

Conservation Plan

St. Mary's Priory, Tallaght



Prepared by:
John Cronin & Associates
3a Westpoint Trade Centre
Ballincollig
County Cork

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1 Background

Description of historic site

St. Mary's Priory is a Catholic priory, founded in 1855 by the Dominican order. The foundation stone of the current building was laid by Rev. Goodman, provincial of the Dominicans in Ireland in 1863. A detached Gothic Revival church was completed by 1886, designed by George Ashlin and built by Messrs. Meade & Son. The nave measured 70ft. long, with five side chapels 7ft. deep and a total width of 42ft. A wing connecting the church and tower was completed in 1903, another wing with gabled dormer windows added in 1936 and a library block finished in 1958.

Statutory policy and protection

The management and protection of cultural heritage in Ireland is achieved through a framework of national laws and policies which are in accordance with the provisions of the Valetta Treaty (1995) (formally the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, 1992*) ratified by Ireland in 1997; the *European Convention on the Protection of Architectural Heritage* (Granada Convention, 1985), ratified by Ireland in 1997; and the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003*, ratified by Ireland in 2015.

The locations of World Heritage Sites (Ireland) and the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites submitted by the Irish State to UNESCO were reviewed and none are located in the area surrounding the subject site. The nearest World Heritage Site is that of Brú na Bóinne which is located c. 60km to the north. The Historic City of Dublin, which is located c. 15km to the southeast, is also included on the Tentative List of World Heritage sites.

The national legal statutes and guidelines relevant to this assessment include:

- National Monuments Act (1930) (and amendments in 1954, 1987, 1994 and 2004);
- Heritage Act (1995);
- National Cultural Institutions Act (1997);
- Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (1999);
- Planning and Development Act (2000);
- *Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht (2011); and
- *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, 1999.

South Dublin County Council Development Plan 2016-2022 lists St. Mary's Dominican Priory (RPS Ref. 270) and Church (RPS Ref. 273) in its Record of Protected Structures. Under this plan, these structures are provided the following protections:

9.1.2: Where a structure is protected under the RPS, the protection includes (unless otherwise stated) the structure, its interior and the land within its curtilage and other structures within that curtilage (including their interiors) and all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of all these structures.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 provides the legislative base for the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Under the Act an ACA is defined as 'a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights that:

is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, social or technical interest or value, or contributes to the appreciation of protected structures.

The priory is within the Tallaght Village Architectural Conservation Area, as per the South Dublin County Council Development Plan 2016-2022.

According to the Development Plan, it is the policy of the Council "to preserve and enhance the historic character and visual setting of Architectural Conservation Areas and to carefully consider any proposals for development that would affect the special value of such areas."

Policies related to ACAs are outlined in the same plan, within *Heritage, conservation and landscapes (hcl) policy 4*, including:

HCL4 Objective 1: *To avoid the removal of structures and distinctive features that positively contribute to the character of Architectural Conservation Areas including buildings, building features, shop fronts, boundary treatments, street furniture, landscaping and paving.*

HCL4 Objective 2: *To ensure that new development, including infill development, extensions and renovation works within or adjacent to an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) preserves or enhances the special character and visual setting of the ACA including vistas, streetscapes and roofscapes.*

The castle (DU021-037020-) and its associated gate house (DU021-037010-) are both listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and have statutory protection as a result. The Zone of Notification (ZoN) associated with these sites extends to almost the entire footprint of the priory and church. A further RMP site; Ritual site - holy tree/bush (DU021-037012-), is within the grounds of the priory and c.60m north of the priory.

Authorship of this document

The document has been prepared by John Cronin and Caroline McGrath of John Cronin & Associates following a programme of desktop research and site inspection. The authors have drawn on reporting generated by Mr Daithi O'Troithigh (Doyle & O'Troithigh Landscape Arch. Ltd) and Mr Pádraic Fogarty (Ecologist, OPENFIELD Ecological Services). The authors wish to thank for commentary and feedback provided by The Priory Institute and St. Mary's Dominican Priory.

2. Understanding the place

Brief Historical Background

Tallaght derives from the Irish *tamhlachta* 'burial places(?)', first cited in the 12th-century Register of Archbishop Alen (McNeill 1950, 3). The Annals of the Four Masters recorded that Parthalón invaded Ireland only to have 9000 of his army killed by plague within a week. The men were buried in the area of Tallaght, giving it the name *Taimleach Muintire Parthalon* 'The burial-place of the people of Parthalón' (O'Donovan 1854, 9). The settlement is also associated with St. Máel Ruain (d. 792), who established a monastery (DU021-037003-) there. He was a leading figure among the Céili Dé, an ascetic Christian community that flourished in Ireland and Britain in the medieval period. He was known for his piety and strict austerity, and was reputed to have said 'As long as I shall give rules... the liquor that causes forgetfulness of God shall not be drunk here' (Gwynn & Purton 1911-12, 129). He is said to have received the land from the Leinster king Cellach mac Dúchada (d. 776) of the Uí Dúchada sept of the Uí Dúnlainge branch of the Laigin. After his death, Máel Ruain was described by his disciple Óengus the Culdee as *grían mór desmaig Midi* 'the great sun over Meath's southern plain'.

The monastery was attacked by the Vikings in 811 (ibid., 417) and subsequently subject to an Anglo-Norman incursion in 1169. In 1179, the monastery with its subsidiary chapels of Killohan and St. Bride's was united to the Archdiocese of Dublin by a Bull of Alexander III. In 1223, Archbishop Henry de Loundres annexed the deanery of Tallaght to St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. The monastery of Máel Ruain was disbanded under the Dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in the 1540s.



Figure 1. Excerpt from William Petty's Down Survey map of Ireland, barony of Newcastle, c. 1654

In 1630, Archbishop Bulkeley wrote the following in relation to Tallaght: 'The Church and chancel are in good repair and decency' (Handcock 1899, 12). This concurs with the depiction of the church on the Down Survey map from 1656-58 (see **Figure 1** above).

In 1651, the former monastery was occupied and damaged by Captain Alland during the Irish Confederate Wars (1641-1653). He stripped the roof of the church and used the timber slates and pews for his own house, and used the medieval font for watering his horse. He later paid £100 for the damage caused.

The modern St. Maeruain's Church of Ireland (NIAH Reg. No. 11215004), which was built in 1829 and remodeled in 1891, is believed to be within the boundary of the original monastery. The curvature of the current graveyard boundary on the southwest side of the medieval church suggests the presence of an ecclesiastical enclosure at the site (DU021-037002). The church font (DU021-037009-), also known as St. Maelruan's Griddle and Loaf is reputed to be located on the site of a holy well (Smith et al. 2009, 17).

