

**St. Bartholomew's Holy Well (C0086-006----),
Doughcloyne, Cork**

Archaeological Impact Assessment

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On behalf of

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Contents

1. <i>Introduction</i>	2
2. <i>Context</i>	4
3. <i>Field Survey</i>	12
4. <i>Conclusion and Recommendations</i>	13
5. <i>References</i>	14
<i>Appendix 1: Photographic Record</i>	15

1. Introduction

John Cronin & Associates have been commissioned by RPS Cork to prepare an archaeological impact assessment for the recorded former location of a holy well site (CO086-006----) known as St. Bartholomew's Well. The location is within the environs of a proposed greenway project along a section of the disused Cork-Bandon railway line between Kinsale Road Roundabout and Eagle Valley on the outskirts of the southern suburbs of Cork city (**Figure 1**). The assessment was commissioned to appraise the former location of the holy well site, which is the only recorded archaeological site within the close environs of the proposed greenway, and this report is not intended as an archaeological impact assessment of the wider greenway project.

The Archaeological Survey of Ireland records that St. Bartholomew's holy well was destroyed during the construction of the railway line in middle of the 19th century. The assessment was carried out to appraise whether any remnant elements of the well exist within the environs of the proposed greenway and to assess the nature and extent of any potential impacts arising from the project.

The desktop study was carried out in order to review any available published information in relation to St Bartholomew's holy well and included consulting the following sources:

- Sites and Monuments Record
- Record of Monuments and Places
- Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028
- National Monuments Service: Historic Environment Viewer
- Archaeological Inventory of County Cork: Vol. 2 (East and South Cork)
- Heritage Council of Ireland: Heritage Map Viewer
- Database of Irish Excavation Reports
- Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society
- Historical publications and cartographic sources
- Aerial and satellite Imagery
- National Folklore Collection UCD Digitisation Project
- Placenames Database of Ireland

The recorded location of the holy well was inspected in clear weather conditions in October 2022 to assess if any visible surface trace of remains of the site exist within the environs of the project.



Figure 1: General location of subject site indicated with red arrow (OSI Licence: SU 0003322)

2. Context

Summary Description of Location

The recorded location of the holy well is within an area of pasture farmland on the margins of the modern suburbs to the south of Cork city centre (**Figure 1**) and is within the townland of Doughcloyne (*Dúchluain*: ‘bog meadow’). The location is bound to the west by the Spur Hill road and modern residential and commercial developments are located to the north with farmland to the south and east. Further details on the existing physical environment at the location are provided in the Site Inspection section presented below.

Legal and Planning Framework

The management and protection of archaeological 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 national legal statutes and guidelines relevant to this assessment comprise:

- National Monuments Act (1930) (as amended);
- Heritage Act (1995);
- National Cultural Institutions Act (1997);
- *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, (1999)

The administration of national policy in relation to archaeological heritage management is the responsibility of the National Monuments Service (NMS) which is currently based in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The National Monuments Act of 1930, and its Amendments, are the primary means of ensuring the satisfactory protection of the archaeological resource. They include a number of provisions that are applied to secure the protection of archaeological monuments. These include the designations of nationally significant sites as National Monuments as well as listing sites in the Register of Historic Monuments (RHM), the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), and the placing of Preservation Orders and Temporary Preservation Orders on endangered sites.

The National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994 made provision for the establishment of the RMP, which comprises the known archaeological sites within the State. The RMP, which is based on the earlier Register of Historic Monuments (RHM) and Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), provides county-based lists of all recorded archaeological sites with accompanying maps. All RMP sites receive statutory protection under the National Monuments Act 1994 and the NMS must be given two months’ notice in advance of any work proposed at their locations. The NMS has designated areas known as Zones of Notification around archaeological sites listed in the RMP. These do not comprise formal exclusion or buffer areas and there are no current legal or planning guidelines which define the extent of required development setbacks from recorded monuments. Details on current national planning policy in relation to the protection of the archaeological

resource is provided in the *Archaeology in the Planning Process* published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage¹.

