

**KNOW YOUR 5 km.**

**Plot at Church Street  
and  
Old Gaol Street  
Roscommon Town**

**By**

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## **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

During the third Covid 19 lockdown, Roscommon County Council along with ‘Our Irish Heritage’ and ‘The National Museum of Ireland’ and ‘Heritage Ireland’ encouraged citizens to investigate and research the heritage located within five kilometres of their residences. My investigation looks at a modest rectangular urban plot of land located at the junction of the streets now known as Main Street and Church Street, close to the centre of Roscommon Town, Co. Roscommon.

If the centre of Roscommon Town is the Market Square and the Bank of Ireland, the 2,175m<sup>2</sup> site under investigation is located at the opposite end of Main Street, lower down the hill. The rectangular site is dimensioned at about 28.5 m. facing onto Main Street by 76.0m. facing onto Church Street.

Although I am not a resident of Roscommon town, I do work in Roscommon Town and as somebody with an interest in the town, I believe I qualify to put in an entry. I have a selection of useful research material on my computer as well as being able to access material on-line, such as the Irish Census and Griffith valuations.

This project intends to analyse what is known about and what is the significance of the site.

## **2.0. A CHURCH STREET SITE AT THE FIRST MILLENNIUM.**

Without excavation beneath the houses of Roscommon Town, evidence is hard to find to support what was happening on our chosen site around the year 1000 A.D.. What we do know is that St. Coman’s eighteenth century Church of Ireland church building was built on the the site of the former monastery building of St Coman’s monastery. Burials in the graveyard outside the church date back at least to the 9<sup>th</sup> century (see National Monuments Service below). The discovery of burials beneath houses on the west side of Goff Street (Formerly Pudding Street/ My Lady’s Lane) have revealed that the graveyard extended some distance beyond its current confines. It is possible that the graveyard once extended as far from the monastic buildings as Church Street. The monastery is described by Michael Moore of the ‘National Monuments Service’ as follows:

## National Monuments Service

### Record Number:

RO039-043006-

### Classification:

Religious house - Augustinian canons

### Scheduled for Protection: 1

### Description:

Situated on a gentle South East -facing slope within Roscommon town. The monastery was founded by St Comán, supposedly a disciple of St Finnian of Clonard, in the 6th century. Comán was a son of Faolchú and is reliably connected with the Dál nAraidhe of north-east Ulster. He died in 747 A.D. and his feast day is celebrated on 26th December. The 'law of St Comán' was proclaimed over much of Connaught in 771, 779 and 792 A.D. (Ó Rian 2011, 216-7). The monastery may have been raided by the Vikings in 807 (AU, 263), but this is unlikely. However, it was burnt in 823 and again in 1134. The processional cross known as the cross of Cong was made for this church, possibly at the church, in 1123 as a gift from Turlough O'Conor. The church became the diocesan centre after the Synod of Kells in 1152, but this honour had been moved to Elphin (RO016-127001-) by 1172. The Augustinian Rule was adopted c. 1140 A.D., and the church continued in use as an Augustinian house until the Dissolution of the Monasteries, although the dedication may have changed to St. Mary's in the 13th century when it might also have had a community of nuns. Coarbs continue into the thirteenth century at least. It was plundered by the de Burgos in 1204 and 1260, and was burnt in 1235 and 1247 and 1360 (Gwynne and Hadcock 1970, 191-2, 323). After the monastery was suppressed c. 1540 its land was granted to Sir Nicholas Malby (Hoare 2014), who transformed the Castle (RO039-043006-) into the fortified house (RO039-043010-) also on the site today. The monastery consisted of at least one stone church and a round tower, which was burnt in 1050 A.D. by the men of Breiffine (AFM vol. 2, 859). It is described as a ruined church, hall and cloister in 1578 (Bradley and Dunne 1988a, 97-8). It was centered on the site now occupied by the Church of Ireland church of St. Comán, which was built in the 18th century and where some fragments of transitional 12th century masonry (RO039-043008-) are incorporated into the tower. The head of a 13th century lancet window is kept within the church. The present east gable has a three-light decorated window, much of which is original, while internally its embrasure has a decorated surround with pinnacles, dating from c. 1450. Inside the church there is a wall memorial to the Gunnings of Castlecoote dated 1717 that might have been moved from Fuerty church (RO039-063001-), and to Lovelaces of Ballybride dated 1723. There is also a wall memorial (RO039-043017-) dated 1696 to John and Catherine Fleming of Roscommon, although it may have been moved to here. An inscribed slab (dims 0.93m x 0.41-0.65m; T 0.06-0.15m) (RO039-043009-) which dates to the 9th century asks for a blessing on Ioseph and is now in the Roscommon County Museum. A cross-slab (RO039-043016-) (dims 1m x 0.7m; max. T 0.13m) decorated with the stem of a cross and traces of ring also has a panel of interlace and roundels at the edge of the stone (Siggins, 1996; Barton 1996). The latter was moved to a position against the south wall of the present church in 2013. Both were found in the rectangular graveyard (RO039-043007-) (dims c. 80m E-W; c. 45m N-S) which also contains fragments of the masonry of a large Gothic window, and a cross-slab (RO039-043028-) with a crudely-incised Latin cross and a single-line ring is used as

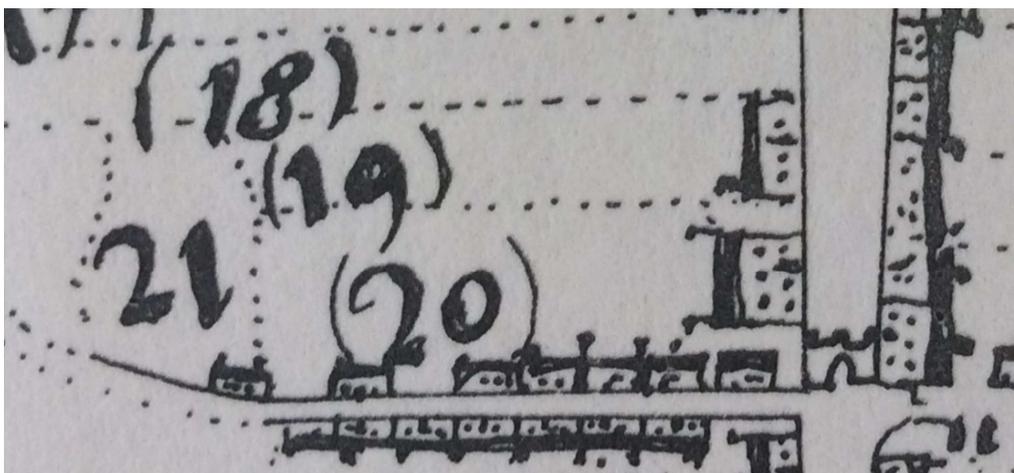
a grave-marker. Human bones were uncovered in Goff St. to the E c. 1917. The holy well of St. Comán's Vat (RO039-047---) is c. 600m to the NW.  
Compiled by: Michael Moore Date of revised upload: 17 December, 2014

This report by Michael Moore suggests that the original site of St. Cománs Monastery may have extended as far as the castle site at the top of the town, and certainly included the site on Main Street/ Church Street currently under investigation. It is quite likely that stone and other material from the monastery buildings could be located under the Main Street/ Church Street site.