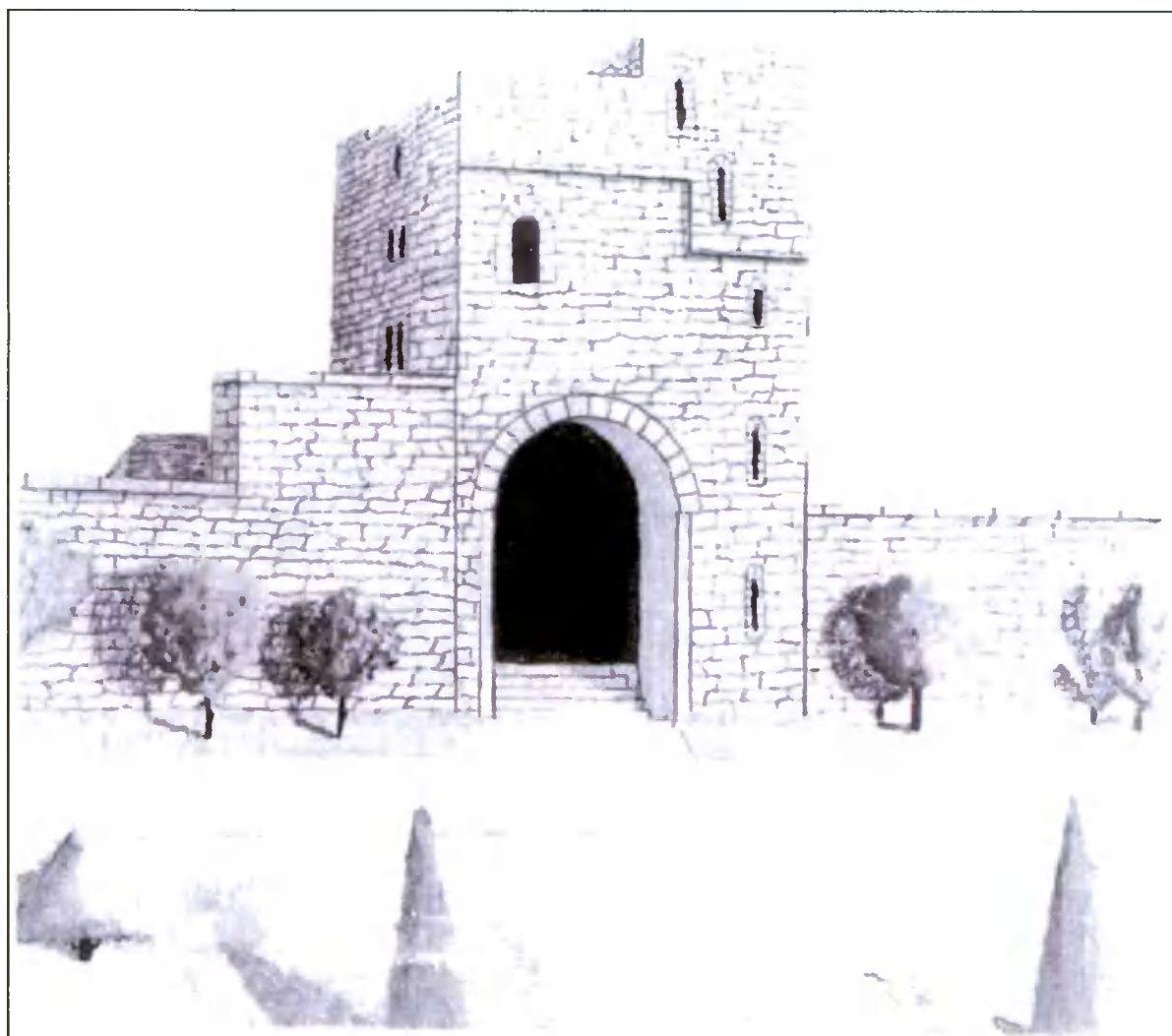


Figure 2. *Tallaght Castle, based on a contemporary illustration*

The 'manor of Tanelaughe' was first mentioned in Alen's Register during the episcopacy of Henry de London (1213-1228) (McNeill op. cit., 53). The following centuries were a time of violence

between the ruling Anglo-Normans and the native Irish. In 1311, the bailiffs of Tallaght received a royal charter to enclose the town and create a medieval borough. Later, a grant was given to build a castle for the town's defence. In 1324, Alexander de Bicker built or restored an archiepiscopal manor at Tallaght. This was later fortified to protect the English in Dublin from attacks from the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles. In 1332, the O'Tooles ransacked the Archbishop's residence, killing many servants and stealing 300 sheep. By 1349, the Castle was finally completed, containing a chamber for the Archbishop and a room for other clergymen (see **Figure 2** above). The O'Tooles continued to harry Pale fortifications, and in 1573, Tallaght Castle was again invaded and many of the Archbishop's servants were killed (Smith op cit, 62).

The Dominicans, an order of mendicant friars, which took their name from St. Dominic, established their first Irish foundations in Dublin and Drogheda in 1224. The order soon grew into a thriving community, and though subject to the English Dominican province, many were established by Gaelic founders and maintained their independence.

In the 1540s, Henry VIII began his campaign of dissolving the monasteries, and many Dominican friars were forced to flee abroad. Irish Dominicans established colleges in Lisbon and Louvain to train clergy. The persecution of religious orders eased and the Dominican order began its restoration in the early 17th century. By 1627 twelve houses had reopened, and in 1636, the Dominican order in Ireland were formed into an independent ecclesiastical province. However, the Penal Laws of the late-17th century onwards caused the Dominican order to decline in number. When the penal laws were finally removed in the 19th century, the Dominican order began to flourish once more.



Figure 3. Excerpt from John Rocque's *An actual survey of the County of Dublin*, 1760, showing the Archbishop's Palace



Figure 4. John Taylor's Map of the environs of Dublin, 1816



Figure 5. William Duncan's Maps of the County Dublin, includes Palmerston, Clondalkin, Lucan and Leixlip, 1821

In 1729, the remains of the medieval castle – with the exception of one tower – were demolished to make way for a new Archiepiscopal Palace, a country residence for the Church of Ireland Archbishop Hoadley, built for a cost of £2500 (Figures 3-6). The structure was entered via a large double flight of stone steps and its façade featured two tiers of windows. The dining room measured twenty-five feet by twenty-one and bore the episcopal arms and crest. The drawing room measured 33ft. by 21ft. and the building also featured a library with a handsome view of the surrounding country (Handcock op. cit, 20).

The last archbishop to reside there was Lord John Beresford, at which time the house was in such poor condition that he had an Act of Parliament passed in 1821 which removed responsibility from the See of Dublin to maintain a country seat. In 1822, the palace was sold to Major Palmer and demolished, except for the remains of the castle. Tallaght House was then built on the site and sold to John Lentaigne, who later sold it to the Dominicans (**Figure 7-8**).