The *Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028* includes a range of objectives in relation to the protection of the archaeological resource within the city and these comprise: Objective 8.1 (Strategic Archaeology Objective), Objective 8.2 (Protection of the Archaeological Resource), Objective 8.3 (The Value of Archaeological Knowledge), Objective 8.4 (Protection of the Medieval Historic Core), Objective 8.5 (Protection of Cork's Medieval City Wall and Defences), Objective 8.6 (Objective 8.6 (Protection of Burial Grounds), Objective 8.7 (Industrial Archaeology) Objective 8.8 (Underwater Archaeology), Objective 8.9 (Preservation of Archaeology within Open Space in Developments) and Objective 8.10 (Archaeological Management Strategy for the City). The descriptions of each of these planning objectives are available on the City Council website²

St Bartholomew's Holy Well (CO086-006----

Holy wells are common features within the Irish landscape and 358 known examples within County Cork are currently listed in the Sites and Monuments Record. They are typically sited at natural springs with some examples simply formed by natural depressions that fill with water while others have stone-built surrounds features which often date to recent centuries. As noted by Power (1994), the traditions and veneration associated with these sites date to the earliest phase of Irish Christianity with the potential that they form a continuation of pre-Christian ritual activity. Many holy wells have associations with a saint's name and were the site of annual visitations, known as patrons or patterns, which were held on the named saint's day, a practice which still continues at some examples. A common feature at examples that remain in use as sites of veneration is the presence of votive objects, such as holy medals and mass cards, within their environs. The holy well waters are also typically associated with traditions ascribing them various curative properties. The holy well recorded in Doughcloyne is one of seven known examples in County Cork dedicated to St. Bartholomew, whose feast day is on the 7th of August, and the waters were said to cure sore eyes and limb pains. A review of the current digitised records of the National Folklore Collection (www.duchas.ie) revealed that it does not presently contain any records in relation to this holy well.

The following description of the holy well is presented in the *Archaeological Inventory of County Cork: Volume II* (Power 1994):

"Beneath bridge carrying now disused old Cork-Bandon railway line. No visible surface trace. The well was destroyed when the railway line was laid down; it was described as 'walled and covered with an arch of stone' with 'an avenue of large sycamore trees leading to the well'; a 'patron' was held there on St Bartholomew's day and the water was said to cure 'sore eyes, pains of the limbs, etc.' (O'Coidealbháin 1946, 162)."

It is noted that the above inventory description states that the former location of the holy well is beneath a bridge that carried the railway line. This structure comprises a road bridge over the railway and is sited on the adjacent Spur Hill road, which was in existence prior to the construction of the railway. As detailed below, an 18th century description of the holy well records

¹<https://www.archaeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/publications/archaeology-planning-process-pl13.pdf>

² <https://www.corkcity.ie/en/cork-city-development-plan/volume-1-written-statement/>

that it was located close to the side of the road rather than on the road itself. The detail on the 6-inch OS map, which was surveyed in 1841, appears to indicate that the well was located in the field to the east of the road at a distance of c.20m from the roadside (**Figure 3** below). This indicates that its former location may not have been under the bridge but rather within the adjacent field to the east.

The recorded location of the holy well and its surrounding Zone of Notification, as designated by the NMS, are mapped in **Figure 2**. The NMS mapping datasets have been overlain on a Google Earth image dating to 2018 which shows ground works extending through the location which may be associated with a series of manholes of recent appearance noted in the area during the site inspection. As detailed below, a review of the Database of Irish Excavation Reports revealed no entries for any archaeological investigations associated with these works.

