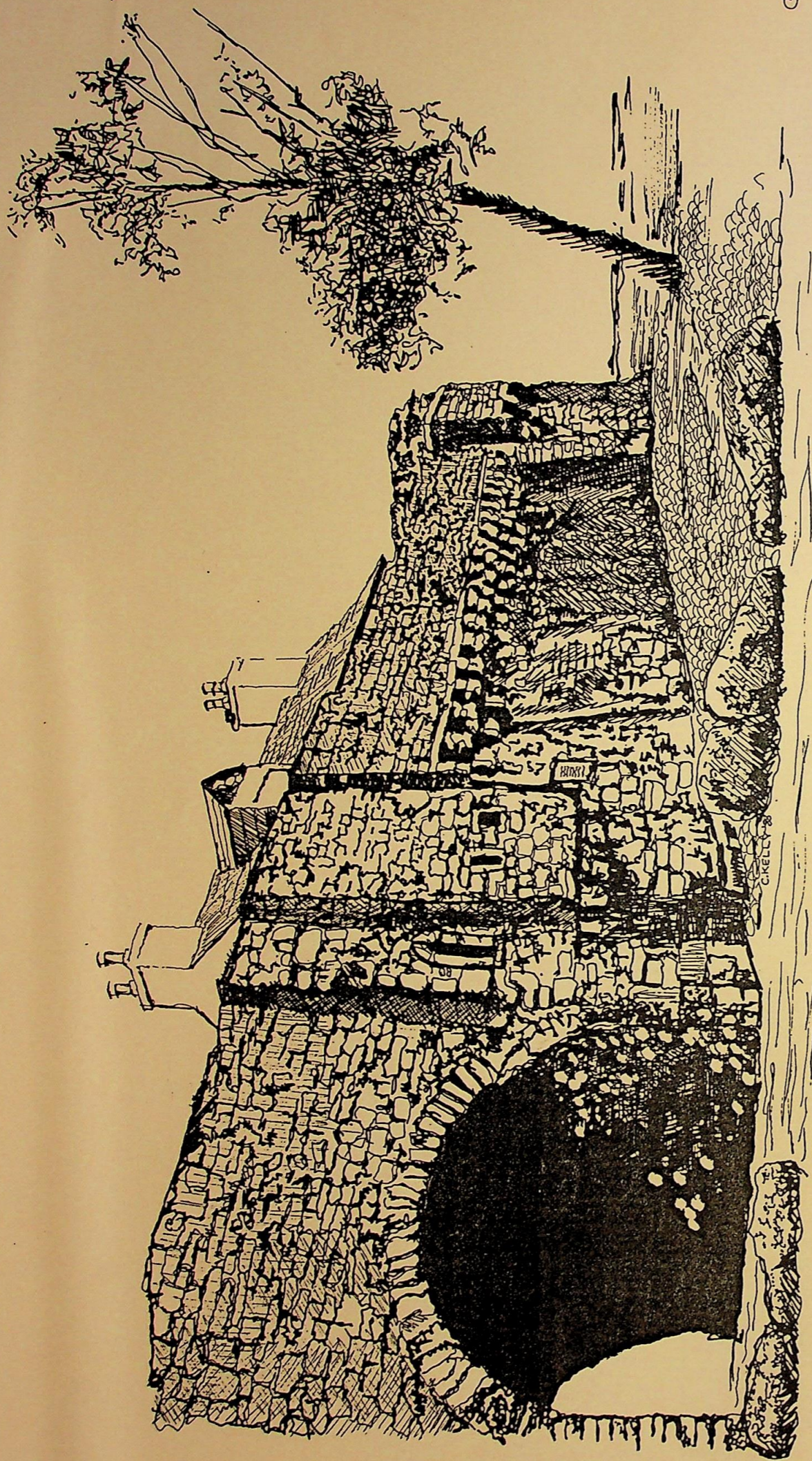


Galway Stone

BY CATHRIONA KELLY, N.C.A.D. 1988.



The Spanish Arch (Ceann-na-Bhalla 1583)



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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

GALWAY STONE WORK

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN APPROX
IN FULLY FOR THE DEGREE

FACULTY OF DESIGN
DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

BY CATHRINA KELLY

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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

GALWAY STONE WORK

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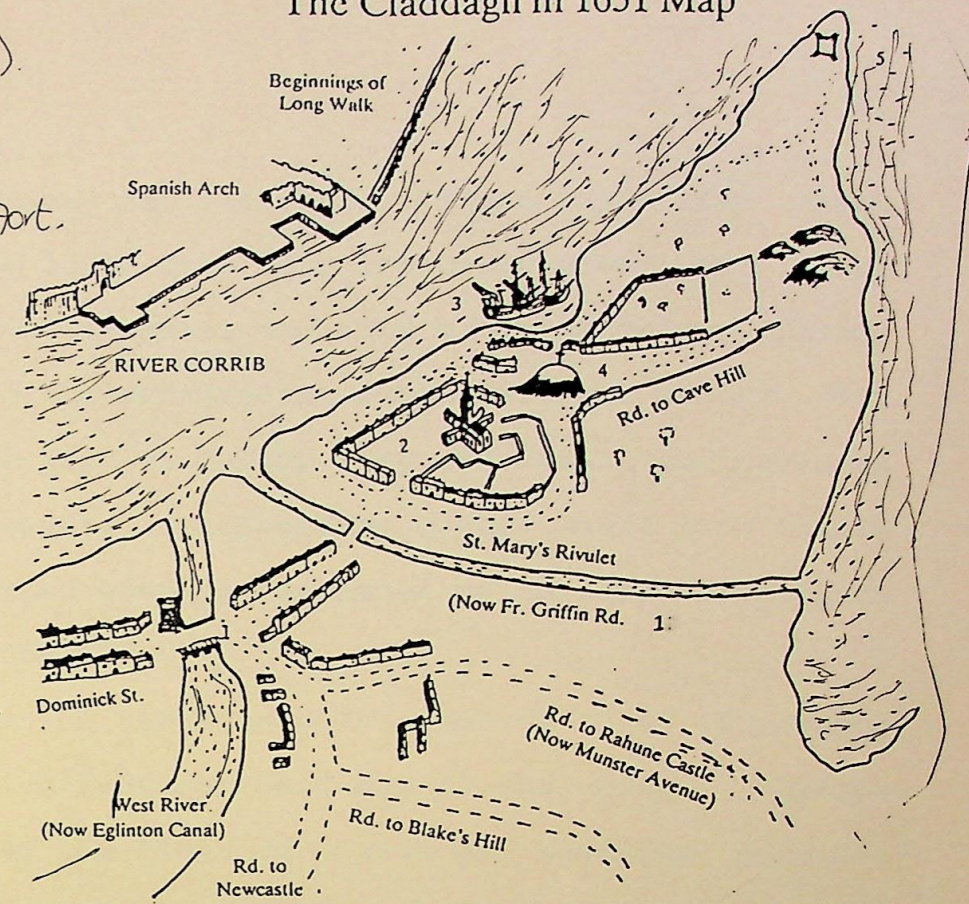
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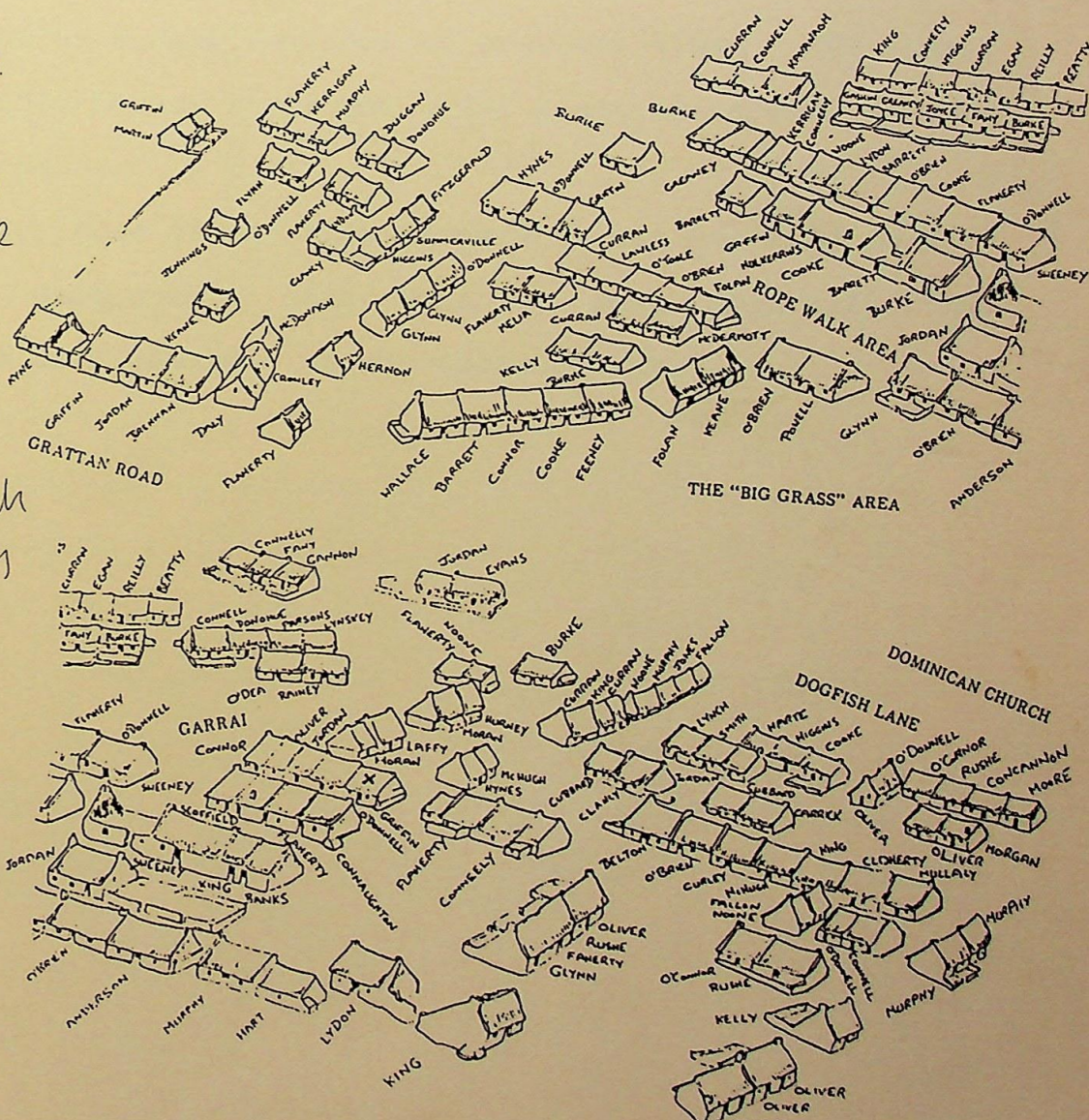
Fig 2.

1. St Mary's Rivulet (now Fr Griffin rd).
2. Monastery of St. Dominick.
3. small cove for docking ships.
4. St. Mary's Hill.
5. peninsula called Rintinane with fort.

The Claddagh in 1651 Map



The last of the Claddagh. A birds eye view of the old tatched village of the Claddagh just prior to its demolition. Note the haphazard layout of the houses and the names of the last occupants. The same surnames still pre-dominate in the much enlarged Galway City today.



Preface

Much of old Galway has vanished. There was a time where things seemed to have moved at a more leisurely pace, now every year changes occur in the rural and city areas as Galway spreads even further out into the surrounding countryside. Things were more different in the past as Galway City was easily definable up to the seventeenth century, enclosed by a huge wall; it's thirty odd acres of congested housing consisted of the area from Eyre square to the River Corrib.

In the early part of the nineteenth century a lot of damage was done to the Architectural heritage of the city. The new fashion of plastering the front of houses or business premises with cement became common practice as people began to think of cutstone facade as a dark reminder of previous times. The finely delicate facades became submerged under a sea of cement in the victorian manner.

Thankfully some of the fine stone work has survived to show us what was destroyed, some examples peep forlornly from concrete walls as a reminder of our ancestors past.

Introduction

"A grey town in a country bare,
the leaden seas between,
when light falls on the hills of Clare,
and shows their valleys green,
take in my heart your palce again
between your lake and sea
O City of the watery plain,
that means so much to me."

Oliver St. John Gogarty

A description composed by Oliver St. John Gogarty, it could have been describing the Mayoral City of Galway five centuries ago as equally well as it does of today's Galway.

The City of Galway is set at the North - east angle of Galway Bay. To its North a great chain of lakes extends for miles. The easiest route from east to west avoids the lakes by crossing the River Corrib. It was an obvious place for a castle. According to the annals of the four masters a castle was built here which was burnt down several times but was re-built. There was also a small fishing village to the west where most of the land was owned by local tribes: The O'Flaherty's and O'Hallorans. The Anglo-Normans were naturally attracted to the site since it governed movement over a large area of land. Galway was also an important port and merchant centre where Spanish ships came with large cargoes of wine. Status came early to Galway when it was settled in the thirteenth century by fourteen Anglo-Norman families who maintained their social position through the centuries. For 400 years these families held civic powers and tried their hardest to Anglicize Galway yet when Cromwell arrived

in the mid seventeenth century he did not really notice that these families had previously come from England. They had become so accustomed to the ways of Galway that they were "more Irish than the Irish themselves". Cromwell called these families "The Tribes of Galway", ever since then Galway has been known as "The City of the Tribes".

One of the laws passed in 1560 in Galway declared that "neither O nor Mac shall strutte ne swagger thro the streets of Galway". Over the west gate once read an inscription; "From the fury of the O'Flaherty's good Lord deliver us". They were one of the large Irish families who regularly raided the walled town.

No trade was done with the Irish families of the hinterland, and so, trade with Spain became dominant. The Galway-Spanish connection is a fondly regarded tradition among locals.

In this thesis I shall discuss Galway, the city possessing a medieval quality. Firstly I shall cover the historical background of the City, it's merchant families and their trade. I shall refer to some of the main buildings such as; Blakes castle, Lynchs Castle and St. Nicholas Collegate Church, as well as covering a history of building materials, Tower houses of the town and Country and the Claddagh Village on the outskirts of the City. I shall look in detail at some of the medieval architecture which still remains in the City today, particularly, medieval doorways and windows, sculptured slabs, marriage stones and merchant marks.

Chapter 1

Historical Background

Galway first dates from 1124 when it was inhabited by the O'Flaherty's and O'Hallorhans. Since that date it has undergone many invasions, led by Richard de Burgo (1232-1243). (1) By Cromwell in 1652 and the Williamites in 1691 (2) The final blow to the City was the great famine 1846/47 (3) However, despite all of Galways misfortunes and hardship during the last few centuries, it had gained recognition as one of Irelands most important and wealthiest towns in the period from the mid sixteenth to mid seventeenth centuries. This came about after a charter from the crown was granted to the City in 1545. Though, Glaway was properous before this date, it was just that the charter gave it Royal status and repuation. The charter did a great deal to improve the trade; many taxes were lifted by the corporation; there were to be no more tolls on wine or other imported goods and all goods were allowed to be exported free of tax (i.e. free trade) except for linen and wool. The state of commerce flourished for the next century up to 1640 and Galway was considered one of the first emporiums of trade. Because of the Tudor wars in Ireland when the various Gaelic families oposed the Queen of Galway, being far removed from the scenes of turbulence, was able to thrive on the general chaos outside the pale. It became quickly recognised as a major port.

Improvements were carried out in the town by many of the main merchants with preservering vigilance and industry. In 1598

Hugh Ruadh O'Donnel tried to seige and burn the city but failed to do so due to the large walls and cannons in place, but did manage to burn quite a few houses near Fort Hill (at the east of the town) (5) At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Galway was still firm in it's allegiance to the Queen.

