help to an analysis of the structure. The alterations and rebuildings of the later centuries make this still more difficult, but there can be little doubt that the structure we see to-day substantially represents the outline and extent of the first building.
In plan the castle is irregularly five-sided but is almost a quadrilateral, with round towers at the angles and a double-towered gate-building in the northern wall. The north and south curtains, the lower part of the western curtain or river wall, the towered gate-building and three of the massive corner towers remain, though considerably altered, particularly in their upper parts. The eastern wall, which has quite disappeared, ran—in a line almost parallel with the river—from the north-eastern tower to another at the south-eastern angle which has vanished. This was probably not less massive than its companions (it is shown on the 1590 map as a low, round tower) but it appears to have become dilapidated since, in 1611, a four-sided bastion of modern form was erected in its place to overawe the city. A small part of the walling of the bastion remains to-day at the east end of the south curtain.

The bridge or north-west tower is believed to be the oldest. This is probable, since the first care of the military architects would be to command the bridge and bridge gate—or, perhaps, the ford which the former replaced—in an adequate fashion. The tower is truncated from its original height to provide a gun platform which would give a better command of the nearer part of the bridge below than cannon at the higher, original elevation could have done. Though both this and the south-western tower are vaulted, it is doubtful if this was always the case; in the remaining tower the vault is certainly an insertion and was doubtless built to carry heavy ordnance. Some original loop-holes remain in all the towers and are to be distinguished from the later apertures by their narrowness and their sandstone jambs.

In the west curtain, of which the upper part has been removed, and at a level beneath that of the present courtyard, there are several early loop-holes, narrow windows rather, which may have lighted a mural gallery. Parallel with this wall there stood, according to the interesting view in Pucata Hibernia, a long building there designated a store. There remain, covered up by plaster within recent years, in the wall of an eighteenth century building in this part of the castle, some elaborately wrought mouldings which suggest a building of some importance. Perhaps this was the “hall and chamber” of the castle built in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

In the Pucata view there is a small rectangular tower in the west curtain. This appears also on Speed’s and the French map. Its base is still to be seen. On the map of 1590 the watergate of the castle (13 on Map) is indicated in the lower part of the wall with a small jetty projecting out from it. The larger scale view of the castle by itself (Hardiman, T.C.D., No. 57) corroborates this and shows a small strand between the jetty and the near-by south-western tower.

The towers of the gate-building (14 on Map) flank the entrance to the castle, a pointed archway. Traces of the portcullis are to be seen and there are indications that the building extended, in rectangular form, further into the courtyard than it does at present. This would be the normal later thirteenth century form, and it is therefore possible that the gate structure is somewhat later than the greater part of the castle.(1)

A short distance north of the castle Thomond Bridge spans the river. It is the successor of the famous structure of fourteen arches, taken down in 1538, said to have been built in the time of King John and at his command. Though undoubtedly an ancient erection, it is not likely that it was the identical bridge of John’s time. Indeed, it is improbable that large bridges completely arched in stone were erected in this country so early as the thirteenth century. What is most probable is that the first bridge was a composite structure, with numerous stone piers carrying timber beams and a floor of hurdles or planks: on the lines of the Irish “hurdle fords,” but, perhaps, more permanent in construction.

In 1359 Edward III. granted an aid towards building a bridge in the city of Limerick in a direction towards the Irish enemies in Thomond and erecting a tower at the end of it for repelling them.(2)

(1). There was also, perhaps, a sally post on the east side towards the city.

LIMERICK
A MAP OF THE ANCIENT WALLS FROM ALL SOURCES.

BUILDINGS
A. ST. MARY'S CATHOL.
B. CASTLE
C. ST. MUNCHIN'S CH
D. ST. DOMINICK'S ABBEY
E. ST. PETER'S NUN
F. THE COLLEGE
G. ST. FRANCIS ABBEY
H. ST. AUGUSTINES
I. MILL (N. ARTHUR'S)
J. MILLS (CORRAGOWER)
K. ST. NICHOLAS SITE
L. ST. JOHN'S CH
M. ST. MICHAEL'S SITE
N. CARUHIN'S CH.
O. THOMORE CAS.
P. BLACK BATTERY
Q. DEVIL'S TOWER
R. CITADEL
S. WALL TOWERS
T. POSSIBLE SITE TE

SCALE OF FEET:

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

N.B.—The figure 12 is misplaced, it should be at the first S of Nicholas Street. The letter P is also misplaced, it should be opposite and North West of the Cathedral (A).

THIS MAP IS BASED ON THE ORDNANCE SURVEY BY PERMISSION OF THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE OF IRELAND

H. G. LEASK, Delf 22. III. 1911
The fact that the arches of the old bridge were turned over wickerwork centreings suggests a fourteenth or a fifteenth century date for the structure. This mode of vault building is distinctively Irish and characteristic of those centuries in particular; on the other hand, the Norman manner—as many thirteenth century castles show—was to use a centreing of planks or boards for the purpose.

The date of old Thomond Bridge is not the only doubtful question concerning it; a good deal that is contradictory has been written about it and Thomond Gate. Should the latter name be applied to the gate in the city wall at the end of the bridge or to the gate-tower near the Clare shore? Where was the drawbridge which was the scene of the terrible incident in the siege of 1691, when 600 of the defenders, driven from the Clare bridge-head, were killed or drowned through the too hasty raising of the drawbridge in their very faces?