### 3.0 THE SITE IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

In the 1970s, a map of the Town of Roscommon from 1736 was found in a Solicitor's office in Dublin. On inspection, it turned out that the map had been prepared by one Francis Plunkett, Surveyor. This map clearly shows the Main Street / Church Street plot represented with the number '20'. The map must have been prepared on behalf of the then landlords and owners of the town, who were:

- i) Elizabeth Countess Dowager of Kildare (1665-1758) daughter and co-heir of Richard Jones, 1<sup>st</sup>. Earl of Ranelagh.
- ii) Lady Frances Hanbury-Williams (1735-1759), daughter and co-heir of Richard Jones, 1<sup>st</sup>. Earl of Ranelagh.
- iii) Charles Hanbury-Williams (1709-1759), husband of Frances Hanbury-Williams.



*This report relates to Plott No. 20. The street on the right is Main Street/ Old Gaol Street, while the narrower road to the south of the site is Church Street which once formed a route connecting the two major religious foundations of Roscommon, St. Comán's Monastery and the Dominican Friary. The map is not drawn to a stated scale.*

- iv) George Bishop of Exeter (1684-1762).

On Plunkett's 1736 map of Roscommon Town, each site is allocated a number or letter which refers to the various plots leased from the landlords listed at (i) to (iv) above, and it states the tenant's name and the area of the plot:

Plott 19. Leased to William Connors. Area of site 1 rood and 0 perches. (It consists of two single storey houses on Old Gaol Street and large rectangular garden behind).

Plott 20. Leased to Patrick Kelly. Area 2 roods and 20 perches. (It consists of one large two storey house on Old Gaol Street and six cabins on Church Street).

Plott 21. Leased to Richard Birmingham. Area 1 rood and 20 perches). It consists of one cabin and a rectangular garden surrounding it).

Several significant features can be observed on this map:

- 1) The historic town gate at the south end of Main Street/ Old Gaol Street was still in place. This gate effectively separated the Gaelic town and monastery to the south from the 'English' town and its castle to the north.
- 2) It is possible that there had been a gaol in the old gate, and it is for this reason that the adjoining street (now Main Street) was at that time called Old Gaol Street.
- 3) It is worth noting that of the three tenants of the Ranelagh Estate, Connors (plot 19) and Kelly (plot 20) are Irish names and Birmingham (plot 21) an English name. The two Irish tenants are located in the English town and the English tenant seems to be in the Irishtown. In other words, the two populations had merged by the 1730s.
- 4) Despite Isaac Weld's report in his '*Statistical survey of County Roscommon*' from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that most of the cabins of Roscommon town having no windows or chimneys, most of the cabins on Church Street do appear to be of better quality with two windows to the front and with two chimneys.
- 5) Being close to the former monastery buildings, stone from the monastery could have been incorporated in the construction of these cabins and their chimneys.
- 6) The large house on Old Gaol Street is two storeys high by three bays wide.
- 7) Although Roscommon had a town gate, it is most unlikely that it was a fully walled town, as there is no evidence of continuous town walls or of another entrance gate to the town. 'The National Monuments Service' describe the gate as follows:

**National Monuments Service****Record Number:**

RO039-043004-

**Classification:**

Gatehouse

**Scheduled for Protection:**

1

**Description:**

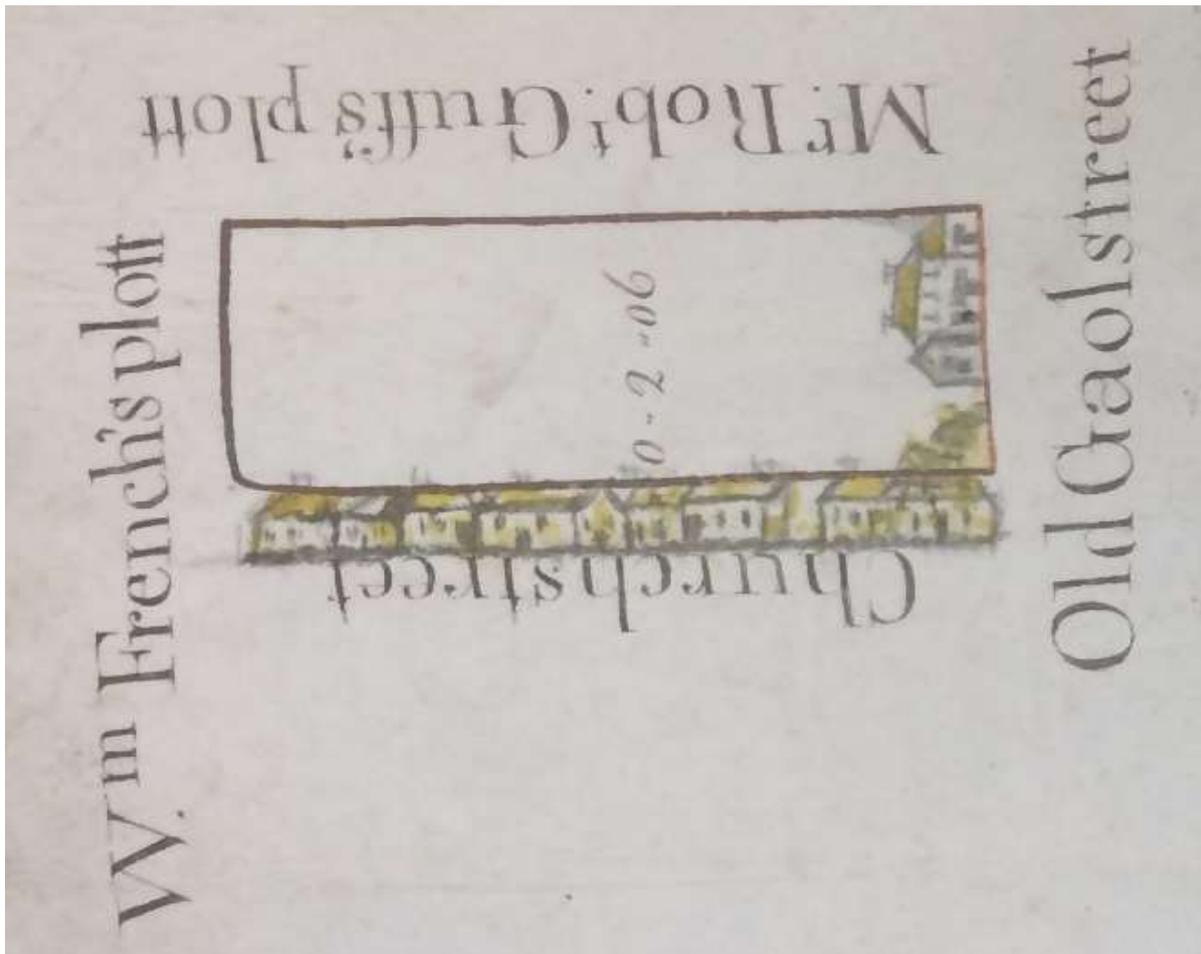
Roscommon town (RO039-043----) appears to have been defended, but no walls survive and their course is unknown, but a gate at the S end of Main St. survived as late as the early 19th century and appears on maps by Francis Plunkett (1736) (Bradley and Dunne 1988a, 91) and D. A. Beaufort (1808) (Siggins 1998b). Compiled by: Michael Moore Date of upload: 24 August 2010

Isaac Weld's description of the cabins of Roscommon reads as follows:

'In no part of Ireland, is a much stronger contrast afforded, than what this new part of the town (Abbey Street) presents, to the old and wretched hovels which may be seen in other quarters, more particularly the outlets on the Lanesborough side. Nothing in the shape of human habitation can be conceived more abject; no chimneys; no windows; roofs sunken and apparently ready to fall in; rags, misery; and filth withinside; and without, dunghills up to the very doors, deposited in trenches hollowed out in lines parallel and close to the walls of the houses, and which by successive scrapings, are rendered deeper and wider year after year. When cleared of the manure, these become so many receptacles for stagnant putrid water, emitting the most noisome effluvia, prejudicial, doubtless, to an eminent degree to the health of the poor people who are exposed to breathe the contaminated air.'