In 1600 Lord Mountjoy (Viceroy of Ireland) laid the foundation of a Fourt on St. Augustines hill and two hundred yards of wall were added to the stronghold of the city to commemorate this. The structure of Galway being made very substancial and compact. Three years latewr the O'Flaherty clan and three other Irish families came to the walls and submitted, the city was essential to them as it was so self-contained, everything that was needed for everyday living was available where as, the families outside the city had to try and survive by fishing and a very poor form of farming.

During the next twenty years - 1630 the main group of merchants in the city began to attain a more spacious and convenient form of accomodation both for dwelling and trade alike. They provided more accomodation for their servants also. All of these improvements were due mainly to increasing finances from shipping and commerce. These new requirements for improved accomodation led to the new stone houses in Galway, many of which are still standing today four hundred years later. A large fire broke out in the city in 1619 and much of the building had to stop. The ruins were rebuilt and many of the houses which were destroyed completely were replaced by stone dwellings; many had previously been built of a wooden/wattle structure with tatch

roofs (6)

Galway was esteemed the most distinguished of any town in the kingdom for wealth and trade and ranked against major cities for strenght and population as it was continuously growing. Sir Oliver St. John, who was the Lord President of Connaught and knew the place well, described it in 1641. "The town is small. The fronts of the houses towards the street are all hewed stone uppe to the top, tarnished with fare battlement, in a uniform course, as if the whole towne had been built upon one modle. It is built upon rock, invironed almost with sea and the River compassed with strong walle, and good defences after the ancient manner, such as with a reasonable garrison, may defend itself against an enemie"(7)

Though early incorporated and governed by it's merchants, the city was surrounded by a poor countryside. The peasants from the claddagh (on the west of the town) were always in a state of hostility towards the townspeople. They were often caught stealing fish from the weir and unjustly punished, even though they were the fishermen and the producers of dairy products for the city.

The inhabitants of the city did not have a prosperous hinterland and they were therfore obliged to go elsewhere to trade. They became importers of and from France, Spain and England. The only export that could be offered from Galway was fish but to do even this, salt barrels had to be imported firstly. Exchanging goods from one country to another gave the Galway merchants a chance to be accustomed with foreigners, their way of life, their trade, commerce, sports, games and

architecture. Influences from other countries became stronger. The richer families were very impressed with the style of life of rich merchants employed in other places and especially the type of houses/castles they lived in. They brought those ideas home.(8) Galway from the mid seventeenth century civil wars, gradually began to decline as did the economy of the rest of the country. This was because Galway, like most of the rest of Ireland, backed the losing side in England's civil wars. Both the destruction of the town by the Cromwellians (1652) and again by the Williamites (1699) and the Great Famine of 1846-'47 were heavy setbacks to Galways progress and unlike most Irish cities there was no expansion of building in the eighteenth century. It was not until the present century and the states independence that Galway started it's regrowth towards prsperity and importance.(9)

The Merchant Families

Previous to the invasion of Henry II, Galway was mostly inhabited by a small number of families who lived principally by fishing.

Circa 1450 the city began to be ruled by wealthy merchant princes. The best known of these ruling families were the fourteen tribes. These were the Athy's, Blakes, Bodkins, Brownes, Darcy's, Deanes, Ffont's, Frenchs, Joyces, Kirwans, Lynchs, Martins, Morrisises and Skerretts, mostly if not all were of Welsh extraction.

Of these families the Lynchs were most successful and later became dominant in the running of the city. James Hardiman who wrote the "History of Galway" in 1820 quoted one of the Lynchs as saying, in reference to the original Irish families, "it was not they who gave any name of credit or fame to the towne of Galway, but the colony,..... until there later came hither, this town was but an ordinary place, with only tatched houses and some castles, but it was by the new colonies and septs, made famous to the world for their trading faithfully, discharging their credit, good education, charity and hospitality both at home and abroad."(1)

It was in the sixteenth century that these merchant families became so important in the building and progress of Galway. These families were considered as some of the best in Europe, there wealth was great, they had plenty of land and most of the larger families also had country estates (around Galway or elsewhere). In general they lived in fine buildings. the

merchant families inter married with other families throughout the country and became involved in some of the most respected "pedigrees" of the Kingdom i.e. O'Neills, Butlers of Ormond and Burkes of Clanricarde.(2) Sir Henry Sydney, the Lord deputy of the kingdom, on visiting Galway in 1654 commented on the elegance of manners, the inhabitants equalled those of the most refined community and they contracted stain from their rude and unpolished neighbours".(3) The whole existence of Galway was an ordered and regular one, no man was armed and the inhabitants were always "a modest and civil people".(4)

Chapter 2

Materials of Galway Buildings

A passion for building large private houses became noticeable in England and Ireland during the end of the reign of Henry VIII. Decorations were taken from the many pattern books available usually fantastic adaptations of Italian motifs by Flemish artists. Many patrons had travelled to Italy, France, The Netherlands or Germany were impressed by the buildings and towns and sought to emulate them. Brick began supersede timber; plasterwork became common; finally as wealth and desire for ostentation increased, stone became more used for rich merchants town houses.

Stone has traditionally been the most common building material in Ireland, varying in quality. The stone mason was an important tradesman who was much in demand and who developed skills and techniques which were handed down from generation to generation. For structural purposes, stone can be used in a variety of ways; in a random pattern for instance, (traditionally the most widely used technique) with the stones laid as they come to hand. Examples of this are the houses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most prestigious method of stone cutting is known as "ashlar work". Here the stone is "dressed" and finished in the quarry to specific dimensions and was therefore naturally more expensive and used in important buildings (and then only as a material for the facade) (1)

Building materials are the very bones of architecture. The

way in which materials were used and the methods of craftsmanship employed, give the distinguishing marks of local architecture in Ireland. Architecture was influenced by economic circumstances. Transportation in rural Ireland was expensive so the builders were restricted as to the local availability of materials. In Galway the local material was limestone: A hard grey stone. Such limitations, though restricting, are one of the charms of Galways architecture. Stone is a supreme building material, part of the earth itself. It can be fashioned in the most exquisite manner as we can see from the finely carved plaques, doorways and window hood-mouldings. If selected and worked carefully, stone will last for hundreds of years with little structural decay.

Outside the walls of every Anglo-Norman or English town or adjacent to such a settlement if walls were never built, you would invariably find an Irish town or quarter. Such a place in Galway was the once picturesque fishing village known as the Claddagh, (In Irish - An Claddagh a haven or seashore) resting at the rim of Galway Bay, and now entirely without character since it exchanged its lovely thatched cottages, costume and customs for amenities of modern housing. (Fig 2)

Fishing had always been the only business to which the claddagh men would think fit to address themselves, and an old Galway enactment gave them first choice of food in the town markets so they might be able "to fish the more nor waste time in the search for sustenance and household goods".(2) Like every other enactment, it had its conditions for it was also stated that no man of the village might "take in hands either the plough, spade or teith, that would barre them from fishing", (3)

Obviously the prosperous merchants of Galway liked their fish and made the laws accordingly.

In the Claddagh the houses were a traditional type building, a single storey cottage with tatched or slated roofs: The classic prototypes of Irish vernacular architecture. The houses were built of stone gathered locally. In the older houses a mixture of mud and stone was used, the walls are extremely thick (two/three feet) and had small windows. The tradition of the country cottage goes back a long way. Medieval rural dwellings in European towns and countryside were built of wattle and mud-providing a basic simple means of shelter. However, because of the turbulent history of Ireland there are very few physical remains from this period. Some fragments of pre 1600 stone buildings may have been incorporated in later developments particularly in towns. The scarcity of small medieval dwellings reflects the social structure of the period. Only the gentry and upper classes had permanent and substantial houses. Tower houses were the everyday houses of the noble families in Ireland both in the town and country from the fifteenth century on. They are still a relatively common type building found most particularly in the south-west of Ireland: Galway, Limerick, Clare and Cork. They date mainly from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century and were essentially partly fortified houses for the gentry, both Irish and Anglo-Norman.

Many of these tower houses have been restored, some as private residences. Some such as Aughnaure Castle, are only twenty miles from Galway City; Oughterard, Bunratty, Co. Clare and Dunguarie Castle, Co. Galway are within a thirty mile radius.

Ardglass, Carlingford, Dalkey and Carrickfergus are some other examples of towns where medieval tower houses have survived, while the houses of timber construction have often been burned or decayed through war, mischance or neglect. Galway and Kilmallock (Co. Limerick) have always been highly regarded for having fine secure stone merchant buildings. Maurice Craig seems slightly doubtful as to this point. He says "There is little enough of this kind of thing to be seen today in Galway, still less in Kilmallock". (4)

Rothe House dating from 1594 - 1604 in Kilkenny, is a stone house of sub-medieval type though not a tower house. Craig also says that "neither the Rothe House nor the Lynch in Galway, the two best known examples of pre-renaissance urban architecture is now in any state from which confident assertions about it's about it's original form and function can be deduced". (5)

The essence of the tower house is it's verticality. In each house it's various parts the entrance hall, (sometmes called the foregoing) the guard room, bedrooms and main living quarters are all built one room over the other, unlike the traditional "hall-house" where rooms were side by side. There were usually four or five storeys to the tower house. The kitchens have been separate in the adjoining bawn or yard. H.G. Leask suggests that a standard form of planning evolved in the tower building period due to the similitarties in style and detail of various structures. this plan compares with Craigs version. Maurice Craig describes various aspects of the tower houses and suggests that the bartizans: (These are corner turrets at the top of a church, tower or castle) protruding from the corners half-way up the wall

appear to be a distinctively Irish feature. There are many examples of these bartizans countrywide, similar to the corner "machicolation" on Lynchs and Blakes Castle. Though many of the others are much larger as they are more for defence purposes.

Another peculiarly Irish feature of tower houses is a slit right on the arris of the corner, (sharp edge formed by angular contact of two planes) about half-way up the building, widening internally into an "embrasure" (a bevelled wall at the sides of a door or window at a splayed angle) and well adapted for small arms. Craig notes that these openings are quite common in Scotland.

Generally there is not much external decoration on Irish tower houses though there are stepped battlements which rest on corbels, resembling the corbels of early church building. With many of the buildings it is hard to decide if various architectural features are purely for display or not. Windows in early towers were usually small. The ones in the upper storeys were one or two-light "ogle-headed openings" (This is a shape made of an s-shaped or reversed curve) while in the tower houses from 1540 on, square-headed mullion and transom windows became more frequent. (Mullion is a vertical bar and Transom is a horizontal bar across the windows). These windows are much wider and also became more arranged one over the other, making the buildings more like houses than castles.

The cliams of householders who lost their property in the Irish insurrection of 1641 include inventories listing "hangings, tapesries, richly embroidered cushions, venetian glass, feather beds, clocks and couches." The houses of the merchants were well

furnished with bedsteds, chests, presses, tables, stools, cushions and carpets as well as household objects in brass pewter and silver.

St. Nicholas Castle

After Richard De Burgo had captured Galway he began to build the city within its great walls. From 1170 onwards the city was built along the main streets which radiated from all the access routes of the town together. By 1181 according to the records, there were fourteen main streets, all of which were built, besides some old ones, during the reign of King John. The streets and squares were built in a regular pattern, the streets being straight and the squares rectangular.

The first street constructed (Fig. 3, 4) was St. Nicholas Street, which ran from the castle to the sea. In 1181 it was called St. Nicholas Street, but later it was called St. Nicholas Street, and today it is known as Quay Street. Quay Street was built by Richard De Burgo as the largest building erected in the city. Only a portion of St. Nicholas Street remains today (Fig. 4) at the end of Quay Street. The south wall facing the street was three stories high, but only a very small portion of the wall remains today, though there are some interesting details to be seen.

There are two towers at the end of Quay Street, the towers being built in 1181. The towers were built in a regular pattern, the towers being straight and the squares rectangular. The towers were built in a regular pattern, the towers being straight and the squares rectangular. The towers were built in a regular pattern, the towers being straight and the squares rectangular.

Chapter 3

Blakes Castle and Lynchs Castle

After Richard De Burgo had captured Galway he began to secure the city within its great walls. From 1270 onwards, houses were built along the main streets which eventually joined all the access routes of the town together. By 1651 according to Hardimans map, there were fourteen main streets, all of which exist today, some with changed names but none widened, giving the unique character, unlike many modern cities where the streets are all of an orderly standard gridiron fashion throughout.

The first street constructed (Fig 3, 4) was Blakes Castle known as Kea Street on the 1651 map. In Logans map of 1818 (Fig 5) it was called Water-Gate street, today it is known as Quay street. Quay Street was guarded by Blakes Castle one of the larger buildings depicted on the 1651 map. Only a portion of Blakes Castle remains today (Fig 4) at the end of Quay Street. The south wall facing the street stands three storeys tall with only a very small portion of the west wall remaining though, there are some very interesting features to be seen.

There are two cusped ^tprefoil type windows (A three hooded window where each curve meets is a point) in the upper section of the east wall. They are both now blocked up but the fine stonework still exists. On the larger wall, facing the street, there is a similar blocked window (south east corner).

There was a spiral stone stairway here, inside the two windows. This is another common element of tower houses where

the stairs would have looked out onto the street. On the south wall are three larger windows which have also been removed and blocked up.

Along the parapet there are remains of two stone corbels, which are thought to have acted as a support bracket for a "machicolation" where the inhabitants would have poured boiling oil or dropped stones on would-be attackers. It is stated in Hardimans "History of Galway" that Blakes Castle had belonged to the O'Halloran clan long before the Blakes. After them it was then granted to the Morgan Family of monksfield and used as jail-house and a corn store in the nineteenth century. Recently one of the filled-up windows in the base of the building, became unblocked to reveal the huge iron bars which helped incarcerate unfortunate prisoners, a grim reminder of the past. (Fig 6)

Blakes Castle, although a ruin, is still an example (Fig 7) of one of the fine edifices that once graced Galways streets. Fig 8 shows a north view of Blakes Castle as on Hardimans map of 1651. Today along Quay Street there are some other examples of the fine medieval stonework. Further along from Blakes Castle is a cusped ogival type window with a single hooded window moulding inset into the modern-day plasterwork. (Fig 9) It is dated late sixteenth early seveneeth century and is not at all unlike a window in the ruins of Ballybrit castle. (Fig 10) This moulding is probably from one of the original buildings on Quay Street which was found and re-placed where it now is.

The route from Quay Street, continued onto Middle Street (Fig 3) which is the main street today, and reached the exit of the town through the great gate. The huge gate entrance was

demolished after the seventeenth century sieges and there are no remains.

High middle street contained many large houses of trade including Lynchs Castle, "undoubtedly the finest surviving town castle in Ireland today" as described by Prof E. Rynne of University College Galway. This naturally would be disputed by many historians and archalogsists as the building is made up of a collection of conflicting architectural features from various different centuries.

Into the walls of many of Galways houses have Lynchs Castle been placed ancient slabs on which are sculptured the arms of old Galway families of these houses. Lynchs Castle is the most noteworthy; it contains more sculptured stones than any other (Fig 12).

It is the oldest in the city and the ancestral home of the Lynch family, who until the middle of the seventeenth century, were the leading family in the city and of whom, eighty-four members filled the office of Mayor of Galway.

Lynchs Castle is situated at the junction of Shop Street (previously High Middle Street) and Upper Abbeygate Street (previously Littlegate Street) (Fig 11) It is a rectangular tower house with a small projecting annex on the north side containing the stairway. The main decorative features of interest are on the Shop Street and Abbeygate Street walls as there is only a small yard with roofless buildings on the north and west sides. The chief points worthy of note are; the victorian doorway, the sculptured slabs, the windows, two blocked up openings that resemble peep holes and the sculptured

gargoyles.