These questions cannot be answered with certainty, but some matters can be made clear by a short study of the documents. Of these the most precise is the plan and elevation drawn by James Pain, the celebrated bridge builder, in 1814, which bears every sign of accuracy. (3)

Pain's drawing shows the fourteen arches, most of them of segmental-pointed shape, the others round or segmental. The bridge may be considered in three parts: at the western shore were two narrow openings with round arches; at the eastern end two—the wider next the city—with segmental-pointed arches, while the long central section had ten arches, of which six were round or nearly so. Between these last were rebuildings of the earlier pointed forms. Between the second and third arches from the Clare shore was a broad and heavy pier with foundations wider than the bridge.

This was the site of the gate-tower (2 on Map). It is shown on the French map as an expansion of the bridge and in Dineley's view (4) the tower itself appears. It is shown with a pyramidal roof bordered by crenellations, crowning a building of two storeys pierced by a round-headed archway furnished with a portcullis. Another view in Dineley (5) is almost equally precise; the tower has a spreading base wider than the bridge, a striking feature, whose previous existence is proved by the foundations, which still existed in 1814. They appear in Pain's plan.

In the first of the Dineley views the opening of the bridge next the gate-tower is lintelled, not arched. It is narrow and well buttressed by the tower base and the Clare abutment. What more proper as a position for the drawbridge? It could be operated in the recognised fashion from the tower. The Pacata Hibernia view, (6) symbolical rather than precise though it is, shows the drawbridge in this position.

In the first Dineley view there appears—in the eighth space from the bridge tower just mentioned and the fifth from the city end—a wooden bridge and balustrade. This has been identified as the drawbridge. (7) This identification is, for several reasons, most unlikely to be correct. Lifting gear would be essential and would have been so obvious in any view of the bridge that even a seventeenth century draughtsman could not have missed portraying it; indeed, he would more probably have exaggerated a feature of the kind. Moreover, such apparatus was usually housed in a tower, while—lastly—very heavy piers or abutments would be essential to resist the thrust of the rows of arches separated from one another by the drawbridge gap. It seems probable that the span in the view was but a temporary affair, used in place of a broken arch.

Northwards for about 500 feet from the site of Thomond Gate (7a) lay a stretch of wall along the river bank or strand—the Island Bank—to near the position of the Island Gate. This wall bounded St. Munchin's churchyard (C on Map) and the site of the episcopal palace before the sixteenth century. A short length remains. It is built of limestone

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(5) ibid., p. 429.
rubble and has a small, half-round tower at its northern end, while the existing houses at its southern end possibly incorporate older work in their front walls. Just south of the tower the French map shows a banquette or platform for several cannon and, north of it up to the corner tower, an enclosed area on the strand. This seems to have been the garden of the Bishop's house which, according to the 1590 map, stood upon or close to the wall.

At the extreme north-western angle of the city there still stand the remains of another small, nearly cylindrical tower. The wall turned to the east here for about a hundred feet where stood the Island Gate (B on Map) at the point where old Dominick Street met the city wall.

The French map shows the Island Gate as a rectangular building or tower (as also does the map of 1590, but with a small turret). We will probably be not far wrong in assuming that it was very similar in form to the surviving gate at Kilmallock: a small, plain tower pierced by an archway—possibly by two, one large and one small. The Island Gate was rebuilt in 1685 by the Mayor, Robert Smith.

From this point for a distance of over 400 feet the wall has disappeared, but it is obvious from the French map, and from the Ordnance map of 1870, that it ran in a nearly straight line within and parallel to the present west wall of the Island Road, and some 70 feet from it. The latter map shows some 150 feet of the ancient wall ending at the northern side of Love Lane, which still existed in 1870 but is now absorbed in the garden of St. Mary's Convent. Part of it still survived in 1902, as the Ordnance Survey map of that date shows.

Further to the south lies another section of the wall, about 170 feet in length, on the east side of the Convent garden. At its northern end there stood, according to the French map, a tower of peculiar shape which may be described as two squares attached _en echelon_. The indications are not very clear, but it may, conceivably, have been a rectangular building with a square projecting turret. In any case no recognizable fragment of it remains unless the rather shapeless piece of masonry at the northern corner of one part of the garden be a remnant. The extant wall of rubble masonry has a projecting feature of considerable interest also indicated on the French map. It has two low but deep recesses in the lowest visible part of its outer face. They are spanned by segmental-pointed arches. Though no signs of gate or doorways are to be seen in them, the archways may mark the position of a small gate, a sallyport or postern. Since the Dominicans possessed—according to the Civil Survey—ten acres of land outside the walls, which here were incorporated in the buildings of their friary, a gate in this position would be convenient if not absolutely necessary.

In the upper part of the wall, at the level of the garden, there are three small ancient windows fairly regularly spaced. All are narrow, square-headed, and splayed towards the inside. The stones of the jambs and heads, which are of sandstone in the northern pair and of limestone in the remaining window, are rebated within for shutters and rebated and chamfered outside. They are, perhaps, of thirteenth century date, like the remnant of the Dominican church which stands near by; the most prominent feature of the convent grounds. It is the north wall of the building. The writer inclines to the view that the stonework of these windows is earlier than the walls in which they are incorporated; a case of the re-use of old materials. Another window in the wall, between the three described and the possible postern, is of two lights and is built in limestone. It is probably coeval with the wall.

