

Holycross, 1730-1840

AIDEEN IRELAND

By deed bearing date 1703, James the 2nd Duke of Ormond granted to Lieutenant General the Right Honourable Frederick Hamilton the land of Holycross including the liberty of egress and regress into the Abbey. On 30 April 1730, Hamilton granted the land of Holycross, including the tythes [*sic*], mills, tolls and customs to William Armstrong for ever at the yearly rent of £337.19.0.¹

In January 1834 William Henry Armstrong and his wife Biddy of Mount Heaton, Kings County and Lausanne, Switzerland, granted to the Reverend Charles William Wall, Doctor of Divinity, Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and later Vice Provost of the same college, "all that and those the manors, towns, lands, tenements and hereditaments of Holy Cross" for ever.² Included in this grant were "the tythes [*sic*] of the several towns and lands and also the mills on the said lands of Holycross and all tolls, customs and advantages to the same belonging and also the benefit of the fairs kept at and upon said lands of Holycross and all duties, tolls, customs and advantages thereunto belonging" as well as "the castles, abbeys, houses, buildings, mills, orchards, gardens, grounds, pastures, bogs, commons, woods and underwoods, ways, water courses", etc., as well as other land in the same barony of Eliogarty.² The whole covered 922.3.30 acres Irish plantation measure, or 1495 statute acres, and was sold for £18,200.³

In a letter from Trinity College dated 7 October 1833 Dr. Wall wrote to Richard Hemphill in Clonmel stating that should the land of Holycross be sold by auction that he was prepared to pay £22,000 but that "I don't know whether there be any chance of getting it at this rate, but if you happen to be in Clonmel I will thank you to attend the sale".⁴ On the 11 October Wall was enquiring of Hemphill "pray did you see a caution in the newspapers noticing people not to buy this property as it could not be released from the £1,000 a year jointure of Mrs Armstrong?"⁴ The payment of this annual sum continued to be the subject of correspondence and Wall was advised that it had to be paid. By 28 October the purchase by Wall had been confirmed and payment of £8,000 was requested as a temporary security until the purchase was concluded.⁴ On 25 April 1834 it was agreed by Wall that £400 of the purchase money of the estates be invested at 37 per cent stock and registered in the name of Mr. Armstrong's agent.⁵

One of the many considerations which must have occupied Dr. Wall at this stage was the repair of the abbey of Holycross. An undated plan by Miller⁶ (see Fig. 1) shows the proposed lay-out of the new town of Holy Cross detailing the intended streets and the intended new houses. An inn with stables and a garden as well as a market place are shown. Topographical features such as the mill, a lime kiln, a ball alley, an osiery and weirs are noted. Another map (Fig. 2) is inscribed:

¹M5258(14) Case on behalf of the Revd. Dr. Wall (1843).

²D23402 Armstrong to Wall. Draft memorial of a conveyance of Holy Cross estate (1834).

³M5259(4) Statement of title of Wall to Ballycahill and Holycross estates (1899).

⁴M5263 Bundle of miscellaneous correspondence, mainly 1830s, relating to Armstrong-Wall estates, Co. Tipperary.

⁵M5264 Bundle of miscellaneous accounts, receipts and fragmentary notes relating to Armstrong-Wall estates, Co. Tipperary.

⁶M5256(9) Maps and plans of Armstrong (later Wall) estate, Co. Tipperary.