These cabins on Church Street were probably not in such poor condition, but evidence exists that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the streets were not paved, there were no pedestrian paths, there was no sewerage system within the town, and that water supplies came from public wells and from a small stream at the bottom of Pudding Street (now Goff Street).

#### 4.0 A CHURCH STREET SITE AT THE END OF THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY



HALS Map DE/Cp/E119 of the Church Street/ Main Street site.

This late eighteenth century map was found in the Earl of Essex archives held by Hertford Archives and Local Studies, Hertfordshire, England, in which his Irish estates are filed under the heading: HALS DE/ Cp/E119. (Herts. Archives Local Studies / deposition/ Capel family). The map is drawn in pen and ink by Bryan Hanly, surveyor at the scale of one hundred feet to the inch or 1:1,200, and is described as 'Roger Kelly's plott'. Hanly describes the map as follows:

'A figure of Roger Kelly's plot, situate in the Town of Roscommon, part of the estate of Hon. Lord Viscount Malden and the Right Hon. Lord and Lady Henry Fitzgerald and contains two roods six perches. Surveyed May 1797.'

The land surrounding the plot is titled as follows:

- a) 'William French's Plott,' located to the west.
- b) 'Church Street,' located to the south.
- c) 'Old Gaol Street,' located to the east.
- d) 'Mr. Robert Guff's plot,' to the north.

William French must have been related to the French family of Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon. Arthur French was the son of John 'Tierna More' French and Anne Gore, and died before 15 April 1769, and held the office of Member of Parliament (M.P.) for County Roscommon in 1721. He lived at Frenchpark, County Roscommon. Their children were Major Robert French, died 1775, George French, died 1770, Martha French and Arthur French b. 2 Aug 1728, died between 24 Apr 1799 - 24 May 1799. Although none of these is William French, it is most likely that he was a close relative of this family.

The reference on the map to 'Old Gaol Street' does not refer to the 'Old Gaol' which is presently located at the top of Market Square, for the simple reason that in 1797 the 'Old Gaol' was a newly built gaol, having been completed for the Earl of Essex about seven years earlier. Where was the old gaol? Plunkett's map of 1736 shows a town gate at the corner of Main Street/ Old Gaol Street and Church Street. It was not unusual in Ireland for a gaol to be located within a city gate because a city gate was so strongly constructed to resist attack, and therefore could resist an escape attempt. I suggest that Old Gaol Street refers to a gaol located in the Roscommon Town Gate. Although the map above does not show the town gate to be in existence, in 1797, a map prepared by Daniel Augustus Beaufort of 1808 (in County Roscommon Historical and Archaeological Society Journal), shows the gate to be still in place at the bottom of Old Gaol Street. This gate had been demolished and removed by the time the Ordnance Survey arrived in the mid-1830s.

What else can we glean from the drawing.

- a) It shows a large two storey three bay house, probably with a thatched roof, with a single storey single bay wing on each side the fronting Main Street/ Old Gaol Street. This house appeared on the 1736 map, but without its two outbuildings. It also shows seven or eight cabins facing Church Street, most with two windows to the front, a thatched roof and a chimney. The map is hand coloured.
- b) Mr Guff's plot. (The family name was later changed to Goff.) It was probably owned by Thomas Guff (born 1772) son of Robert Goff and Sarah French, a merchant in the town of Roscommon. This family were related from the Goff family of Carriglea, Kingstown, Dublin who had married into the Caulfield family. In 1828 Robert Goff was a member of the Grand Panel of County Roscommon. At the time of Griffith's Valuation, the Goff estate included the demesne at Oakport, near Boyle. Later the main family seat was at Carrowroe House, parish of Roscommon. The family also held townlands in the parish of Baslick, barony of Castlerea, Kilbride, barony of Ballintober South and Killukin,

barony of Roscommon. In the 1870s three Goff brothers owned about 9,000 acres in county Roscommon. Today's Goff Street, Roscommon is named after Mr. Goff.

## 5.0 THE OWNERS OF THE CHURCH STREET SITE 1797

The HALS map of 1797 indicates that the ownership of the site is in the hands of three joint landlords:

George Capel Coningsby (1757-1839)

Viscount Malden was the only son of William 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Essex. He was Member of Westminster Parliament representing Westminster 1779-80, Lostwithiel 1781-1784, Okehampton 1785-1790 and New Radnor Boroughs 1794-99. His home was at Hampton Court, Herefordshire. He was therefore an absentee landlord. He served as Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire 1802-17, recorder and high steward of Leominster 1802-5 and Chief Steward 1805-8. In addition to the extensive lands he owned around Roscommon Town, he also owned land in Navan Co. Meath but probably never visited either place.



*George Capel, Viscount Malden as a young boy with his sister painted in 1768*

He had inherited lands from Richard Jones, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Ranelagh (1642-1712) who had served in Athlone and Roscommon through the Williamite wars, and had lost much of his property between 1685 and 1691 under King James II. The estates were recovered under King William.

His co-owners of the site were Lord Henry FitzGerald (1761- 1829) fourth son of James Fitzgerald, the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Leinster and his wife since 3 August 1791 Charlotte (nee. Boyle), *suo jure* Baroness de Ros, who lived at 'Boyle Farm' Thames Ditton, Surrey, which was described by Hannah More in 1787 as "A large and very elegant house."

Being the fourth son Lord Henry Fitzgerald had little to hope for in the way of inheritance from the Leinster side of his family. Nevertheless, he had all the right upper crust connections. He was

the son of the first Duke of Leinster, and of royal descent, being the grandson of the Duke of Richmond, who was himself the grandson of Charles the second's liaison with the French, Louise de Keroualle.

Henry was nine years senior to his wife Charlotte, and had led an exciting and romantic life. After an education at Eton, he had joined the army, saw action in the West Indies, and had risen to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, all whilst still in his early twenties. On his retiral from army duties, he joined the social round in London and in Dublin. Making a particular shine in the role of amateur thespian. Such a man as Lord Henry, handsome, dashing, and debonaire. He had the charm - she had the money. The wedding settlement included joint control of her estates, which included this site at Main Street/ Church Street in Roscommon Town.