Southwards from the Dominican church (D on Map), still along the eastern side of the convent grounds and as far as the rear of the Boys' School, the old walls have disappeared. The same large gap existed in 1691, as the French map shows, its place being supplied by an earthwork, probably a trench and breastwork, part of the fortifications of the town during the siege. In the time of Charles II. barracks were erected on the ground now occupied by St. Mary's Convent and the schools: the space within the great gap. The French map does not show it, while the map of 1788 in Ferrar's History indicates several regular blocks of buildings called "Barracks, later Brewery." Whatever existed in 1691 must have been swept away shortly before to make way for the entrenchment which ran right across the site from the Dominican church, at about a hundred feet inwards from the destroyed wall, and returned eastwards to meet the sur-
viving ancient work about eighty feet north of Peter’s Cell. Before leaving the vanished wall, it may be noted that the map of 1590 shows two crenellated towers upon it about half way between St. Dominick’s and St. Peter’s Nunnery.

This last (E on Map) was the house of the Canonesses of St. Augustine. It lay within the wall which still stands. This is very well built of squared masonry, is about seven feet in thickness, and forms the western boundary of the back yards of a row of small houses fronting on the Island Road. Projecting outwards on corbels from the wall at a point close to St. Peter’s Cell is a puzzling piece of masonry. Since there is no aperture between the corbels, it cannot be either a machicolation or a garderobe, possibly it once gave support to a small turret on the wall-walk. On the other hand, it may be but the base of a chimney stack serving a building abutting on, or incorporated in the wall.

![Diagram of loop in wall: St. John's Hospital](image1.png)

**View.**

**Plan.**

**Elevation.**

**Part of wall: St. Mary's Convent**

To the south of St. Peter’s Cell, in O’Donnell’s tannery, and continuing in the same line as the section just described, is another part of the wall similar in thickness and construction. It is 53 feet in length and, curiously, has some corbels in its outer face. These, however, must be insertions in the old wall, not ancient features.

These two sections of the wall—almost bisected by Peter’s Cell, where there was, perhaps, a small gateway or sally-port (A on Map) used by the Augustinian community—together with the parts now missing, ended towards the south, according to the French map, at a point south of the present Exchange Lane, the “Monkes Lane” of the old maps.
At this extremity or angle, where there was a tower, the wall turned at a right angle and ran about 150 feet westwards. A stretch of wall, which has lost its inner face, remains.

Before dealing with the vanished parts of the wall in the south-eastern corner of the town, it should be mentioned that the map of 1590 shows a water-filled fosse or ditch outside the whole length of the walls from the Island Gate to the angle tower south of Peter's Cell. This does not appear on the French map, which shows a line of earthworks instead.

At the re-entrant angle by Bishop Street there was a tower where the wall again turned south-eastwards. This tower and that further east, appear to be the two "flankers" mentioned in the Civil Survey. For nearly 700 feet the wall followed the slightly sinuous line of Sheep Street. Where the present Meat Market Lane (the southern of the two "Rues de la Petite Isle" of the French map) ends, stood the Little Island Gate (5 on Map). This, in the writer's opinion, was also the Abbey North Gate mentioned by Lenihan in his tale of the city gates. It does not appear on the map of 1590 unless the tower on the walls near-by is to be identified with it. Another gate (6 on Map) stood at the end of Gaol Lane ("Rue de la Prison"), in which was the Tholsel. These two gates gave access to the Franciscan Abbey or friary (G on Map) which stood without the walls here.

Dineley says that "the Water Gate leading out of the English Town to the County Court, which is set up in the Ruines of an Abbey is inconsiderable." This gate had in his time a statue of St. James in a niche. A tablet bore the following inscription: —

SANCTE IACOB
DEFENDE NOS AB HOSTE
HIC BELLONA TONAT, SEDET HIC ASTRAEA RENASCENS,
HAC PIETAS AD AQUAS, AC SACRA PANDIT ITER.
ANNO DOMINI MDC.XLVII
R. R. CAROLI DOMINIC FANNING PRAETORE
DAVID CREAGH ET IACOBO SEXTON VICEC.

This was the Dominick Fanning hanged by Ireton in 1651, with others of the brave defenders of the city.

At the south end of the Sheep Street section of the walls—just behind Long Lane—the wall turned southwards again for 250 feet in a straight line. A short distance from the turn, at Fish Lane, was the Fish Gate (7 on Map). Within the walls close by was the Priory of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine (H on Map).

This south-eastern corner of the English Town, low-lying ground at the bend of the Abbey River, was naturally subject to floods and there is a record of the undermining by the water, at spring tides, of the Augustinian church and the collapse of part of it. This was in the fifteenth century. The church seems to have actually stood in the very angle of the walls. Here there was a small tower—shown on the 1590 and French maps—rising from the water of the river. According to the former map there was also a tower a little further west, between the angle of the wall and Ball's Bridge. Speed's map, or map view, of 1610 also shows a tower here, but the French map does not do so.

No vestige of the walls remains from Exchange Lane to the site of St. Augustine's church. It was between the abbey and Ball's Bridge, says Storey (Impartial History, p. 210) that the breach was made in 1691. Similarly, from St. Augustine's along the southern boundary of the town—by Sir Harry's Mall, George's Quay and the Potato Market—bunding the Abbey River for some 1400 feet, no ancient fragment stands to-day.