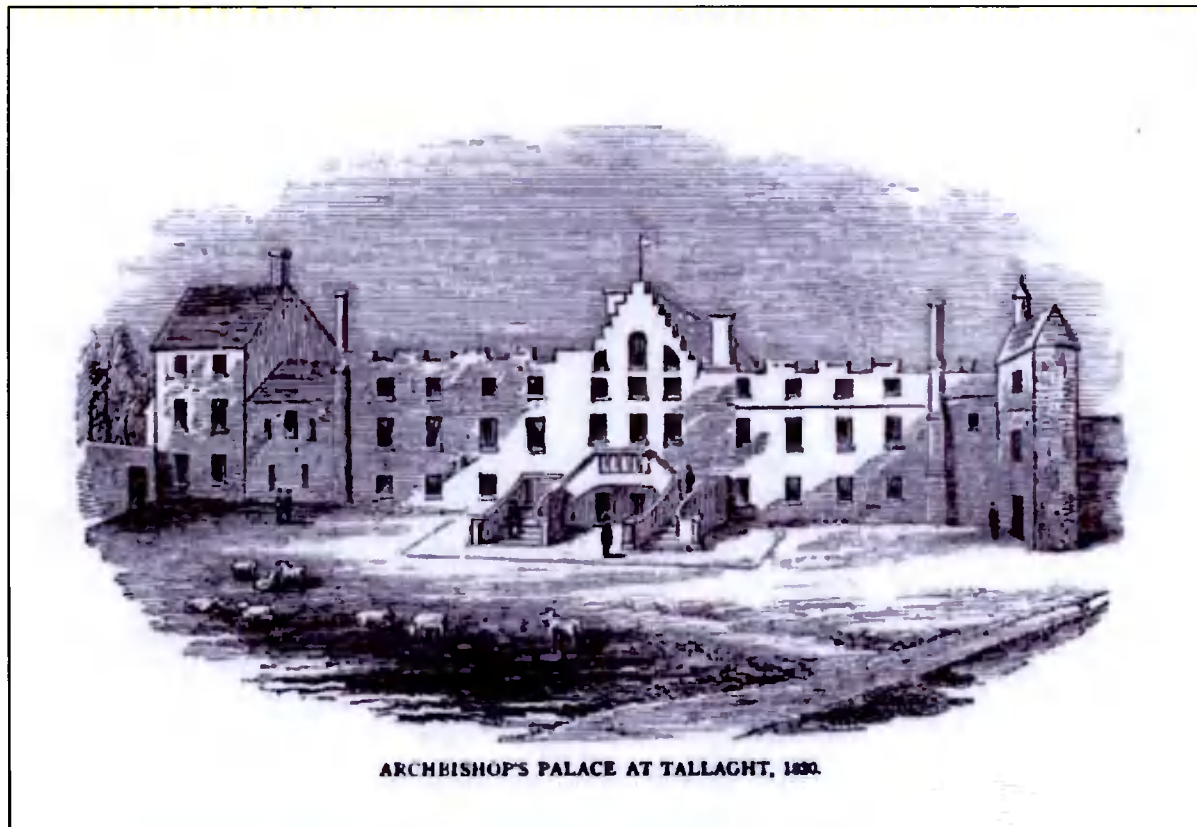


Figure 6. Illustration of Archbishop's Palace, Tallaght, c. 1890

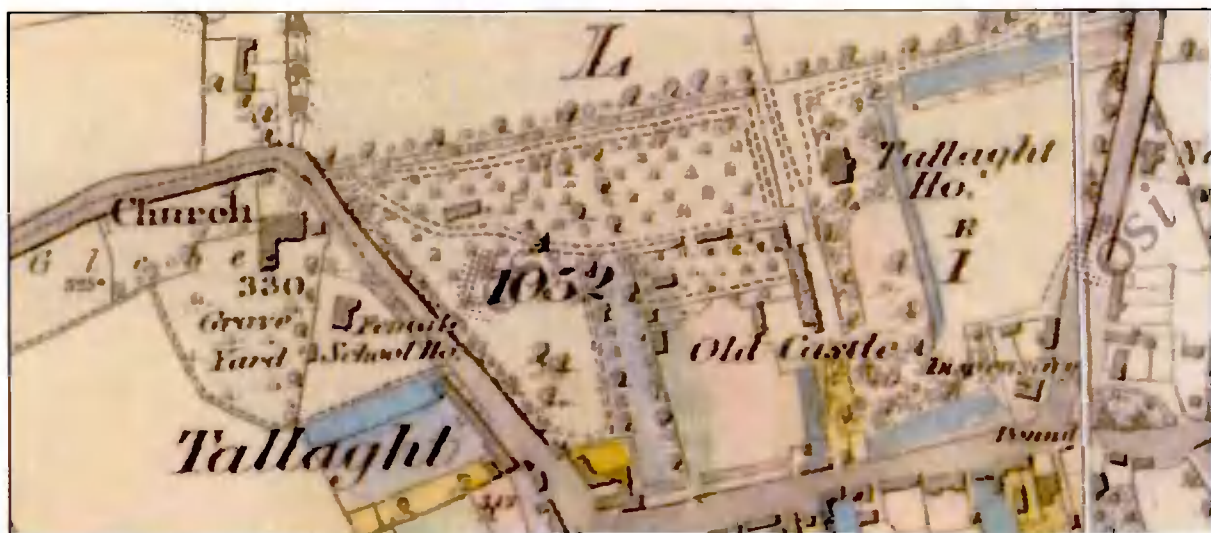


Figure 7. Extract from the 1st edition OS map (surveyed c.1840)

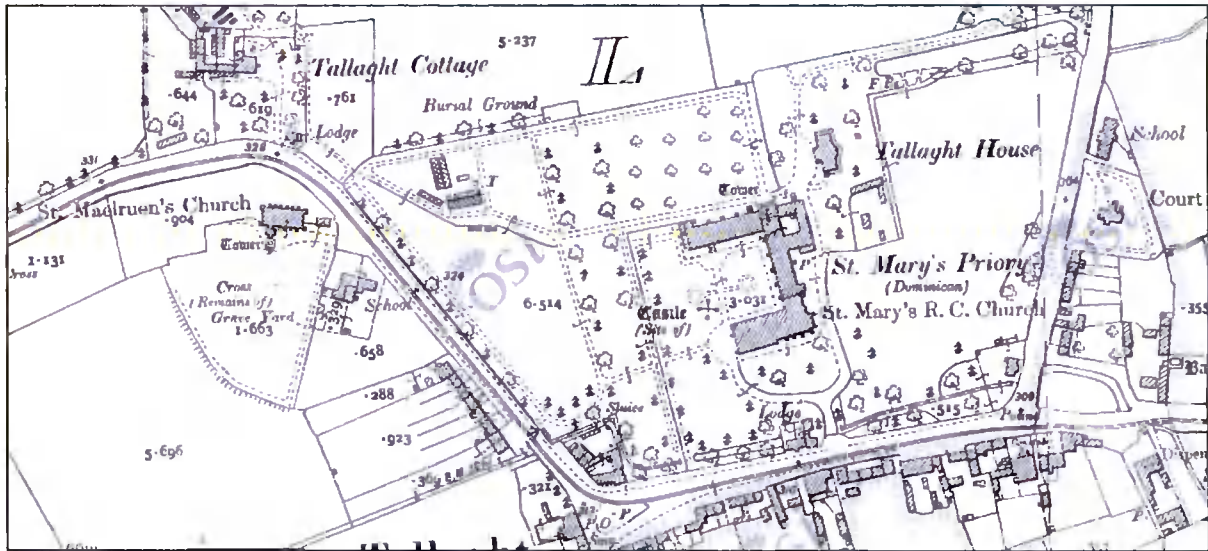


Figure 8. Extract from the 25-inch OS map (surveyed c.1900)

The history of the castle was recorded by Lewis (1837):

A castle was built here by Alexander de Bicknor, Archbishop of Dublin, as his residence, which continued to be the seat of his successors until a late period ; in 1324, he obtained a remission of money in consideration of his expenses in its erection, In 1331, O'Toole, the chieftain of Imaill, at the head of a numerous band, plundered the castle and demesne, slew many of the Archbishop's people, and defeated Sir Philip Britt and a body of Dublin men who had been sent against him. A very large mansion-house was subsequently erected, to which was attached an extensive and well-stocked garden, laid out in the Dutch style, and a demesne of upwards of 200 acres....Lord John G. Beresford, who was translated to the see of Dublin in 1819, obtained an act of parliament to sell the buildings and lands, and his successor, Dr. Magee, sold them to Major Palmer, who, after having taken down the buildings, with the materials of which he erected Tallaght House, a handsome modern residence, disposed of his interest in them to John Lentaigne, Esq., the present proprietor.