Their house at Thames Ditton became a centre of 18<sup>th</sup> century social life, with many of the Irish Fitzgeralds travelling to England to enliven it. Instead of improving her estates in Roscommon, Charlotte concentrated on improving 'Boyle Farm' where she enlarged the grounds, improved it by the growing of trees, and the construction of pavilions. Although Henry and Charlotte loved 'Boyle Farm,' they were also enraptured with Italy, where they usually spent the winter. There is no evidence of them ever travelling to Roscommon.

Henry's youngest brother, Edward, was the Irish patriot, and his death in 1798 in the cause of Irish freedom, has earned for him the reputation of one of Ireland's greatest patriots.

Lord Henry's connection to Ireland was reaffirmed by his appointment in 1806 as Postmaster-general in Ireland.

Charlotte, had no personal connection with Ireland. The Boyle Walsinghams were, through Charlotte's mother, descended from the barons de Ros (Pronounced and sometimes spelled de Roos) the oldest and premier barony in the kingdom, having been created in 1264. This also gave them descent from Mary Tudor, sister of Henry the eighth, and from Ann Plantagenet, sister of Edward the fourth. The barony had been in abeyance since 1687, when George, second Duke of Buckingham and twentieth baron de Ros, had died. It was, however, a peerage which could descend in the female line.



*Baroness Charlotte de Ros 1769-1831*

Although nobody had claimed the title for over a century and a quarter, Charlotte considered it was hers by right, and in 1802 we find her seeking support from her influential friends, and in the following year she petitioned the King, claiming that, as the nearest living relative of the last baron, the abeyance be terminated. Charlotte was determined. She persuaded the Prime Minister, Lord Grenville, to write a personal letter to George the third asking:

"Whether your Majesty would be graciously pleased to determine the abeyance of the Barony of Roos in favour of Lady Henry Fitzgerald, which, if your Majesty had no objection to it, Lord Grenville would venture to recommend".

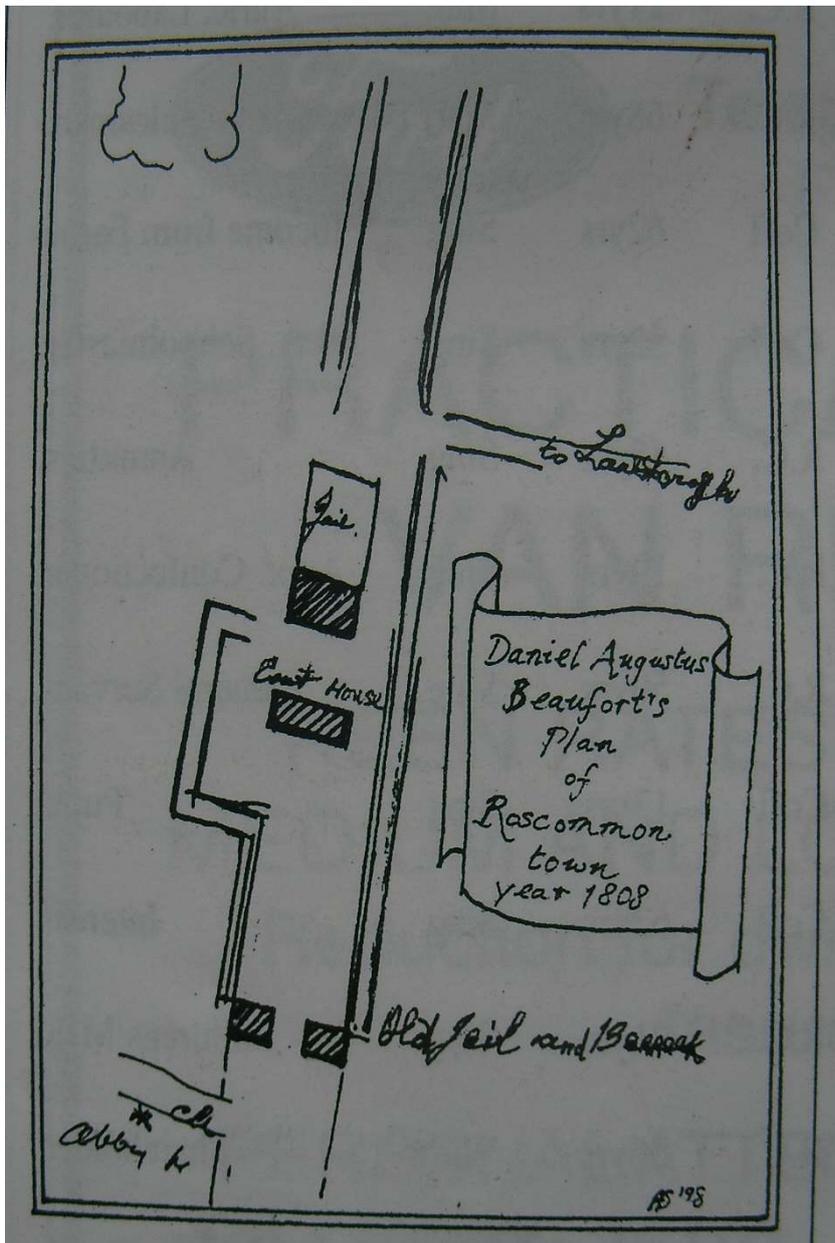
To which the king replied from Windsor Castle:

"Lady Henry FitzGerald having been at so much expense and trouble in regard to the Barony of Roos, and having brought forward the case so clearly, the king considers it very fair to grant the abeyance in her favour, as recommended by Lord Grenville".

She was now in her own right the twenty-first Baroness de Ros, and henceforth stood in precedence above her husband, who carried no such title.

## 6.0 OLD GAOL STREET IN 1808

The Rev. Daniel Augustus Beaufort visited Roscommon Town in 1808, and drew a sketch of the old town gate which was still in place that year. (See Albert Siggins, 'DAB's visit to Roscommon Town, 1808' in *CRH&ASJ*, vii (1998), pp24-5). Another significant feature of this plan is the size of the gate. Not only does it keep the Catholics out of the English town, but it is



stated to contain an old jail and a barracks. The police had not been established at that time, so it would have been an army barracks to compliment the one in Abbeytown.

Although not drawn to scale, this sketch does show the Courthouse in Market Square, and shows Main Street/ Old Gaol Street with a very substantial gate building at the bottom of the street close to the junction with Church Street.

Daniel A Beaufort's sketch of the area adjoining the Church Street and Old Gaol Street site.