At the foot of Mary Street, where there was a gate (8 on Map) giving access to the town, stood Ball's or Baal's Bridge—which will be referred to later on—on the site of the present structure. Some 350 feet west from the bridge, about the middle of the present George's Quay, Nicholas Arthur's Mill (I on Map) projected outwards into the river. (9)

Where the Potato Market now is there was one of the most interesting features of ancient Limerick—the ship dock or port—enclosed by pier-like arms of the walls terminating in towers. The southern pier or wall, nearly 400 feet long, started from a tower seemingly three-sided, at the foot of the "Rue du Quay" of the French map: the modern Bridge Street, and formed the south boundary of the port. In 1500, say Fitzgerald and McGregor, "a wall and vault were built on the south side of the Quay. This vault had its entrance by a flight of steps at the end of Quay Lane, and formed a covered way to a six-gun battery at the Pierhead near the flood-gate. This is the south wall and tower shown (the former by a double line) on the French map, which also shows the entrance steps minutely. This south wall of the Quay was repaired in 1640-41, when Wm. Comyn was Mayor, and bore a long inscription to that effect which is given in Ferrar's History, 1st edition, 1767. The tower fell in 1693, the collision of the falling stones detonating the 260 barrels of gunpowder in store there, with most destructive effects: fatal casualties and much injury to persons and property: houses were wrecked, many windows broken and roofs stripped. The battery at the pier-head seems to have been a successor to the tower.

The entrance to the port was bounded, on the north side also, by a wall-pier about 100 feet in length, and the same distance from the south wall. It also terminated in a tower. Within the entrance lay the dock itself, an irregular piece of water surrounded by quays and projecting jetties and backed by the quay. The view in Pacata Hibernia shows a sort of half-moon quay, but the French map and that of 1590 are more precise and detailed and probably more accurate. The piers and terminal towers—which must have been most interesting and picturesque objects—have quite gone and so also has the whole of the river wall of the town from the dock northwards to the nearest tower of King John's Castle. Its trace passes across the County Court House diagonally at the river end of the building, and in the same way over the yards west of the City Court House. At or near the foot of Newgate Lane—the "Rue des Moulins" of the French map—were two water mills (J on Map). They stood out from the wall just below the Curragower reef. These mills are specifically mentioned in the Civil Survey at pp. 442-3. There seem to have been two stone houses (30ft. by 30ft. and 45ft. by 27ft.) "with two mills (wheels?) therein seated" and a thatched house. The map of 1590 shows them as "Thos. Arthur's" and the "Queen's Mills," and connected with the city wall by a bridge. North of the mills the wall followed a slightly sinuous line up to the castle.

This completes the circuit of the English Town but something remains to be said about those gates which have not so far been mentioned. According to Lenihan, Limerick had, up to 1760, seventeen gates, twelve being in the English Town. Of these eight have been referred to already in this paper. The positions of the Creagh, Quay Lane, and Bow Lane gates, and Newgate, remain to be identified.

All must be sought in the south-western arc of the city or within its walls. Creagh gate (9 on Map), not shown on any of the maps, doubtless stood at the end of Creagh Lane. It must have been in the nature of a water-gate giving directly on the river—or upon a strand at least. What purpose it can have served is obscure. Quay Lane Gate (10 on Map) at the foot of the lane of the name, is easily identified. It is indicated on the French map, and very well shown on that of 1590, as standing at the end of a short length of wall, projecting inwards from the main line and closing the end of the quay. Dinsley notes the following inscription on the "Key Gate":

"CAROLO REGE
REGNANTE
PETRO CREAGH
PRÆTORE
ANNO DOMINI
MDC. XLII."

The gate was within the city. Bow Lane Gate (11 on Map) receives passing mention in a lease of October 23rd, 1676 (communicated to the writer by the Rev. M. Moloney, P.P.) as "All that the stone house on the Quay of the City at the north end leading to the little gate of the College." The gate was evidently within the city and stood, probably, near the river end of Bow Lane (the "Rue Voutec" of the French Map). The map of 1590 shows a gate-building about the west end of the "bow" or vaulted passage and another archway nearer the quay. Either of these might be the gate. Newgate (12 on Map), the
last of the gates, was also within the city. It stood across the “High Street” of the Civil Survey—the Nicholas Street of to-day—at its intersection with Newgate Lane. This is a curious position for a gate. The map of 1590 shows an internal wall on the lines of Bishop’s Street and St. Francis Place. This continued westwards from Newgate as the wall of the College. It divided the North ward of the city from its Middle ward; the old parishes of St. Munchin and St. Nicholas from that of St. Mary?

In addition to the towers and gates mentioned, some other features of the English Town walls appear on the map of 1590. These are all mural towers, though one may, perhaps, be identified with a gate. Two towers are shown half way between the Dominican church and St. Peter’s Cell, and another at that place. Yet another tower is shown between the south-east angle (St. Augustine’s) and Ball’s Bridge. All are indicated as rectangular, their parapets crenellated in the Irish manner with stepped battlements. There is another, doubtful, representation of a tower halfway between the Gaol Lane or Prison Gate and the right-angled bend in the wall south of St. Peter’s Cell; this may be intended for the Little Island or Abbey (north) Gate, which is not shown on the map of 1590.

Joining the two towns there was but one bridge; that variously known as “Ye Bridge” (Pacata Hibernia), the Tide Bridge, Baal’s or Ball’s Bridge. Almost certainly it was originally the “Bald” Bridge (Droichead Maol), i.e., a bridge without parapet walls. Ball’s Bridge seems to have existed from the fourteenth century. Its four arches, resting on piers with sharp, projecting cut-waters, spanned an “Abbey River wider than it is now. The French map, which shows, of course, only a plan of the bridge, indicates four piers and two other projections, suggesting five or even six arches or spans. The 1590 map shows six arches. The Pacata Hibernia view shows four arches and a drawbridge span. That this is the probable form is borne out by a picture, painted in 1810, of the bridge with its row of houses above four round arches. Before this date the quay on the north side of the river had been widened, obliterating the drawbridge span. The two rows of houses which stood on the bridge, making it a sort of London Bridge in miniature, were not in existence in 1691. They were built, or allowed to be built, by Viscount Shannon, who got a grant of the bridge. In 1761 the row on the east side of the bridge was valued and thrown down and the too-narrow roadway thus usefully widened. Fourteen years later, on the 4th February, 1775, part of the bridge was damaged by a high tide and several of the western houses fell. A resident in one of them, named Barry, fell through the floor of his house into the river and was carried down to the new bridge before he was rescued by a brave sailor. The bridge, and at least some of the houses, remained until 1830, when demolition and rebuilding in its present form took place, as the commemorative tablet built into it shows.

