



# Laytown Park, Co. Meath

## Heritage Desk Based Assessment

Ninch townland

Site Area: Approx. 2.35 ha

ITM: (centre) 716315, 771254

**Record of Monuments and Places: None**

**Record of Protected Structures: vicinity of**  
RPS MH028-304/NIAH 14319003 (House/Shop),  
RPS MH028-305/NIAH 14319004 (Alverno Hotel),  
MH028-303/ NIAH 14402801 (Railway Bridge over River Nanny,  
NIAH 14319005 -not on RPS (The Coast Public House).

**Architectural Conservation Area: None**

Niall Roycroft

**21<sup>st</sup> June 2023**

## **Non-Technical Summary**

Meath County Council is proposing to redesign the existing Laytown Park at Laytown, Co. Meath ITM 716315, 771254. The defined site outline is 2.35 ha, but the large area to the east includes grassed dunes at the beach head, as well as the estuary sands to the south, that would raise the site influence beyond 3.50 ha. Previous mapping and photographs show that the entire 2.35 ha site was previously an estuary with a tidal inlet including pools, muds, marshes and a track leading to a ford, until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The River Nanny once had a sharp meander in the middle of the site; but has since moved south into its present channel. The present R150 road along the N site boundary is a mid-20<sup>th</sup> C creation: the original road survives as a cut-off along the old houses to the north. The southern side of this early road was the original sea wall and head of the tidal zone. The E site boundary was a road leading S to a ford on the River Nanny. This road was perhaps an ancient N-S 'Coast Road' that led to the original estuary settlement at Laytown. The road was around the high tide mark and may not be buried too deep under present ground level. The adjacent Dublin-Drogheda Railway to W was opened in 1844.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> C Down Survey maps, Laytown (Leyton) was located on higher ground facing the sea to the north, in the area of the present Race Course. It was a settlement named after water-meadows (fields that flood in winter) that probably lay between present Laytown and Bettystown, as well as meadows around the River Nanny estuary. Laytown is named as a small village in its present estuary location on the 1837 OS and there may have been some form of port and boat beaching facilities here. The town really took off with the arrival of the Dublin-Drogheda Railway (with River Nanny viaduct RPS MH028-303/ NIAH 14402801) and the construction of the Alverno Hotel (RPS MH028-305/NIAH 14319004). 19<sup>th</sup> C photos show a sea wall along the original road line with no port facilities visible. A ford once existed across the River Nanny estuary to the south of the proposed site, and this was accessed by a rough track along the E site boundary – presumably around the high tide mark.

When the estuary area was infilled in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a carpark and sports grounds were built in the western and central parts, and the eastern part included a children's playground. The whole construction was protected by linear dune-bunds that are still clearly visible. The dune-bunds have an overlapping outflow arrangement for drainage at the southern end. The central grassed area becomes wet in winter.

The area was upgraded again in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century when the realigned R150 Strand Road was built. Further works after 2000 created the present River Nanny Car Park, the River Nanny Footbridge (replacing a footbridge on the W side of the viaduct), the present Laytown Playground and associated carparks, and the R150 bus turning loop.

Proposals include redesigning the Laytown Playground and associated lawns only. This is approx. 1 ha and most excavations would probably need to be several metres deep to impact on the previous ground surfaces. However, the old track on the E side is probably not much under present ground level. Therefore, archaeological trial work would be useful in understanding the archaeological potential of the area. This work may or may not lead to further excavations, environmental coring or monitoring.

# 1 Introduction



Meath County Council is proposing to redesign the existing Laytown Park at Laytown, Co. Meath ITM 716315, 771254. The defined site outline is 2.35 ha, but the large area to the east includes grassed dunes at the beach head, as well as the estuary sands to the south, that would raise the site influence up to 3.50 ha. 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century mapping and photographs show that the entire 2.35 ha site was an estuary with a tidal inlet including ponds, muds and marshes until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

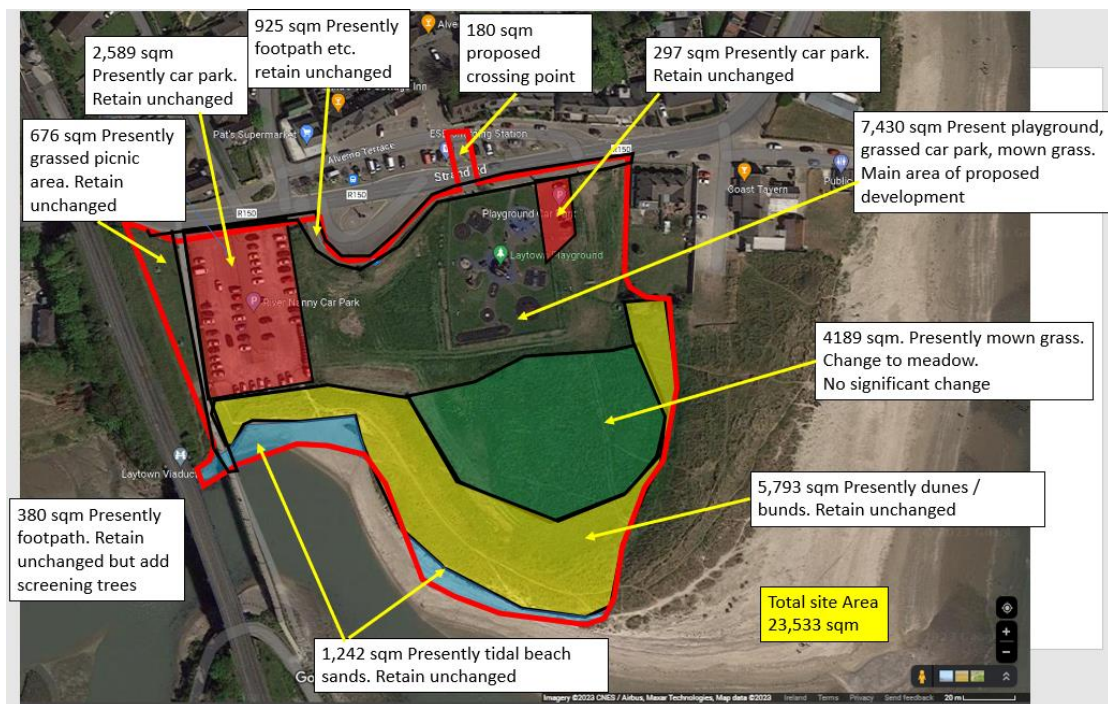
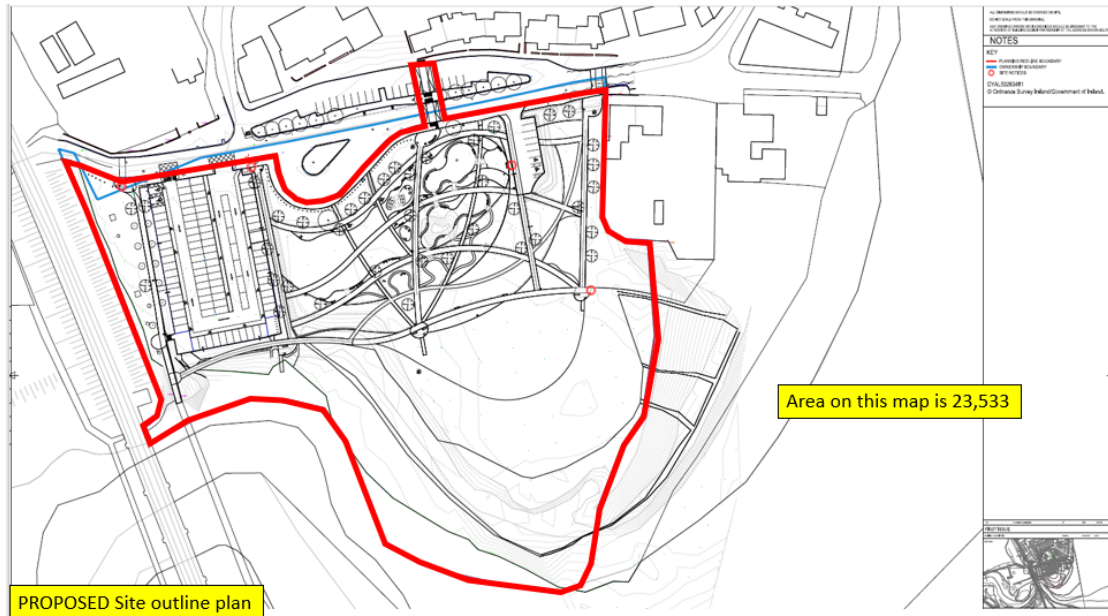
## Extract from BDP Design Summary:

Meath County Council intend to redefine and reimagine the existing Laytown Park at Laytown, County Meath. BDP (Building Design Partnership) have worked together with Meath County Council to prepare the design for the park. This has been developed in conjunction with Fers Ecological Consultants and Stakeholder requirements.

There are no recorded monuments in the immediate vicinity – the nearest is SMR ME028-064 Holy Well (100m to SW on opposite side of River Nanny).

The site is in the vicinity of several Protected Structures:

- RPS MH028-304/NIAH 14319003 (House/Shop),
- RPS MH028-305/NIAH 14319004 (Alverno Hotel),
- MH028-303/ NIAH 14402801 (Railway Bridge over River Nanny,
- NIAH 14319005 -not on RPS (The Coast Public House).