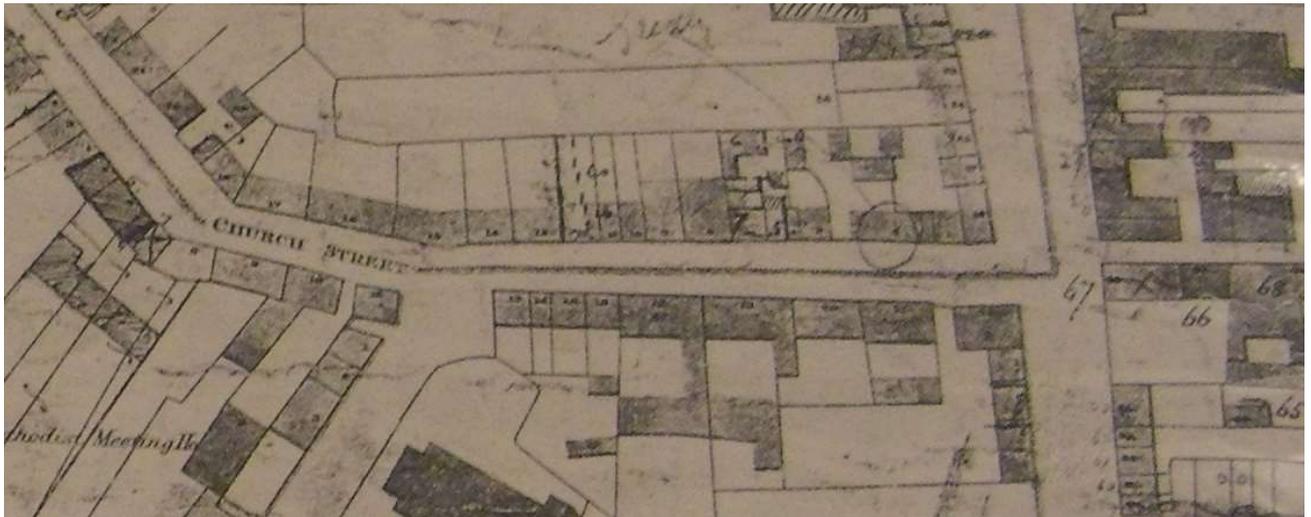
## 7.0 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP OF 1838



*Part of 1838 First edition Ordnance survey of the site 1:1056.*

This map shows the Church Street site. The town gate has been removed and additional building erected on the Main Street side of the site. Of the houses on this side of the site is in use as a 'PH' or Public House. The backlands to the cabins are being developed with outhouses, offices and stores. The long garden at the north side of the site remains almost intact.

## 8.0 THE GRIFFITH SURVEY MAP OF THE CHURCH STREET SITE 1857.



*The Griffith Survey map showing Church Street/ Main street site. The extent of the original 1730s site consists of five houses on Main Street and thirteen plots on Church Street as well as the gardens and yards behind.*

Eight hundred and fifty towns and villages were surveyed as part of the Griffith Survey of Ireland, with the larger towns on maps at the scale of 1:1056. The survey of Roscommon Town was completed in 1857. The properties included in the subject site were described in the survey as No. 24 to No. 28 on Main Street and Numbers 1 to 14 on Church Street. The details of the Main Street holdings were as follows:

No. 24, Main St, house, office and yard (held in common), tenant James Mannion, immediate lessor the Earl of Essex, total site area not stated. Valuation £6 10s.

No. 25, Main St, house, office and yard (held in common), tenant Michael Gaffery, immediate lessor the Earl of Essex, site area not stated. Valuation £5 10s.

No. 26, Main St., a garden to the rear, joint tenants Patrick Hussey, James Mannion and Michael Gaffery, immediate lessor the Earl of Essex and John Hopkins, total site area 26 perches. Valuation 10s.

No. 27, Main St., house, tenant Patrick Hussy, immediate lessor Farrell McDonnell, total site area not stated. Valuation £4 10s.

No. 28, Main St., house, office and yard (held in common), tenant Daniel Harrison, immediate lessor Earl of Essex, total site area not stated. Valuation £6 -10s..

It would appear that the large house which was on the site in 1797 had been removed, or incorporated into the five new buildings erected in its place. All of these buildings were two storeys high with slated roofs, probably without shops at ground floor level, which would not have been introduced until later. On the Church Street side of the site the tenancies were as follows:

No. 1 Church St., house and yard, tenant Thomas Murray, immediate landlord Michael Geraghty, total area not stated. Valuation £3-10s.

No. 2 Church St., house office and yard, tenant Michael Grealy, immediate landlord Earl of Essex, total site area not stated. Valuation £10-10s.

No. 3 Church St., house, tenant Paul Keeffe, immediate landlord Henry Wade, total site area not stated. Valuation £1-5s.

No. 4 Church St., house, tenant Patrick McIntyre, immediate landlord Henry Wade, total site area not stated, valuation £1-5s.

No. 5 Church St., office, tenant: James Mannion, immediate landlord Farrell McDonnell (a Roscommon Town Commissioner), total site area not stated. Valuation £1.

No. 6 Church St., house, tenant James Mannion, immediate landlord Earl of Essex, total site area not stated. Valuation £3-10s.

No. 7 Church St, office and yard, tenant James Mannion, immediate landlord Farrell McDonnell (a Roscommon Town Commissioner), total site area not noted. Valuation £3-10s.

No. 8 Church St, house office and small garden, tenant Michael McCourt, immediate landlord Timothy Keigher, total site area not stated. Valuation £4-0s.

No. 9 Church St, house and garden tenant Henry Fallon, immediate landlord Bernard Fitzgerald, total area 12 perches. Valuation £2-0s.

No. 10 Church St, house, vacant, immediate landlord Michael Grealy, total site area not stated. Valuation 15s.

No. 11 Church St, house, tenant Michael Grealy, immediate landlord Bernard Fitzgerald, total site area not stated. Valuation 15s.

No. 12 Church St, house and forge, tenant James Kelly, immediate landlord reps of Danial Gough deceased, total site area not stated. Valuation £1-5s. ( note another spelling of the name Guff/Goff)

No. 13 Church St, house office and yard, tenant Bernard Malone, immediate landlord Earl of Essex, total site area not noted. Valuation £5-5s.

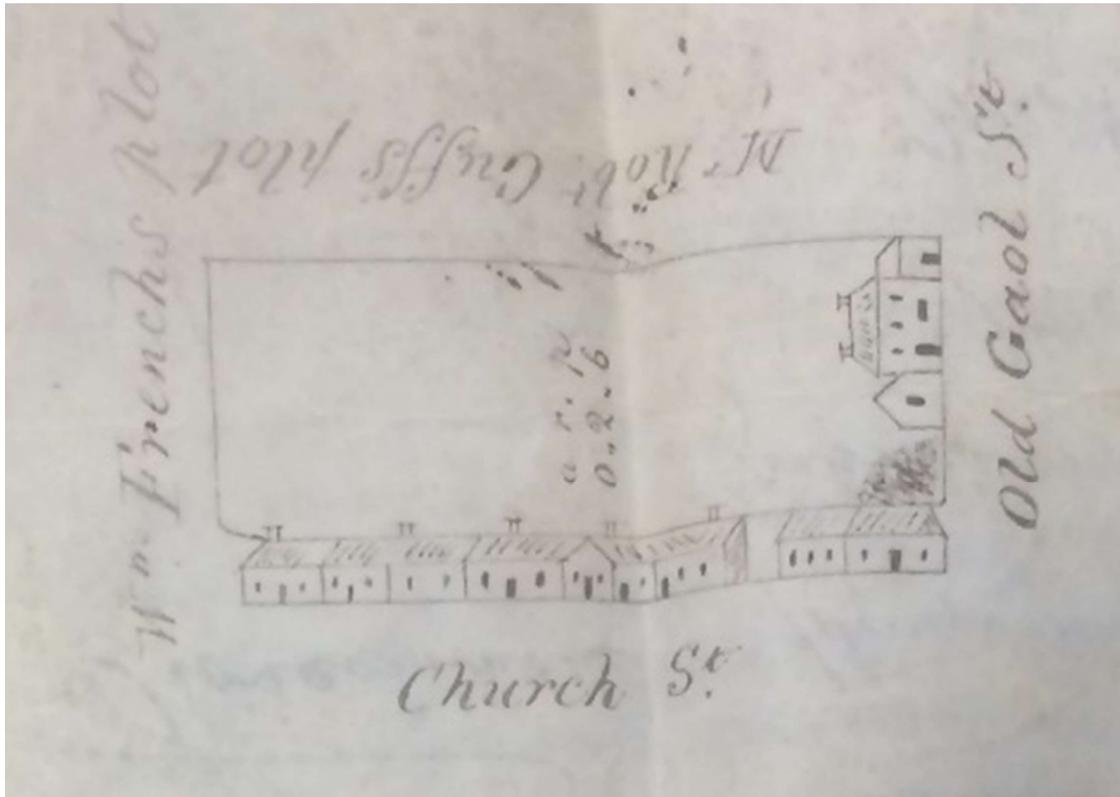
No. 14 Church St, house office and yard, tenant Bernard Malone, immediate landlord Earl of Essex, total site area not noted. Valuation £5-5s.