Before the southern suburb, the Irish Town, was walled in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there was a gate and drawbridge at the north end of the bridge. Both remained at least till the time of the sieges in the seventeenth century. Gates (8 and 15 on Map) are shown at both ends of the bridge in the 1590 map.

The enclosure of the Irish Town with a wall was not undertaken till about 1310, the year of Edward II.’s murage grant. The building must have proceeded very slowly since it was not until 1395 that the south-west tower was completed. The wall reached the region of St. John’s Gate in 1421; a tower called Cogan’s Tower, on the east wall, was begun in 1430, and the wall continued to what was afterwards called Cromwell’s Tower. St. John’s Gate and the works near by were begun in 1450 but were not finished until 1495. It is permissible to wonder what form of temporary protection was used to close the gaps—very extensive gaps—which must have existed during this long period from 1310 to 1495.

As has already been said, the agreement of the trace of the walls—as shown on the French map—with the modern map of the Ordnance Survey, is remarkable in the case of the Irish Town. Though large sections of the walls have disappeared, the lines of the earlier map agree closely with those of some modern streets. They coincide with or parallel several.

(10). There was a charter of 1540 for building a bridge in Limerick.
(12). On August 29th, 1699, the chains of the drawbridge were cut by one shot of the Williamite Artillery (Journal of John Stevens, ed. Murray, Oxford, 1912, p. 182).
Ball's Bridge and its gate to the Irish Town stood about the centre of a more or less straight wall, some 300 feet in length, bounding the Abbey River. Both the map of 1590 and the French map agree in showing a tower at the eastern extremity of this wall. From it the wall turned sharply southwards for about 40 feet and then at a right angle to the east-south-east for about 450 feet, along the present Clare Street and on the south side of it. Close to the re-entrant angle—that is to say, at the north end of this stretch—and about 30 or 35 feet from the angle itself, was the East Water Gate (16 on Map). The point is defined by the junction of Clare Street and Curry's Lane. A round, or nearly round, wall-tower stood at the other end of this long length of wall: on the south side of Clare Street opposite the present O'Sullivan Place.

At this point begins the longest, best preserved, and straightest length of ancient walling surviving. The total length of this section was over 750 feet and of this some 640 feet still stand. It is built of large, roughly squared masonry and is seven feet in thickness at the top; it may be more below; indeed, the reputed thickness of the walls of the Irish Town is eleven feet. This, however, is not the thickness of the other sections which survive.

For more than half its length the wall is backed by a rampart of earth, which—the French map shows—ran the whole distance from Clare Street to the south-east angle tower. That this rampart was thrown up between the two sieges of the city is clear from White's reference in the MSS. under 1691:—"Between the two sieges all the east and south part of the walls were lined inside with earth, which is the place we now walk upon." The promenade is mentioned by Bishop Pococke in his Tour. A little distance south of the centre of this wall—where it makes a very slight change in its course, possibly indicating a pause in the building—there was a D-shaped tower. The base of this still remains in a garden at the rear of a small house in St. Lelia Road. The tower projected 14 feet 6 inches outwards and had walls four feet thick, in which were loopholes flanking the wall faces on each side and locking the D-shaped room which was recessed into the wall itself. There are traces of an entrance by steps from the town side, which seems to have been approached by the vaulted passage under the rampart, entered from the present Quinn's Lane. This passage, itself doubtless of the same period as the rampart (1690-91), leads to the older features in the wall: the tower and the flight of steps which gives access to the wall-top. The tower may be Cogan's Tower, finished about 1430. (13)

Just a hundred feet back from the tower—to the north—is an opening through the wall which is called "Sallyport" on both editions of the Ordnance map. It is approached through the rampart by way of a tunnel, and connects the grounds of Town Wall Cottage with a small field outside the walls. Whether this opening is an ancient feature or a modern one is doubtful. Lenihan, however, seems to have no doubt in the matter, since he says (p. 749):—"Here the walls are nearly 36 feet thick, and have been lately tunnelled by the proprietor in order to connect the interior and exterior garden."

This wall, like all the others, no doubt, had a walk along its top for the defenders, protected by a crenellated parapet. To the seventeenth century garrisons these parapets—and even the walls themselves—were a doubtful blessing. The cannon balls of the besiegers not only rebounded outwards from the stonework, injuring the defenders in the trenches, but assailed them with flying fragments of splintered stone from parapet and wall, as Stevens tells in his Journal. Much of the parapet walling was then thrown down to mitigate this danger.

Close to the southern end of this long east wall, in the space now occupied by the New Road and for some distance from it towards the corner tower, was the breach made in the wall by the Williamite artillery in the siege of 1690. The Journal of John Stevens gives the width of the breach at its greatest—just before the besiegers withdrew some days subsequent to the fierce but unsuccessful assault—as forty paces. This agrees closely with the visible facts: the width of the road and the length of the repaired portion of the wall closer to the Black Battery (P on Map). This lay upon the rampart within the salient south-east tower, which still remains. It is shown on the older maps.