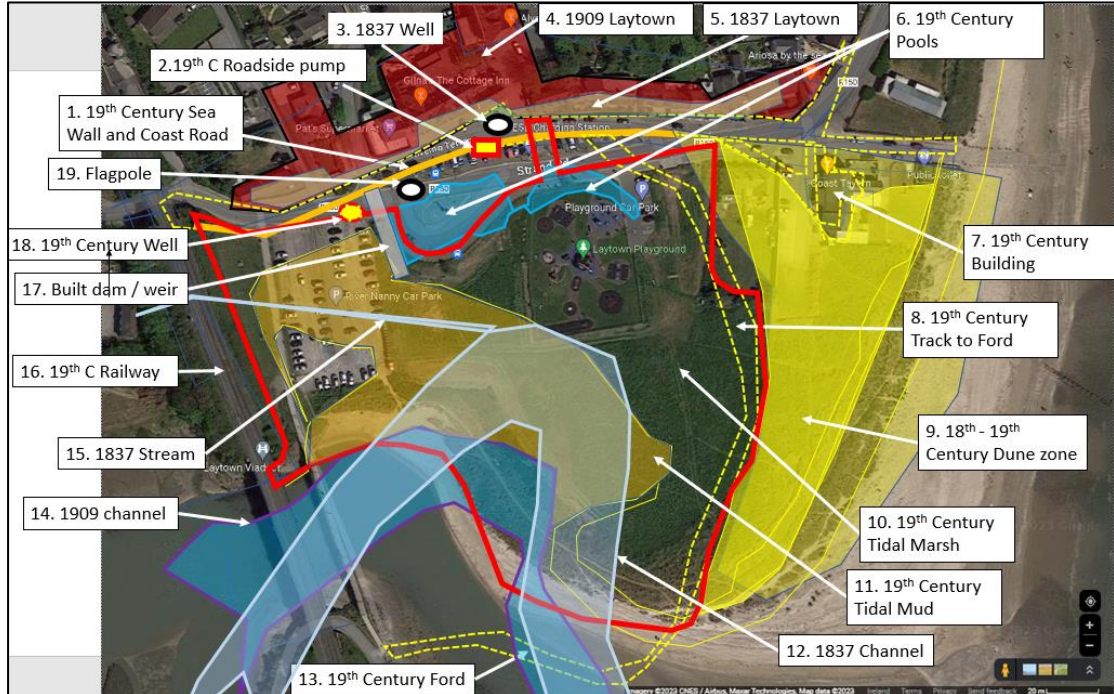


Proposals focus on redesigning the Laytown Playground and associated lawns. This is approx. 1 ha and excavations would probably need to be several metres deep to impact on the previous ground surfaces in these areas. However, it is not known what material was used to infill the estuary, so some archaeological trial work would be useful in understanding the archaeological potential of the area. Similarly, the size of the proposed development would typically trigger an archaeological response. Also, other minor works in the area have had archaeological conditions – mostly as a result of the extensive archaeological remains ME028-025 noted at the Ince Bay Housing development c.750m N of the proposed site.



## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Topography and hydrology



The above shows overlays of 1837, 1909 and modern mapping. The 1837 outline to the River Nanny is number [12], connected with a stream [15] that was redirected when the Railway was built. There is a projecting dune bank [9] on the seaward side.

By the 1909 OS – after the construction of the Dublin-Drogheda Railway (opened 1844) - the River Nanny channel has moved south as [14] and there is tidal estuary of muds [11] and marsh [10]. The marsh [10] would still be briefly flooded at the higher tides, but vegetation does grow. Towards the northern end are two pools [6]. Photographs show that the W end to the large pool was a ridged dam [17] that also acted as an access track. The whole area was tidal as far as the sea wall [1] (now located to the north of the site) and the Ford [13] access track [8] (now located along the E side of the proposed site).

Archaeologically, the Ford [13] would be a place of great interest since it is likely that a bridge of hurdles or some other structure, perhaps of gravels or brushwood, were built here in the past. Typically, lots of items are lost when people and materials cross fording points. However, fording points move over time and this whole area is outside the present site outline and has been thoroughly scoured by the present River channel.

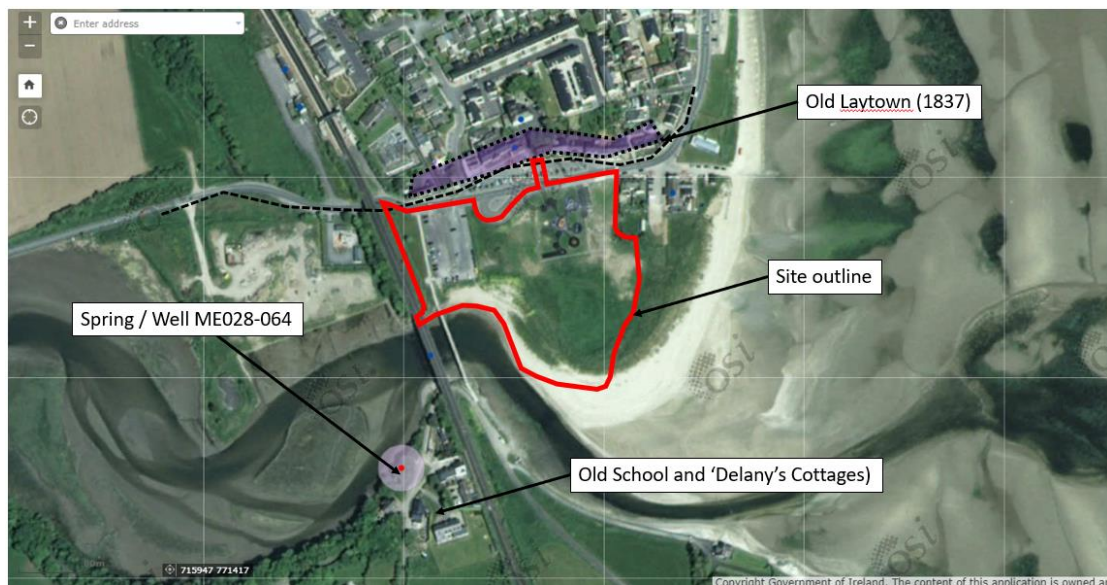
Similarly, lots of items and waste are often thrown over a sea wall in the vicinity of a settlement. The Pools [6] could have been used to temporarily store eg shellfish or

other seafood. Therefore, the zone up by the sea wall would also be an area of higher archaeological potential.

Old photos imply that the present R150 is probably not more than 0.50m or so above the high tide level. Similarly, the original E track to the Ford is probably around high tide level and probably not much below present ground level. But the original River Nanny channel bases might be up to 5m or more below present ground level. So there must be a variable depth of modern infill in the Laytown Park area of 0.50m to perhaps up to 4m deep.

Several 'Wells' or Springs marked on OS mapping in this area may be partly a result of impermeable layers of estuarine clays dating from the post-glacial period onwards. The depths and extents of any such clays is not currently known.

## 2.2 Record of Monuments and Places





There are no recorded monuments in the immediate vicinity – the nearest is SMR ME028-064 Holy Well (100m to SW on opposite side of River Nanny).

**ME028-064----**

[Scope note](#)

**Class:** Ritual site - holy well

**Townland:** CORBALLIS (Duleek Upper By.)

**Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP:** Yes

**Description:** A natural spring known as 'Colmcille's well' that runs out of a rocky crevice in the south bank of the river Nanny. The bank at this point is revetted by a stone masonry wall. There is evidence for veneration with coins placed in the hollow and it is reputed to cure sore eyes (pers. comm. Colin Byrne)

Compiled by: Claire Breen

Date of upload: 10 December 2013

**ME028-064----.jpg**





### 2.3 Details of the previous nearby archaeological works

NOTE: there were extensive, significant archaeological excavations at Ninch / Ince Bay for a hectare or so around ITM 716137, 772003, approx. 750m to the N of the proposed site from 1998 to 2003 (98E0501 ext., 01E0723 and 03E1820). However, for conciseness these excavations are not included here.

## 2003:1415 - Laytown, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Laytown

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 02E1003

**Author:** Martin Jones, No. 6 Newgarden, Belclare, Tuam, Co. Galway.

**Site type:** Monitoring

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 716437m, N 771543m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.680630, -6.237450

Topsoil-stripping was monitored at the proposed location of a development of 38 houses, three shop units and their associated services and access **at the rear of the Alverno Hotel** in Laytown Village, Co. Meath.

A desk-top assessment and testing were carried out by Tom Rogers in June 2002 (Excavations 2002, No. 1488). Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in the course of testing. It was recommended that an archaeologist carry out monitoring of the proposed development. The development is relatively close to several monuments and recent excavations 1km to the north have also revealed a site of multi-period activity.

Fieldwork was carried out on an intermittent basis between 14 and 29 of July 2003. Work was then postponed until further notice. Topsoil was stripped to a maximum depth of



0.45m. No deposits of an archaeological nature were found. A number of cut features noted were modern and associated with the former use of the site as a caravan park. Finds retrieved included modern pottery, glass, plastic drainage piping and domestic refuse.

## 2005:1207 - LAYTOWN, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** LAYTOWN

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** —

**Author:** Rosanne Meenan, Roestown, Drumree, Co. Meath.

**Site type:** No archaeological significance

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 716102m, N 771437m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.679750, -6.242558

The owners and developers of this site received planning permission to construct two apartment blocks comprising 26 apartments. Monitoring of excavation works was required. The site is surrounded by housing on three sides. The boundary on the fourth side is formed by the **railway embankment and railway station at Laytown**. The railway track is at a higher level than the development site and overlooks it. The sod and topsoil were removed to a depth of c. 0.3m. The subsoil was exposed in a few places but not generally; it was dark-brown and contained sherds of 19th-century pottery, presumably deposited there during manuring. Subsoil comprised heavy gravel. The line of a north–south trench was exposed running parallel with and c. 20m east of the railway embankment. This represented the line of an existing water drainage pipe. Excavation took place for the realignment of the existing drainage pipe. Its line was moved westwards and closer to the line of the embankment. Strip foundations for the two apartment blocks were then excavated.