Over the doorway is a panel which is enclosed in a plain hood moulding. On this panel is a carving of a human head. (It also turns up on the other parts of the building) On the front wall (south) there are five sculptured slabs. The slab directly over the doorway shows an ape holding a child. (Fig 13) This is from the legend that an ape had once saved a child from a fire in the castle and carried it from its crib to safety.(1)

The next slab over the foregoing bears royal arms on its centre and two other arms on its sides. The royal coats of arms are those of Henry VII and the arms on the sides of the slab frame, though not very distinct, seem to be; Fitzgerald, De Burgh, Bermingham, Blake and Lynch. (2) Under the royal coat of arms is an inscription which has been translated as an abbreviation of "Long live the King of England, France and the Lord of Ireland." The top left and right margins of the slab are decorated with leaf patterns and the human head again appears in the centre of the top margin. (Fig 13)

Over the right hand window of the second story are three sculptured slabs (Fig 14) the lowest of these bears an inscription of Gothic letters, translated to "After darkness I hope for light." (Post tenebras spero lucern) Above this is a carved lion, perhaps a symbol of British dominion, as the Galwegians were so loyal to the crown.(3) Above the lion is a carved coat of arms enclosed in a circular border, these are the Lynch arms. There is also an inscription here in gothic letters, hard to decipher, it has been said by some historians to translate to "Lynchs shield" or "Lynchs coat of arms".

There are two windows on the second floor and three on each of the others. Those in the lowest and highest are plain but the others have hood mouldings and are beautifully decorated with foilage and some human heads, below them are merchant marks. (Fig 15) They probably had stone mullions originally as the sash windows are recent. Beneath the third and fourth floor there is part of a blocked window which obviously did not belong to the original building in this position. The blocked circular openings are near the quoin on the right hand side of the first floor. (This is where there are larger stones around the frames of windows, doors and along the corner of a building.) These openings were probably peep holes or a position for a cannon. (Though only in a country house and not a town house.)

On the Abbeygate Street side of the building there is a projection which consists of two stones in the form of a trapezium (this is a quadrilateral figure with only two sides parallel) with their long ends inserted into the wall. (Fig 12) The stones are separated only by a few inches and are covered at the top with slates. It might be that they are purely decorative (perhaps to resemble the machicolations found on Feudal Castles) or could have been an opening where refuse would have been thrown out.

The protruding corbels (Fig 12) each with a hole, are under a window on the third floor. There must have been some sort of beam resting between the perforations, perhaps to support a bell which the mayors would have used to gather the citizens for meetings (or a hoist to raise large objects upstairs).

The blocked window (Fig 16) is a one-light window with a

trefoil head and hood moulding, not unlike the one on the east side of Blakes Castle. (Fig 7) It's present position is not original as it has been inserted between two floors.

The highest of the sculptured slabs has a circular border decorated with interlacing leaf patterns and a coat of arms in the centre. The crest is that of the Earls of Kildare. On the second slab is the figure of a lion. (like the one on the south wall under the Lynch arms) There is an inscription underneath "He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble" (4) There is a blocked opening near the quoin on the left-hand side resembling those in the Shop Street again probably a peep hole.

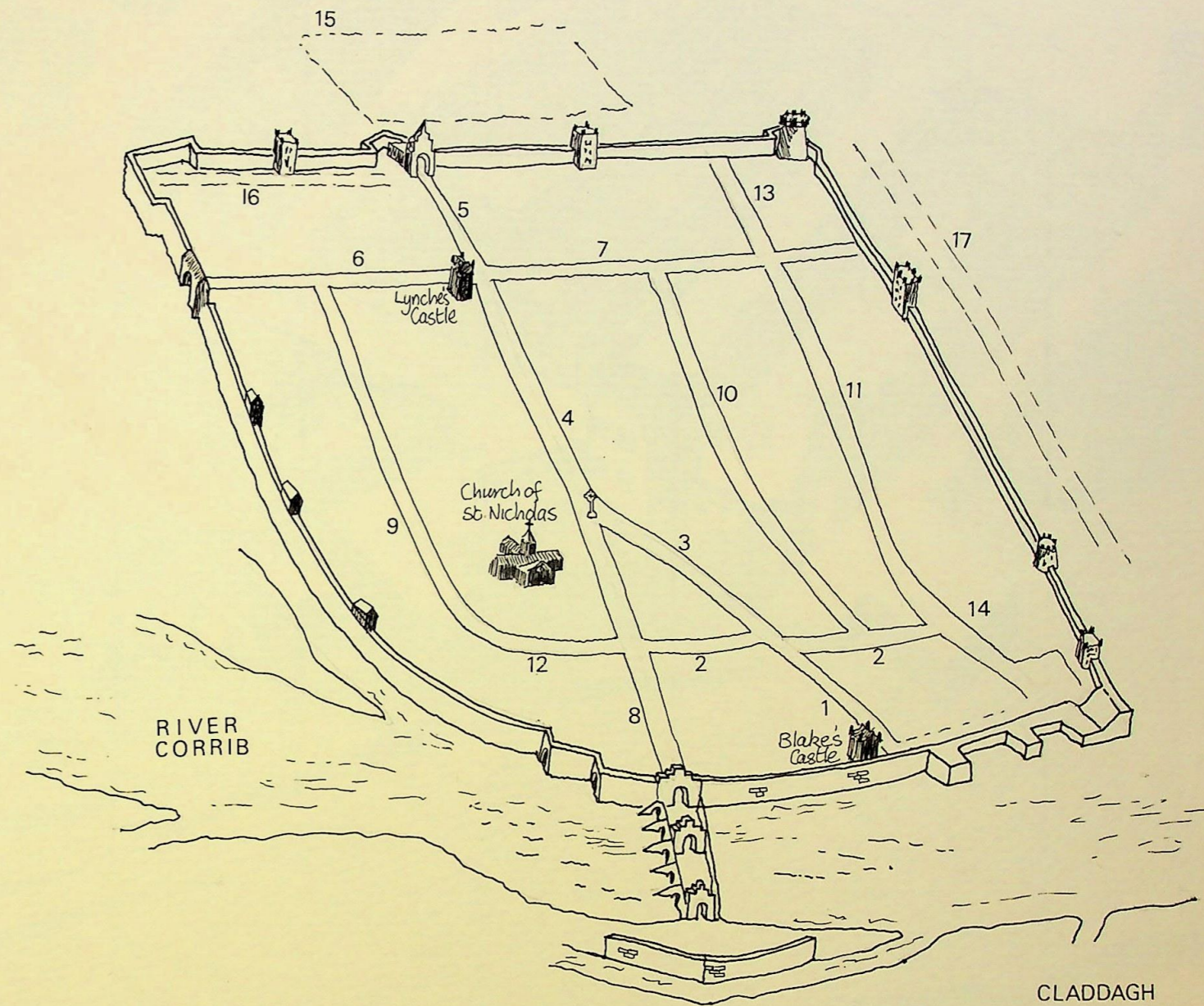
There is no record of the actual erection of the Castle. It was probably built after 1500 as Hardiman says there was a great fire who destroyed a part of the city in 1500 and that shortly afterwards the inhabitants beautified the town with several most superb structures. If the slab with the coat of arms of Henry VII was on the original building, therefore the castle was built before 1541 as the inscription referred to "The Lord of Ireland" a title which was discontinued after that year.(5)

It is dear from casual examination of the Castle as it stands, (Fig 12) that it has been rebuilt and that some of the architectural features have belonged to other buildings. The slab with the monkey and child, and the slab with the Fitzgerald coat of arms, did not form part of the original edifice. They are connected with the Fitzgerald family and one cannot imagine why the Lynch family would have slabs associated with another

Galway Fig 3.

family on the walls of their mansion. (It obviously happened much later when another family resided there.) If the blocked windows, openings and perforated corbels belonged to the original castle. The positions must have changed, they are aesthetically and architecturally wrong. There is no mention of the interior of Lynchs Castle except that the floor at the street level was a business premises, more of a store house than what we would consider a shop today. Trading was usually done in bulk so most of the larger merchant houses had their business premises downstairs and a small office and lived upstairs.

MAIN STREETS OF Galway Fig 3.



Map 1

• AS DEPICTED BY THE MAP OF 1651;

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Kea street (water Gate st. 1818) Quay st 1988 | 8. Bridge Gate st (1442) Bridge st. 1988. |
| 2. Crosse street (1615) | 9. North st. (market st. 1988) |
| 3. Goal street (classed as the market st.) Mainguart st 1988. | 10. the st. between tow lanes (middle st 1988) |
| 4. High Middle street (NOW SHOP ST) | 11. New Tower st. (st. Augustine st 1858-1988) |
| 5. Great Gate street (1615) Williams street 1988 | 12. Market st. |
| 6. Little Gate street (1615) Upper Abbeygate st. 1988 | 13. Pludd st. (Whitehall 1988) |
| 7. Skinners or Glovers st (1615) Lower Abbeygate st. 1988 | 14. Earl street. (sraid tobair an Iarla.) |
| | 15. Eyre square. |
| | 16. Eglinton st today. |
| | 17. Merchant's road today. |

fig 4

Section of the 1651 map, showing Kea St. where Blake's Castle stands

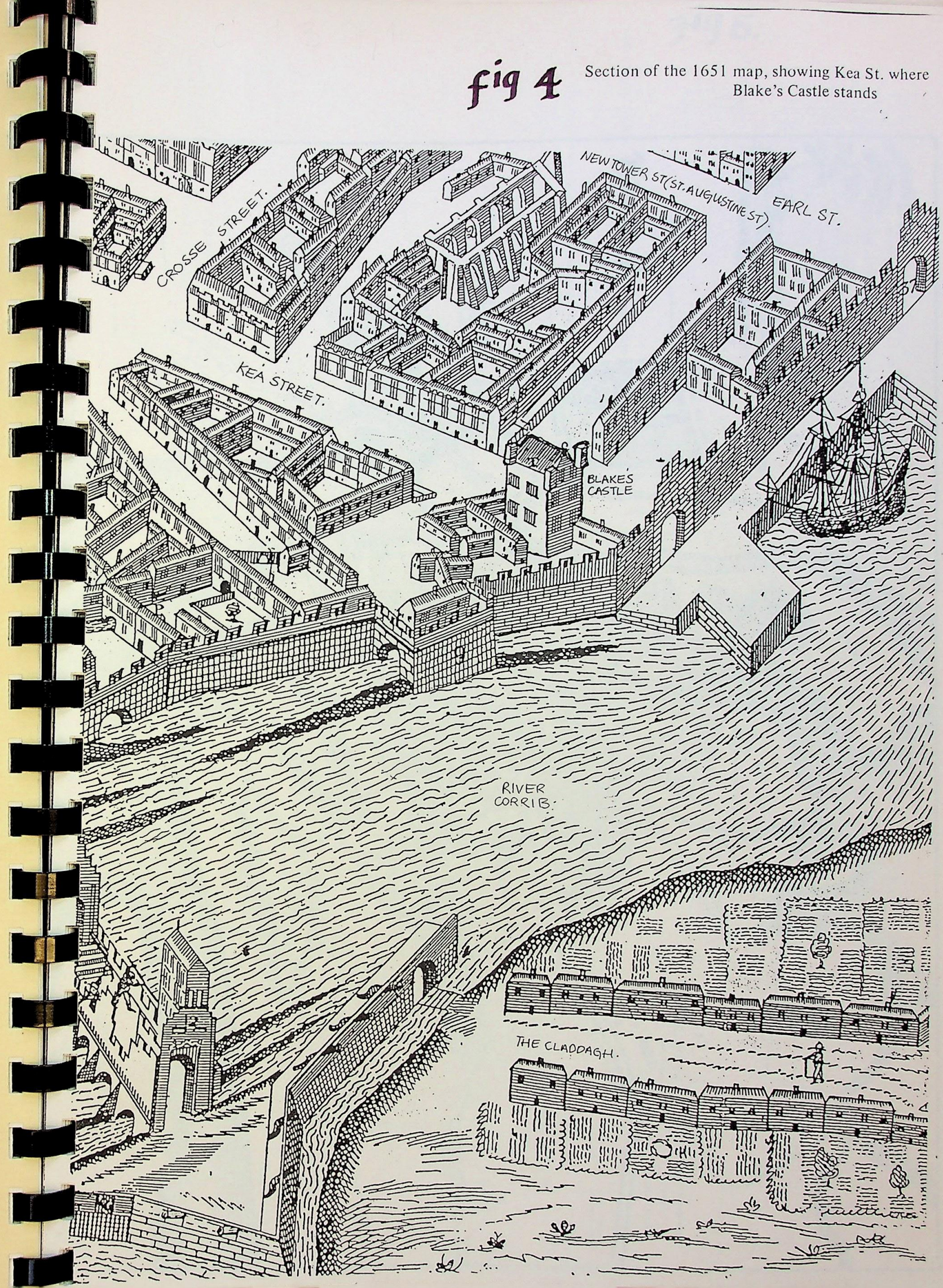
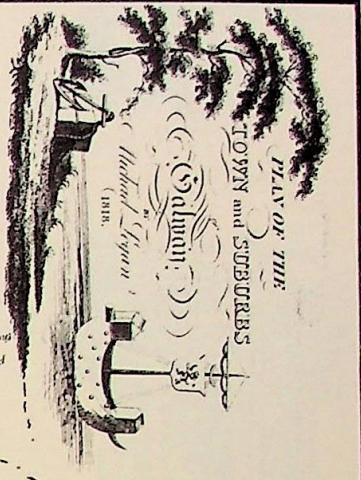


Fig 5

Maps

Map 2.



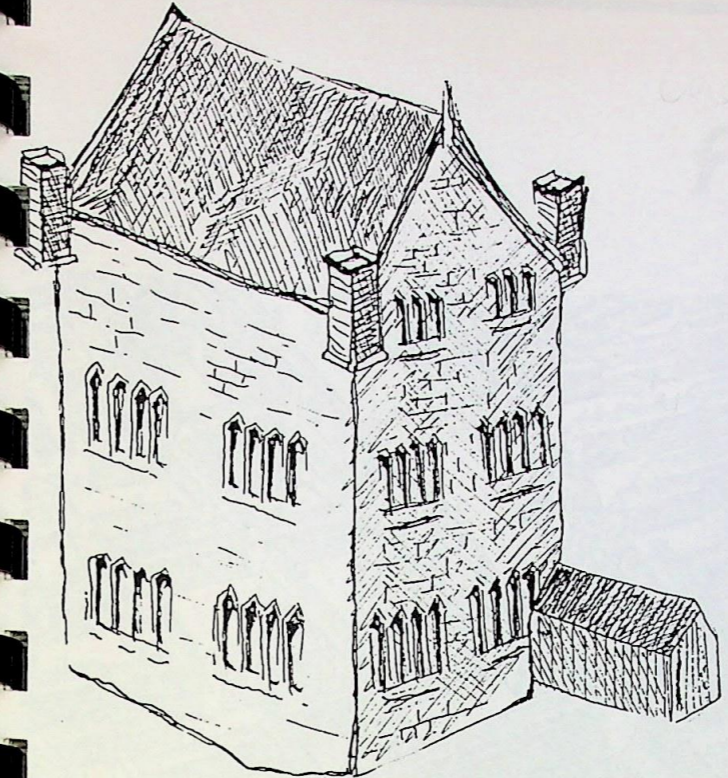


fig 8

Blake's Castle as depicted in the map of 1651

fig 6

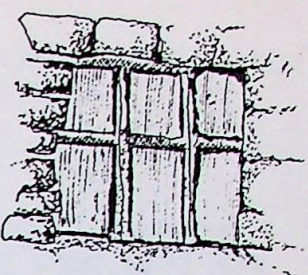


fig 10.