The White MSS. tells that, in 1643:—"This year, Dominick White being Mayor of Limerick, the east rampart from St. John's Gate towards the green called Ana Chluoin was made." The Civil Survey (at p. 489) throws light on the position of this latter point:—"The Greene, commonly called Cluone, and the Bogg on ye north . . . . mearing . . . . on the west with the Rampier and the walls of the South Suburbs . . . ." It is fairly evident that the Cluain, or na Clony, tower is either that tentatively identified with "Cogan's Tower" or is the south-east tower. But since the rampart behind the former is—almost certainly—a work of 1690-91, the 1643 reference in the White MSS. must be to the rampart of the south wall—east of St. John's Gate in the hospital grounds—on which stood the Black Battery of the sieges, and to the tower at the angle there; evidently the tower na Clony itself.

At this point the wall turns west again, almost at a right angle. Its lower part still stands, bounding the garden of St. John's Hospital and supporting, for some of its length at least, the south wall of the modern buildings. In it there is a perfect loop-hole (see sketch) less than two inches in width but splying outwards and inwards. It is 2 feet 6 inches in height and is hollowed out to 9 inches wide at the bottom. The masonry of this part of the wall is good, roughly squared and occasionally coursed. The loop-hole is possibly, though not certainly, an insertion.

Just 300 feet from the angle of the wall it joins Porteullis House : the Gate-building of the Citadel (R on Map). This strong point is first mentioned about 1685(14) but the pointed arches of the building suggest an earlier date. The pointed arch died out in Ireland in the seventeenth century but it is to be found in some castles built between 1600 and 1640. Another characteristic of the castle building of the same period is the fine-picked dressing of wrought stonework similar to that found in the citadel building. From the building's evidence, therefore, it seems that it must be ascribed to the early part of the century and to the activity of the Confederates in Limerick. The Civil Survey (at p. 406) speaks of:—"the Cytadle about St. John's Gate, contains a great stone house with a Cross house, the great Castle on the Gate . . . ." Moreover (according to Lenihan's History (at p. 239) the much defaced tablet set in the wall of the Hospital set forth that John Creagh, Mayor, on the 1st May, 1650, and D. Rochfort and James Bonfield, Sheriffs, freely bestowed two hundred pounds on some work which included the outworks. While a large structure is shown at the position of St. John's Gate on the map of 1590, there in no sign on that map of the Citadel, which is shown on the French map. The earlier cartographer could hardly have missed so remarkable a building. It seems that the limiting dates are 1590 and 1650.

The Gate-building is worthy of a more detailed study than can be given to it in this account, but its main features can be described briefly. On the city—northern—side is a pointed archway leading to a slightly wider passage which has recesses in its side walls. At the other end of the passage is the gate towards the outworks, spanned by three arches with broad soffits. The inner pair are pointed in shape and are divided by the slot for the portcullis which descended along the grooves in the stone jambs; the outer arch, which is round-headed, spans a deep recess and rises to a greater height than the others.

What was the original form of the outworks of the Citadel is not very clear. Stevens(15) says:—"to the cityward it is square, of small compass, and has two small platforms, without it makes a half moon; the whole work is of stone but weak . . . ." On the French map a bastion with long sides projects outwards. While not exactly agreeing with Stevens' "half moon" it is, in essentials the same thing, seemingly designed to flank St. John's Gate close by. The same map shows the earthen, siege fortification abutting on the bastion and covering the gate.

Of the inner walls of the Citadel but a small part remains: the gateway—perhaps not original—and a section, an elbow as it were, of the western bastion; one of Stevens' "platforms." The whole work was nearly rectangular; about 130 feet by an average projection of 75 feet from the gate-building.

The two platforms or bastions stood out from the angles of the enclosure, their pointed extremities being quite 200 feet apart. That to the west reached to within a few feet of where is now the wall enclosing St. John's Church. The eastern bastion must have been the place of "the two pieces of cannon playing from the Citadel" which did such execution on the assaulting troops in the breach. (15) The wall which remains is 7 feet in thickness; about the same as that of the town walls generally.

From the south-western angle of the Citadel part of the ancient wall projects in the direction of St. John's Gate (17 on Map) which stood about a hundred feet away, just where Cathedral Place and the narrow road leading to Garryowen meet under the shadow of St. John's Cathedral. The walls in this region and the gate itself were the last part of the city's enclosure to be completed; the works were begun in 1450 and not finished until 1495. (17)

Of the form of St. John's Gate we know nothing. This very important entrance to the Irish Town is shown on the 1590 map as an elaborate structure crowned by a pair of battlemented gables, while the French map shows no more than a plain gap.

Beyond the gate and at about 150 feet from the Citadel, the wall turned westwards (nearly W.S.W.) along the present Brennan's Row and probably coinciding with the southern side of that street. It terminated and turned north-west at Williams' Lane. The tower (Q on Map) which marked this angle stood, in all probability, just within the buildings on the west side of that small street. The whole length of this south wall of the town, from the Citadel to the most southern tower—a distance of over 700 feet—was backed by a rampart of earth which, according to the French map, was as much as 50 feet broad for the greater part of its length. Under 1642 the White MSS. attributes the rampart in question to that year. The reference (copied by Ferrar) is as follows:

"This year, Pierce Creagh being Mayor, the rampart from St. John's Gate of Limerick within the walls towards the west, was made, and the new tower built there (Mungret Gate tower)." At the south-west tower were sloping approaches to the ramparts which served both as fortifications and as a promenade for the citizens from 1642 until, about 1760, both they and the walls they reinforced were swept away. The tower appears to be that referred to in the White MSS. Annals as being built in 1395, in the Mayoralty of Walter Dannell. It appears on the 1590 map as a rectangular building with a corner turret, but the French map indicates a massive round structure.