## 2007:1345 - Laytown, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Laytown

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 07E0930

**Author:** John Purcell, 17 Balmoral Terrace, Dillon's Cross, Cork.

**Site type:** Ditches?

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 716437m, N 771543m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.680630, -6.237450

Test-trenching was carried out as part of further information for a school development at Laytown, Co. Meath, in an area where archaeological remains have been uncovered in adjacent development sites. A series of trenches were subsequently excavated by mechanical digger across the site. Two potential ditches were uncovered in Trench 7 at the north of the proposed development. This is partially within the construction area. The ditch may be associated with reclamation works evident across the site. Alternatively the ditches may be part of a large enclosure with an internal diameter of 61m. There was also no evidence of an associated bank. No other features were uncovered associated with these potential ditches.

## 2007:1347 - River Nanny, Laytown, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** River Nanny, Laytown

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 07E0967

**Author:** David A. McCullough, The Crossways, Ballyline, Callan, Co. Kilkenny, for ADCO.

**Site type:** Riverbed

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 671086m, N 816059m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 54.088716, -6.913444

No archaeological artefacts or features were revealed during the seven-week regime of monitoring of the construction phase excavations of the riverbed and associated riverbanks as part of the construction of the **Laytown pedestrian footbridge**. The monitoring was concentrated on all areas impacted upon, including the piling locations within the river and any disturbances on the adjacent riverbanks.

## 2012:450 - Meath Countywide Water Conservation Project Watermains Rehabilitation Phase 2, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Meath Countywide Water Conservation Project Watermains Rehabilitation Phase 2

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** 12E0096; C533 **Licence number:** E4426

**Author:** Judith Carroll

**Site type:** Monitoring

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 0m, N 0m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.726835, -6.874833

Monitoring was conducted during the digging of engineer's test pits for Phase 2 of the Meath Countywide Water Conservation Project. Judith Carroll and Company Ltd was contracted by Grontmij Ltd on behalf of Meath County Council to conduct the monitoring of the groundworks. A desktop assessment report was also commissioned prior to

monitoring and an archaeological historical background study was provided by this company.

The monitoring was carried out between April 16 and June 20 by Judith Carroll and Kenneth Wiggins. The area covered by this scheme included several Meath towns of medieval or earlier date, extending into the early modern and modern periods. These were Kells, Slane, Navan Trim, Oldcastle, Athboy, Duleek, Ratoath, Mornington and Laytown and their environs in most cases. The scheme also included smaller areas such as Fennor and Kilcarn which were of importance during the early medieval to early modern periods. The pipeline is planned to run through the centres and outskirts of the above locations, in many cases, in areas of high archaeological potential. The test trenching to examine soil and water quality for the scheme took place along these routes. A licence, 12E0096, was issued for the archaeological monitoring of the scheme in general, while a Ministerial Consent was issued for works within the constraint zone of Kells. Most of the work consisted of the digging of test trenches 0.8-1m in width and 2m in length, though this was occasionally extended when the trench impacted on an existing service, etc. A small number of archaeological features were revealed.

**Judith Carroll & Company Ltd, Consultant Archaeologists, 11 Anglesea Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2**

## **2016:646 - Meath various towns for water rehab scheme, Meath**

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Meath various towns for water rehab scheme  
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** various **Licence number:** 12E0096 extension  
**Author:** Judith Carroll  
**Site type:** Testing and monitoring  
**Period/Dating:** —  
**ITM:** E 0m, N 0m  
**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.727000, -6.876900

Testing and monitoring was carried out during the digging of engineer's site investigation (SI) test pits and slit trenches for the Meath Watermain Rehabilitation-Phase 2. Irish Water is proposing to upgrade the pipeline infrastructure and this upgrade will be carried out in a number of urban, suburban and rural areas throughout the county. This licence (12E0096) is an extension of that granted in 2012 for the same scheme. A monitoring report for this scheme was submitted in 2012 but SI works on the scheme did not recommence until June 2016. In conjunction with this report, monitoring of SI pits and test trenching was carried out in Kells and Fennor townland, Co. Meath under Ministerial Consents for both RMP sites. Monitoring in Kells was carried out under Consent C533 (E004426) and at Fennor,



C738 (E004659). All three comprise the total monitoring of the SI pits for this scheme and the trial testing.

The areas covered by this scheme were Kells, Slane (including Fennor), Navan, Trim, Oldcastle, Athboy, Duleek, Ratoath, Mornington, **Laytown** and Dunboyne and their environs in most cases. The pipeline was planned to run through the centres and outskirts of the above locations, in many cases, in areas of high archaeological potential. Only one feature of note came to light. It was recommended that trial testing should take place to investigate a thick wall feature, 1.5 m wide, found during monitoring of the engineer's slit trench ST3-077 at the east end of St Patrick's Park, Dunboyne.

**Ballybrack Road, Glencullen, Dublin 18**

## **2018:409 - Laytown, Ninch, Meath**



**County:** Meath **Site name:** Laytown, Ninch

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** None **Licence number:** 18E0284

**Author:** Kieran Campbell

**Site type:** Monitoring of coastal protection works

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 716461m, N 771496m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.680200, -6.237105

Monitoring took place in June and July 2018 during excavations associated with coastal protection works at Laytown (Td. Ninch), Co. Meath, carried out by Carty Contractors Ltd. on behalf of Meath County Council in compliance with archaeological requirements in the tender documents. The works involved excavation into the existing embankment, the construction of a retaining wall and the installation of rock armour, for a length of c. 80m of the seafront.

The site was formerly occupied by shops, holiday chalets and a ballroom/cinema (The Palladium) built in the second decade of the 20th century as the village extended northwards from the River Nanny estuary. The buildings were demolished in the late 1970s when the site was infilled with 4m depth of rubble and soil and landscaped as a green area and car park. The excavations exposed beach sand, clay subsoil and concrete foundations

directly under the infill material. Blown sand to a height of 2.5m above strand level indicated the former presence of a dune system at this location. The bowl of an early 19th-century red sandstone garden urn, with acanthus leaf decoration, was recovered from the introduced infill material.

**6 St. Ultans, Laytown, Drogheda**

## **2020:221 - Saint Mary's Convent, Ninch, Laytown, Meath**

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Saint Mary's Convent, Ninch, Laytown  
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 20E0588  
**Author:** Linda Clarke, Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit  
**Site type:** No archaeological significance  
**Period/Dating:** —  
**ITM:** E 716161m, N 772558m  
**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.689806, -6.241246

An archaeological assessment (test trenching) was carried out on the site of a proposed development in the townland of Ninch, on a site of the former Saint Mary's Convent, in Laytown, Co. Meath. The assessment was carried out at the request of the client at a pre-planning stage. The site was tested in December 2020. The sod and topsoil (C1) consisted of a light brown sandy clay. It measured between 0.36m – 0.42m in thickness and lay above the natural grey sandy clay (C2). One post-medieval spread (C3) was identified within Trench 1. It measured 2.52m in width and consisted of a spread of dark grey sandy clay containing occasional inclusions of ash and red brick. Two post-medieval finds, a clay pipe stem (20E0588:003:1) and a sherd of green glass (20E0588:003:2) were recovered.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were exposed or identified at the site. No further mitigation is proposed.

**Linda Clarke, Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit, Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co Louth.**

## 2019:839 - Ninch, Laytown, Meath



**County:** Meath **Site name:** Ninch, Laytown

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 19E0383

**Author:** Liza Kavanagh

**Site type:** No Archaeology found

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 716341m, N 771648m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.681592, -6.238863

A programme of archaeological testing was undertaken on 24 June 2019 at Ninch, Laytown, County Meath, prior to a foodstore development. A total of ten trenches were excavated within the area of development. The layout of test trenches was designed to investigate the archaeological potential of the available open green space, following the demolition of the former nursing home within the site boundary.

The topsoil on site consisted mid-grey-brown sandy clay with occasional small stones, sea-shell and modern domestic waste. The topsoil varied in depth between 0.4m and 0.6m. The subsoil varied between dark grey-brown sandy clay with frequent stones to a mid-red-brown sandy clay with frequent stones. Patches of sand, similar to beach sand but more compact, was noted throughout.

No features of archaeological significance were uncovered during the assessment. A single find of a piece of flint debitage was recovered from site and retained.

**c/o IAC Archaeology Ltd, Unit G1 Network Enterprise Park, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow**

## 2001:1008 - Laytown–Bettystown, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Laytown–Bettystown

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 01E1175

**Author:** Rob Lynch, Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd, 8 Dungar Terrace, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.