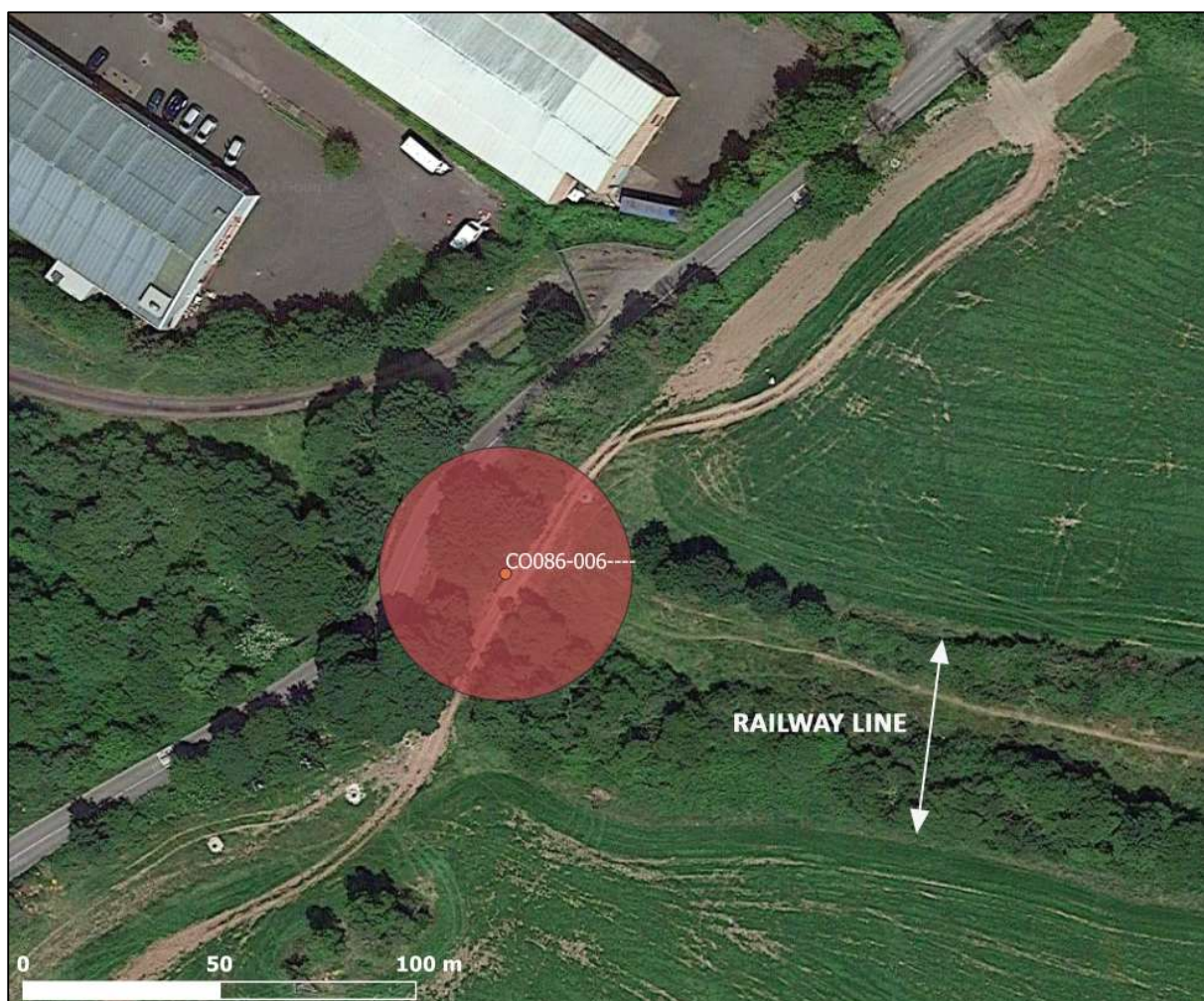


Figure 2: Location of the holy well and surrounding Zone of Notification (shaded) overlain on a 2018 Google Earth satellite image

The well was described as follows in a 1758 publication, named *A Tour through Ireland by two English Gentlemen*, cited by O' Coindealbháin (1946, 162) which indicates that it was the focus of a well-attended and organised pattern on the saint's day (August 7th):

"We went this morning to that [well] of St. Bartholomew, which, being that saint's day, was surrounded by vast crowds of Roman Catholics, some upon their knees at their devotion, and

others walking with their beads in their hands. This ceremony is here called a 'Patron.' The well is enclosed with trees, close to the side of the road, and even the sight of it looks refreshing. When their devotions were over, they retired to several sulter³ tents erected for that purpose, some to eat and drink, others to wrestling and dancing, noise and merriment, which brought on several boxing bouts while we stood there. In short it is exactly what we call a 'wake' in England, setting aside the devotion."

The well was also described in Smith's *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork* (1774) as follows:

"About two miles S.S.W., from Cork, is a celebrated holy well, dedicated to St. Bartholomew. The water gushes out of a slaty rock, through a round wall cut into it, about two feet diameter, and one and half deep; it walled and covered with an arch of stone; there is an avenue of large sycamore trees leading to the well. They relate several stories of miraculous cures having been performed by this water, particularly on the person who planted the avenue and walled the well round, whose name was Gallant, and who, they say received his sight by the use of this water. There is a flag-stone set up on which is a cross with an inscription, importing that David Fox got the use of his limbs by bathing in it. It is still much frequented on St. Bartholomew's day, and the evening before, by an infinite number of Romish devotees, who flock to it out of devotion, and for the cure of sore eyes, pains in the limbs, etc. It is a pleasant, soft, sweet water, lathers immediately with soap, but I could not discover any other appearance, from whence it might receive its healing virtues."