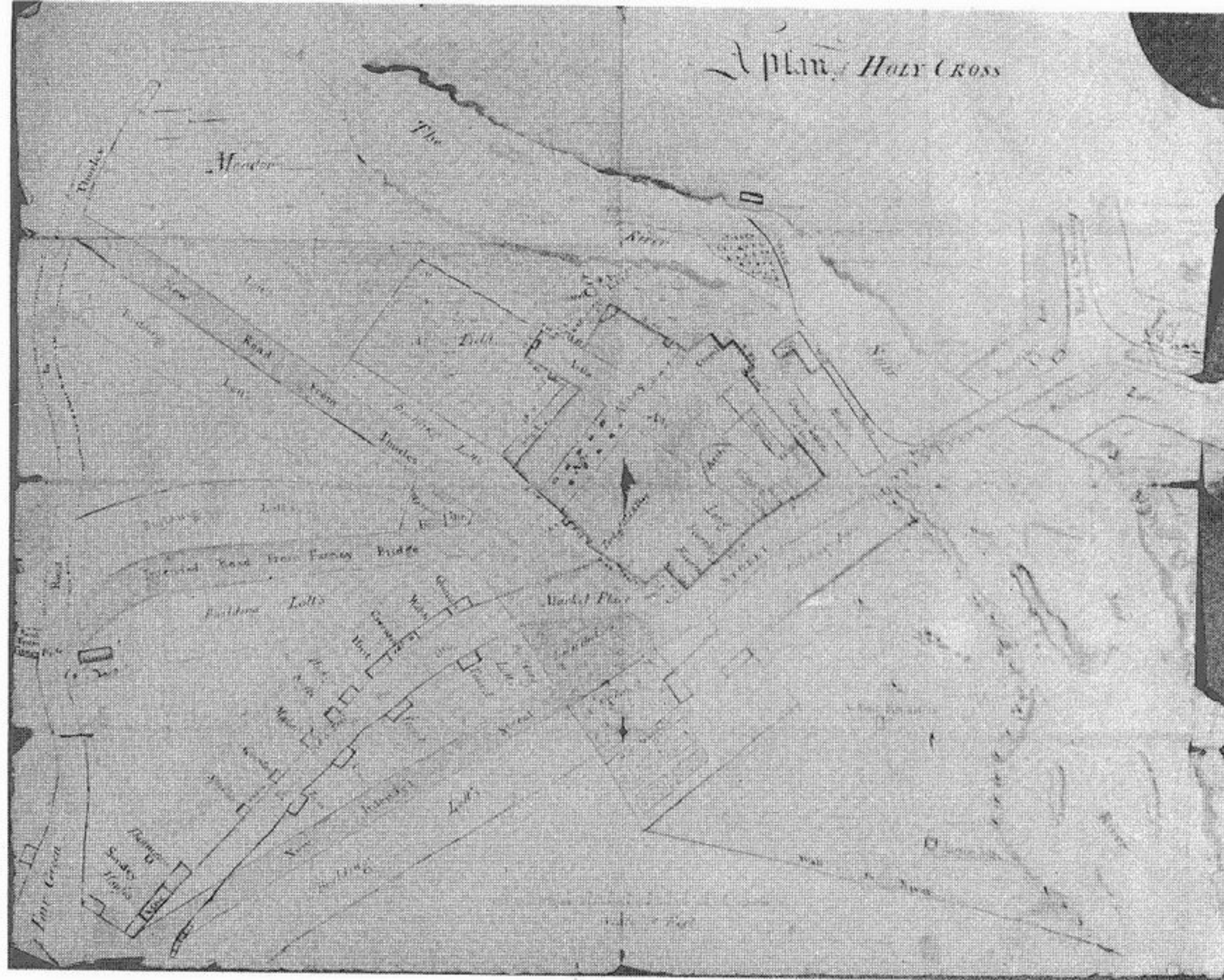


Fig. 1. Proposed plan (undated) for the town of Holy Cross drawn up by Miller. (Photo: P.R.O. Ireland)

A Map of the Village of Holycross in the Co of Tippry, Estate of Wm. Henry Armstrong Esqr., The old form And new projection of a Town for Artificers laid down, as partly directed by Capt. Morrison Ingenr. perfected by me 1800 Jas. Miller Artizan of Survey & Architecture.⁷

This map includes a drawing of a tradesman's house which was to be a semi-detached one sharing a common chimney with its neighbour. The legend reads:

Whole length from out to out 22 feet as the tradesmens houses of Templemore. Breadth 13 feet clear, height 8 feet above ground. Lofted room & kitchen on the ground. Two good rooms above stairs. Chimney serving every two houses. Slated. Price finished £25.