**Site type:** No archaeological significance

**Period/Dating:** —

**ITM:** E 715819m, N 773498m

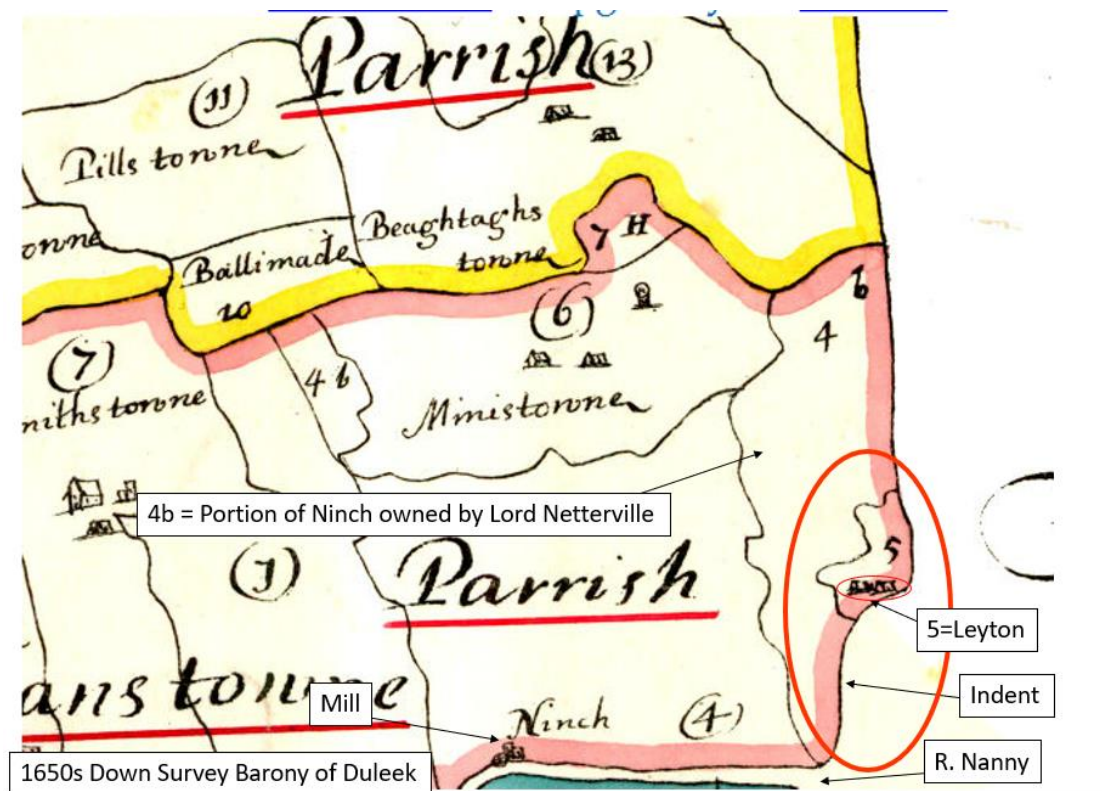
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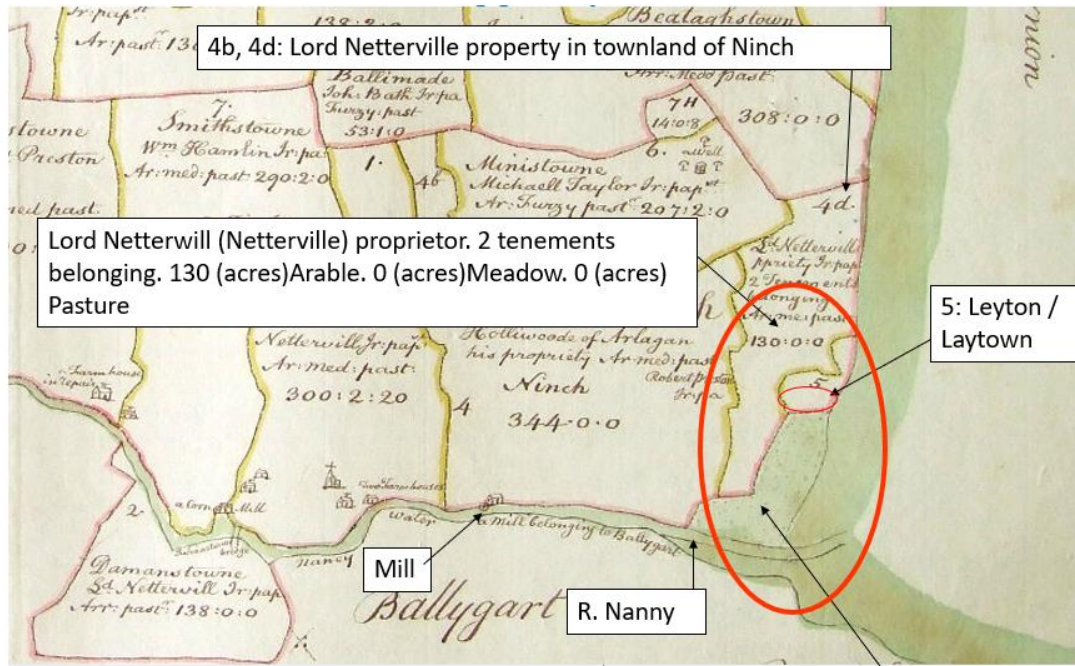
The East Meath Sewerage Scheme involves the construction of a sewage pipeline c. 20km in length running through areas of land in Mornington, Donacarney, Bettystown, Betaghstown, Laytown and Julianstown to service existing and future residential housing. The scheme also involves amendments to the existing pipeline and modifications to six existing pumping stations along the route.

Monitoring commenced on site in July 2001 and will continue until December 2002. To date nothing of archaeological significance has been discovered.

### 3 Map regression

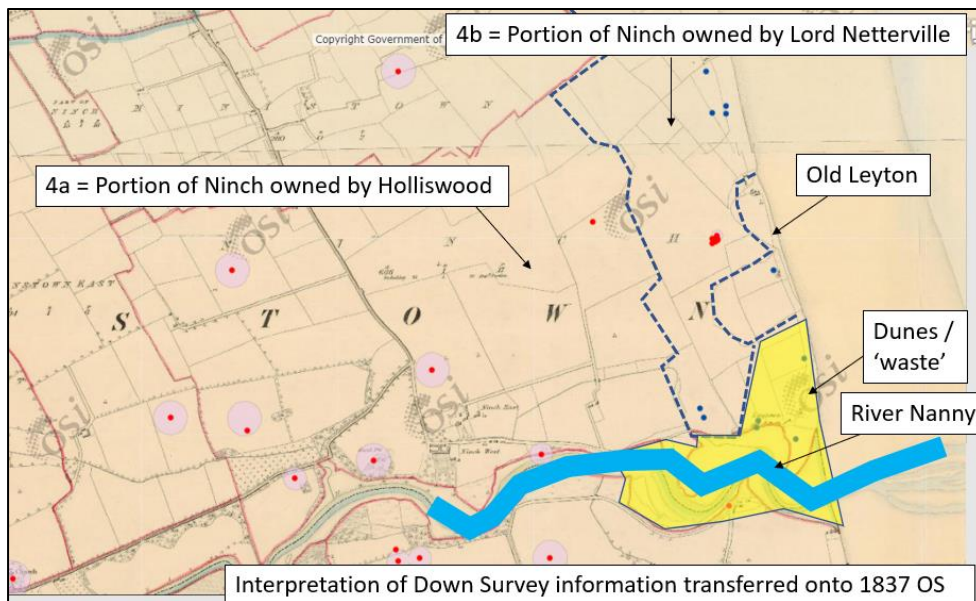
#### 3.1 1650s Down Survey





1650s Down Survey, Parish of Julianstown

Beach /dunes/ lagoons. Present focus of Laytown settlement

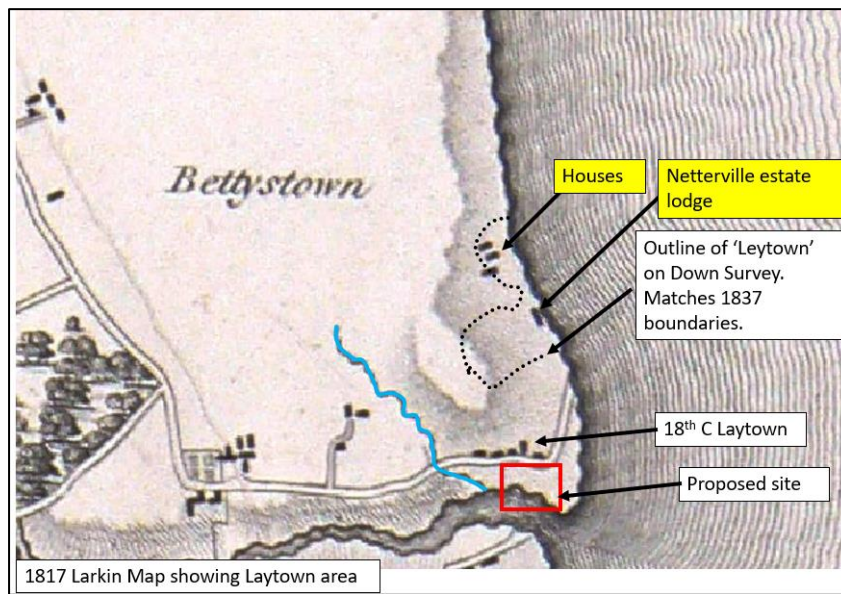


The above shows the area around the River Nanny estuary as 'beach/dune/'waste'. This seems to include the whole area of 19<sup>th</sup> C Laytown. The implication is that there is no 'farmland' here, but the River Nanny Ford seen on 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> C mapping could have been in operation with a nearby settlement in the present Laytown area. A settlement overlooking a ford would be a typical arrangement, since fords would only operate at lower tide levels and if someone needed a boat to cross, this could be supplied by locals. Also shops, refreshments and accommodation etc.

This potential settlement could have existed on trade from the Ford as well as a small income from seafood. However, there is a significant lack of a port at Laytown, but some facilities (a jetty and a crane perhaps) are possible.