Window in Ballybrit Castle

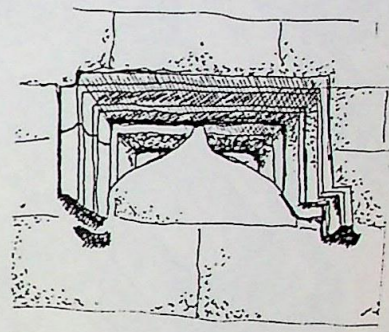
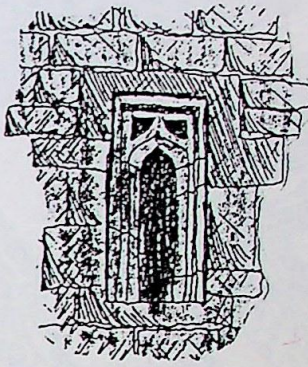


fig 9.

Ogival - type window hood - mould inserted in the wall of a Quay St. building

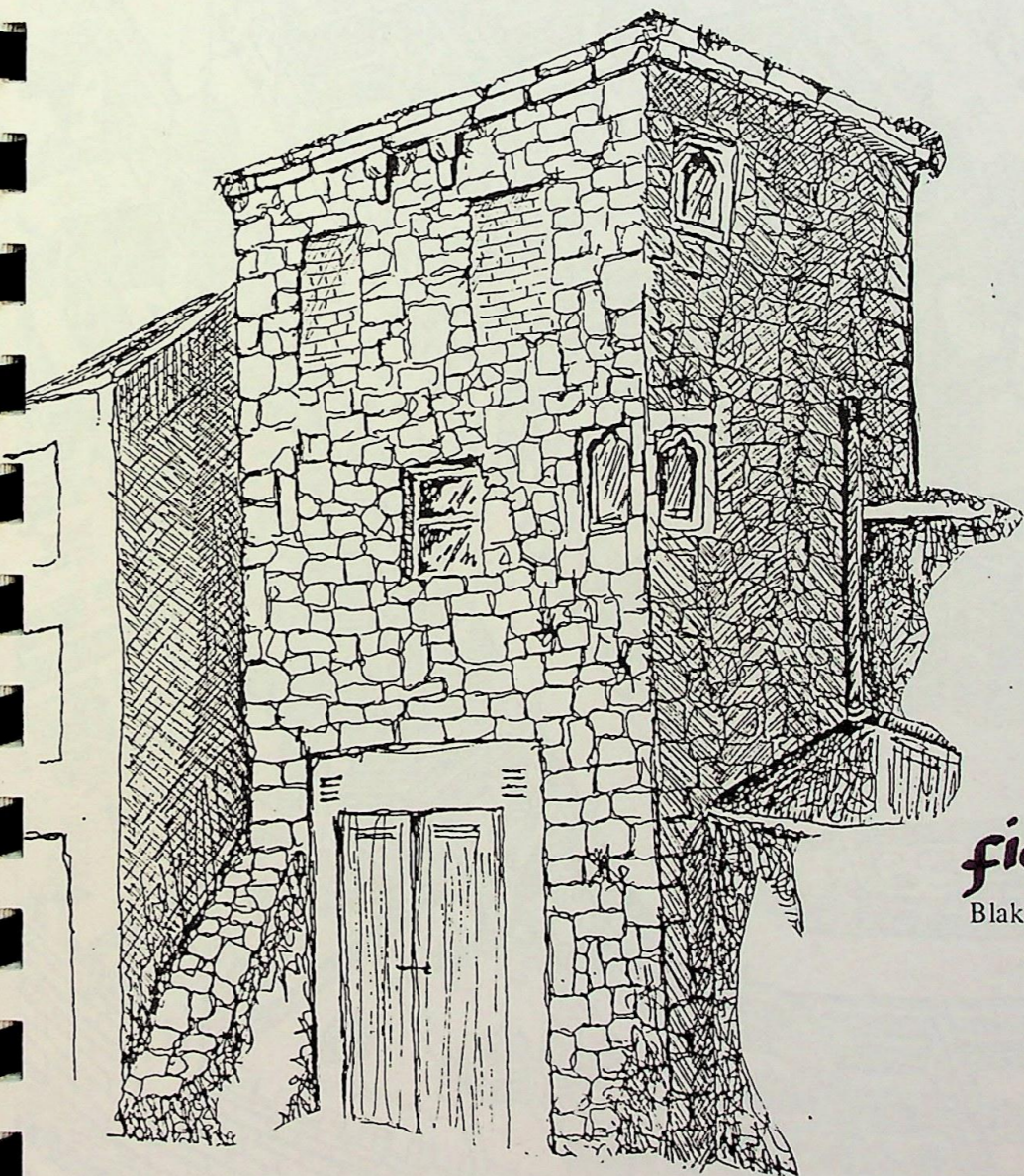


fig 7.

Blake's Castle as it stands today

fig 11

Section of 1651 map showing High middle St. with Lynch's Castle

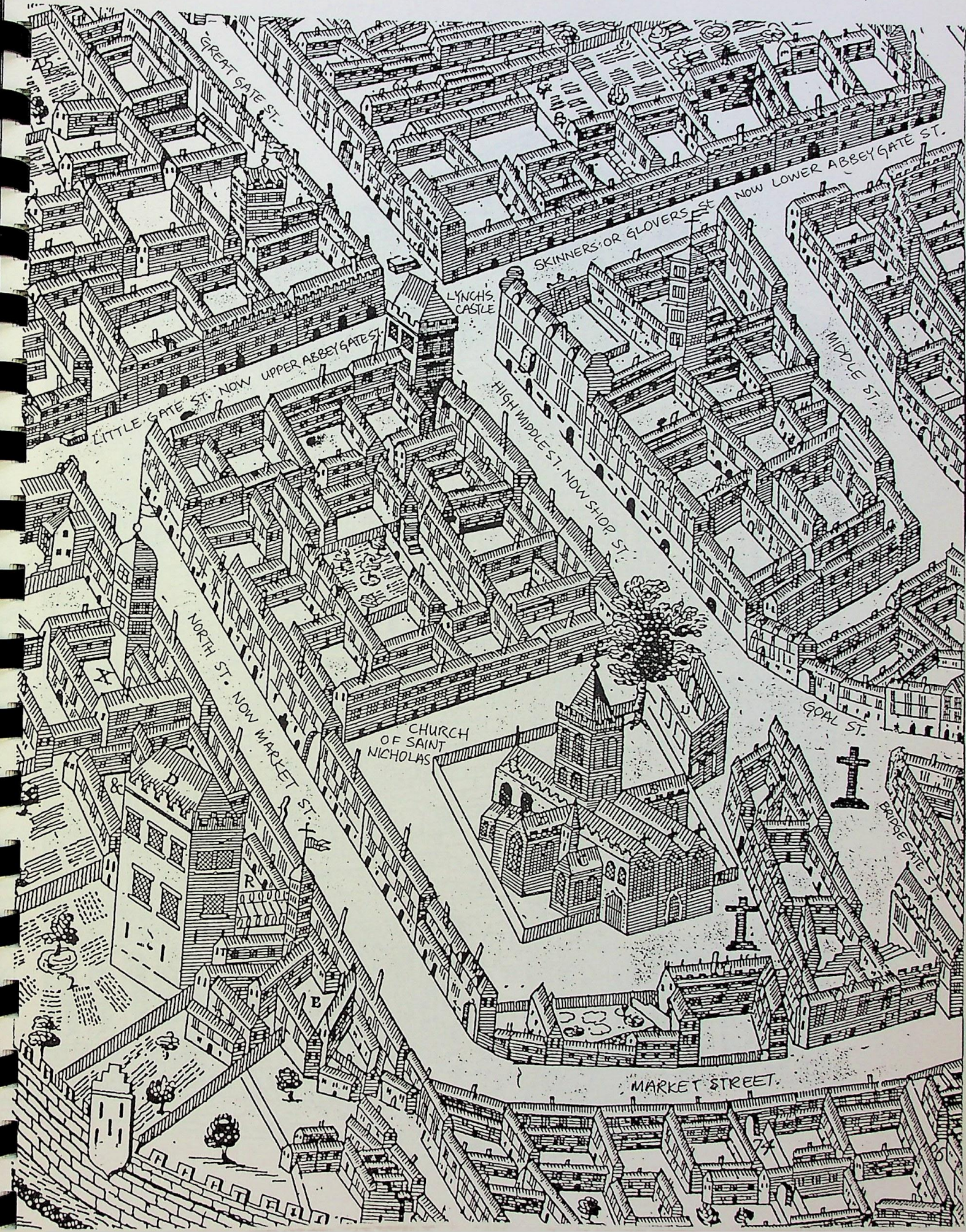


fig 12

fig 12 Lynch's Castle (Shop St.) as it stands today

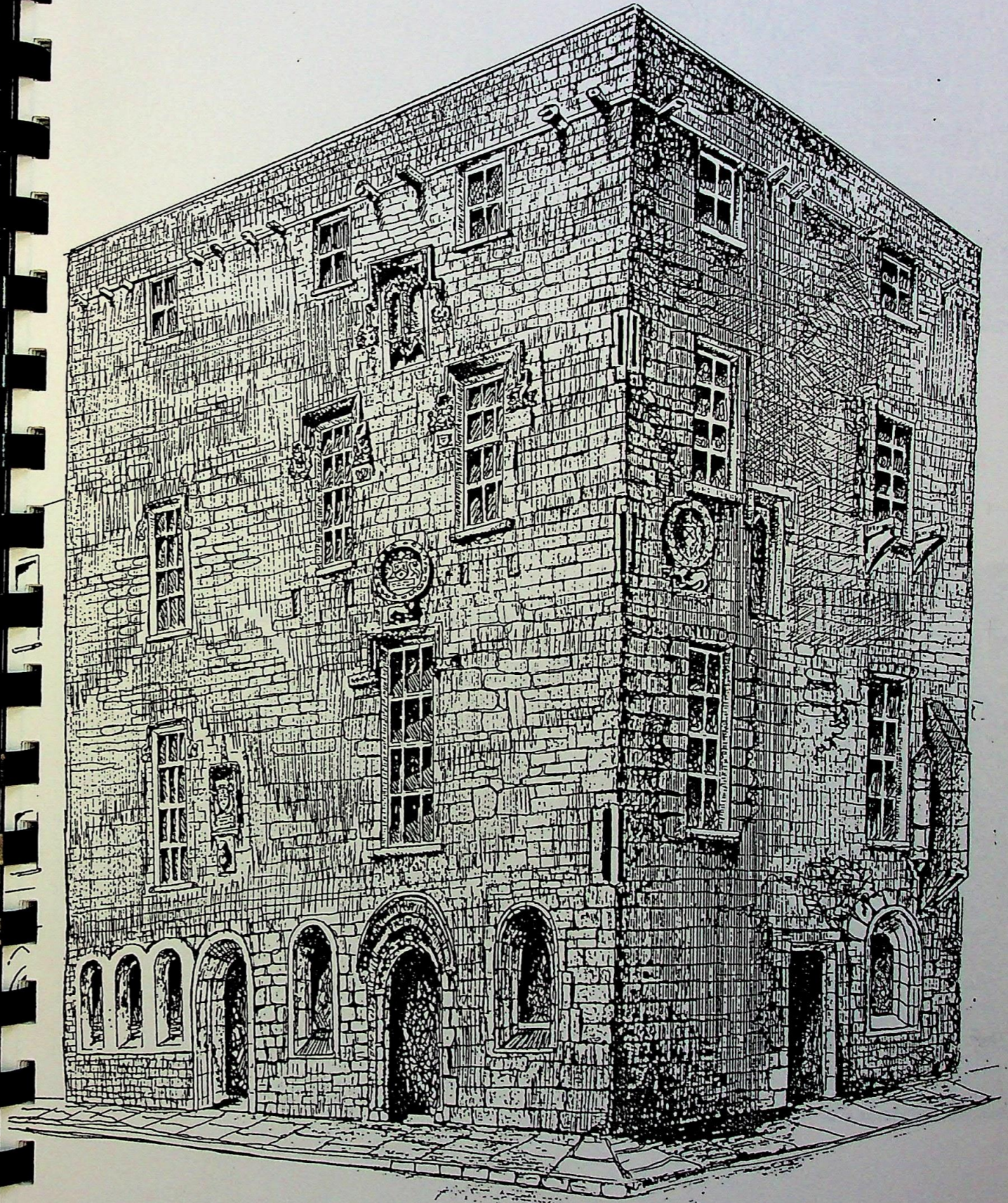


fig 13

fig 13

Sculptured slab over the doorway on the Shop
St. side of Lynch's Castle

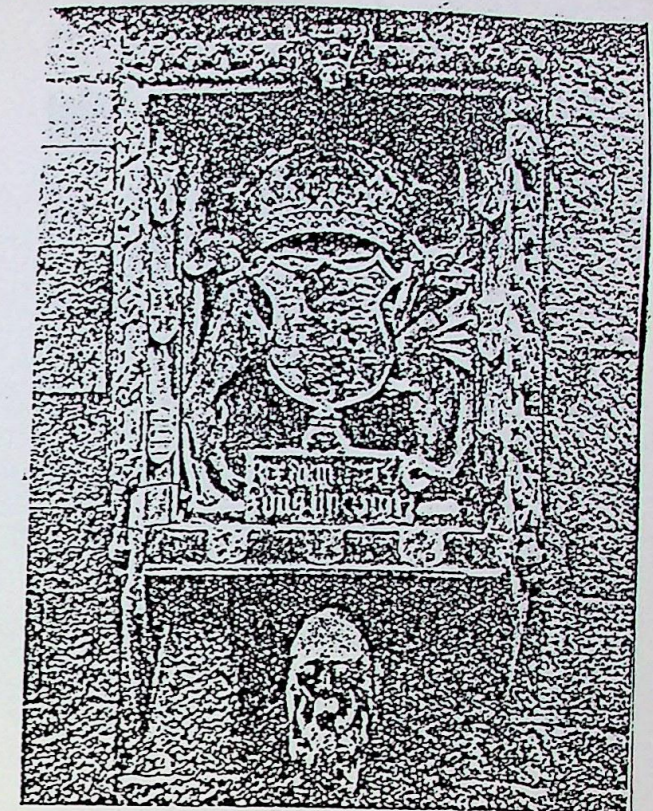
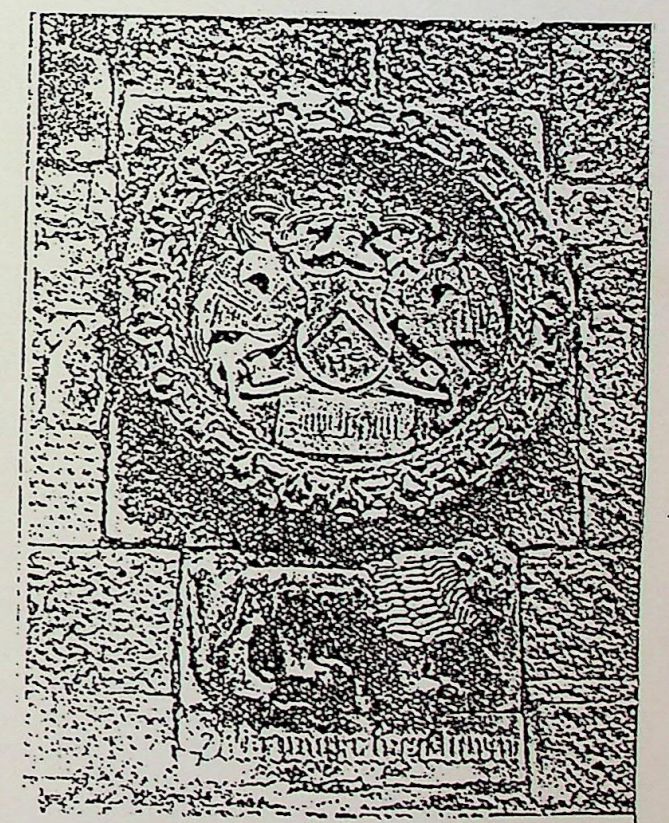


fig 14.