Caulfield's notes in a version of Smith's book published in the 1890s⁴ contain the following brief reference to the removal of the well by the railway construction works:

"Destroyed by the Bandon railway. Some years ago a regiment returned from foreign service, and, grievously afflicted with scurvy, encamped in the vicinity of this well, the men were healed by drinking the water."

The construction of the Cork Bandon Railway single track line commenced by 1845 and the section between Bandon and Ballinahassig was in operation by 1849 while the section to Cork was opened in 1851. The line included sections of cut ground and raised embankments to create steady gradients for the track and these would have required extensive clearance and ground reduction works along the line. As detailed in the below Cartographic Review, the section extending through the recorded location of St. Bartholomew's Well appears to have been constructed on a low embankment, with a road bridge built across the adjacent Spur Hill road. The railway was amalgamated into the Great Southern Railway in 1924 and then into Córas Iompair Éireann in 1945. As with many railways throughout the country, the line became unprofitable following the increasingly widespread use of private car transport as the 20th century progressed and it was closed in 1961, with the tracks removed shortly thereafter.

Database of Irish Excavations Reports

A review of the Database revealed that it contains no entries for any archaeological investigations within the environs of the holy well site.

³ a civilian merchant who sells provisions to an army

⁴ <https://archive.org/details/ancientandprese00socioog/page/n4/mode/2up>

Cartographic Review

The cartographic sources examined for the subject site comprised the first 6-inch edition OS map (surveyed 1841), the 25-inch OS map (surveyed 1899) and the Cassini edition 6-inch map (published 1938). The first edition 6-inch map shows the location a few years before the railway track was constructed and 'St. Bartholomew's Well' is clearly labelled and appears to be indicated as a small circular feature (a symbol typically used by the Ordnance Survey to indicate wells) located c.20m to the east of the Spur Hill road which is also present on this map (**Figure 3**). A number of planted trees are shown within its environs, and these may correspond to the avenue of sycamore trees referred to by Smith in 1774 although no clear formal avenue feature is depicted. These trees may have formed part of landscaping associated with Doughcloyne House which is shown in the area further to the south.

It is noted that when a geo-referenced extract from the 6-inch map is overlain on modern satellite imagery that it appears to show the location of well slightly to the south of the extent of the railway line (**Figure 4**). While the accuracy of the first edition 6-inch OS maps is generally good, they often do not correlate exactly with the actual locations of topographic features and the potential that the mapped location of the holy well is slightly inaccurate is noted. This is supported by the fact that while the well is labelled on the later 25-inch OS map of 1899, which was surveyed decades following the construction of the railway line, no trace of the well feature is shown (**Figure 5**). This may indicate that the annotation commemorates the former location of the well which was occupied by the railway line directly adjacent to the label when the 25-inch map was surveyed. A review of the Cassini edition OS map, which was published in 1938, also revealed that while the well continued to be labelled it contains no cartographic symbols indicating its surviving location (**Figure 6**).



Figure 3: Extract from the 1st edition 6-inch OS map (surveyed 1841) with arrow indicating possible location of holy well (OSI Licence: SU 0003322)