Description of the Monument and Site

The site consists of a 19th-century priory and church. The priory (NIAH Reg. No. 11215001), designed by J. J. McCarthy, was officially founded in 1855. The foundation stone was laid in 1863, the west wing was completed in 1863-4 and an extension including library wing was built in 1956-8 by Cyril Ashlin Harrington. St. Mary's Church (NIAH Reg. No. 11215002) which was designed by George C. Ashlin and completed in 1886. The facing stone is local black limestone, known as 'calp', with white limestone dressings.

There is a square tower and gate house (DU021-037010-), originally part of Tallaght Castle (DU021-037020-), incorporated into priory fabric at the junction of the north and east wings. Tallaght Castle originated in the early 14th century, and was later improved by Archbishop Michael Tregury (Elrington 1905, 8). It was used as a garrison in the time of the Geraldine Rebellion (Ball 1905, 8). There also appears to have been an enclosing fosse (Handcock op. cit., 29, 35). The gate house appears to have been part of a medieval archbishop's palace. It is rectangular in plan, with four storeys and a stair turret at the northwest angle and an external base batter (receding slope) visible on the east side.

The church has an arcaded extension to its southern side, the priory is a detached multi-bay, three-storey-with-attic Gothic Revival priory. Other buildings in the complex include the 1950s library block and the Dominican Retreat Centre, built around the former Tallaght House.

Evolution of the place

After the foundation stone for the Priory buildings was laid in 1863 architect James Joseph McCarthy (1817-1882) provided the design for the west wing. The structure was built on an L-plan with an internal court to the east, and a single-storey wing to the north. It consists of ashlar walls with pointed, segmental- and flat-headed window openings with timber sash windows. The pitched slate roof contains gabled dormers with carved bargeboards and stone chimney stacks. The medieval five-stage tower of Tallaght Castle is incorporated into the priory fabric at the junction of the wings. A detached three-storey over arcaded basement modern retreat centre to the east was built on the site of the former Tallaght House.

The church, designed by George C. Ashlin (1837-1921), was commenced in 1882, possibly with the separate addition of sacristy, chapter room and incomplete belfry, in memorial to the Very Rev. Thomas Burke. The church was built by Meade & Son at a cost of £6,462, who were also responsible for the rood screen, stalls and pulpit. The high altar and two of the side altars were executed by Messrs. Ryan and Son, and Messrs. Smith Brothers crafted the sanctuary lamp. Messrs. McGloughlin and Sons executed the lead lights of the windows, tabernacle, doors and other wrought metal work.

The Irish Builder, August 1 1884, described the newly-built church:

The new buildings comprise the church and cloisters, the west wing, and the completion and alteration of east wing. The west wing was built some years ago, from the design of the late Mr. J.J. McCarthy, R.H.A. The east wing is of a very ancient date and is the only portion remaining of a large Abbey which stood on this site in the twelfth century, and which was subsequently converted into the summer residence of the Archbishops of Dublin.

The new church will be used chiefly for conventional purposes and the neighbourhood is very thinly populated. The material of the facing is the local black calp limestone, with white limestone dressings. The nave walls will be lined with brick and those of chancel and choir with Bath stone. The choir is placed behind the High Altar, according to the usage in Dominican Churches and will contain fifty stalls. A night choir is also provided over the sacristy, 42ft. by 22ft., with arcaded opening into day choir. The chancel and choir will have groined ceilings in oak, resting on trefoil corbel shafts. The nave ceiling will be wagon-headed and have arched principals.

The church is intended as a memorial to the late Very Rev. Thomas Burke, the celebrated preacher and lecturer, who was Prior of the Convent, and who died about thirteen months ago.

The contractors are Messrs. Meade & Son, and the architect Mr. George C. Ashlin, both of Dublin.

A planned western range of the priory, which would have completed a quadrangle, was never completed (**Figures 9-13, with notes**).

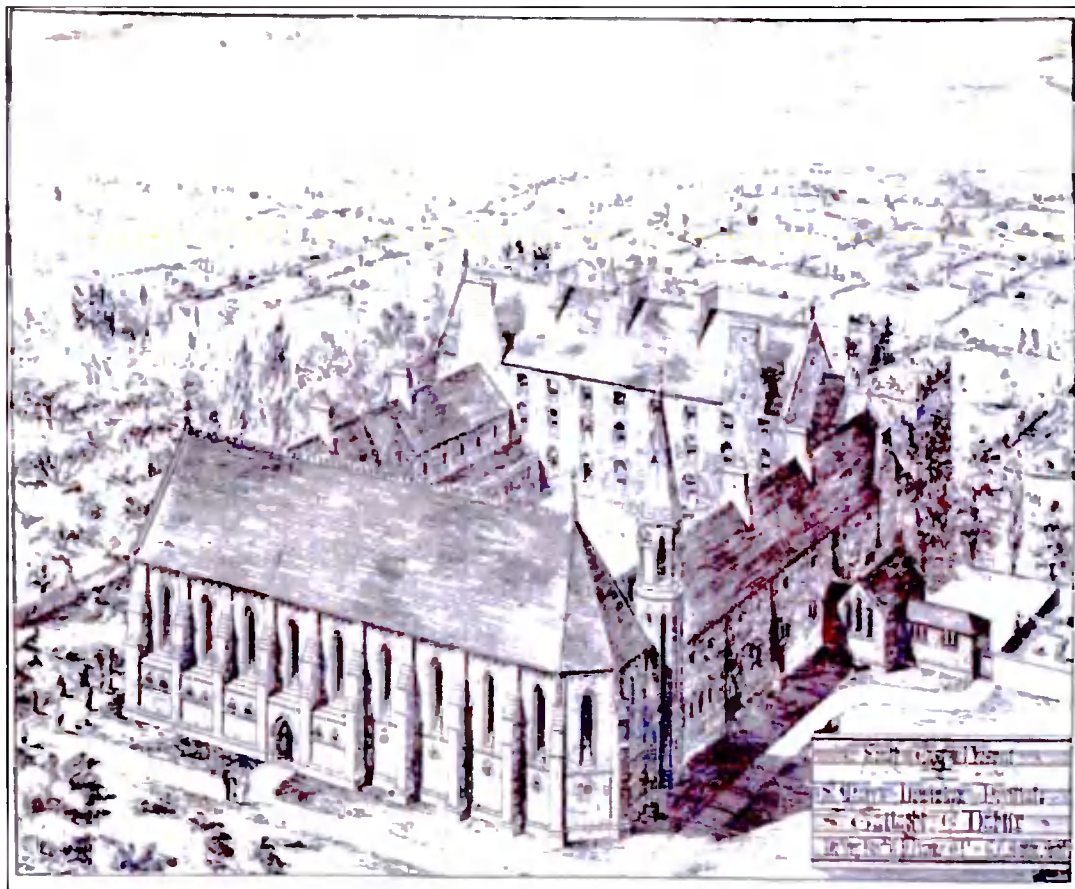


Figure 9. South-east Prospect, St. Mary's Dominican Novitiate, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, *The Irish Builder* August 1 1884. The western return and bell tower shown on this illustration was never built. The church was subsequently extended to the south.