Sculptured slab over the doorway on the Shop
St. side of Lynch's Castle



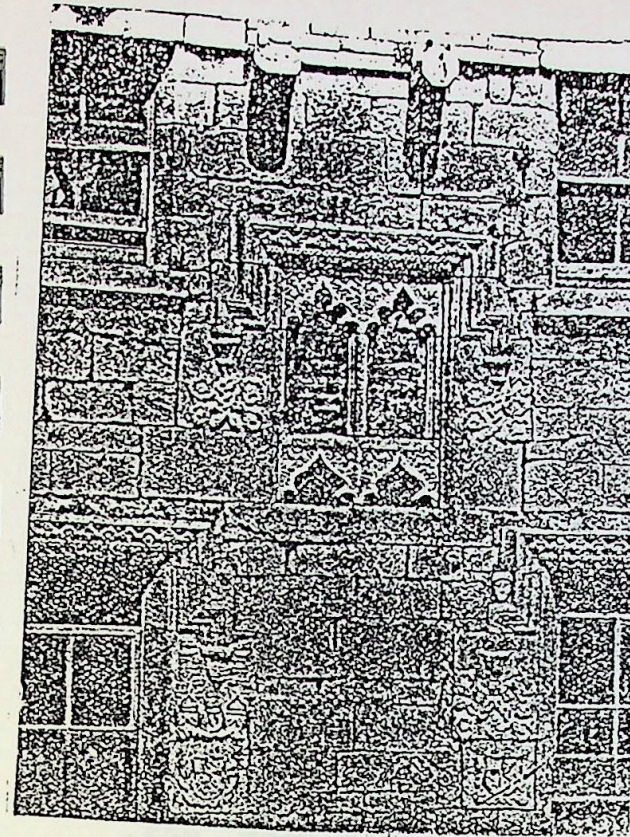


FIG. 15
Window on the Shop St. wall of Lynch's Castle
decorated with human heads, leaf patterns and
merchant marks

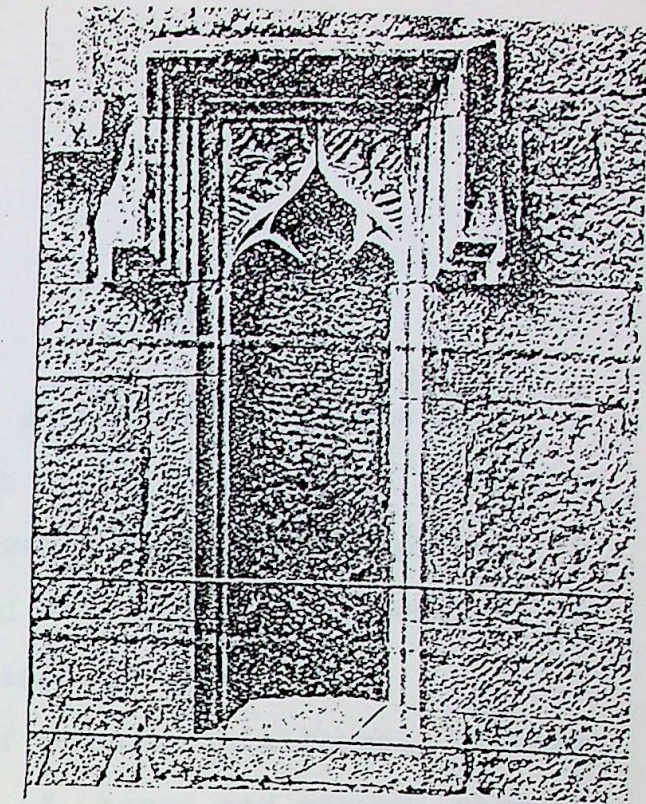


FIG. 16.
Blocked window on the Abbeygate St. wall of
Lynch's Castle

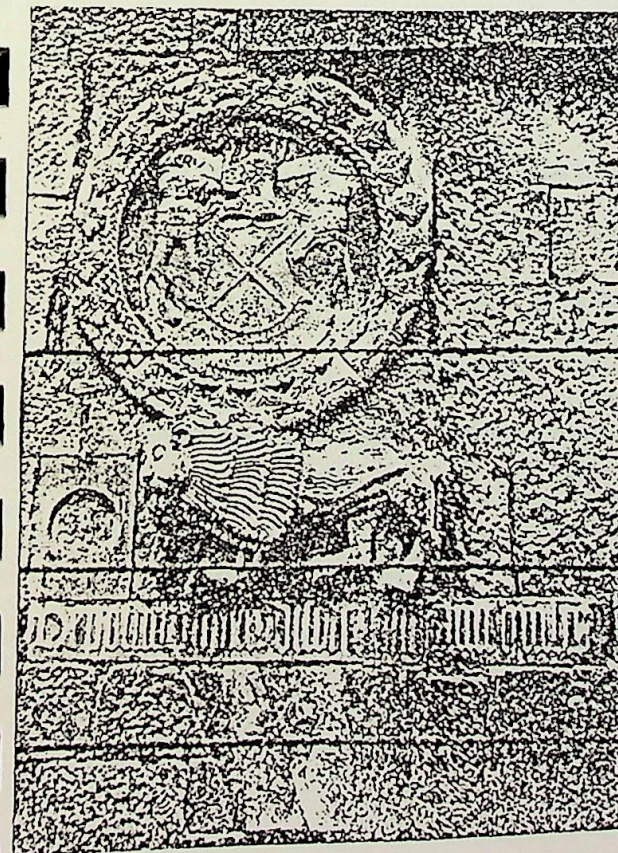


FIG 17.
Sculptured slab on the Abbeygate St. wall of
Lynch's Castle

Chapter 4

St Nicholas' Collegiate Church

St. Nicholas' was the largest parish church of the medieval period in Ireland, the next biggest was St. Mary's in Youghal, also Collegiate. St. Nicholas' was dedicated to the patron of merchants and all travellers by land and sea; Saint Nicholas' of Myra. (Fig 18) The foundation was laid in 1484.

St Nicholas' is a building of mixed architectural history the result of no single period, but of change and growth through several centuries. The most important document relating to the building of the church is the will of Domnick Duff Lynch (1508) which is contemporary with the construction.(1)

The hardest thing to comprehend about the architecture of this building, is how conservative and unfashionable to its time it is. The Irish craftsmen/architect shows little, or a late, response to the architectural developments elsewhere. As already stated in England or the continent, changes in architectural forms and forms and details were part of an ongoing development providing suitable dating points; here the case different.

Irish craftsmen often clung tightly to forms which had passed out of use elsewhere or which had slowly developed into something different - isolation as much as an inborn natural conservatism, must have been the cause of this retention of old forms. It is also hard to date from mouldings, this is partly because blue-grey limestone was used in Galways buildings. This is a stone which is difficult to work in comparison with softer

kinds used in Britain and calling for surface rather than bold moulding.

Hardiman says that St. Nicholas' was built in 1320.(2) The church as it stands consists aisleless chancel, a central tower, transepts, various chapels, a nave with wider side aisles and a south porch. On the south wall of the chancel, the lower part of the wall is different in masonry from that over it. (Fig 19) There is also an old window-sill stone, perhaps the sill and wall are remains of an earlier building chapel or church which has thought to have existed before St. Nicholas'.

Most of the windows have trefoil pointed heads, some with two lights (the east window with five lights) and plain bar-tracery over head - typical in England in the thirteenth century. There are numerous examples of east windows with many lights replacing lancets, (slender pointed arch windows) or other smaller windows of an earlier date. Perhaps it was an intention to provide a larger area for the display of the increasingly popular stained glass. This often happened in the fourteenth century and much more in the fifteenth century. People donated not only the glass designs, but also the framework. Some of the windows, i.e. south (Fig 20) are plain with bevelled surfaces at the edge or corner (known as chainfering), while the east windows have mouldings of a later type in place of the chainfers.

In the south wall, is a beautiful three light window with curvilinear decorated tracery. (Fig 21) The mullions, tracery bars, jambs and arch are moulded and the tracery elaborately cusped. The hood moulding is of an ogee form; its outline is chainfer decorated with small square flower patterns and rises

from the carved tops; one a head and the other an excellently carved mermaid. This window is undoubtedly earlier than 1561. In England a window is of this design would date from the early fourteenth century. The marked lack of co-ordinance between the jamb stones and the adjoining wall, suggest that the window was not designed for it's present position. Accordingly to the Lynch manuscript, the window, the finest in the church, may be the work of Dominick Duff Lynch or his son Stephen, and be ascribed to the period around 1500. (3)

The central window lighting the nave is obviously an insertion. It is the widest window in the church and differs in design from the others in it's tracery which is perpendicular and a strong contrast to the curvilinear decorated aisle windows. To make space for the sill of this window, the pinnacles which rise from the door way below had to be removed. (Fig 22) The doorway itself is also inserted in the wall, but, of an earlier date than the window. The jambs and arch form a deep multi-moulded splay. (The base of the jambs are in three orders.) There are vine leafs carved on the hood moulding and also on the delicately pannelled pinnacles on each side at the end of the hood moulding. This doorway is of a fifteenth century character but could be early sixteenth century.

Hardiman, in a note, states that the south porch "was built for the accomodation of the poor by James Fitz Stephen Lynch (same man who gave glass to the church) in 1493". (4) This statement has been disagreed with, as it possesses an external doorway with details of a sixteenth century character, it's hood mouldings having conventional decorations of leaf and grape

patterns combined with vase-like forms, almost renaissance in style, the external masonry also differs from that of the aisle. The stonework has been dated 1561.

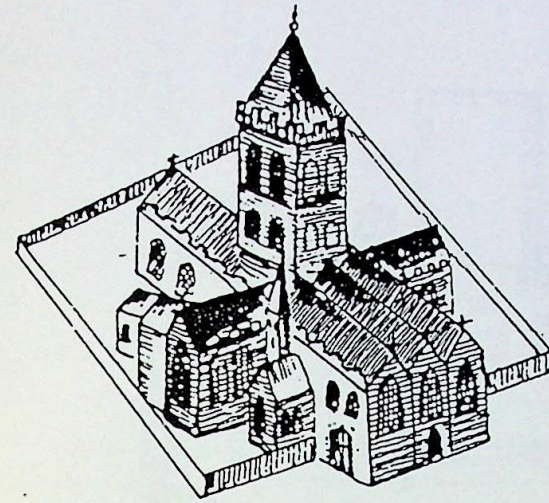
There are thirty carved gargoyles projecting from below the parapets on the south aisle wall. (Fig 23) They varied in design. The plainest are a plain tapered octagonal form and paired with them are tapered twist forms, some others have a twisted stem with "daisy" face. There is a bird, a horse or ox head, a griffin, a hairy face (perhaps a lions) a manticora (man-like) and an ox head. The Lynch arms and many human heads with different expressions also appear. Some have two heads/faces looking in different directions. The spouts are positioned, so that the water delivers sideways and would be less likely to fall on the windows.

There is such a wealth of detail to be studied of the exterior and interior of St. Nicholas' that it is impossible to cover it here, though there are some interior features are particularly worthy of note.

The first is a very fine altar tomb in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin. It is of sixteenth century date, flamboyant in style and the most foreign looking work in the building. Spanish influence is suspected or accepted. Though examples of the same could be found in France or Portugal also.

The confessional is also a notable feature of the interior. Most of it's stone work is modern (1900) but the twisted pillar and ogee heads seem to be original medieval.

The font-basin is a square form tapering downwards. It is decorated on two of it's with tracery designs similar to those of



Church of St. Nicholas in 1651. FIG 18.



Church of St. Nicholas today.

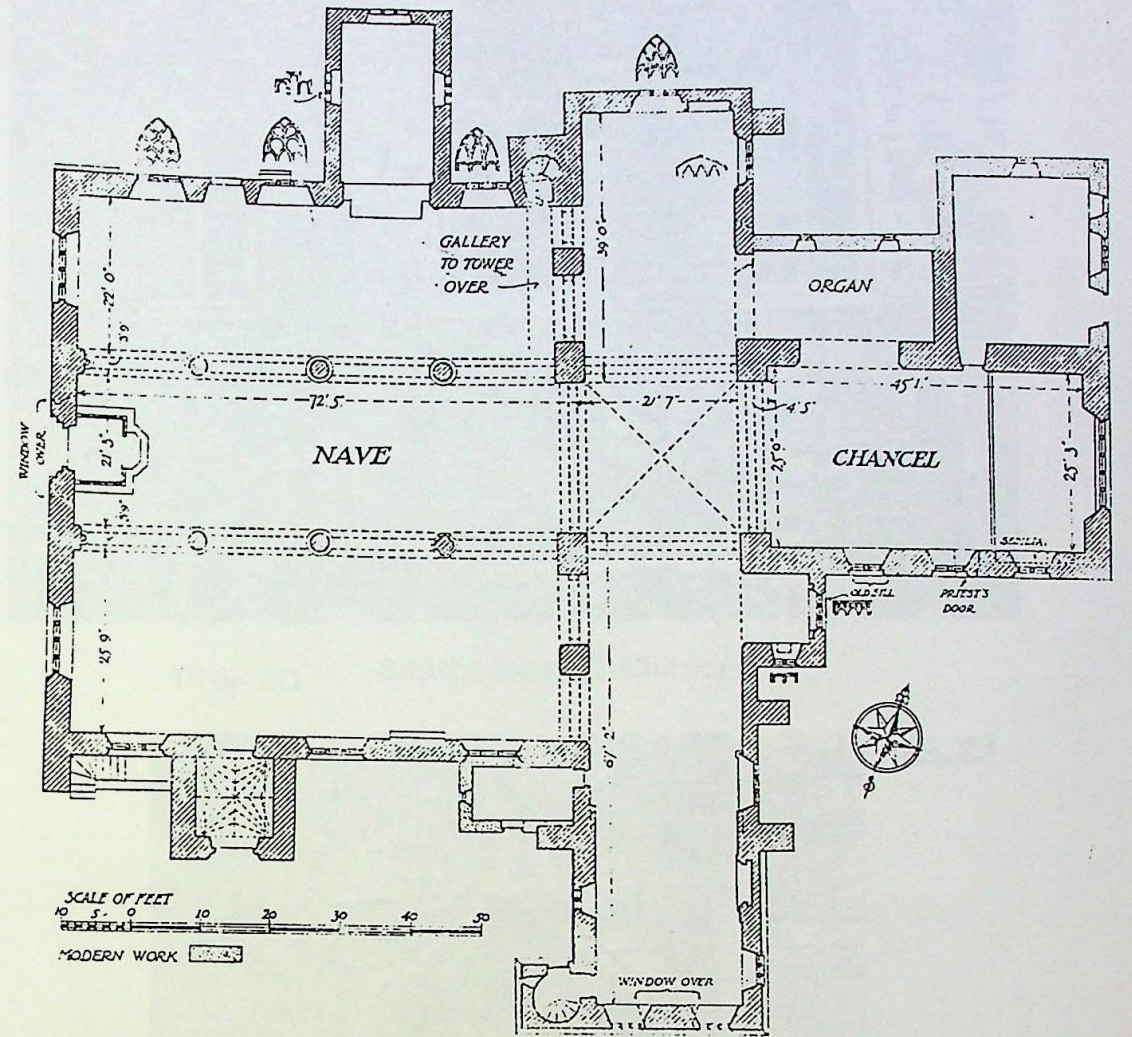


FIG. 19 CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS, GALWAY.
Plan at the present day.