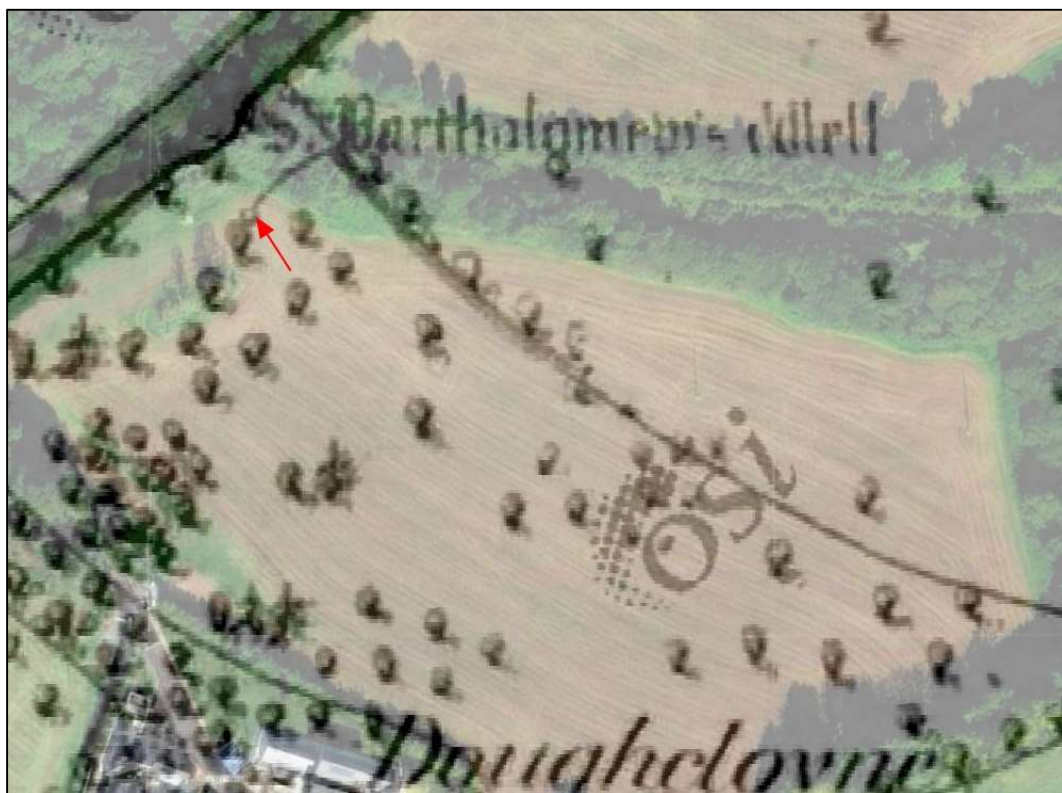


Figure 4: Detail from 6-inch OS map overlain on modern satellite image

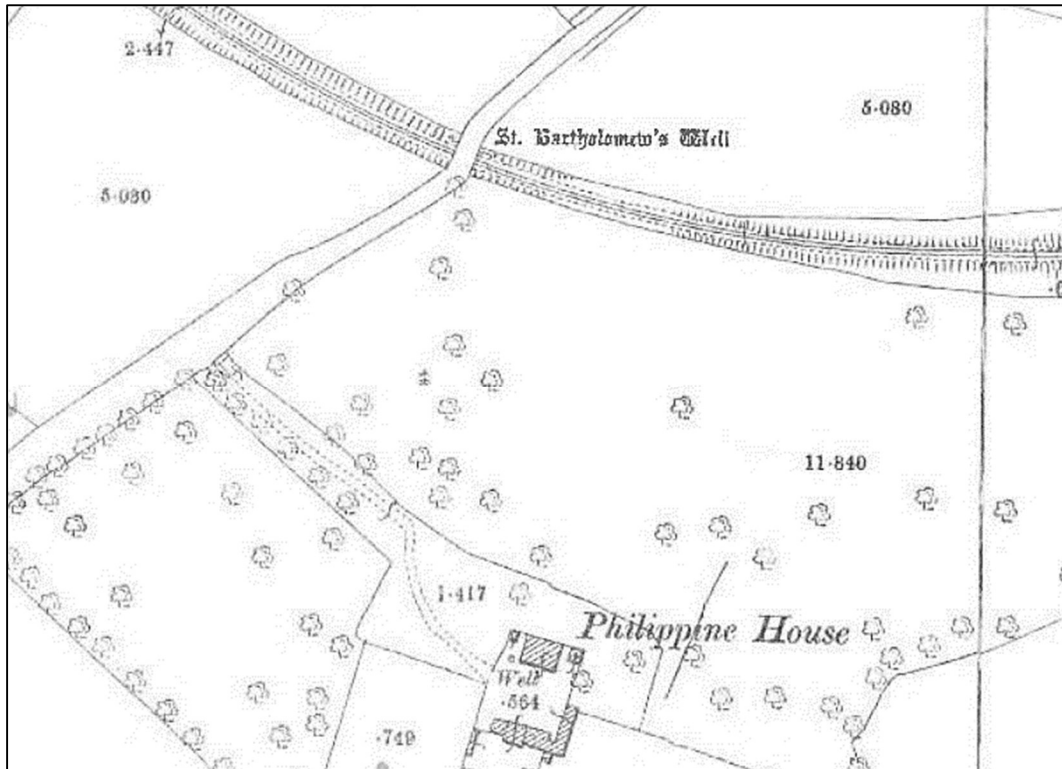


Figure 5: Extract from 25-inch OS map (surveyed 1899) (OSI Licence: SU 0003322)