That the south-western tower was also known as the "Devil's Tower" or "Battery" seems to be proved by the following references given to the writer by the Rev. Michael Moloney, P.P. Under the entry in White's MSS. attributing this tower to 1395 there is a note in another hand—that of Bishop John Young who died in 1814—stating that "this must be the tower which in aftertimes was called the Devil's Battery, on which there were three or four pieces of cannon mounted, one of which was brass; it was demolished within my memory." Under 1760 White has two entries which bear out Bishop Young's view. Speaking of the partial demolition of the walls that year, White states: —"Councillor Edward Pery began by throwing down forty yards of the Irish town walls near the Devil's Battery in order to make a road from his Mungret road to his new Square back of St. John's Church." The same year he writes: —"Also in the month of October forty-five feet of the Irish Town wall between the Devil's Battery and Mungret Gate was thrown down in order to open a new road from the new square back of St. John's Church to the Mungret road or Bohar Buoi." The road thus formed is now called Gerald Griffin Street.

From the south-west to the west tower, some 850 feet away, the wall ran in three more or less straight sections. The first, 300 feet in length, lay parallel with Williams' Lane and passed across Lower Gerald Griffin Street. The French map shows a slight set-back in the wall line here for 120 feet, ending at the modern Palmerstown (Taylor's Row on the 1870 Ordnance map), where a small tower is shown. This also appears on the map of 1590.

From this point some 130 feet of the old wall remain embedded in modern buildings and serving as a party wall on the north side of the Pavilion Stores in Playhouse Lane. It stands slightly in advance (westwards) of the last mentioned section and is just seven feet in thickness.

(16) Stevens: Journal, p. 139.
Along Corn Market Row, from the Back Lane frontage of the same block of buildings, to the west tower—a distance of about 300 feet—no trace of the wall remains. The tower also has disappeared and its precise position is uncertain. That it stood at or not far from the western corner of the Milk Market is clear, but it may have been as much as 30 or 40 feet south of that point (see X on Map). This small uncertainty is due to the fact that the length of the Carr Street section of the wall is the one dimension of the walls on the French map which does not agree fairly closely with the Ordnance map.

On the 1590 map this tower is round and had a conical roof, presenting an appearance not unlike that of Reginald’s Tower at Waterford, which still exists.

Mungret Gate stood at the end of Mungret Street close to the south angle of the Milk Market. Its original form is as uncertain as that of most of the other gates. The 1590 map shows a twin-towered or turretted building, but on the French map the wall is thin and not pierced. A strong half-round tower covers it, however, on the “field” side. That a gate was built with the walls here may be taken as certain. The Sexton Annals at 1622 record:—“Mungret Gate opposed and nowe built . . . which was shut time out of mind.”

Lenihan states that Pierce Creagh built the Mungret Tower in 1643 and quotes the inscription which Dineley saw and noted at the Quay Gate. Dineley gives the following two inscriptions from Mungret Gate:

(a) On the City Wall, left side of the Gate:

CAROLO REGNANTE
PETRO CREAGH PRAETORE
HUIC MURI PROPUGNACULO TAGGE
SUNT
ANNO R.S. MDCXLIII.

(b) “On that part of the wall which adjoins to the right side of the aforementioned Mongrett Gate in Roman Capitals”:

HANC PROPUGNACULI MOLEM AD HOSTILES
IMPETUS PROPULSANDOS EXCITATAM TABULATO
STRAVIT FASTIGIUMQUE IMPOSUIT FRANCISCUS
FANNING PRAETOR MDLXV (?) ET
I.M. VICECOMITEN. P.D.M.

(The date should be 1645. I.M. seems to be James Mahowle and P.D.M., Patrick Meyagh, the Sheriffs in 1644).

Just within Mungret Gate the French map shows a peculiar building—a rectangle with a number of semi-circular projections to one side—marked “fours,” i.e., ovens, furnaces, bake-houses or kilns. Baking ovens were probably numerous in the city; perhaps these large installations were for the military forces in particular.

(In the Dineley drawings [Nat. Lib., Ireland] there is a drawing of Mungret Gate. Unfortunately this is not accessible at present.—H.G.L.)

At the West Tower the wall turned—at almost a right angle—along the western wall of the Milk Market, bending again at its north corner and following the eastern side of Carr Street to another round tower. On the 1590 map this is shown as exactly similar in form to the West Tower, even as to the conical roof. The distance between these two towers measures about 450 feet on the French map. This is the one point, as has been said already, in which this map’s wall dimensions differ to any great extent from those measured on the Ordnance map to-day. As another of the measurements—an internal one of the length of Mungret Street itself from the gate to Broad Street—is also a hundred feet too long, a similar error must have crept into the wall length, which is nearly parallel to the street and not far away from it. For these reasons it seems better to trust to the modern map, which makes the distance between the towers about 380 feet. It may, however, have been 30 or 40 feet greater at the most.