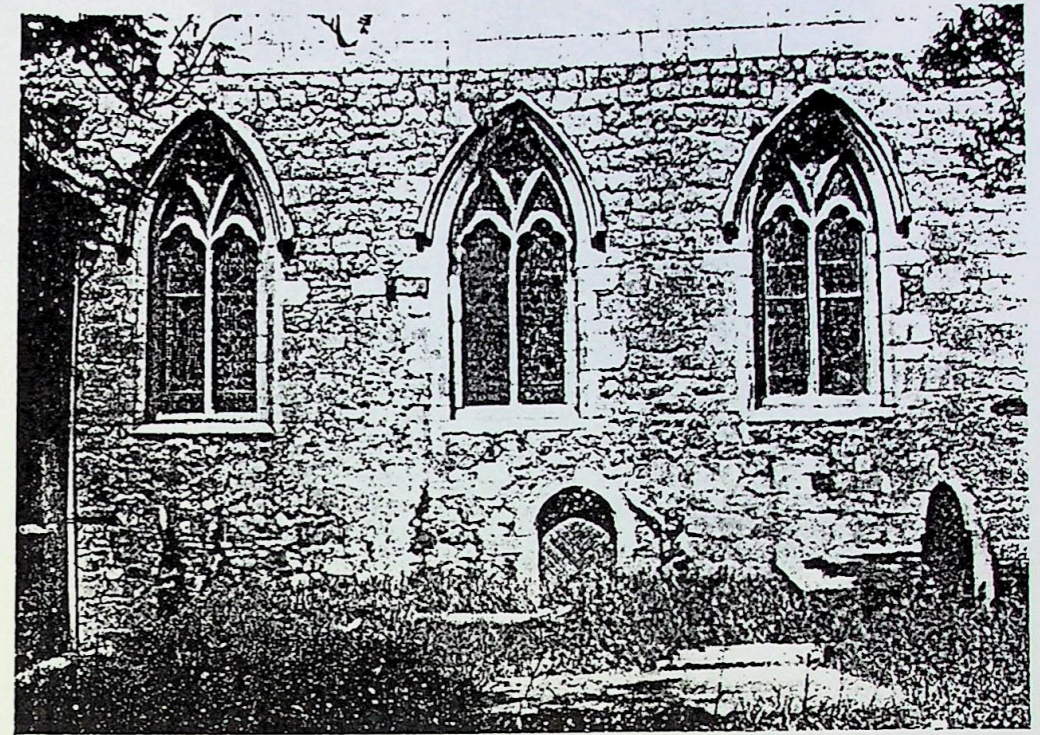


FIG. 20 -South Side of Chancel.

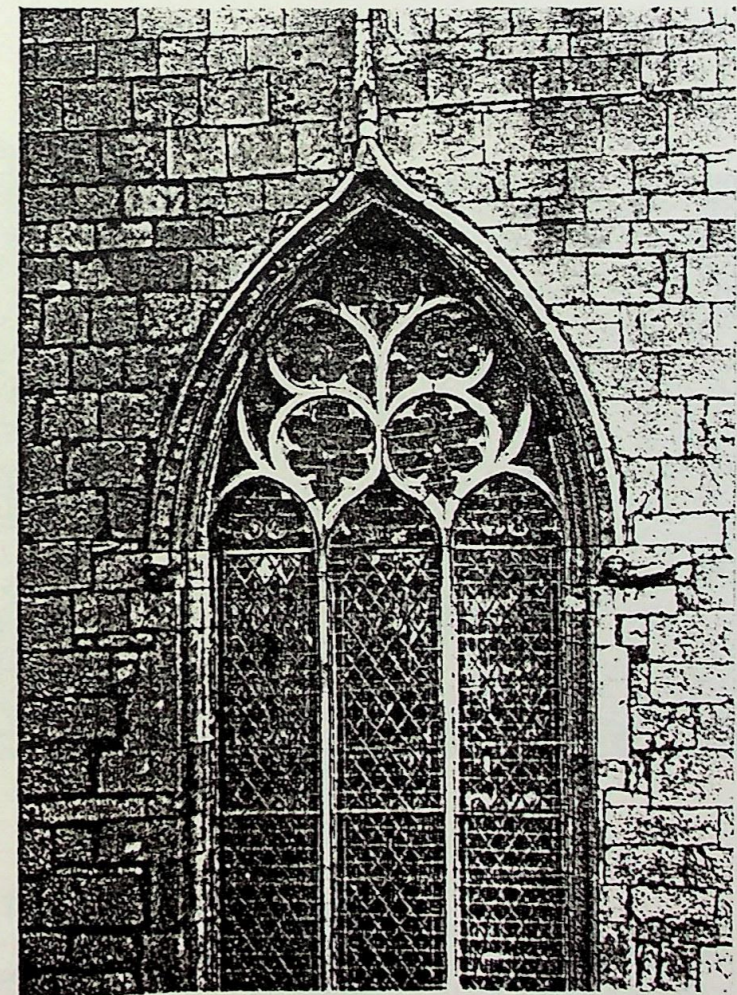


FIG. 21.

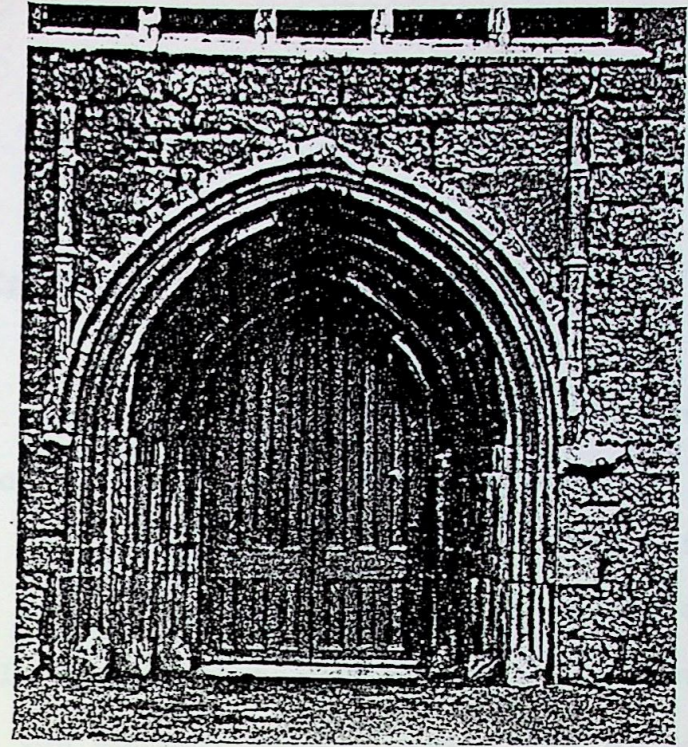
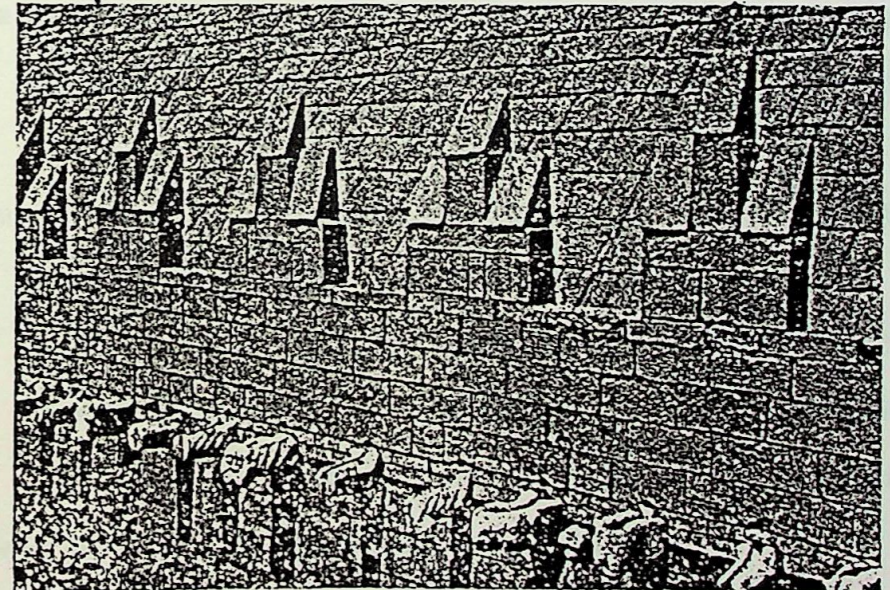
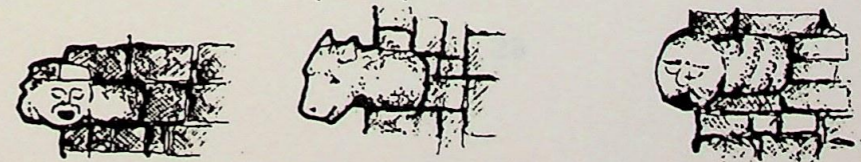


FIG. 22.

FIG. 23



DETAIL OF GARGOYLES



Chapter 5

Ornamented Carving in Galway's Streets

There are many carved slabs throughout the streets of Galway which are locally known as "marriage-stones". These usually contain coats of arms of two of the merchant families. Most likely these carved slabs were placed over the doorways in the large medieval town houses and mansions or perhaps over the mantelpiece in the chimney wall. For years it has been thought that these so-called "marriage-stones" were to commemorate the marriage of members of two families, but recently after much research, it has been suggested that these plaques were probably to commemorate the date of construction of the building itself. In other places, the coats of arms are accompanied by "merchant marks" or trade guild plaques, clearly not denoting marriage.

These stones, whether "marriage-stones" or not, have some rather confusing characteristics for the historian as some contain the coats of arms on separate shields while others have the arms on the same shield, one being inserted into the other, perhaps these latter type do commemorate marriage.

Of these stones, according to Prof. E. Rynne, the one in the doorway of McDonaghs offices in Flood Street is indeed a marriage stone. It is dated 1645 and has the coat of arms of the Lynchs and Browns and has a latin inscription.

"Make lasting God what thou hast wrought in us".

There are many fine examples of these stones dotted around the

merchant marks in Galway are carved in a shield shape, with the initials of the merchant and some foliage decorating the sides. (Fig 27) This can be seen clearly on Lynchs Castle where there is a merchant mark underneath the decorative hood-mould stop. There is an interlacing design with shape that could be an acorn but it is hard to recognise it fully.

Doorways

The best known of all medieval doorways in Galway are the Browne Doorway and the Athy Doorway. (Fig 28) In the well proportioned eighteenth century Eyre Square, virtually the centre of the town; stands the fine entrance of a town house which was built in 1627 for a Browne married to a Lynch. This house, originally stood in Abbeygate Street, and as it's inscribed slab relates, was removed from the ruins there 1906 "to preserve the architectural heritage of the great houses in the days of Galways civic opulence". This is a fine two-storey renaissance door and oriel window combined one of the city most prominent landmarks. The Browne family is widely represented throughout the city. The Browne coats of arms are conserved in the university (1616) and over the Arch Shopping Arcade arch in Williams street, while it's two headed eagle crest can be seen on the Pro-Cathedral in Middle Street. The Browne coat of arms also shares with the Blakes family in Lydon House restaurant (1646)

The Athy doorway, which has a much smaller entrance is a beautiful example of the sixteenth century urban architecture. In 1947 the sculpturess Clare Sheridan purchased the adorned doorway which was near the Hynes building in Saint Augustine

Street and re-erected it on top of the spanish arch in her studio. Now, along with a richly decorated panel and window it forms a very important exhibit in Galway's City museum. The beautifully embellished doorway has the Athy family coat of arms on one side and a tradesmans guild crest on the other, it's dated 1577. The richely carved doorway gives us an idea of how medieval Galway's facade looked when it's reputation was at it's height.

There are many other plainer stone cut medieval doorways in the medieval doorways in the medieval quarter of the city. One acts as an entrance to a hair salon on High Street, (Fig 29) with lovely floral decorative work in each corner of the hood-moulding and at the hood-terminals. Again, another acts as a doorway to a modern shop; Brogues shoe repairs in High Street.

A doorway in Shop Street could be described as rather mysterious. It seems to be from three different buildings. The lintel, dated 1616, has the religious I H S monogram carved on it, while just above it, there is a central panel dating from 1594 with five coats of arms including the Lynch and Athy families. To make matters more confusing there are two other side panels bearing the coat of arms of the Blake family and a 1751 date. (Fig 30)

Another doorway, described as a chimney-piece rests in the Convent of Mercy garden in Francis Street. (Fig 31) This fine medieval monument was removed from Upper Abbeygate Street during the last century and re-erected to it's present position. On the right-hand panel of the arch is the Martin coat of arms with the initials C D underneath and date 1624. There is another coat

of arms thought to be of the D'Arcy family, however, local historian Jim Higgins, has suggested it is Doirse crest and contains five crosses.

Carved on one of slabs inserted in the walls of medieval Galway is an usual creature. It is called an "amphisbaena". it has been reppresented in manuscripts and other illustrations as a dragon with two heads, one human and the other a dragons head upon the end of it's tail (in place of the usual barb or point). This mystical creature is always illustrated and described fabulously in many medieval bestiaries, as preforming various magical cures.

Galway's amphisbaena is located on the south wall of a house on the corner of Flood Street. (Fig 32) It is re-set ten feet high and is a re-used medieval carving in the local grey limestone presumed to be from one of the ruined ecclesiastical structures in the city. This stone slab was a corbel termination and the end of the corbel itself is in the centre of the stone. it is pointed with the tip in the mouth of the beast which is to the the left with a beut neck and twisted around so much that it's mouth faces up, biting the corbel. The beast is two legged and the tail head is turned to face directly outwards. The twisted neck is corded, the ridges illustrating the turn and the wings are wrapped around the body. the human head is wearing a hood, popular throughout the middle ages with both sexes so it is hard to determine either sex or date.

On the right of the stone are two other carvings. A dog curled in a circle and asleep; which could be a representation of the Talbot family but here is thought to be a symbol of

domestility. The rest of the space contains a shield bearing the arms of the Martin family. The carving is a cross on a four-stepped plinth between the moon (dexter) and the sun (sinister). This represents problems because the Martin arms as normally represented only has three steps on the calvary and the position of the sun and moon are reversed.

Perhaps it's just that it's a different interpretation, but, the sun is normally in the place of honour on the right and this would then be an error in the carving. The inward carving of the outline of the shield shows the beginning of departure from the utilitarian shape used up to and into the fifteenth century and it has similar qualities to the "paper-heraldry" shield shapes which came into use in Germany and Hungary in the fifteenth century.

There are similar carvings to that of the Galway amphisbaena at Swaresey Church, in Cambridgeshire. The beast is also lying on it's back and the tail ending in a grinning mouth which is interpreted as demoniac, but in Galway, the reverse is suggested as the expression is serious and severe. (2)

There is also another carving in Saint Nicholas' Church resembling the one in Flood Street. It is under the northern hood moulding terminal of the west windows of the North aisle. The head is similarly twisted with the body inverted and a mermaid curled up beside it, her fish tail is pointing upwards holding a mirror. However, the sculptor has caused her head to be detached so it hovers near the point of the beasts tail. The two carvings must be the work of the same stone mason/carver. The details are the same, pointed fangs, prominent eye, heavily

corded neck, tiny ribbed wings and a body decorated with dots. This assists the dating of the Flood Street stone as saint Nicholas' was completed in 1583. Fig 33 shows the house where these stones have recently been uncovered from the plasterwork. The whole facade of the house shows the marvellous stonework of the late medieval building. The stone arch suggests various uses for the building in earlier times.