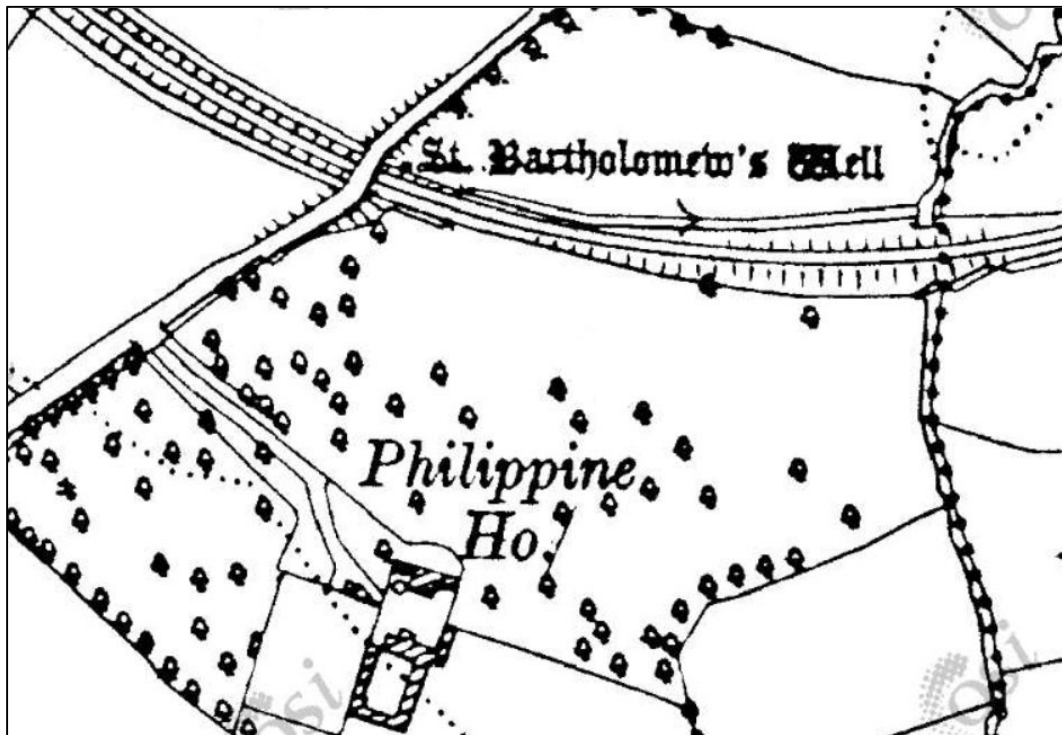


Figure 6: Extract from Cassini edition 6-inch OS map (published 1938) (OSI Licence: SU 0003322)

Aerial and Satellite Image Review

A review of online aerial and satellite imagery of the location was carried out to ascertain if any traces of the holy well, or associated features, were evident and also to appraise any recent interventions in the area. The extent of the disused railway line is clearly evident as an overgrown area between two vacant fields on all reviewed images and no traces of the holy well or any potential associated features are visible. A small cluster of trees in the field to the south of the railway line are visible as an avoided area during the agricultural works on the 2006 image. This location was inspected during the field survey and comprises a natural bedrock outcrop. Also of note on the 2006 image is the fact that the existing field gap in the section of the railway line to the east of Spur Hill road was not present at that time. It is visible on subsequent images indicating that it was created in order to allow access between the two fields at some point after 2006. The ground works visible on the 2018 image extend through this field gap and appear to have taken advantage of this existing access feature rather than creating it. The detail on the 2022 image indicates that grass regrowth has occurred in the area disturbed by the 2018 ground works.



Figure 7: Google Earth images of the general location

3. Field Survey

The recorded location of St. Bartholomew's holy well and its environs were inspected in overcast but dry conditions on the 18th October 2022 and extracts from the compiled photographic record are presented in **Appendix 1**. There is no formal access route to the location from the adjacent Spur Hill road and no signposts indicating the former location of the well are present in the area. There is a small gap in the roadside on the north side of the railway bridge which leads to a well-trodden trail extending down the steep side of the road embankment and this route was in use as an informal access point by walkers at the time of the inspection.

The route of the railway line is clearly evident as an overgrown strip of heavily overgrown ground between two vacant green fields and extends in a curvilinear line towards the east. The railway bridge over Spur Hill road remains in good condition although the area under the span is heavily overgrown and has been intentionally blocked with a large dump of spoil on the western side. There are also frequent inclusions of dumped material under the bridge and on its east side. The presence of thick overgrowth restricted views of the ground surface in this area.