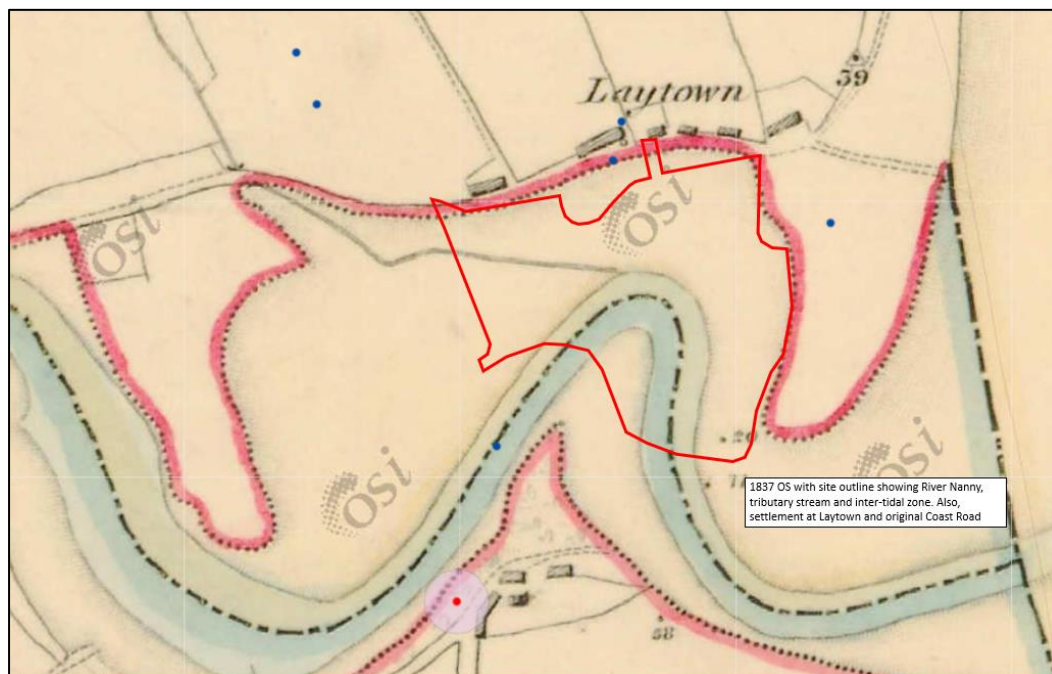


### 3.2 William Larkin Map 1812-17



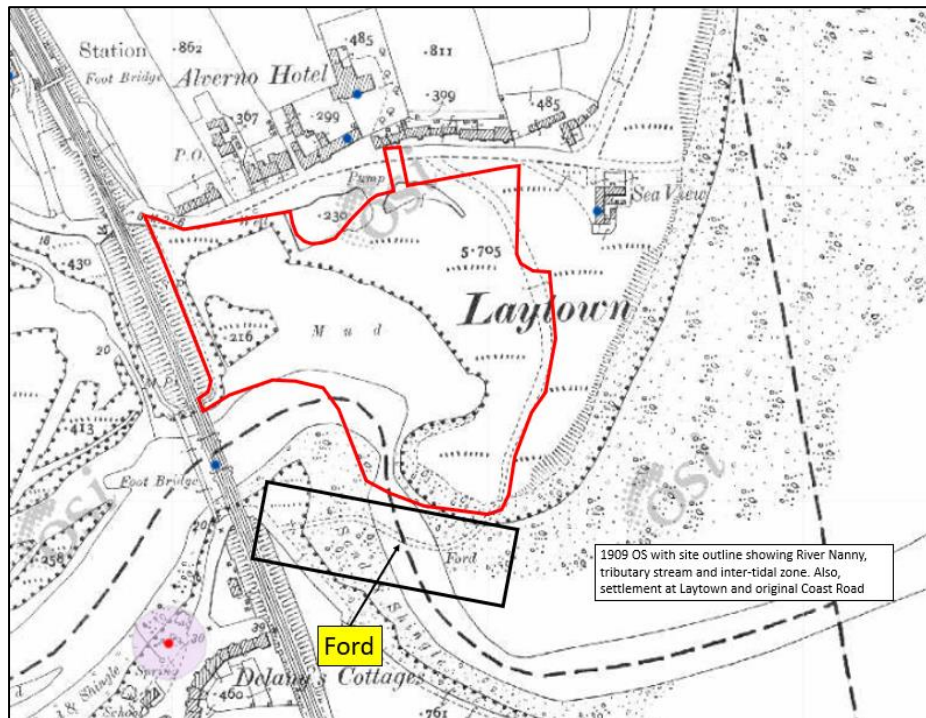
Larkin shows a scatter of buildings at Laytown. Note the road leading to the S side of the River Nanny. This is likely the N-S coast road associated with a River Nanny fording point.

### 3.3 1837 OS



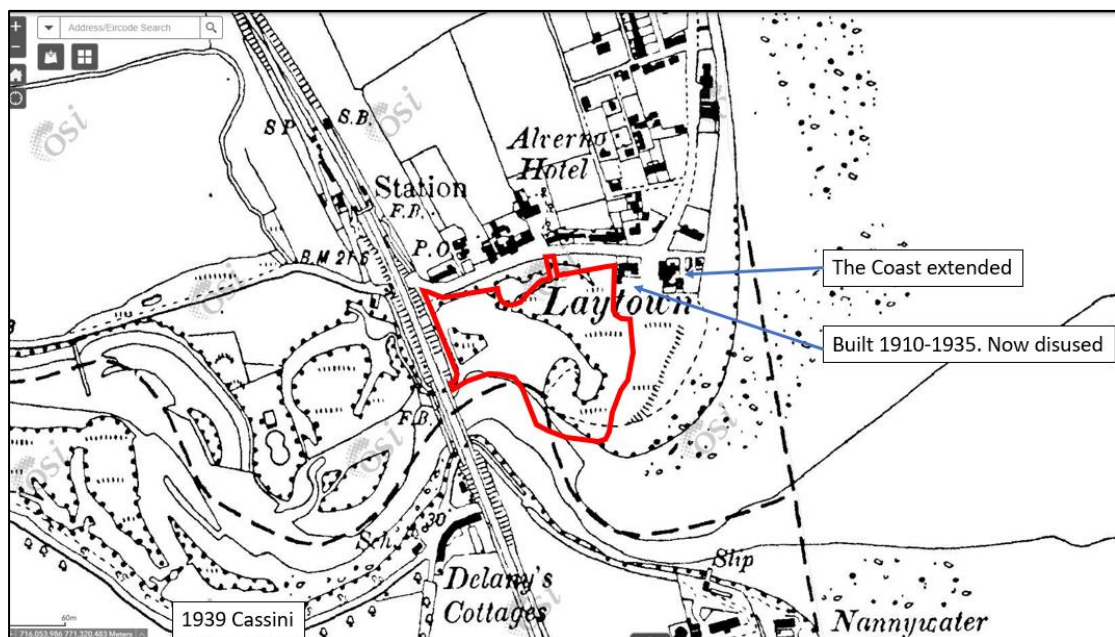
1837 OS with site outline showing River Nanny, tributary stream and inter-tidal zone. Also, settlement at Laytown and original Coast Road.

### 3.4 1888-1913 OS



The c.1909 map shows the tidal River Nanny Estuary and the layout after the Dublin-Drogheda Railway has been built. For further detail of this period there are several historical photographs 3.6 below.