Medieval creators of the fabulous monsters could add extra heads with bodies (at the front) to create a more ferocious beast. Monsters represented evil and often the carvings had the points of the terminals supressing them, showing that evil had been contained. In Galway the carver seems to have had a decided taste for floating heads where the evil has been restrained. Some of the carvings in Galway show the skill and experience of the sculptor. The composition is well designed and the cutting; deep and confident. Carving in places such as Christ Church (Dublin) shows that the sculptors approach to stone carving was a contrast to that of the native Irish craftsman as they were prepared to cut more vigorously into the stone and the designs are from different tradition. The Galway carving is rudimentary, again illustrating the scarcity of highly skilled craftsman, but, the mason in his carving has still managed to create a poignant expression.

Another cutstone slab and perhaps the best remaining portion of a window can be seen in the facade of John Flaherty's general store in Cross Street. (Fig 34) Though the actual hood-moulding itself is demolished, it's end panels remain. On the left is said to be a wolf with two sucking figures - Romulus and Remus,

but, Mr. Jim Higgins (archelological and Historical Society) disagrees, saying that it is a sow with two suckling piglets. Beside the carved animals are some interwining vines with acorns - the symbol of strength.

On the right hand side of the stone is some decorative carving of foliage with one interlaced pattern joining leaves to the end of the slab. The carvings on the centre stone of the window contain; on the left, winged figure with curling tail and the other seems to have a fox/hound with a goose/bird in it's mouth (perhaps the animal is also winged). In the centre of the panel is another winged animal with a hounds herad between the left wing and a birds head behind the right wing. The hound has very pointed teeth, not unlike the amphisbaena. The detail in the carving is very limited and simplified. There had been another stone slab to the left and below the window, now plastered over because on of Galways Bishops thought it indecent, depicted a mermaid. it is thought by galways historians that under the rest of the plaster, remain the corner stones of the window, this also applies to many other windows throughout the medieval city.

Conclusion

If, in order to have a future, a place must have a past, then the future of Galway looks certain. I have made an attempt to capture some aspects of Galway's unique history. Thankfully, the importance of this past has been given full recognition since the quincentennial anniversary celebrations in 1984.

Galway's past and present, which one could describe as the essence of the city, continually intermingle in the innercity area. The very streets themselves, narrow and winding, between high pitched roofs, exude a historic feeling, added to by the medieval stonework of doorways, windows, plaques and coats of arms. The plaster which is encountered everywhere, which began to cover so much of the curstone facades in the nineteenth century, is slowly being peeled away today to reveal more of our medieval heritage.

Native Galwegians are more aware of their surroundings in recent years. They see, for the first time, the dated stone plaques, the medieval window hood-mouldings which escaped their eyes up to now. The Browne doorway in Eyre Square has a richer meaning for them and they look with new found interest as the builder prepares to remove plaster from an ancient building.

I feel the most stimulating aspect is that the youth of Galway are encouraged to be part of all of this. Continuous school projects on the history of Galway are an on-going item. From studying the atmosphere and all aspects of this old city it has given me, a Galwegian, a sense of belonging. It is important that we all begin to preserve and restore more of what is our

unique heritage.

"I return one again to the womb of memory
walking the sights that only now are digested,
within, looking out, at this vibrant city
where the blindness of yesterday now yeilds nostalgic.

City of bridges and open markets,
Land marks of history, Columbus and Cromwell,
arched in memories of spanish wine,
Gold and silver hearts clasped in hands lovinly,

Ghosts of the past revived for the tourist,
Faded corpus christi buntings resurrected in
street festivals; tribes celebrated continuity
where I leave once again cherished memories
temporarily forgotten."

(Looking back by Sean Crow (Waterford '85))

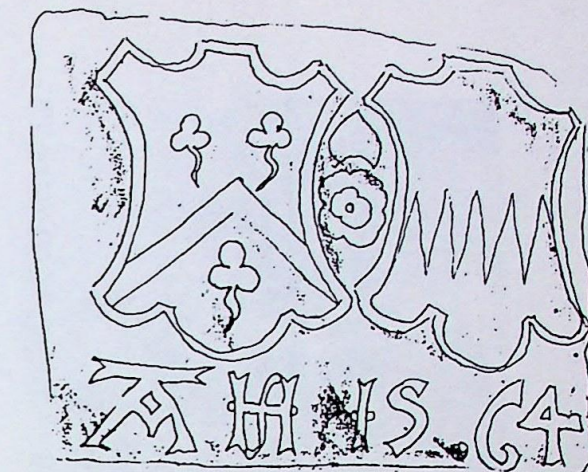


FIG 24.
 "Marriage stones" in Lydon House restaurant with
 the Lynch and Morris Coats of Arms

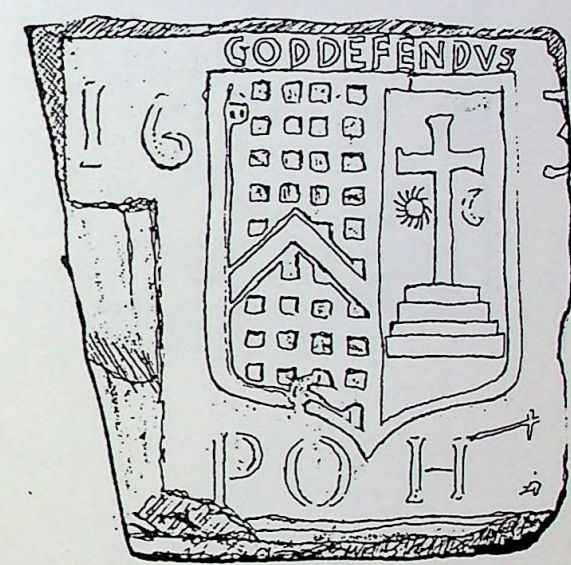


FIG. 25
 Stone dated 163 in Lydon House restaurant with
 the Coats of Arms of the Athy's and Martin's

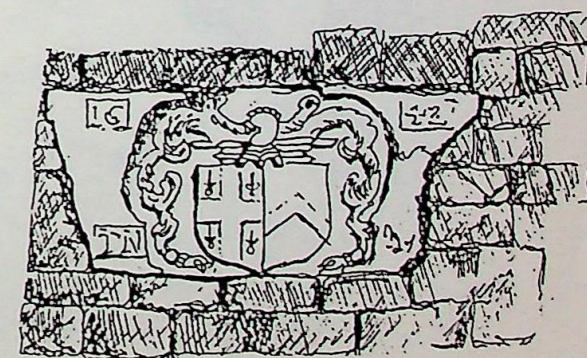


FIG. 26.
 Stone dated 1642 on the side of a house in Lower
 Abbeygate St. with the Nolan and Skerrett Arms

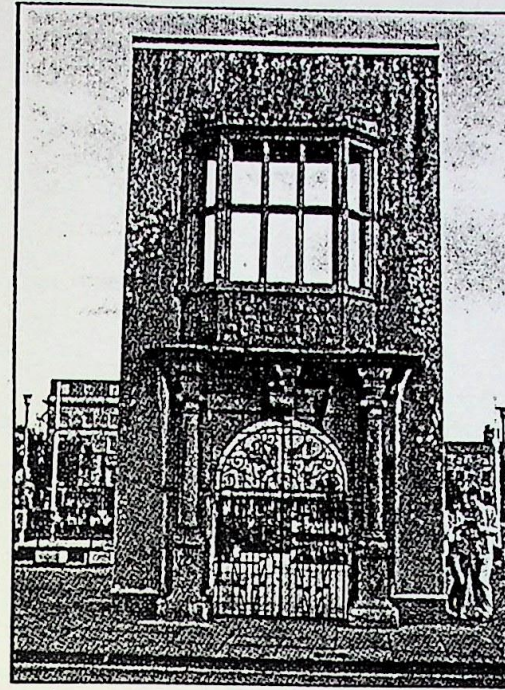


FIG 28.

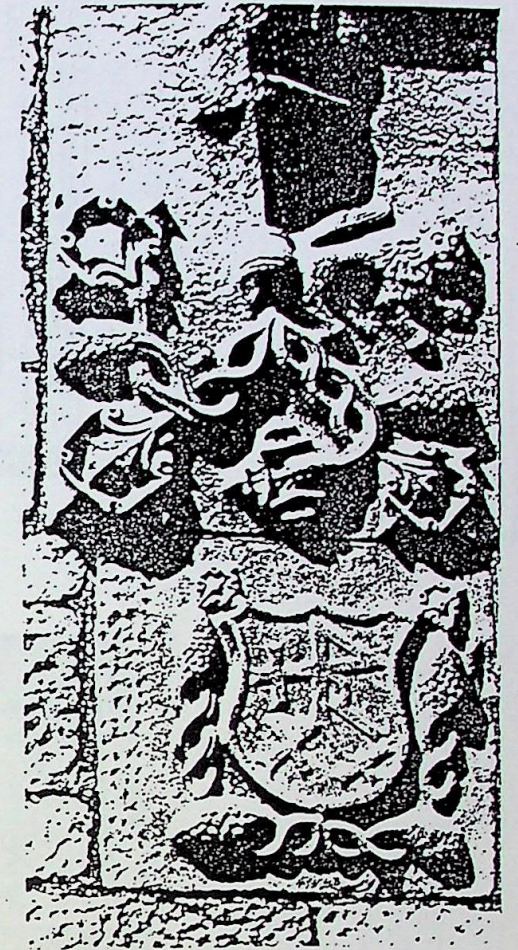
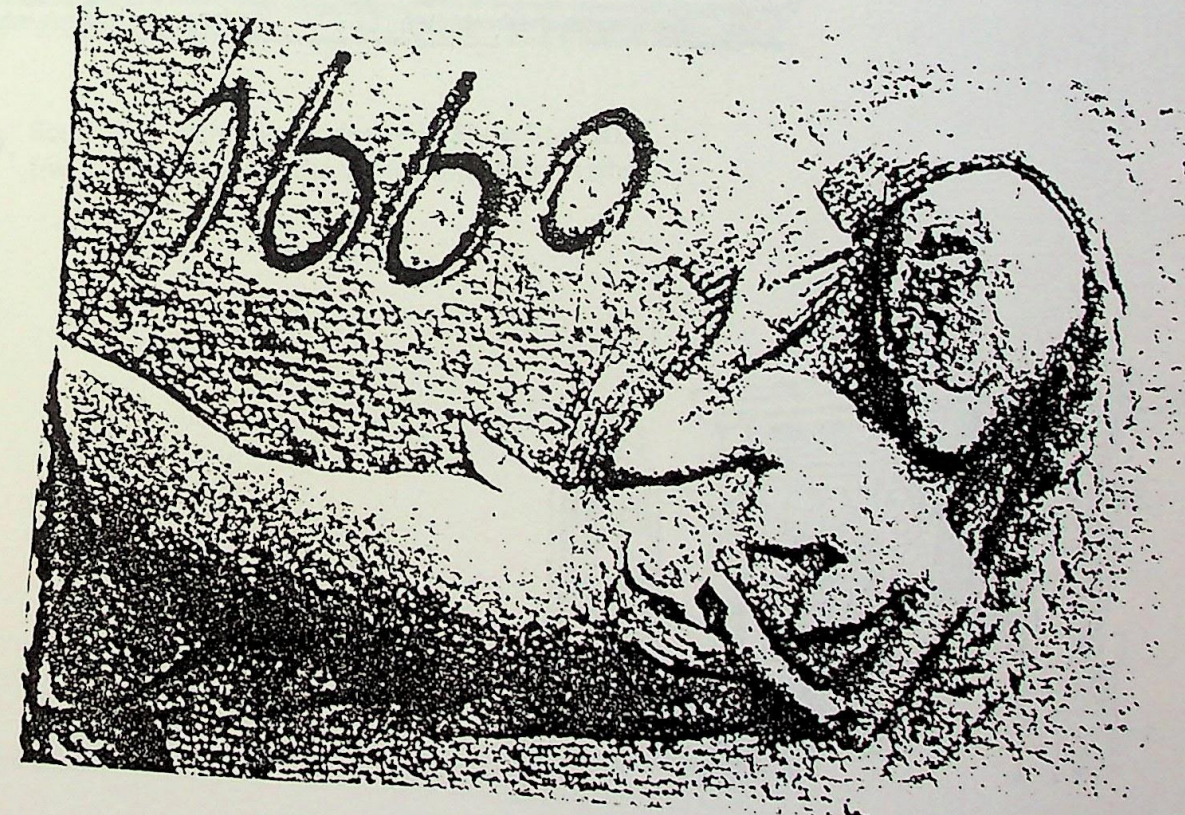


FIG. 27.
Detail from the front of Lynch's Castle showing
a decorated hood - mould stop and merchant mark



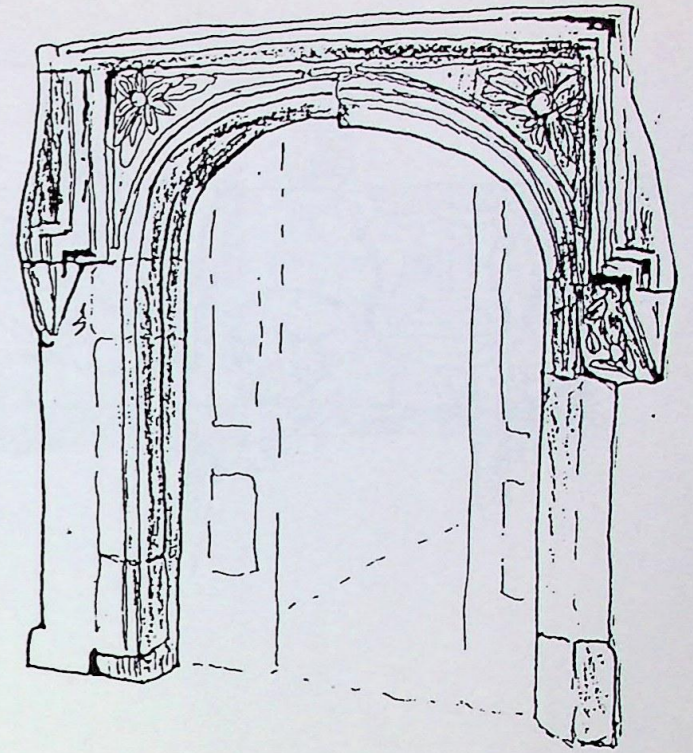


FIG. 29.
Medieval Doorway into a hair salon on High St.

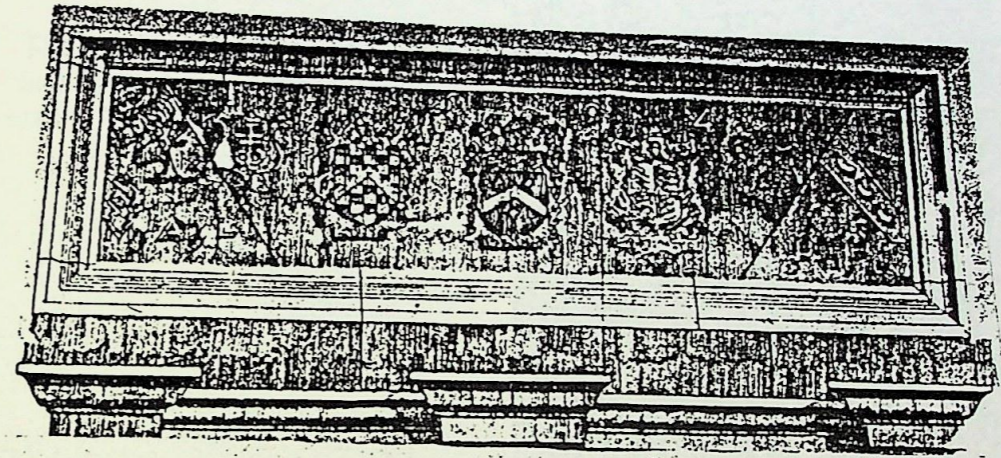


FIG. 30. Sculptured slab over doorway in Shop St. with five Crests including the Lynch and Athy Arms

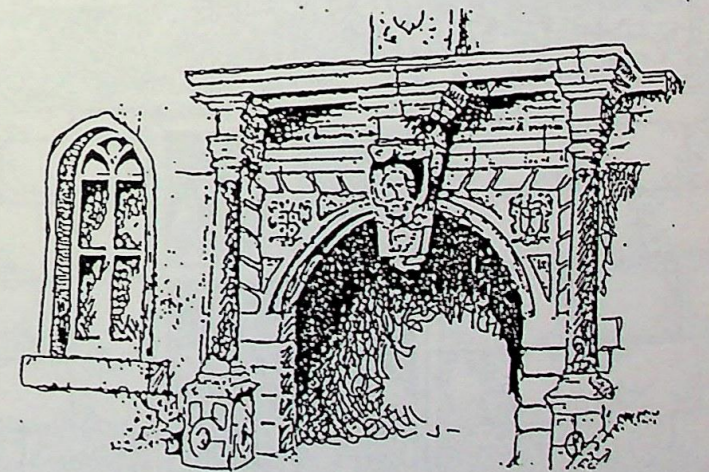


FIG. 31.
Doorway in the garden of the Convent of Mercy

FIG.32.