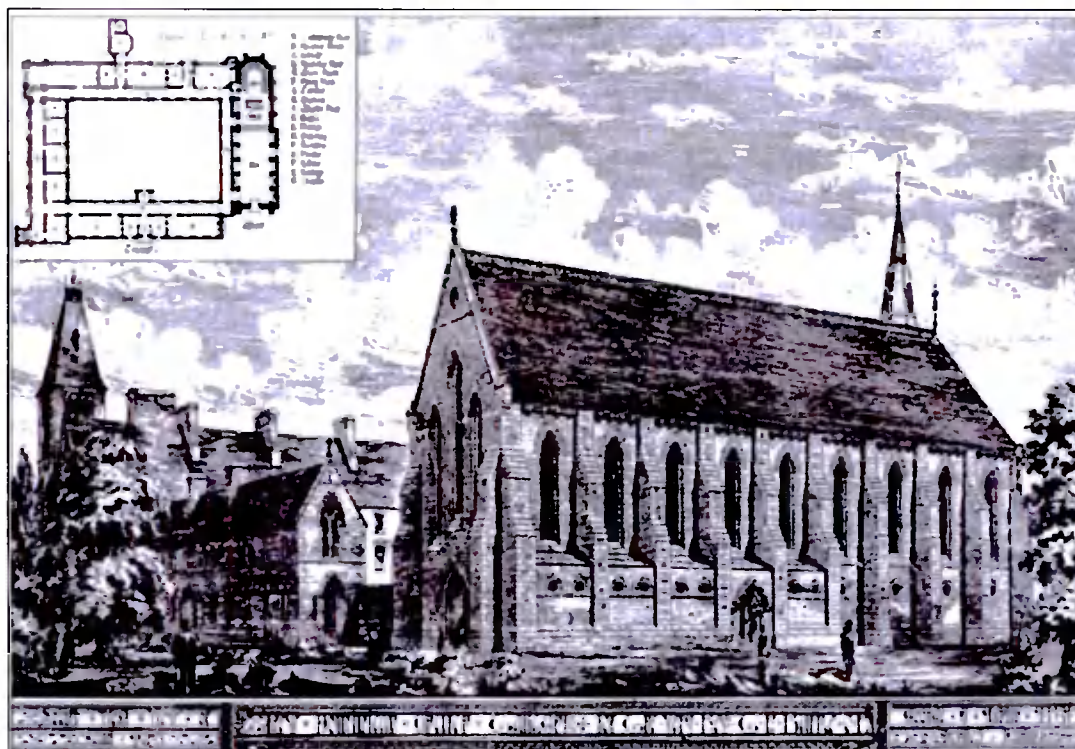


Figure 10. Undated illustration and floorplan featuring uncompleted range (© archiseek.com)

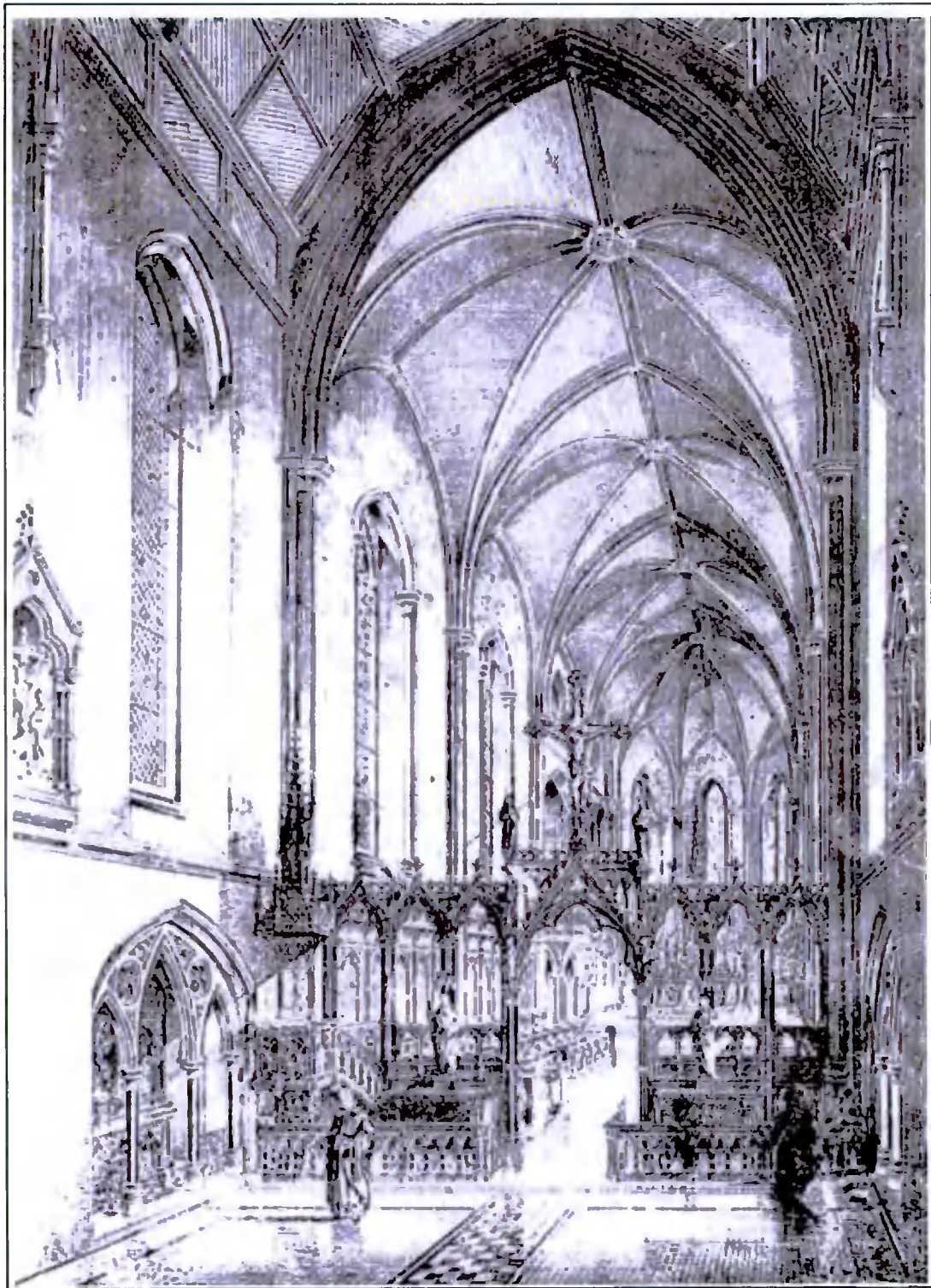


Figure 11. *Undated illustration of interior of St. Mary's Church, featuring detail of rood screen (© archiseek.com)*

In 1886, sculptor George Smith, who came from a family of well-known Dublin sculptors, executed the St. Joseph altar, which was a gift of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The church was consecrated in the same year. The seven-bay nave with plain lancets measures 70ft. long, flanked on either side by five side chapels 7ft. deep, at a total width of 42ft. The structure consists of ashlar walls with prominent stepped buttresses. The marble canopy over the tabernacle is 32ft. high and the apse contains five compartments and is concealed by an ornamental reredos. Each compartment contains three arched recesses containing paintings of the fifteen mysteries of the rosary, with statue niches between each compartment. The walls of the chancel and choir are lined with Bath stone and the ceiling is groined in pitch pine. The rood screen, stalls and pulpit are of oak and walnut. There are three lancet windows above a central timber double-leaf door with iron strapwork and a cut stone surround. The church abuts the priory to the south.