Each house was to have a sizeable garden and kitchen garden. A large imposing barracks with a smaller market house in front grace the street to the abbey. The caption reads "the new street looks from the barracks to the abbey, and from the abbey to the barrack direct views". The relevant legend to the map reads:

The dotted line, the trace of the old irregular street, too narrow in many places. The black irregular line, the confines of the old streets, with the cabbins laid down. The abbys platform at X there discribed, the walls 4 feet thick, well built, its taste and ellegence no work in this kingdom can exceed it. By the river is a flour mill in repair, projecting seven feet into the new intended street that will surround the abby, with a good cabbin near it. M [item M on the map] near the abby, the chappel now in use, remote of all harm, but all the other houses incumbering the fine old abby work, should be eradicated to complate a view. The new intended street is divided and shaded black, two houses in each division, with gate ways to the gardens, one rood to each house, while ground will hold for them. But in setting the land this convenience should be reserved, which is 7 as [acres] to front on the North side, 6.2.27 a.r.p. is already in the gardens, to the back wall, but a part is cut a way by ye new street. So it remains, that the gardens should be produced to the yellow line, which would take about three acres more down to the river, to accommodate the houses on the circular, or octigenal street about the abby. And also 4 a[cres] to the North side of the church to accommodate the street leading to the church on the East side, on the corner of which may be a good inn. The West side Church Street if land can be had from Mr Saddler . . . may be accommodated by the first division to the town of the Weader Park, making in the whole to accomodate that side of the town about 15 acres. The South side may be accomodated with about 15 acres more, which together make about 30 a[cres] for the whole town of 120 houses. If these accommodations should not be reserved and managed with judgement, it would fail of improving in the rapid manner these accommodations would produce without a vast body of expence and contradictions. I have laid down a barrack to accomodate 350 soldiers with their officers and do think it as proper a place as any in this Kingdom, as to its cheap quarters and handyness to call to any part of Ireland, it being nearly in the center. A barrack to accomodate any number of men required may be built and furnished fit to receive them at five pounds sterling each for the number it may contain. The market house is laid down convenient to the barrack if built, if not the market house should be built near the abby. If the ground can be got from Mr Sadler to build round the fair green, the whole would form a complete colony of manufactory.⁷

All maps made the abbey a feature of the new development. Though the new town was not to be, the restoration of the abbey was begun shortly after its purchase by Dr. Wall.

On 22 May 1834 Martin Doolin of Templetuohy [sic] wrote to the Rev. Mr. Peacocke of Holycross:

I do hereby propose to build all the new work and repair all the old work which you have pointed out to me with the two principal windows at Holy Cross Abbey, finding myself, all goods and sufficient materials for the same. The old stones to be used according as you have pointed out to me, the hewn or cut stone not to be used any where they may be unnecessary. I will do the whole work as above stated with dispatch and in a trademanlike manner for the sum of thirty five pounds, sixteen shillings sterl.⁴

⁷M5256(2) See fn. 6.