No. 15 Church St, house office and yard, tenant John Kelly, immediate landlord Earl of Essex, total site area not noted. Valuation £4-0s.

Among the tenancies we have James Kelly at no. 12, and John Kelly at No. 15. These men were probably the children or grandchildren of Roger Kelly who held the entire site in 1797. Michael Grealy at No. 2 and No. 10 was a relative of the man who later developed the hotel at the corner of Main Street and Church Street. Although immediate landlords are referred to, it is most probable that the Earl of Essex's family remained the ultimate owners of the entire site.

This map would seem to show that since the 1790s, the site had been further developed with many of the old cabins removed and replaced with the new larger buildings, probably all two storey high. Information to hand does not indicate what trades and services were on offer from the site at that time, other than the forge at No.12. serving the agricultural activities of the hinterland.

## 9.0 THE HALS MAP OF THE CHURCH ST. MAIN ST. SITE 1868.



*Map from HALS, Hertford archives and Local Studies, DE/Cp/E119.*

This second map in the Hertford Archives and Local Studies, is also filed under Earl of Essex Irish Estates (HALS D/E Cp/E119) and is very similar to the coloured map of 1797, but it is not embellished in colour in the same way. However, information on the manuscript on which the map is drawn (which I have not illustrated) indicates its significance. On reflection, this map is simply a tracing off the previous map and is not a reflection of the status of the site in 1868.

‘Dated 10<sup>th</sup> August 1868.

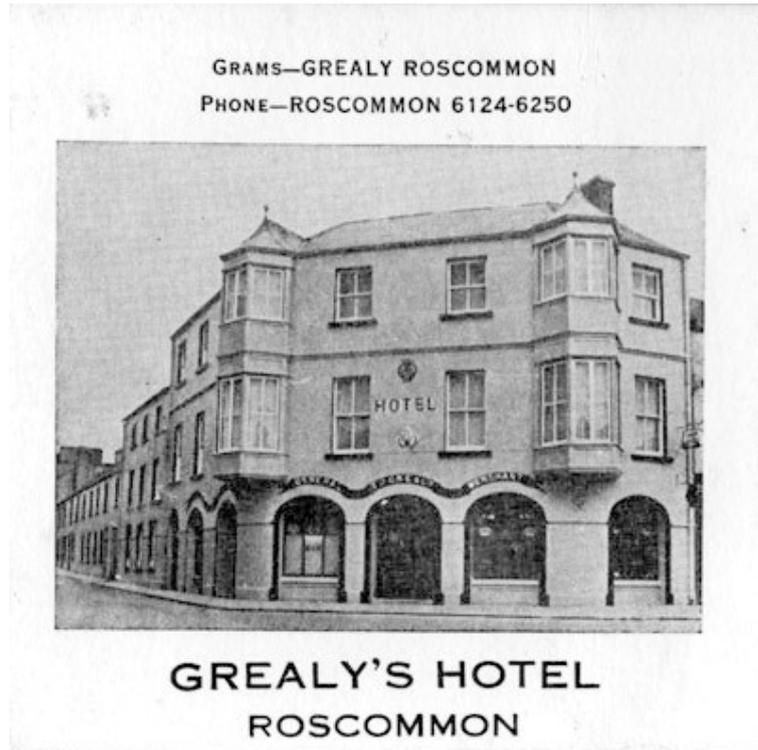
The Right Honourable Arthur Algernon, Earl of Essex

To Michael Grealy and others.

Counterpart Fee Farm Grant.’

‘A Memorial of the within deed was entered in the Registry Office  
In the city of Dublin on the first day of January one thousand  
Eight hundred and sixty nine, at twelve minutes after  
twelve o’clock in Book 1 of 2, and the execution of said  
Deed and Memorial was duly proved pursuant of an Act of  
Parliament in that case made and provided.’

Who was Michael Grealy, and what did he wish to use the site for? Michael Grealy was a tenant in No. 2 & No. 11 Church Street in 1857. Grealy’s Hotel may have been built in an earlier form on the corner site between Church Street and Main Street, facing both streets, soon after the lease was signed in 1868. The ultimate hotel on the site was a substantial three-storey seven bay building, incorporating Nos. 1 and 2 Church Street and No. 28 Main Street, with great architectural pretensions, with oriel windows on the corners surmounted with copper finials and roofs, and an arched arcade at street level.



In this photograph there appear to be no shop fronts on Church Street.

## 10.0 THE OWNER OF THE CHURCH STREET SITE 1868/9

By 1868/9, the previous owners of the Roscommon estates had died, and the estate had been inherited by The Right Honourable Arthur Algernon, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Essex (1803-92). Arthur Algernon Capell, 6th Earl of Essex was baptised with the name of Arthur Algernon Capel. He lived at 'Cassiobury House,' in Watford, Hertfordshire. He succeeded to the title of 6<sup>th</sup>. Earl of Essex on 23 April 1839. He succeeded to the title of 7<sup>th</sup>. Baron Capell of Hadham, Co.