The Irish Times (7 October 1886) described the church, prior to its dedication:

It is divided into equal portions by a magnificent rood-screen of oak and walnut, the gift of Mrs. Crosthwaite, of Crosthwaite Park, Kingstown... Beautiful altars also of oak and walnut to S. Dominic and S. Catharine occupy the space on the sides of the entrance in the rood-screen. The outer part of the church, or part for the congregation, is flanked by five recesses, to contain altars and confessionals... This church may be truly said to be one of the most beautiful in the neighbourhood of the metropolis.

A new altar was commissioned by George C. Ashlin and Thomas A. Coleman in 1907-8 and executed by Dublin sculptor Patrick Tomlin (b. 1861/2). This altar was later removed during the extension of the church c. 1969. A new extension, including a library wing was executed by Cyril A. Harrington in 1956-8. In 1969, an arcaded seventeen-bay portico and aisle was built to the south. By the 1970s, the church could no longer facilitate the rapidly increasing population and 'adapted to the new liturgical reforms' (Healy 2004, 64). In 1972, Tallaght became a parish and then three more churches, St. Dominic's, St. Aengus' and St. Martin's were founded, leading to the creation of four parishes in 1985.

Tallaght House was originally built around 1824 for Major Palmer, an Inspector of Prisons. A number of schoolhouses and cottages were built for the seminary, and the surrounding roads were also repaired by Palmer. He subsequently sold Tallaght House to St. John Lentaigne, who developed its gardens, which included a walnut grove. Part of the demesne was leased to the Dominicans in 1856, and was used as a priory until 1864, when a dedicated priory was completed. The house was subsequently used as a novitiate, a laundry and a retreat house. The house was depicted on the 1st edition 6-inch and 25-inch Ordnance Survey maps, and was incorporated or enclosed by a new retreat house built in 1955. Healy (op. cit., 62) stated that it was done in this manner so that it would not be recognisable.

The Priory grounds had been watered by a small stream which ran along the front boundary wall. During the development of the site, the stream was diverted. A pond located to the north of the carpark on Greenhill Road was previously used as a swimming pool. It has since been filled in for agricultural use (ibid., 64).

Summary Description of Setting

Tallaght is a former monastic settlement which developed into a medieval borough and is currently a large suburb and satellite town of Dublin. It is located 13km southwest of the city, close to the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains. The underlying geology consists of dark limestone

& shale from the Lucan formation. It is surrounded to the northeast by Templeogue, to the west by Saggart, southeast by Firhouse, south by Clondalkin and southwest by Jobstown. The River Dodder runs to its south, and other streams, including the Jobstown stream, the Tallaght stream and the Killinarden stream are close to the area. Tallaght is in the Civil Parish of Tallaght, and the barony of Uppercross.

Lewis (op. cit.) described the parish:

The parish contains 6604 acres, as apportioned under the tithe act : the northern portion of it is generally flat, with a range of low hills, or escars, extending from Balrothery hill, on the Dodder, to the Greenhills at its western extremity ; the southern and eastern parts rise into the range of Tallaght hills, which command a magnificent view of the vale of Dublin and are backed by the lofty range of Seechin, the summit of which is on the southern verge of the parish. The Dodder has its sources near Castlekelly, in the valley of Glensmuil, or the " Thrushes' vale," in the south, and proceeding northward quits the parish at Templeogue near Rathfarnham: The Brittas river, a tributary of the Liffey, also rises in the parish. The hills consist of clay-slate, greenstone, and greenstone porphyry ; the last-named formation is most abundant in the eastern part. There are several paper and flour-mills and a woollen-mill in the parish, In the town is a dispensary; it is a constabulary police station, and petty sessions are held in it on alternate Mondays. It has a patent for fairs but they are not held. Near Newlands is Belgarde Castle, originally the property of a branch of the Talbots of Malahide, from whom it passed by marriage to the Dillon family, and thence by purchase to the ancestors of the present proprietor, P. H. Cruise, Esq., who resides in it. The mansion is a large building in a demesne in which there are a number of very fine aged forest trees, and has at one of its angles a square tower of very antique appearance, that formed part of the original structure, which at some distance gives it the appearance of a church. The other more remarkable seats are Templeogue House, the residence of P. Gogarty, Esq. ; Newlands, of J. Crotty, Esq., and at one time that of Viscount Kilwarden, chief justice of the King's Bench ; Cypress Grove, of J. Duffy, Esq. ; Friarstown, of Ponsonby Shaw, Esq. ; Delaford, of B. Taylor Ottley, Esq. ; Sally Park, of W. B. Handcock, Esq. ; Kilvere, of J. Sealy Townsend, Esq. ; Willington, of the Rev. Chas. McDonnell ; Prospect, of the Rev. Dr. R. McDonnell ; Allenton, of F. R. Cotton, Esq. ; the Glebe House, of the Rev. W. Robinson ; Kiltalown, of J. Robinson, Esq. ; Fir House, of J. Armitage, Esq. ; Orlagh, of N. Callwell, Esq. ; Killymanagh, of J. Clancy, Esq. ; Castlekelly, of J. Grierson, Esq. ; Oldbawn, of M. McDonnell, Esq., an ancient mansion having in one of its apartments the date 1635 ; Ballyroan, of W. Poole, Esq. ; Ellenborough, of N. Read, Esq. ; Knocklyon, of W. Dunne, Esq. ; Johnville, of N. Roe, Esq. ; Annemount, of J. Gaham, Esq. ; Newbawn, of S. P. Lea, Esq. ; Newhall, of Edw. Manders, Esq. ; Killininey, of W. Devine, Esq. ; Mount Hastings, of R. Hastings, Esq. ; and Cherryfield, of P. A. Lawless, Esq.

The living is a vicarage, in the diocese of Dublin, united to the rectory of Cruagh, and in the alternate patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and W. Bryan, Esq. ; the rectory forms part of the corps of the deanery of St. Patrick's. The chapel of Killahan, in the townland of Oldbawn, and dilapidated since 1532, and that of St. Bridget, near the Dodder, now in ruins, were appendant to the church of Tallaght. The Dean of St. Patrick's formerly had the right of presentation to the vicarage, by a grant from Pope Gregory IX., but the right afterwards lapsed by neglect. The tithes amount to £678. 18. 6., of which £369. 4. 7-. is payable to the dean, £221. 10. 9-. to the dean and chapter in their corporate capacity, and £88. 3. 1. to the vicar ; the gross tithes of the vicarial union amount to £270. 0. 7. The glebe-house stands on a glebe of 17a. 0r. 20p. The church, dedicated to St. Maelruane, was built in 1829 on the site of the ancient structure, by a grant of nearly £3000 from the late Board of First Fruits ; it is in the pointed style of architecture, with pinnacles at the angles and along the sides : the ancient belfry tower, which is of considerable height, is still preserved as part of the edifice : the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have lately granted £107 towards its repairs. In the R. C. divisions the parish forms part of the union or district of Rathfarnham, and has a chapel at Bohernabreena. At Fir House, a convent of discalced