(18) Quoted Lenihan: note, p. 702.
(19) Ibid. note, p. 151.
(20) Ibid. p. 702.
At the tower, which may be called the north-west tower, the wall swung back north-eastwards, and followed, as the remaining fragments clearly show, the eastern side of West Water Gate. About 95 feet in length of the wall forms part of the street face of the stone-built stores now occupied by the Irish Art Cabinet Factory in West Water Gate. Still preserved, high up in this wall near its northern end, are two wrought stone corbels of a small machicolation. A little further on there appears on the 1590 map a small tower which is absent from the later maps. Further north some more fragments of the old walls survive. They are about 60 and 35 feet in length. The longer section has a batter at its base and is faced with roughly squared and coursed masonry. It is about 6 feet thick and still stands to a height of some 18 feet; the shorter length, however, is defaced and is pierced by a modern gate.

Outside this stretch of the walls stood the old church of St. Michael, which existed in 1200 and was thrown down at the time of the Cromwellian siege. Its large and very irregularly shaped graveyard (M on Map) remains. Northwards of it, nearly opposite Nicholas Arthur’s Mill (I) in the English Town, and, like it, projecting outwards into the Abbey River—was the Prior’s or Common Mill.(22)

At the north end of the street, at about 600 feet—measured along the curve of the street—from the north-west tower, stood one of the more elaborately constructed gateways of the city, if we can rely on the map of 1590. This was the West Water Gate which the old map shows as two similar buildings, one behind the other. (Can there have been a barbican?) That the gate-building had twin round or D-shaped towers is clear from the French map. It can hardly have been less than 50 feet in width over the towers which flanked the entrance archway. The gate and walls near by were demolished in 1796.(22) According to Ferrar(25) “it was the finest in the City and represented the arms thereof.” He mentions also(29) that the date 1619 was cut in the small arch, “at the entrance of the lane near it,” but the reference does not appear to be to the gate itself.

From the north tower of the gate the wall ran straight for a hundred feet to the bank of the Abbey River, turning there at a right angle to meet, some 120 feet to the eastwards, the Ball’s Bridge Gate of the Irish Town.

In this perambulation of the walls few of the mural towers have been mentioned by name. Probably all of them were named. Three are mentioned in record but their identification is a matter for research. Which, for instance, were na Clona or Clony Tower, built about 1419; Cromwell’s Tower, 1441; and Cogan’s Tower (which the writer thinks was that in the centre of the eastern wall), 1430.(25) Cahen’s Tower, 1428?(25?)

The whole course of the ancient walls of Limerick has now been followed. That this study of them is imperfect the writer is aware; he has been unable to include in it more than passing references to the extra-mural defences of the seventeenth century and may have fallen into error in his conjectural restorations of those more ancient. Moreover, limitations of knowledge and of space forbade references of any length to the stirring history of the city or its notable buildings and famous men; he has done his best to collate evidence which is not always clear and to analyse the ancient maps which, a fascinating study in themselves, provide so much evidence.

The most valuable of the maps known to the writer, and used by him, are the two mentioned at the beginning of this account: that of circa 1590 in the Hardiman Collection, T.C.D.(27) a part of which—the northern section only—is reproduced in the R.S.A.I. Guide to Limerick, by the late T. J. Westropp, published in 1916; and the British Museum map of 1691, called throughout the French map.

The authorship of the first map is not known. It is a more or less isometric view drawn on parchment and coloured, the walls being shown in red. Its scale is in geometrical paces (60 inches) and its scaled dimensions agree fairly closely with the facts.

(24) Ibid., p. 28.
(26) Sexton Annals.
(27) Copy of this map made in 1850 is in the Limerick Museum.
The French map—so styled because it is obviously the work of a French surveyor, possibly a Williamite engineer, though this is not by any means certain—is a regular horizontal projection: a proper map, not an attempt to combine a map with a bird's eye view, as so many old maps are. It shows the extra-mural fortifications in detail, as well as the more ancient walls and towers and some of the interior streets and houses. Whether it is primarily a plan of the military works as they stood after the surrender to Ginkel, and to illustrate a project for their improvement, or represents the state of the works after the siege of 1690 is not clear. The map certainly shows the six bastions to the Irish Town erected between the sieges, and mentioned by Stevens (23) but the existence of an apparently contemporary detailed estimate in French—a copy of which has been lent to me by Mr. Colm O'Lochlainn—suggests that works of great importance were under consideration. The estimate, indeed, may be actually associated with the map. A study of the two documents together is outside the scope of this account but would be of interest and is one which should be undertaken. There is a lithographed reproduction of this map in Lenihan's History and a photostat of the original is exhibited in the Limerick Public Library. Its scale is of Toises: French fathoms, each equivalent to about 6.395 feet.

Story's Impartial Account (1691) also has a map but it is to a very small scale. The curious view of the siege operations is, perhaps, the best known feature of the book; its perspective is impossible but it conveys, none the less, some information.

In "A History of the City of Limerick," (printed by Andrew Welsh for John Ferrar, Bookseller, Limerick, 1767), which is the forerunner of Ferrar's History of 1787, there is no map. This little book is valuable for the history of the city, in that it is a compilation of the chief events in the form of annals. All the notices are extracted from acknowledged sources: the White MSS., Sexton Annals, Arthur's MSS., etc. That these sources have been used by Ferrar himself in his second and larger History, and either directly or indirectly by Fitzgerald and McGregor (History, published in 1827) and by Maurice Lenihan, author of the best known, most voluminous but—in the matter of the walls—rather uncritical History, published in 1866, seems obvious. The map in Ferrar's second volume is incorrect in several particulars regarding the trace of the walls, notably at St. Peter's Cell.

The extracts from Dineley's Tour, 1680 (published in J.R.S.A.I., vol. VIII.) are also of value, while the Civil Survey, the important production of the Irish Manuscripts Commission, also throws a little light upon the ancient fortifications.

(23) Stevens: Journal, p. 196.