Arthur Algernon Capell, 6th Earl of Essex. Photo by southwell Bros. 1862-3 (National Portrait Gallery)

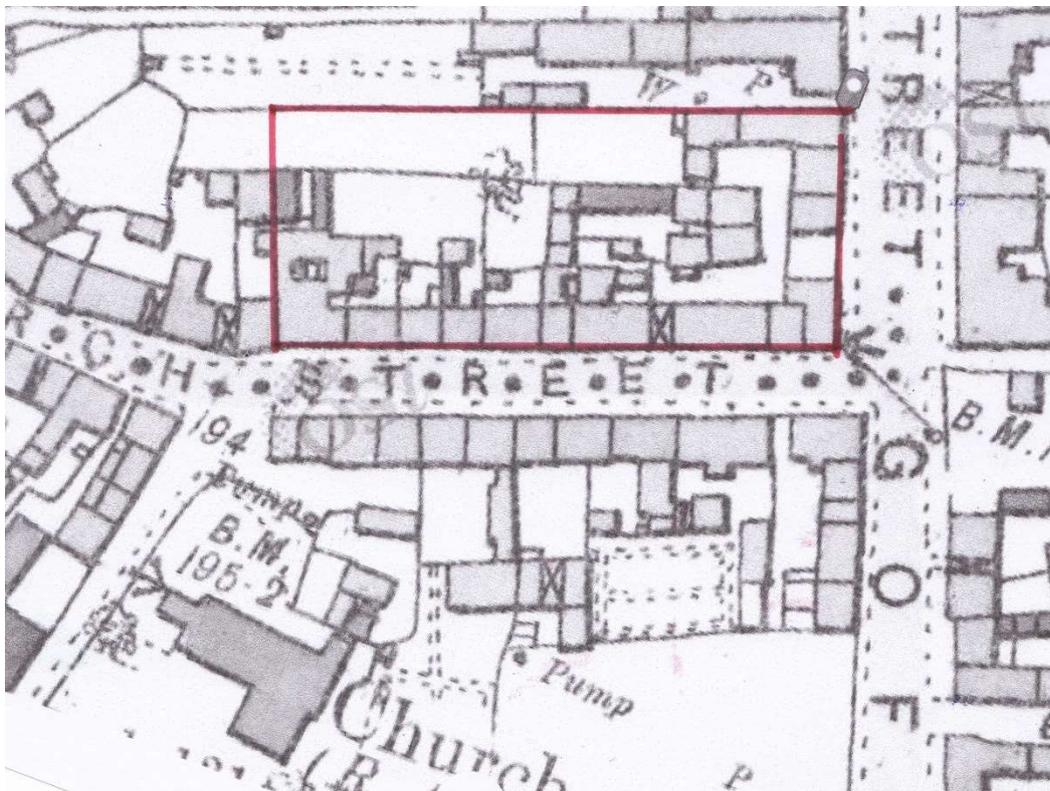
Hereford on 23 April 1839. On 23 July 1880 his name was legally changed to Arthur Algernon Capell by Royal Licence. He was married three times. He married, firstly, Lady Caroline Janetta Beauclerk, daughter of William Beauclerk, 8th Duke of St. Albans and Maria Janetta Nelthorpe, on 14 July 1825. He married, secondly, Louisa Caroline Elizabeth Boyle, daughter of Charles Boyle, Viscount Dungarvan and Lady Catherine St. Lawrence, on 3 June 1863. He married, thirdly, Louisa Elizabeth Heneage, daughter of Charles Fieschi Heneage, on 25 April 1881. He died on 11 September 1892 at age 89.

In 1866, the Earl of Essex sat on the prestigious Committee of the 'Association for the Trial of Preventative and Curative Treatment in the Cattle Plague by the Homeopathic Method.' The committee working with Dutch scientists made serious breakthroughs in the treatment of plague in cattle. The Earl also took an active interest in agriculture in England and developed a model farm, 'Home Farm,' to the north of 'Cassiobury House.' His improving strategy never extended to Roscommon Town. He was first president of the West Hertfordshire Agricultural Society, and in August 1864 he held first exhibition of the Watford and Leavesden Horticultural Society in the gardens at Cassiobury. The Prime Minister of the day, Sir Robert Peel, offered to the Earl the position of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, an appointment he declined due to ill health. Perhaps

if he had been fit enough to take this position, the fortunes of Roscommon Town could have been more favourable.

It is worth noting that the landlords of the town and their agents last major investment in Roscommon town was the building of the gaol in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. They did contribute towards the sinking of wells for the water supply, but other than the above, their relationship with Roscommon was one of ‘collect the rents but don’t invest in the prosperity of the town, or develop any much-needed industries there.’

### 11.0 THE MAIN STREET / CHURCH STREET SITE c. 1900



*1896 Ordnance Survey Map of the site showing Church Street to the south of the site, Main Street and Goff street on the right and St. Coman’s, Church of Ireland on the other side of the street. This map does not appear to show Grealy’s Hotel in its final form.*



*View of Main Street c. 1900 with Grealy's Hotel on the left, the first five buildings are on the subject site. Note the proximity of the site to Market Square at the top of the street.*



*Church Street c. 1900, the site under review is on the left. Note the street is now paved.*

The photograph above shows that by 1900, all the cabins had been demolished, Grealy's three storey hotel with its oriel windows had been constructed, the streets had been paved, and

although not visible in this picture, the gas streetlighting was in place. Most of the buildings were in use providing goods and services to residents and visitors to the town.

The Census of Ireland 1901 identified the following people living on Church Street:

1. House 1, Ardnanagh, (Church St.) Grealy's Hotel, first class building with seventeen rooms, the occupants were:
  - i) Thomas J. Grealy, aged 37, head of family, publican.
  - ii) Matilda Grealy, 35, his sister, assistant.
  - iii) Michael J. Grealy 32, his brother, assistant.
  - iv) Patrick Murphy, 20, an employee, assistant.
  - v) Mary Dunley, 38, a domestic servant.All were Roman Catholic and unmarried.
2. House No. 2 Ardnanagh (Church St.) Brid Geuran (exact spelling unclear), second class building, with 5 rooms and four occupants, in use as a shop.
3. House No. 3 Ardnanagh (Church St.) John Gaffey's second class building with six rooms in use as a shop.
  - i) John Gaffey, aged 30, head of household, mason.
  - ii) Margaret Gaffey, 25, his wife.
  - iii) Delia Tinnelty, 11, sister-in-law.
  - iv) Patrick Cronin, 71, boarder and Royal Irish Constabulary pensioner.
4. House No. 4 Ardnanagh (Church St.) Mary Anne. Mullen's second class building with four rooms in use as a shop. She lived alone.
  - i) Mary Anne Mullen, 38, head of family, a green grocer, she was married but husband not in the house. Perhaps he was in the infirmary as he had died within the following 10 years.
5. House No. 5 Ardnanagh (Church St.) Joseph Egan's second class building with 8 rooms in use as a shop.
  - i) Joseph Egan, 50, head of family, tailor.
  - ii) Elizabeth Egan, 51, his wife.
  - iii) William Egan 30, son, tailor.
  - iv) May Egan, 18, daughter, tailoress.
  - v) Jock Egan, 15, son, house servant.
  - vi) Charles Egan, 12, son, not identified as a scholar.

6. House No. 6 Ardnanagh (Church St.) William Gavagan's four-bedroom, second class private dwelling.
  - i) William Gavagan, 53, head of household, car owner.
  - ii) Norah Gavagan, 48, his wife.
  - iii) John Gavagan, 26, son, car driver.
  - iv) Norah, Gavagan, 21, daughter, no occupation.
  - v) Bridget Gavagan, 16, daughter, scholar.
  - vi) James Gavagan, 15, son.
  - vii) Nanny Gavagan, 13, daughter, scholar.
  - viii) Agnes Gavagan, daughter, 11
  
7. House No. 7.1 Ardnanagh (Church St.) Kate Donnelly's second class, five room, Boarding House.
  - i) Kate Donnelly, 47, head of family, boarding house keeper.
  - ii) Edward Madden, 32, boarder, postman.
  - iii) Mark Creighton, 30, boarder, postman.
  - iv) Thomas Connor, 20, boarder, postman.
  