Carmelites, consisting of a superioress and 13 professed and lay sisters, was founded about eight years since, with a small chapel attached. At Mount Anne is a small monastery of the order of Carmelites. A female parochial school is held near the church. Near the village is a neat school-house for boys and girls, erected in 1834 at an expense of £266, of which £130 was granted by the Board of National Education, on a site given by Mr. Lentaigne, and aided by subscription, to which W. D. Trant, Esq., contributed £25 and supplied the stone for its erection from his quarries : the last named gentleman has also erected and maintains a neat school-house at Ballynascorney. A free school for girls is kept by the ladies of the Convent, and one for boys by the monks of St. Anne's. Near Fir House is a private school for the instruction of the deaf and dumb, and two others : the number of pupils in the free schools is about 430, and in the private schools, about 70. In 1789, Robert Murphy, Esq., bequeathed to the minister and churchwardens £10 Irish currency for the poor, and £10 Irish per ann, towards founding a Sunday school. In the garden of Tallaght House are the remains of the original castle, consisting of a large square tower with a lofty gateway. On a rising ground that commands a pass in the road leading from Crumlin and Drymnagh Castle to Fir House is the castle of Timon, or Timothan, which anciently was the chief place in the lordship or manor of Tymothan, granted by King John to Henry de Loundres, Archbishop of Dublin, in recompense for his losses in repairing the castle of Dublin and for other public services : in 1247 the manor was erected into a prebend in St. Patrick's Cathedral, which still exists but without any endowment. The building, which was in a ruinous condition in the reign of Hen. VIII, now consists of a square tower or keep with a few small windows in a very dilapidated state. At Aughfarrell are the remains of an old castle, and at Templeogue and beyond Friarstown are ruins of old churches ; near the latter of which is a well, dedicated to St. Anne. At the Greenhills is a rath and a fort, apparently erected at an early period to curb the predatory incursions of the Wicklow septs : on the grounds of Fortville Lodge is a Danish rath, surrounded with a fosse.

There is evidence of settlement in the area from prehistoric times, including a cist burial (DU022-052----). In addition to Máel Ruain's monastery (DU021-037003-) with its ecclesiastical enclosure (DU021-037002-), font (DU021-037009-), graveyard (DU021-037004-), 17th-century tombs (DU021-037005; DU021-037009-; DU021-037018; DU021-037019-), a granite cross (DU021-037006-), There are a number of religious sites in the area such as a number of holy wells (DU022-053----; DU021-037012-; DU022-061----) and a bullaun stone (DU021-037022-) (**Figure 14**).

The ecclesiastical settlement of Máel Ruain (DU021-037002-) prompted the development of a wider settlement in the aftermath of the Anglo-Norman invasion. The historic town of Tallaght (DU021-037----), a tower house (DU022-018001-), medieval mill (DU021-037007-) and enclosure (DU021-037013-) and town defences (DU021-037017-) are evidence of Tallaght's development into a substantial town settlement.



Figure 14: Recorded archaeological sites located in the vicinity of the subject site
 (Source: <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/>)

Evolution of the village

Tallaght is an example of a settlement which grew from early monastic origins, developing into a borough in the aftermath of the Anglo-Norman invasion, and undergoing rapid development in the post-medieval and modern period.

In 1179, Tallaght, newly part of the See of the Archbishop of Dublin, was listed among the lands confirmed to Archbishop Laurence O'Toole by Pope Alexander III (Sheehy 1962, I, 27). A borough was founded by the archbishops, and by 1326, there were 15 burgesses rendering 15 shillings per annum (McNeill op. cit., 181). In addition, there were free tenants, eighteen cottiers and four betaghs residing at Tallaght. The medieval borough consisted of a linear main street which expanded to the west to form a market place, then forked northwards past St. Máel Ruain's church and south towards Oldbawn. To the north of the road of the archbishop's palace, and to the south are probably the remains of a medieval burgage plot system – narrow strips of land which were rented by a lord to a freeman of a borough or 'burgess'.

John Speed's 1610 map of Leinster depicts the settlement as 'Tollogh' (Figure 15).



Figure 15. John Speed's *The Province of Leinster with the City of Dublin described*, 1610

In the aftermath of the industrial revolution, Tallaght benefitted from the introduction of a number of mills, which took advantage of a plentiful water supply from the River Dodder. Bolbrook paper mill was founded in the late 18th century, and continued to be in use until the early 20th century. Another paper mill was founded at Oldbawn House, run by the McDonnell family, who also ran mills in Saggart, Templeogue and Clonsilla. Other mills were established including Bawnville, Friarstown and Haarlem Paper Mills. One of the most notable events in Tallaght's recent history took place in March 1867, when a large group of Fenian sympathisers mustered and seized weapons and ammunition. A stand-off took place between the armed Fenians and local constabulary, which resulted in several fatalities. In 1888, the Dublin to Blessington Steam Tramway was established, improving transport links with the town.

From the late 1960's onward, there began a massive residential expansion at Tallaght, as Dublin began to spread outward. Developments such as The Square, Tallaght Hospital and Tallaght Institute of Technology (now the Tallaght Campus of the Technological University of Dublin (TUD)) in the latter part of the 20th century, have seen Tallaght transformed from a former village into a large suburban centre.

Ecological significance

There are no locally high value habitats within the subject lands. The lands are of limited value even for common and widespread species. The Priors lands include open gardens, amenity grassland with scattered trees and a surface car park. Currently, the Priors Lands are bounded to the south, east and west by urban development while to the north lies Tallaght Technical University with buildings but also open areas of grassland and hedgerows. Larger trees within the campus do provide bat roost potential while potential foraging habitats is available in open green spaces surrounding the Priors and into the university lands to the north. There are no water courses on the lands, no bodies of open water or habitats which can be classified as wetlands. There are no alien invasive plant species.

Although a number of mammals are known to be present within 10 kms of the Priors lands, there are no habitats on the site which are suitable for the majority of these species. There was no evidence of badger or deer activity. There are no setts on the site.

A heronry is located in a large Cypress *Cupressus sp.* to the east of the vehicle entrance off Main Street. It was estimated that there may be six nests in this tree however it is also used as a habitual roost and a number of birds were present in December 2021. Birds were noted to be flying in a southerly direction and may be commuting to the ponds and wetlands at the Sean Memorial Park which is approximately 300m to the south-west of the roost. It should be noted that herons are not a bird of conservation concern and have been placed on BirdWatch Ireland's 'green list' (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021).

Landscape significance

To the south, north and west of the existing Priory Institute lands (which include the Dominican retreat centre and St Marys Priory Church), the lands are heavily wooded. These areas are heavily planted with trees which are mature and have a mix of 80-20% deciduous to evergreen. The flat topography provides an easily accessible landscape.

To the east of the historic buildings on site, the landscape is dominated by a surface car park and parcels of open grassland in the north-eastern portions of the land parcel. The large carpark is separate from the Old Green Hills Road and the Tallaght Village Main Street by the woodlands which surround the site to the eastern and southern sides. The existing mature poplar trees running north to south on the eastern site boundary with the Old Greenhills Road have a visual presence on site, however poplar as a species is not suitable for urban sites due to an invasive root system and limited ecological value.

3. Assessment of significance

Methodology

The assessment made of the cultural importance of this place derives from two principal sources, a careful examination of what exists at present, and the findings of the various studies that have been carried out. The methodology adopted can be summarised as follows:

The church and priory have been studied in detail. A wide range of historical documentation has been examined to establish the history of the site and of the church and priory and their various modifications. Its fabric has been analysed to establish phases of construction. The settlement of Tallaght and its environs have been studied, both their historical development and as they are today.