The field gap across the section of the former railway line to the east of the bridge is grass-covered and measures 8m-10m in width. A line of manholes of recent appearance extend to the north and south of the gap and are likely associated with the ground works visible on the 2018 Google Earth image.

The section of the railway extending to the east is heavily overgrown with trees and brambles which almost completely restrict access to the internal area of the line. Where accessible, it comprises an area slightly raised above ground level in the adjoining fields to the north and south. The width of the overgrown area delimiting its extent increases from c.30m in the west end of the field to c.55m in the west end, which broadly mirrors its original layout as indicated on the 25-inch OS map (**Figure 5**). A steep-sided cut channel (c. 1m wide by 1m deep) extends eastwards along the north end of the line and this likely forms the remains of a drainage channel that flanked this section of the line, perhaps in part created to channel ground water rising from a natural spring that fed the former holy well.

No surface traces of the holy well, including any remains of a stone built surround or a later capping of the spring, were noted within the accessible areas of the railway line, or within the adjacent fields, during the site inspection. It is noted that while the presence of thick vegetation along the railway line restricted the inspection, the likelihood exists that the Archaeological Survey of Ireland's conclusion that the construction of the railway destroyed the holy well is correct.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Impact Assessment

The Archaeological Survey of Ireland inventory description of St. Bartholomew's Well (CO086-006----) records that it was destroyed during the construction of the Cork-Bandon railway in the middle of the 19th century. While the site was described by a number of writers during the 18th century as a well-attended feature within the locality in the period before the railway construction, no post-1850s record of the structure was noted during the desktop study carried out as part of this assessment. In addition, no surface traces of the well or any potential associated features, including modern signature or information boards recording its former location, were observed during the site inspection of the area. It is noted that the inspection was hindered by the presence of thick overgrowth within the footprint of the former railway line.

Given the above factors it is concluded that the proposed greenway project will not result in any predicted impacts on the holy well, but this will need to be confirmed by archaeological supervision of vegetation clearance works within the environs of its recorded location.

Recommendations

Please Note: The following archaeological mitigation measures are recommendations which will be subject to the approval of the National Monuments Service.

It is recommended that licensed archaeological supervision of the clearance of vegetation, and any required ground excavation works, within the overgrown section of the former railway line in the environs of the recorded location of the holy well be carried out during the construction phase to confirm that no surviving traces of the site exist.

It is recommended that the area to be supervised should encompass the area under the railway bridge as well as the section of the railway extending 30m east of the bridge.

It is also recommended that consideration be given to the erection of an information board within this area of the proposed greenway commemorating the former location of St. Bartholomew's Well, to help ensure that a folk memory of the site continues. It is suggested that this could potentially include content from the 18th century descriptions of the holy well and its associated traditions,

5. References

Published works

Cork City Council (2022) *Cork City Development Plan 2022 – 2028*.

O’Coindealbháin, S. (1946) ‘Holy Wells’. *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society* Vol. 51, No. 174, pages 158-163.

Power, D. (1994) *Archaeological Inventory of County Cork (Vol. II)*. Dublin: Stationery Office

Smith, C. (1774) *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork*.

Consulted Website

Database of Irish Excavation Reports: <http://www.excavations.ie/>

National Monument Service: Historic Environment Viewer,
<http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>

Geohive Map Viewer Resource : <http://www.geohive.ie/>

Geological Survey of Ireland: http://spatial.dcenr.gov.ie/imf/imf.jsp?site=GSI_Simple

Google Earth: <https://www.google.com/earth/versions>

Heritage Council of Ireland : <https://heritagemaps.ie/WebApps/HeritageMaps/index.html>

National Folklore Collection: www.duchas.ie

Irish Placenames Database: www.logainm.ie

Togher Historical Association: <https://togherhistoricalassociation.blogspot.com/>

Appendix 1: Photographic Record



Plate 1: View towards former railway line from south (location is within tree line in centre of frame)



Plate 2: View of Spur Hill railway bridge from east with overgrowth and soil dump visible



Plate 3: *View from north of modern field gap extending across the section of the former railway to the east of the bridge*



Plate 4: *View from west of overgrown section of former railway line (taken from field gap)*



Plate 5: View of drainage ditch within overgrown area