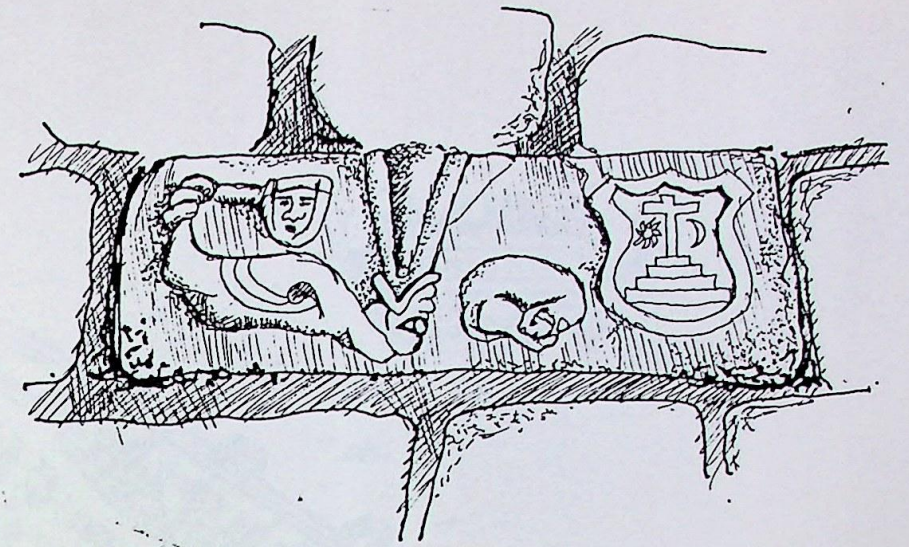


FIG.33.
Stone arch uncovered on building on the corner of Flood St. (also shows some inserted carved stones)

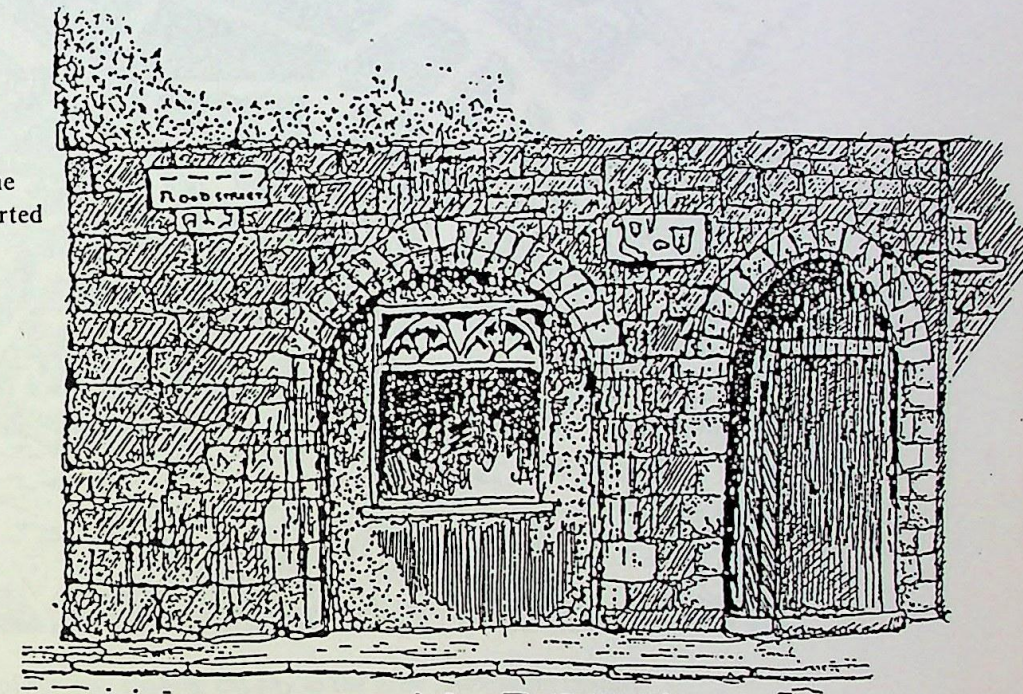
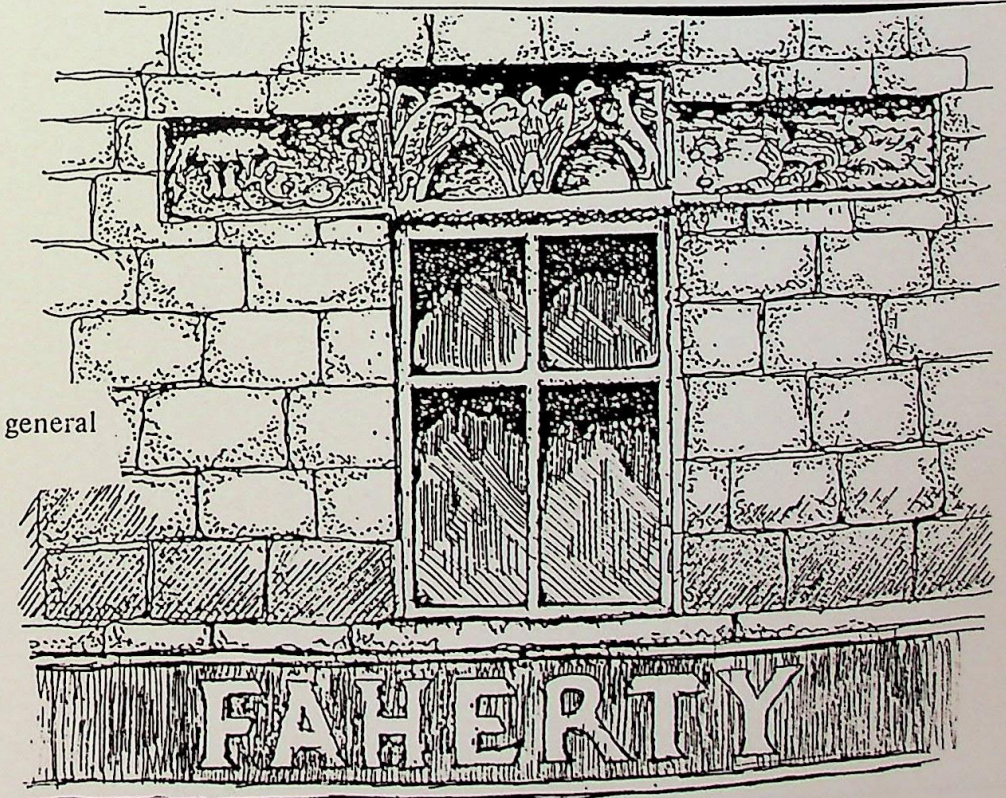


FIG.34.
Hood - moulding over John Flaherty's general merchant store in Cross St.



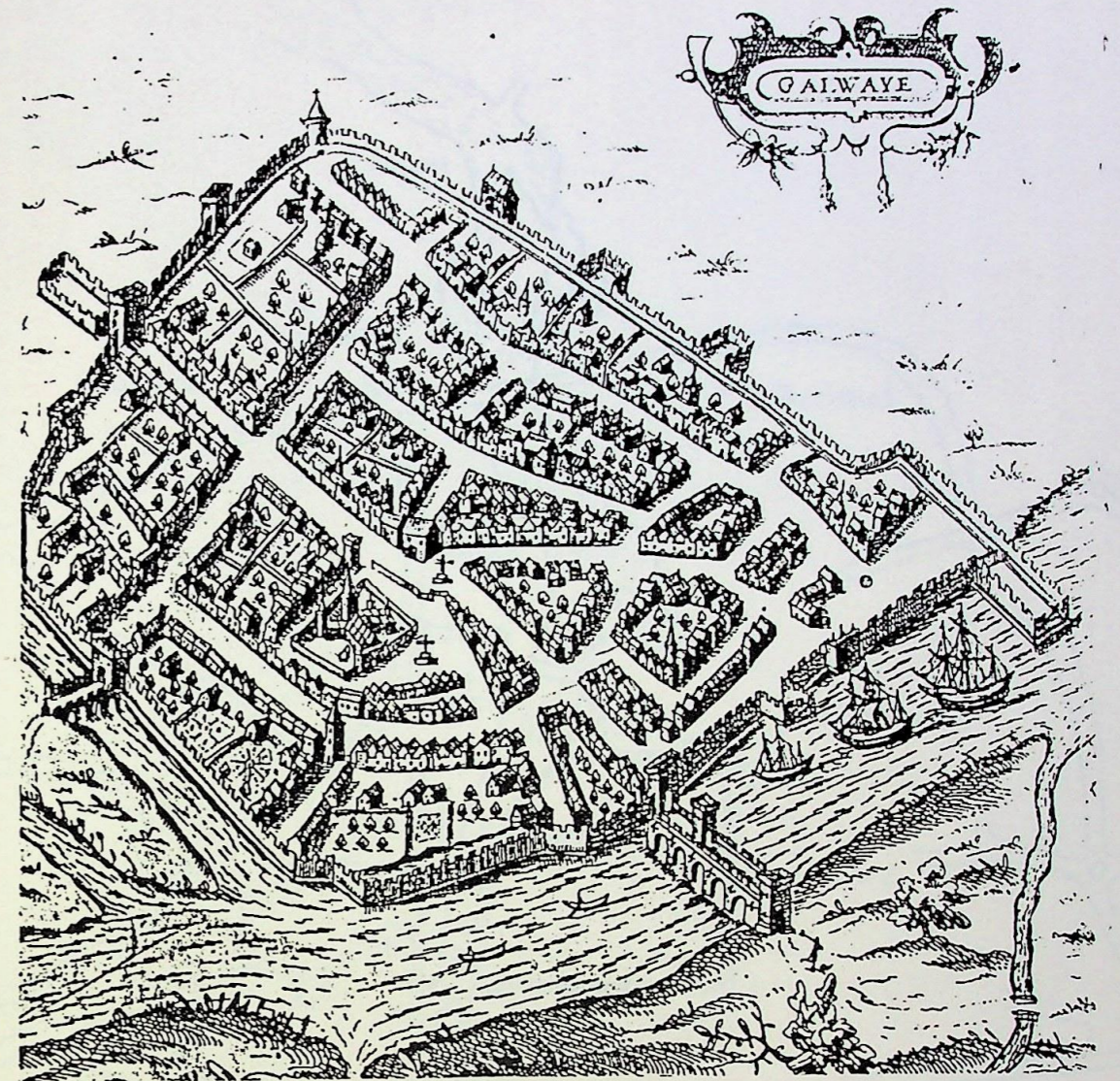
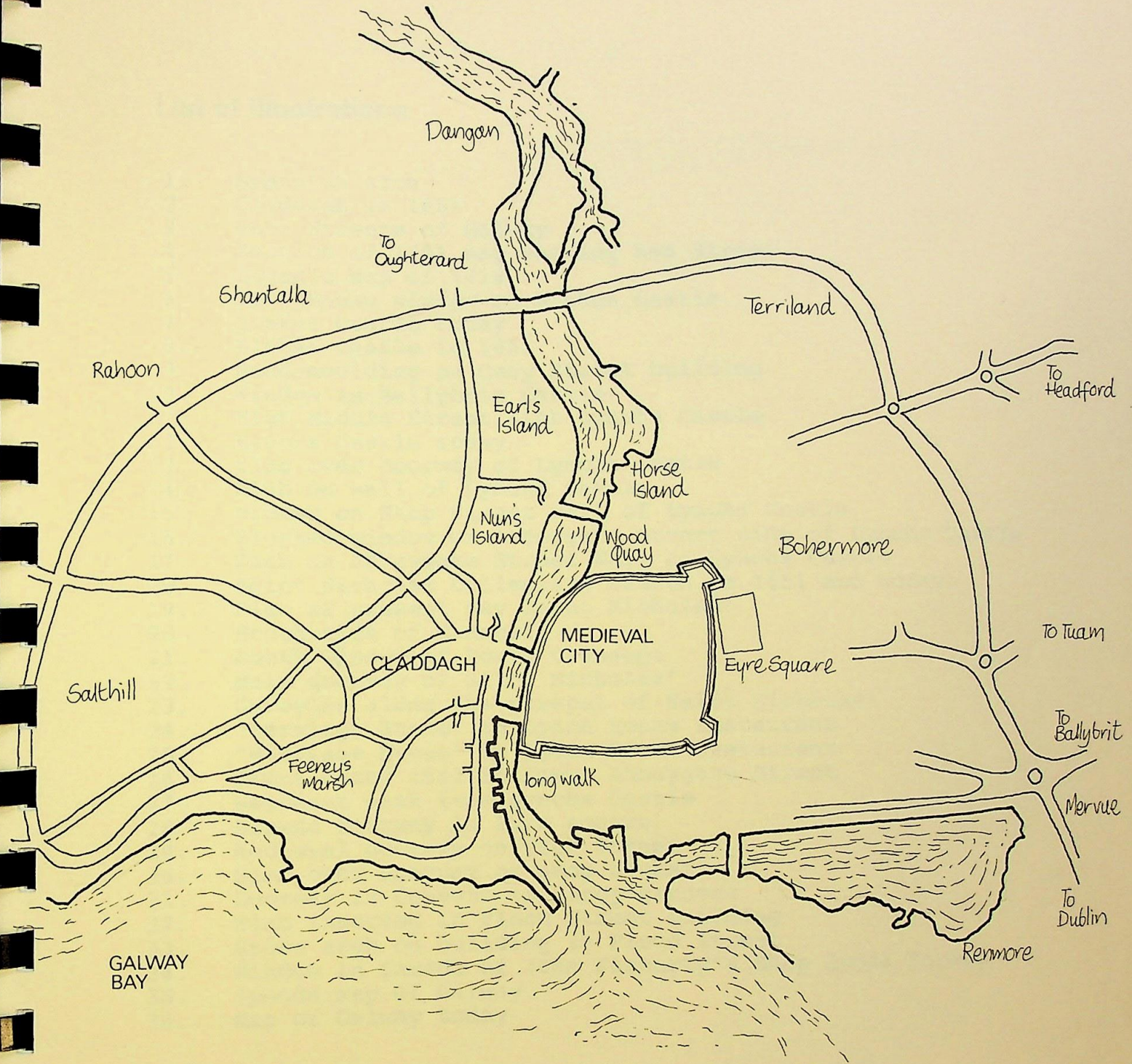


FIG. 35. Speed's map of Galway, showing the city in the early seventeenth century.

TODAY'S Galway fig 36



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