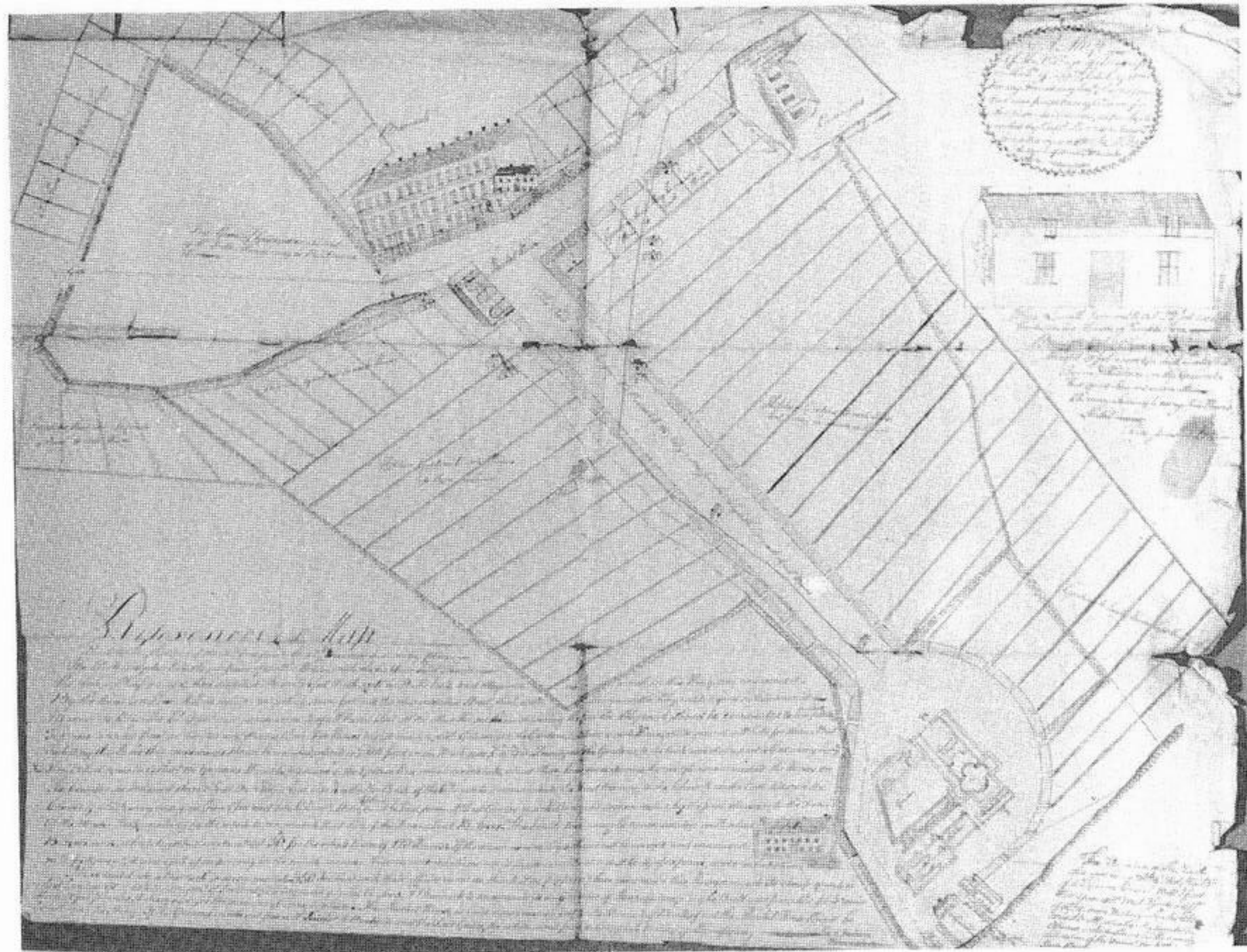


Fig. 2. Plan of Holycross village proposed by James Miller in 1800. (Photo: P.R.O. Ireland)

The bottom of the letter is covered in tots.
Similar correspondence is furnished for June:

For the Revd Mr Peacock
I propose and agree to execute the walls and repairs of walls and the two windows to be finished as the
[sic] were before in the same manner finding all attendance and necessary materials for the same work
for which I have been shewn by your reverence the work to be finished to the satisfaction and inspection
of an architect or any other inspector for the sum of £120 sterling
June the 1st 1834
Wm Houlihan Holy Cross.⁴

On 1 September of the same year Richard Hemphill from Clonmel wrote to the Rev.
Mr. Peacocke at Holycross Glebe:

Enclosed I send you a bank receipt payable to your order for fifty five pounds to pay the different matters
relative to the Abbey. We made up the cash you wanted to £60 but we forgot to diduct the £5 I paid the
mason which leaves the balle £55.0.0. If any more should be wanted I'll give it to you when next we meet.
The most particular part of the whole is the new work in the window next the river. If the stones are not
accurately finished so as to match the old work it would be better not done at all. I much fear that he
will never be able to execute it as it ought to be.⁴

The cover of the letter is full of tots among which feature: 8d for postage, £36.6.0 for
the mason and £10 for Armstrong. The mending of the surveyors instrument cost 7/- and
the carriage of the instrument cost 5/-. This and various other amounts came to £60.⁴

To corroborate the account a receipt is to hand:

Received from the Revd Doctor Wall by the hands of the Revd George Peacocke the sum of ten pounds
for consideration money on my giving up the house I lately resided in adjoining the old abbey of Holy
Cross, dated this tenth day of October 1834 thirty four.

John Armstrong signed with his mark and the receipt was witnessed by William B.
Armstrong.⁴

From 30 January 1835 there is a receipt from Thomas Mason, optician of 6 Essex-
Bridge, Dublin, made out to "Mr Edwards, to sundry repairs to circumferenter" which
came to 7/-.⁴ Also from 1835 comes a receipt⁴ which reads:

Weighed for John Dwyer	
Thirty eight pound of lead and Iron at 2½d per	
lb. 7/11. March 4th 1835	
3 locks 12 bolts 3 [.....] and lead weighed 28 lb.	
at 2½d per pound	7/11
	5/10
	<hr/>
	13/ 9
for Hanging the gates and locks	1/10/ 0
	<hr/>
	2. 3. 9

From 1836 comes another receipt⁴ which might relate to the repair of the abbey:

Bot of Michael Purcell	s	d
4 stone 6 lb of 2 iron bars 1/10 per	8	1
October 25th 1836		

There are also some undated receipts:⁴

Expenses attending the of the Abbey of Holy Cross	£	s.	d.
Martin Doolan Mason	41.	6.	0
Compensation to Armstrong	10.	0.	0
Iron Gates etc	15.	14.	5
Postage	0.	0.	8
	<hr/>		
	67.	1.	1
Mending surveyors Instruments		7.	0
Carriage of same to & from Dublin		5.	0
	<hr/>		
	67.	13.	1

This would seem to be a fair version of the tots on the envelope of the letter from Hemphill to Peacocke, dated to September 1834.

The final receipt is signed by Martin Doolan:⁴

Received from the Revd Doctor Wall by hands of the Revd Mr. Peacocke the sum of thirty five pounds sixteen shillings sterling being the amount of estimate for enclosing and repairing the windows of the abbey of Holy cross also five pounds additional for an after agreement made with Richard Hemphill Esqr for raising some of the walls an additional height, also ten shillings from the Revd Mr Peacocke at the completion of same

£35.16.0

5. 0.0

10.0

£41. 6.0

Present Patrick Cronin

There is no further reference to the repair of the abbey though the merit of halting the decay cannot be over emphasised.

At the end of 1836 Mr. Hemphill received the following letter in Clonmel:⁴

The piece of land on which the chapel of Holycross is built was given for both chapel and school house. I feel and so does every person I have spoken to, on the subject that it is very un becoming to collect a great body of thoughtless young persons, so near the chapel, for many reasons, but particularly, for one could not have little houses built for them. What I beg to propose is, that you would, with your usual kindness, obtain from Doctor Wall a release from the promise we made when getting the lease of this site. We feel confident, that from his great character for acts of generosity, he will grant us this favour, and that even perhaps you may do the needful yourself on the occasion as we are most anxious to have the matter settled with as little delay as possible

I remain Dear Sir

Your obt servt

William Laffan

September 13 1836

Richard Hemphill Esq

This note was left for you three days back as being expected in the neighbourhood. I [.....] send it by hand to Clonmel, & hope you will be pleased to give us an answer as soon as at all convenient.⁴

Along with the land and abbey of Holycross, Dr. Wall had also bought out the tenancies. A great many proposals to rent are preserved. Further information on tenants and lots is provided by the plan of Holycross mentioned above⁶ (see Fig. 1). Consequently we learn that the Rev. Peacocke rented the Abbey Field situated between "the Church and Chapel of Holy Cross" for £8.11.0 per acre per year.⁵ As the Abbey Field is, in fact, identical with the Abbey Garden,⁸ then, by 1837, the lease of the Abbey Garden had

passed to Grant and Gleeson at the rent of £8.10.0 per acre per annum,⁸ while by 1840 the garden had passed back to the Rev. Peacocke at the rent of £21.8.0 per acre per annum.⁹

Holycross itself changed hardly at all. A map of 1848 detailing a tail race for the mill shows a few more houses at the cross-roads near the abbey, including the addition of a post office. An eel weir is shown near the Holycross mill; tenants have changed but little else. The restoration work on the abbey is not depicted.¹⁰

Doctor Wall had not intended to build a new town, his munificence was confined to the abbey. It was the sort of example which few private citizens could afford to follow. However, Dr. Wall must have rejoiced to see his example followed by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society which, in 1852, turned its attention to Jerpoint Abbey, then in a serious state of disrepair. The Society argued the case for the restoration of Jerpoint by calling to mind the work of Dr. Wall:

All this had been accomplished at Holy Cross, by the liberality of the proprietor, Dr Wall, Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, whose example was worthy of being more generally followed".¹¹

Note

Material for this article comes from a collection of Armstrong and Wall deeds preserved in the Public Record Office of Ireland. Extracts are published by kind permission of the Deputy Keeper. The records were donated to the P.R.O. in January 1960 by the firm of Cartcart and Hemphill. Footnotes refer to the accession numbers of the records.

⁸M5256(15) See fn. 6.

⁹M5257(21) Rentals and lists of tenants on Armstrong (later Wall) estate, Co. Tipperary.

¹⁰M5256(18) See fn. 6.

¹¹*J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, I (1852-53), 206.