8. House No. 7.2 Ardnanagh (Church St.) Thomas Fahey's one room annexe house.
  - i) Thomas Fahey, 31, head of family, postman.
  - ii) Norah Fahey, 19, wife.
  
9. House No. 8 Ardnanagh (Church St.) Patrick Curley's seven room, first class warehouse.
  - i) Patrick Curley, 34, head of family, draper.
  - ii) Mary Anne Curley, 26, wife, draper woman.
  - iii) Margaret Curley, less than one year, daughter.
  - iv) Richard Kilrain, 18, drapers assistant, salesman.
  - v) Edward Jordan, 15, Drapers assistant, apprentice.
  
10. House No. 9 Ardnanagh (Church St.) John McNamara's fourteen room first class Public House.
  - i) John McNamara, head of family, 42, shopkeeper.
  - ii) Mary McNamara, 28, wife.
  - iii) Mary Margaret McNamara, less than one year old, daughter,
  - iv) John Bardon, 18, shop assistant, publicans assistant.
  - v) Bridget Stantin, 18, general domestic servant.
  - vi) William St L Burke, 34, boarder, Clerk of the Petty Sessions.

The single storey cabins of the eighteenth century were demolished and replaced with more substantial two storey nineteenth century buildings, most of which were classed as second class buildings. The number of people living in them was extraordinary, with about seven occupants in each house. With the improvements in education of Roscommon population, each house appeared to have at least one skilled tradesperson. It would be appropriate for masons, tailors greengrocers etc. to locate their houses on a secondary street where passers-by could see the available trades and services, such that purchases would know where to go if looking for a gravestone, new suit etc.

## **12.0 THE CHURCH STREET AND MAIN STREET SITE 1911.**

For the 1911 Census of Ireland the properties were numbered differently, starting from the west end of the street. We therefore number them in the reverse order. The following people were living in Church Street:

House 14 in Church St (Ardnanagh) Grealys Hotel, first class building with thirty rooms.

- i) Thomas J. Grealy, aged 47, head of family, hotel proprietor.
- ii) Mona Grealy, 1, daughter.
- iii) Patrick Murray, 29, servant, shop assistant.
- iv) Thomas Farrell, 18, servant, shop assistant.
- v) Edward J. Mulligan, 23, boarder, veterinary surgeon.
- vi) George L. Bennett, 35, boarder, bank clerk.
- vii) Richard C. Lynch, 58, boarder, L.G.B. inspector.
- viii) Annie Casey, 25, servant, waitress.
- ix) Mary McDermott, 20, servant, house maid.
- x) Mary Maher, 27, servant, cook.
- xi) Bridget Kennedy, 28, servant, nurse.
- xii) Martin Gannon, 21, servant, hotel boot cleaner.

It appears that the hotel had extended into the first adjoining house on Church Street.

House 13 in Church St. (Ardnanagh), Mary Anne Mullin's second class building with four rooms was in use as a private house and no longer in use as a shop. Her husband was no longer alive.

- i) Mary Anne Mullen, 50, head of family, widow.

House 12 in Church St (Ardnanagh), Bessie Egan's second class building was a private dwelling with four rooms.

- i) Bessie Egan, 67, head of family, widow (Her age was indicated to be 51 in 1901).
- ii) William Egan 40, son, tailor.
- iii) Fred Egan, 24, son, baker.

House 11 in Church St (Ardnanagh) Edward J. Dooley's three-bedroom, second class shop with dwelling over.

- i) Edward J. Dooley, 48, head of family, shopkeeper.
- ii) Briget Dooley, 51, wife, no occupation.
- iii) John Joe Dooley, 24, son, general labourer.
- iv) Mary Josephine Dooley, 19, daughter, scholar.
- v) Edward Joseph Dooley, 18, son, scholar.
- vi) Bridie Dooley, 8, daughter, scholar.

House 9 in Church St (Ardnanagh), Michael J. O'Farrell's second class shop, with 8 rooms.

- i) Michael Joseph Farrell, 32, head of family, general merchant.
- ii) Mary Agnes Farrell, 30, wife, no occupation.
- iii) Mary Francis Farrell, 1, daughter.
- iv) Margaret Mohan, 35, servant, domestic.
- v) Eugene Guckian, 18, servant, messenger boy.
- vi) James Healy, 18, servant, messenger boy.

House 8 in Church St (Ardnanagh), Mary McNamara's first class Public House, with 15 rooms.

- i) Mary McNamara, 38, head of family, publican.
- ii) Mary Margaret McNamara, 11, daughter, scholar.
- iii) James Michael, McNamara, 8, son, scholar.
- iv) Michael Dunna, 32, brother, shop assistant.
- v) Ellen Browne, 20, servant, domestic.
- vi) John Darling, 27, boarder, butcher.
- vii) Francis Carson, 25, boarder, clerk.
- viii) James Ashe, 23, boarder, bank clerk.
- ix) Una O'Kelly, 24, boarder, instructress DATJ
- x) Mary Rutherford Johnston, 29, boarder, instructress DATJ

- xi) Hubert Curly, 16, shop apprentice.

House 7 in Church St (Ardnanagh), Margaret Lump's second class shop, with 6 rooms.

- i) Margaret Lump, 70, head of family, housekeeper.

House 6 in Church St (Ardnanagh), Mary McNamara's first class Public House, with 7 rooms.

- i) Mary Anne McNamara, 69, head of family, Publican.
- ii) Ellen M. While, 40, sister, no occupation.
- iii) Lizzie Murray, 30, servant.
- iv) Jane Rourke, 26 boarder, dressmaker.
- v) Bridget Hunt, 19, visitor, no occupation.
- vi) Michael Maher, 40, boarder, railway porter.
- vii) Joseph O'Reilly, 25, boarder, railway porter.

In 1911 the profile of the street had changed, there were less trades people operating on the street, and more boarding houses, public houses and hotel rooms, facilitating people who not born in the town but held jobs located in the town, and transient people.

### 13.0 THE CHURCH STREET / MAIN STREET SITE TODAY



*Many of the 1900 building still exist, but most have been adapted as shops with large openings on the ground floor at street level. The cars change the character of the street.*

On Church Street today, house numbers are not conspicuously displayed, so we list the businesses from the Main Street corner:

Corner: Former China Palace Restaurant.  
Ground floor unused. Upper floor unused  
residential.

Macklins Fresh Fish.

Talk Shalk

Support services for people with sight loss.

Axe Forestry.

Luxstyle Sunbed and Beauty Salon.

Classic Cuts with Maurice Sirr DVD and  
Video Production upstairs.

Paddy Joe the Barber.

M.J. Farrell Jewellers, established 1905.

Klassic Dry Cleaners and Laundry.

On Main Street the following businesses exist, starting from Church Street corner:

Corner: Former China Palace Restaurant.  
Ground floor unused. Upper floor unused  
residential.

Intersport, George Bannon Sports Shop.

Fuji Film.

Maddens Meats.

Apache Pizza.

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