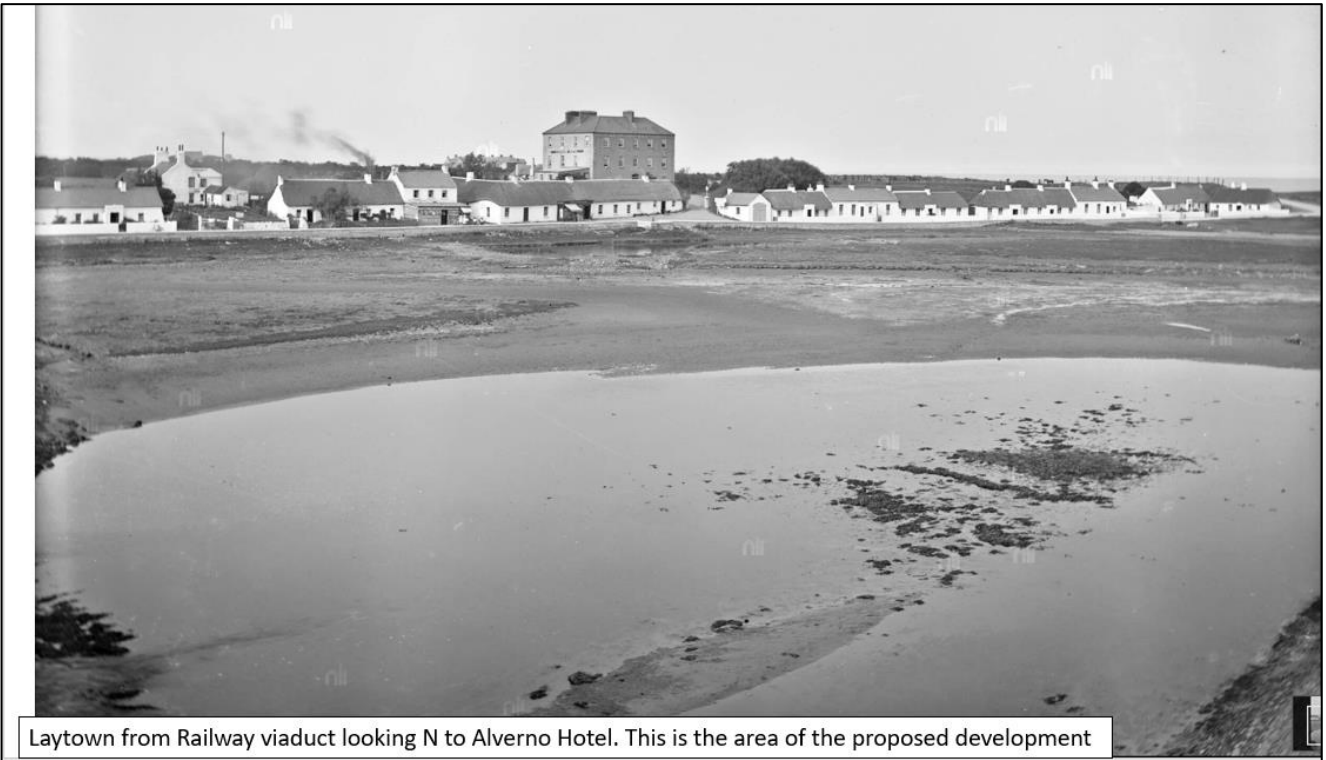
### 3.5 1939 Cassini



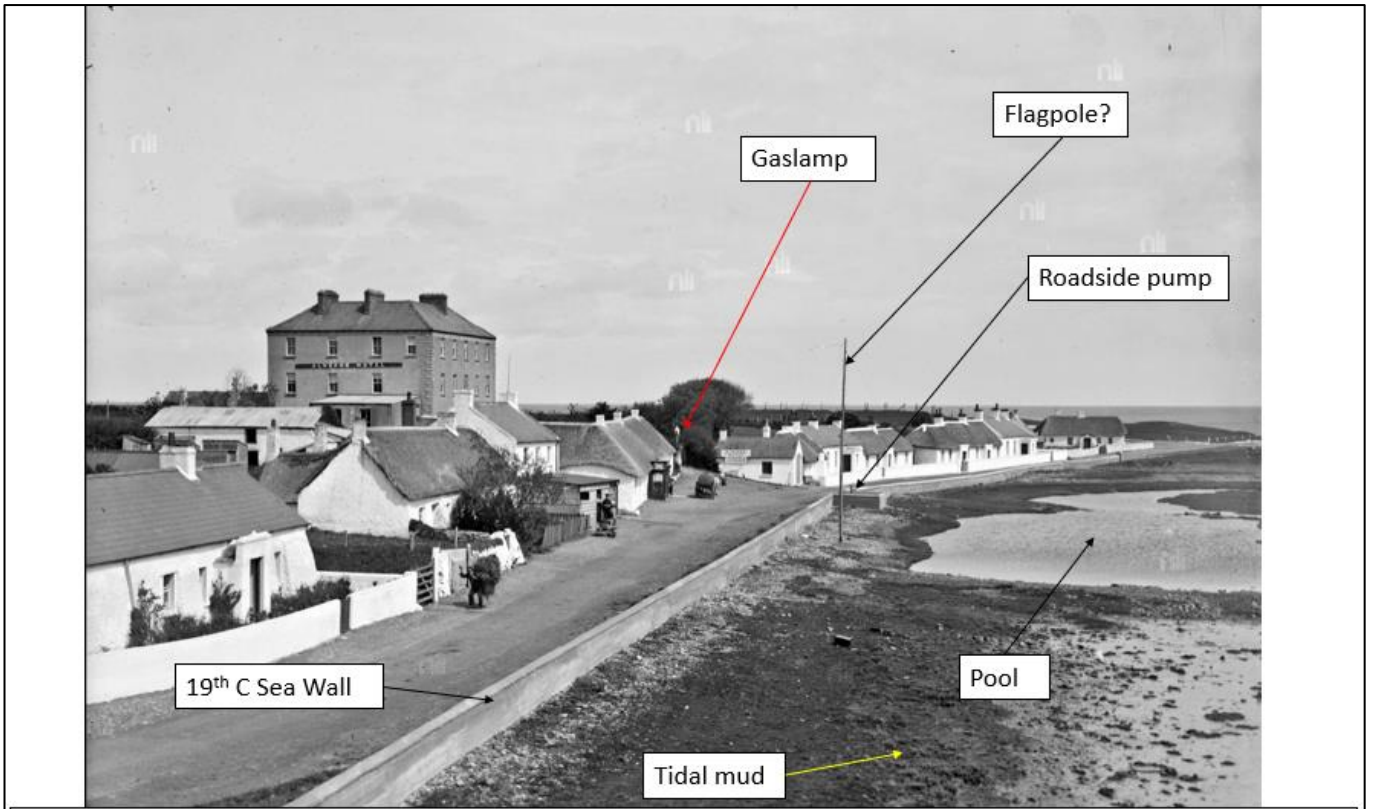
This shows the now-disused buildings next to The Coast have been built. These have extended, fenced gardens not shown on this map.



