

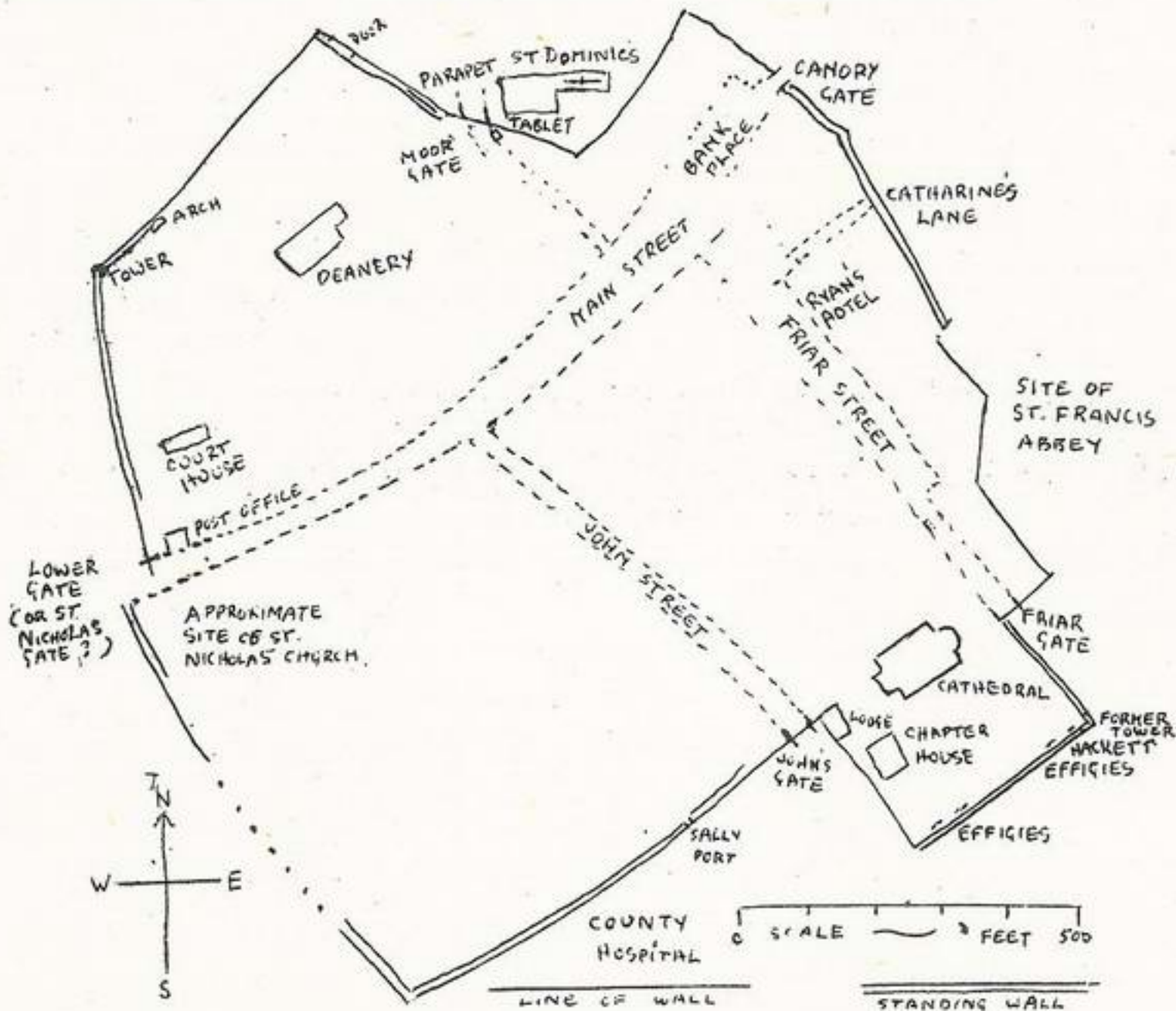
The Walls of Cashel

By R. WYSE JACKSON.

Exploration among the back yards and gardens of Cashel shows with remarkable completeness the line of the mediaeval walls of the city, with substantial fragments standing, marking the boundaries of the old city.

On February 30th, 1319, Edward II granted a Charter of Murage to the citizens of Cashel to hold for five years. During the period of 1319-'24 the walls were built. This was during the episcopate of Archbishop Fitz John, Chancellor of Ireland. (Another work fostered by Fitz John had been the erection of the prison planned by Edward I, but delayed indefinitely by the opposition of Archbishop McCarvell).

Considerable parts of the Edward II wall remain, the most important being those behind the County Hospital; along the south and east boundaries of St. John's Cathedral grounds (where are inserted the four thirteenth century Hackett coffin-lid effigies taken in the eighteenth century from St. Dominick's Abbey; behind the Court House and the Technical School; and behind Ryan's Hotel, where the wall may be seen from the end of Catharine's Lane. A sall-port with Gothic mouldings exists behind the Hospital. Near St. Dominick's Abbey a stone tablet (probably eighteenth century) is inserted in the Chapel Lane wall, bearing the inscription "Moor Gate." The circumference of the walls is just over one mile in length.



SKETCH MAP OF CASHEL CITY WALLS

The minutes of the Corporation give information about the walls during the last three hundred years. In the first half of the seventeenth century additional fortifications had been erected outside Canopy Gate. In 1676 these were ordered by the Corporation to be demolished and the way to the gate was opened up as it had been formerly, while the thoroughfare there was paved. The following year the various gates of the city were repaired and "the little tottering toure in the south corner of St. John's Churchyard, being ready to fall" was pulled down and the place was built up solidly to match the rest of the city wall.

The Corporation Minutes mention the following names of gates—Canopy Gate, St. Nicholas Gate, the Upper and the Lower Gates, the Friar Gate, the West Gate, Dublin Gate, John's Gate. In 1693, there was a "fort" in the middle of the walls of the churchyard. In 1702, there was another of the frequent payments for "making up the gates," but by then the need for strong fortifications seemed to be disappearing, for two years later Alderman Thomas Chardwick was permitted to make a door through the town wall, eight feet wide, into his garden. In 1729, the Lower Gate was ordered to be taken down, as dangerous to passers by. Three years later, Charles Minchin was paid twenty shillings compensation annually not to build over Cannafie (Canopy) Gate, but to leave "an open passage ye full breath of the street, from Weldon's House at one side to Charles Wogan's concern on ye other."

The seventeen hundreds saw the decay of the city fortifications, and practically no reference to them exists in the Corporation minutes after the middle of that century. Their usefulness had passed. After the invention of gun powder they were probably of little value in any case—(thus, at Inchiquin's coming in 1647, the city garrison retired to the more defensible heights of the Rock). There seems to be no contemporary description of their appearance, but probably a fair enough impression can be had from Cromwell's sketch of the walls of the neighbouring town of Fethard. "The town is most pleasantly seated, having a very good wall with round and square bulwarks, after the old manner of fortifications."

In the seventeen sixties, the Corporation of Limerick pulled down most of its old walls. Cashel seems to have left them in position, for the most part, though (unlike Clonmel, which has its West Gate) none of the original Cashel gates survive. But the position of most of them can still be placed accurately.