In short, each element of the historic place has been examined both in itself, and from the perspective of the contribution to the place as a whole. The assessment of the significance of Tallaght has been arrived at through an understanding of how these various elements combine.

Statement of significance

In terms of *archaeological importance*, St. Mary's Church and Priory incorporates the remains of a medieval tower and the 19th-century Tallaght House, which form part of the neo-Gothic church and priory, which have undergone various extensions and renovations throughout the years. Portions of the priory are formally designated as *recorded monuments* and have associated *zones of notifications*.

The priory is a rich repository of *architectural heritage significance* and many of the buildings that make up the site are protected structures and have been recorded by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). The priory was completed in 1863-4 by J.J. McCarthy, with a later extension by C.A. Harrington in 1956-8. The church is a gable-fronted structure, designed by George C. Ashlin and completed in 1886. Both are examples of the Gothic Revival, of which the English architect Augustus Pugin (1812-1852) was a pioneer. Both McCarthy and Ashlin were heavily influenced by Pugin's work, and the former in particular was praised for the enthusiasm with which he revived intricate and elaborate medieval features in his designs. No rood-screens were said to have been used in Irish churches since the Reformation, and his use of this feature in his design for St. Kevin's in Glendalough was seen as revolutionary (Sheehy 1977, 8). This was part of a renewed religious zeal which followed the Catholic Emancipation in the 19th century, in addition to a growth in cultural nationalism of which McCarthy was an active participant.

The Church and Priory have been a *spiritual centre* for the village of Tallaght since the 19th century and have provided an educational centre for the Dominican order and its students. They continue a long ecclesiastical tradition of St. Máel Ruain's monastery and the medieval residence of the Archbishops of Dublin. Both were designed in a 19th-century Gothic Revival style influenced by Pugin, and the church features striking features such as the prominent stepped buttresses, fine decorative detail and an elegant concrete extension. The priory incorporates the medieval five-stage tower of Tallaght Castle which adds character to the visually attractive Gothic-style structure, which to its architect McCarthy in particular, represented a celebration of Gaelic and Catholic ideals, and celebrated a long-standing tradition of Christian observance in the area.

The Priory lands are of limited ecological significance but have a *landscape importance* in and of itself (particularly as counterpoint to the modern developed form of Tallaght). The north-eastern portion of the campus consists of unused grassland with a number of Category A trees and the area is well-screened from the principal Priory buildings by a row of existing trees and railings along the western and southern boundaries. This area has capacity to accommodate a quantum of new development without interfering visually or operationally with the existing Priory buildings.

4. Policies to retain significance

The purpose of these conservation policies is to provide a guide for the future development and management of the lands, principal buildings and associated structures at St. Mary's Priory. These policies take into account practical requirements for use as well as the retention of the site's significance.

The policies are framed:

- To be flexible enough to facilitate the continued use of the site;
- To retain or complement the character and quality of the existing monuments, structures or spaces, when planning repairs, adaptations or development;
- To identify existing or future patterns of development which might adversely affect the site and which might be in need of modification;
- To inform the future development outside the immediate boundaries of the complex but which could affect its continued significance;
- To emphasise the need to include conservation advice within the decision making process of future developments.

The recommended policies are set out in italics. They are preceded by the information on which the policies are based and, where thought appropriate, are followed by examples of treatment or options following from the policies. Policies should be read in conjunction with the associated text as this will make the context clear and help interpretation.

Policy 1.1 *The future conservation and development of the place should be guided by the principles of international best practice in conservation and the ethos of the Dominican Order.*

Policy 1.2 *The statement of cultural significance and the assessments of individual items contained in more detail in the policy section should be accepted as the basis for future planning and work.*

Policy 1.3 *The policies recommended, and options discussed, throughout this document should be endorsed as a guide to the planning of future work on the site by the relevant guardians and other parties.*

Archaeology

The study area has been occupied continuously since at least the late middle ages. In view of the number of individual sites within the study area that are classified as Recorded Monuments under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act of 1994, any groundwork to take place within the complex should be carried out in such a way that any loss of archaeological significance is minimised, and that any opportunities for learning more about the nature and extent of the previous settlement and uses of the site are not lost.

Policy 2.1 *Any groundwork to take place within the complex should comply with the requirements of the National Monuments Acts and the National Monuments Service.*

Building uses and new development

The buildings on site are in continual use and are in good condition. The building stock is best preserved through appropriate use and continual preventative maintenance. It is considered that there is scope to accommodate new development to the rear (north) and east of the lands. In particular a land parcel in north-east portion of the campus (fronting onto Greenhills Road) has been sold for development

Policy 3.1: *The Priory will seek to make best use of the existing building stock and will continue to maintain and repair the structures in accordance with conservation best practice and the architectural significance of the heritage buildings.*

Policy 3.2: *New development and new uses within the campus should be encouraged that supports the significance of the place and is not in conflict with the place's significance as a spiritual centre. Appropriate scaled new development should have regard from the site character and seek to sustain a pleasant setting for the heart of the lands. High-quality contemporary design and use of quality materials are to be promoted and encouraged in any new development proposals.*

Policy 3.3: *It is acknowledged that the provision of car parking facilities on site is important to older and less-mobile members of the local community and no policies or measures flowing from this plan should seek to limit site accessibility.*

Green and open spaces

The lands benefit from mature trees and strong tree belts, particularly to the west and in the south-east corner of the lands. There are a number of areas where non-native trees have been planted and they contribute little to the ecological significance of the landholding. The primary weakness of the landscape to the surrounds of the Priory Institute is also its main strength and this is maturity. The trees within the site lands are mature. Ideally the existing landscape should be planted with new trees of a similar species to replace the existing mature trees as they begin to decline over the coming years. A woodland regeneration programme should be implemented on site to ensure the retention of the existing sylvian character.

Policy 4.1 *It is recommended that a survey of the existing trees (to BS5837:2012) to the wider site lands be undertaken, with any recommendation proposed as part of the survey being implemented. This will help to prolong the condition and life expectancy of the tree stock on site. Notwithstanding the results of such survey work, it is recommended that the existing poplar trees along Greenhills Road be replaced with a line of columnar oak which will provide greater ecological and visual impact as they establish and mature.*

Policy 4.2 *In the interests of visual amenity, the open spaces to the south of the church (between it and the main street of the old village) and to the immediate west of the Gothic Novitiate be continued to be maintained as open amenity space. Elsewhere there may be scope for management practices that encourage botanical diversity.*

Policy 4.3 *The opportunity to provide bat boxes and bird boxes (fixed to the trunks of the mature trees) will be encouraged to increase the biodiversity of the subject lands.*

5. References/sources

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Internet resources

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's Historic Environment Viewer
<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>

Down Survey Maps

<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Newcastle&c=Dublin>

Maps by Taylor and Duncan

<https://libguides.ucd.ie/findingmaps/mapshistDublin>

National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/Surveys/Buildings/>

Rocque's map of Dublin County 1760

<http://www.dublinhistoricmaps.ie/maps/1600-1799/index.html>

South Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures

<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/planning/heritage-and-conservation/protectedstructures/record-of-protected-structures-schedule-2.pdf>