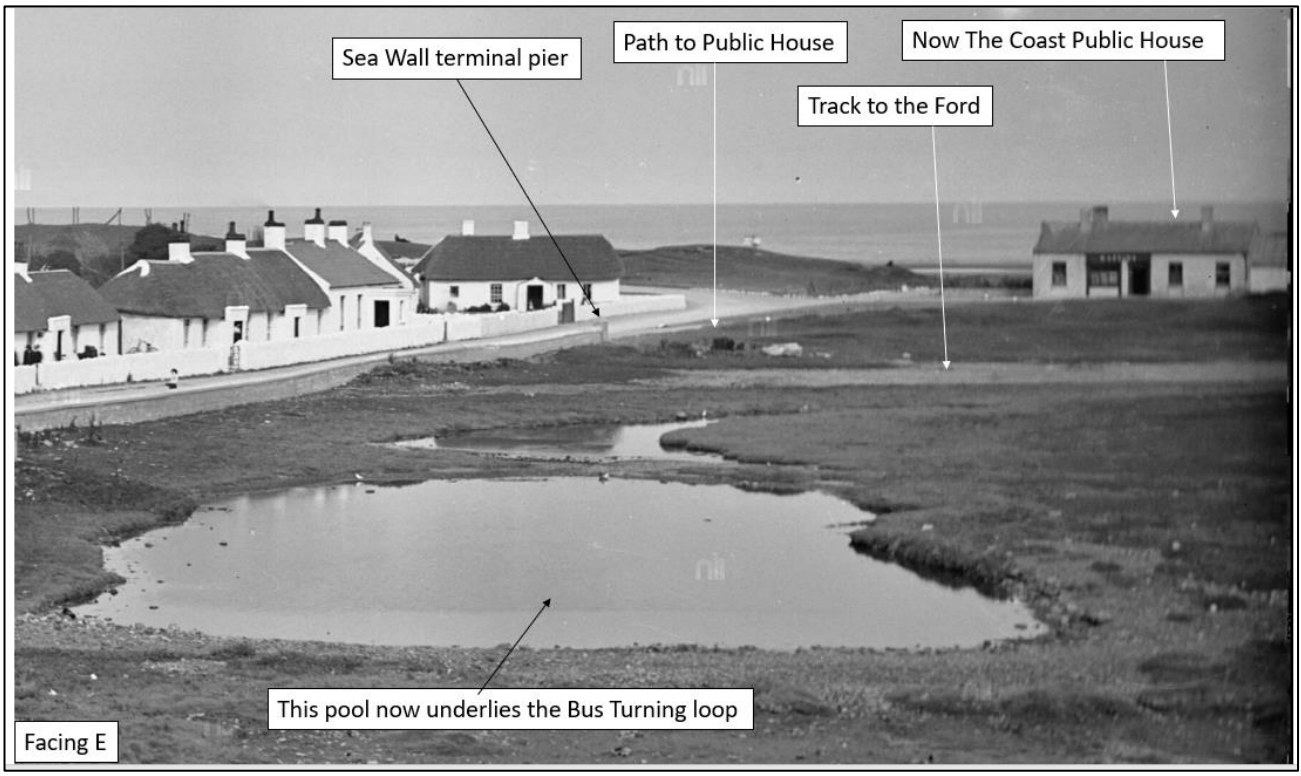
### 3.6 *Historic Photographs*



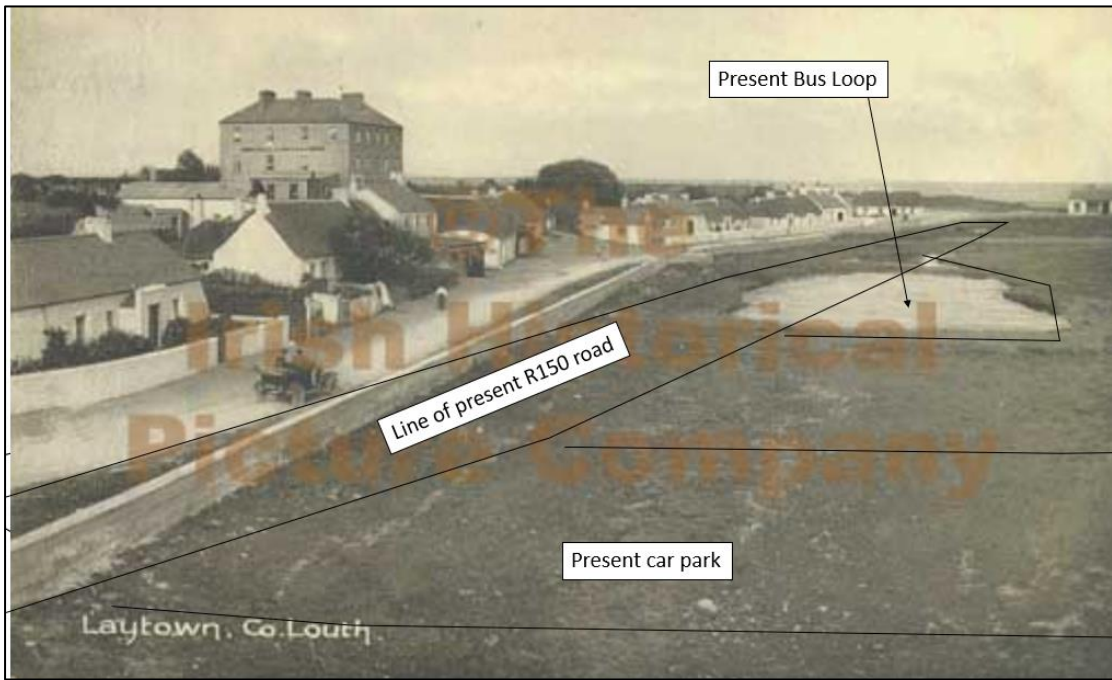
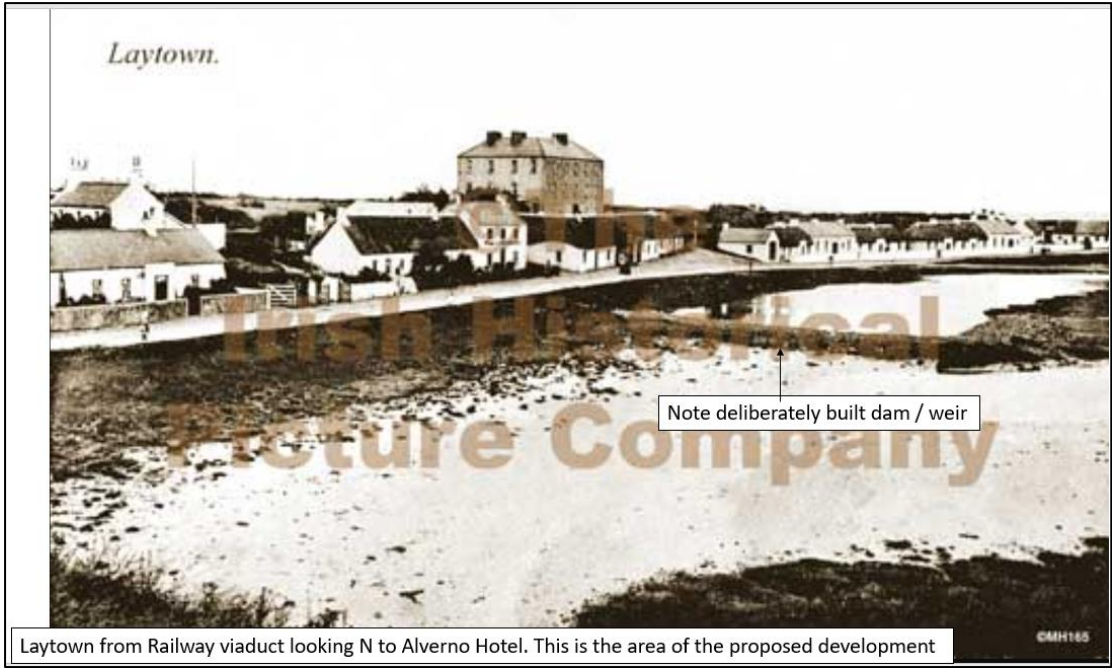
Modern photos from roughly the same area as the old one above.



Laytown from Railway looking E to Alverno Hotel. The area of the proposed development is the tidal zone on the right





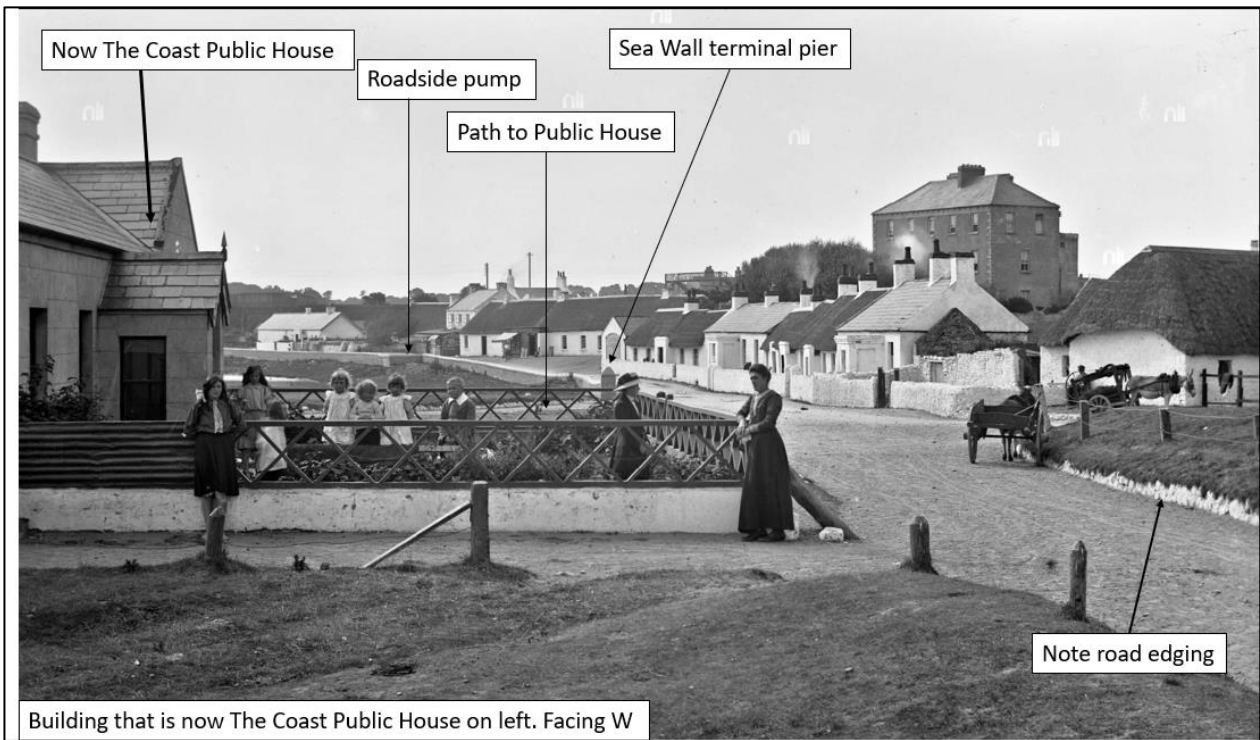




From the dunes to the rear of The Coast facing NW to Alverno hotel. Track to the Ford in foreground. Proposed site and present R150 in tidal area in centre and on left



From the beach access path next to The Coast facing W to Alverno hotel.

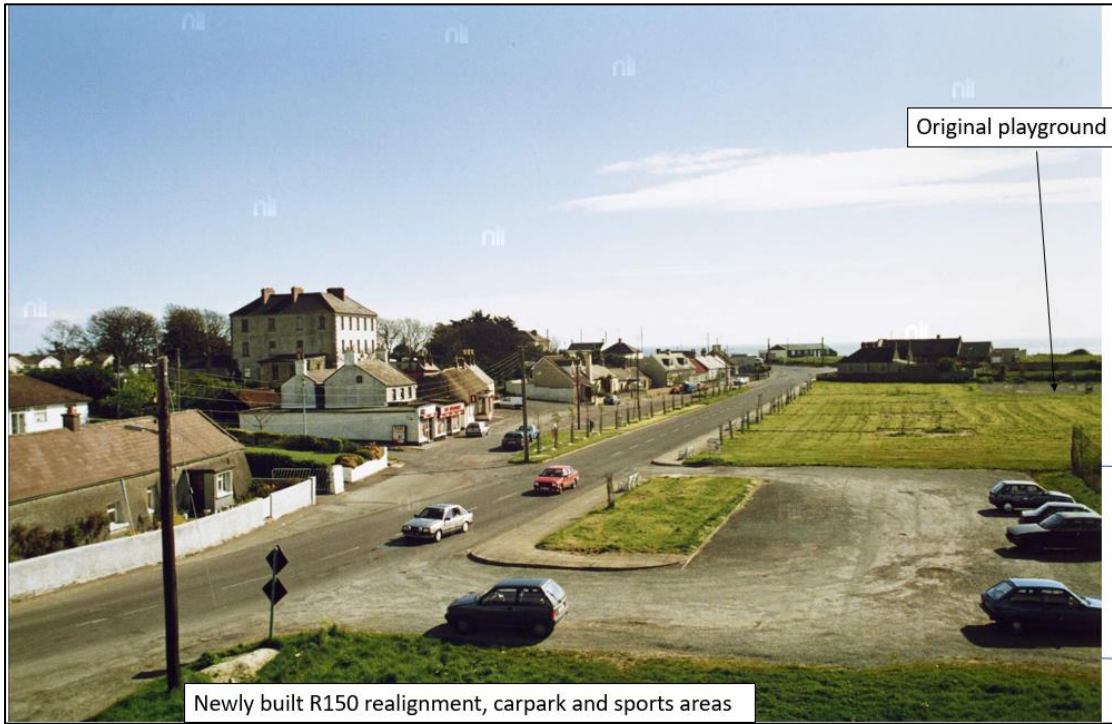


Note the decorative roadside edging. This displays a local vernacular architectural style that might be retained in future developments.





Mid-20<sup>th</sup> C (1950s-1960s) Area filled in before new R150 road alignment

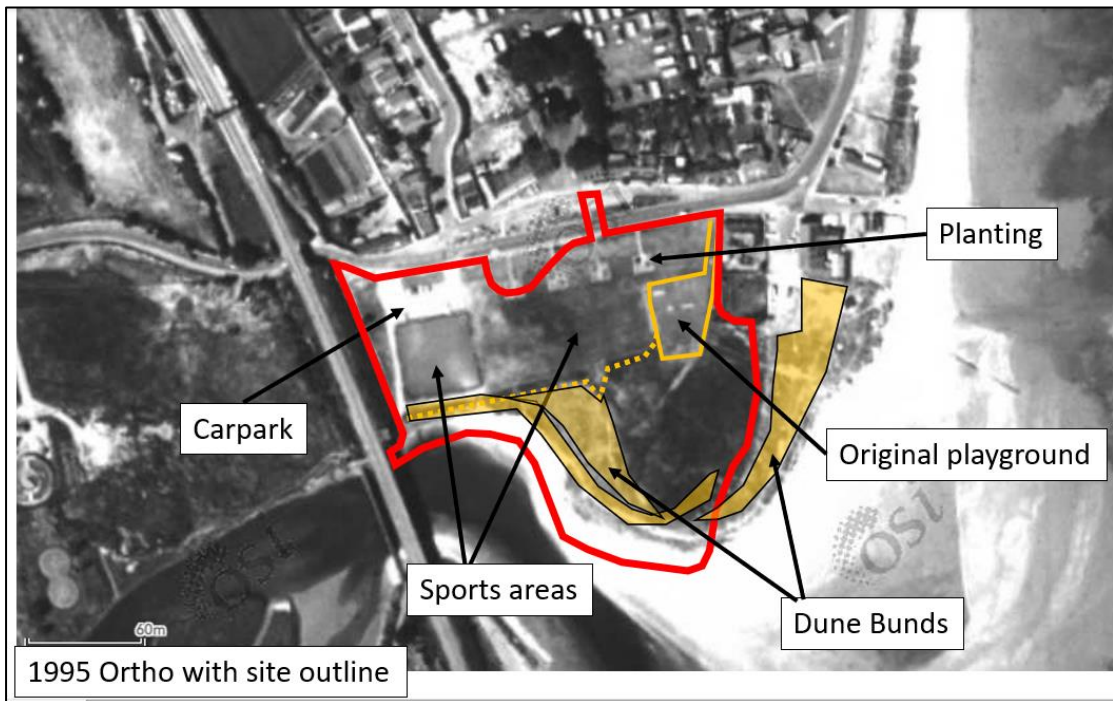


C.1990 image



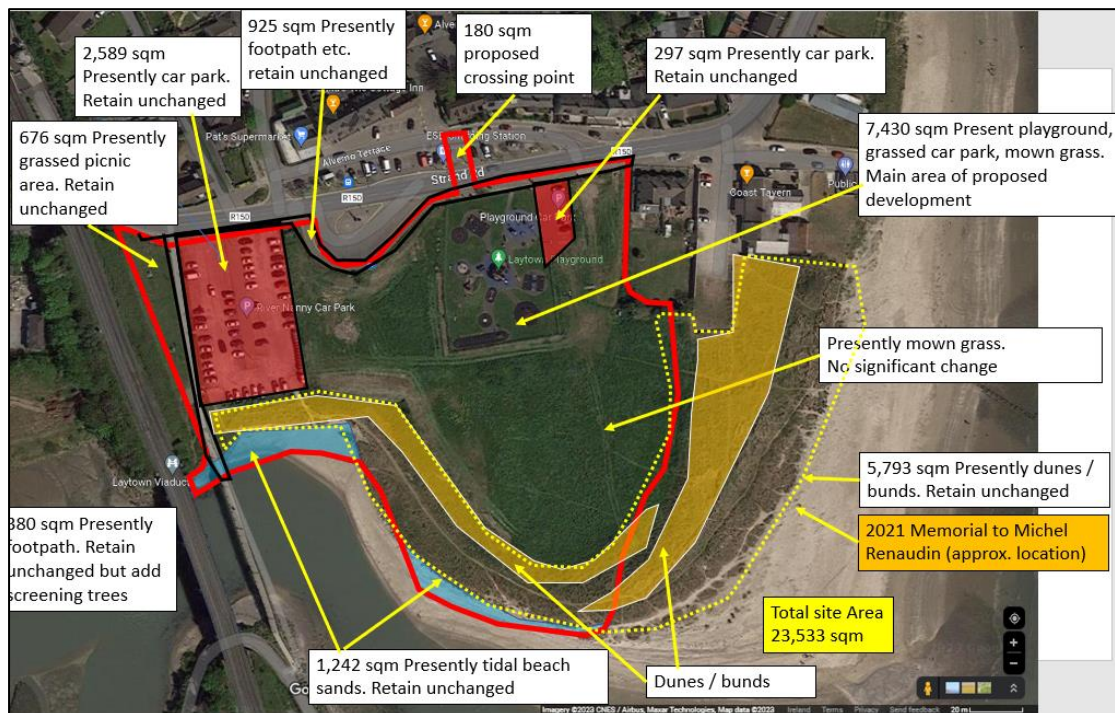


C.1990 image



The Carpark, Planting, Sports Areas and original Playground are noted above. There are still some patches of hard standing / paving to the SE of the bus loop that might be the remains of one of the planting zones. The Dune Bunds to the SW seem to have been formalized since 1995 and are now a thinner, higher strip alongside the beach and estuary.

### 3.7 Present Layout



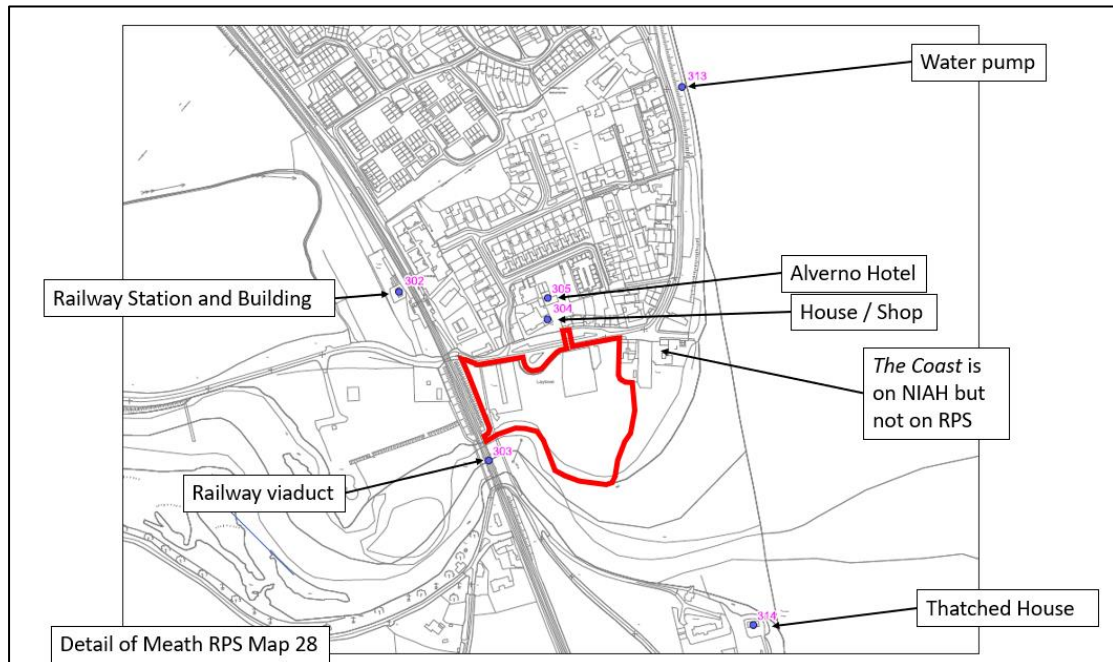
The present layout has a 'new' carpark, areas of mown grass, the 'new' playground, the bus turning loop, the beach frontage dune-bunds, the grassed head of the beach (including the memorial to Michel Renaudin), and the sandy tidal zone. See captions to walkover section below. The proposed R150 crossing passes to the original coast road to the north. Anecdotal evidence from those using the grassed space noted that the southern area becomes waterlogged and wet in heavy rains.

The hard surfaced playground adjacent to the children's playground is retained. But the grassed area to the E of this is now being used for 'Free Beach Parking' (since car parking on the present beach has been prohibited).

The existing road to the beach to the E of the proposed site is armoured with gabion cages and there is a public toilet.

## 4 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

### 4.1 Record of Protected Structures / National Inventory of Architectural Heritage



The site is in the vicinity of several Protected Structures:

- RPS MH028-304/NIAH 14319003 (House/Shop),
- RPS MH028-305/NIAH 14319004 (Alverno Hotel),
- MH028-303/ NIAH 14402801 (Railway Bridge over River Nanny,
- NIAH 14319005 -not on RPS (The Coast Public House).

In addition, there is the Laytown Railway Station, a roadside water pump and a thatched building.



## Laytown Railway Station, NINCH, Laytown, MEATH



[View on map](#)

### Survey Data

Reg No	14319001
Rating	Regional
Categories of Special Interest	Architectural, Technical
Original Use	Railway station
In Use As	Railway station
Date	1845 - 1850
Coordinates	316174, 271376
Date Recorded	27/05/2002
Date Updated	--/--

### Description

Detached nine-bay single-storey railway station, built c.1847. Pitched slate roof, yellow brick chimneystacks and cast-iron water goods. Timber clapperboard walls, with string course at sill level, set on a stone plinth. Segmental-arched openings with timber block-and-start surrounds. Timber sash windows. Timber pilaster and entablature shopfront. Panelled timber doors. Stone embankment walls flanking tracks. Cast-iron pedestrian bridge to site.

### Appraisal

The station at Laytown is of architectural interest, particularly due to the timber construction of the building. The timber detailing of the building imitates detailing which is commonly found in stone railway buildings, with the block-and-start surrounds and string course. Laytown Railway Station, with the station, pedestrian bridge and the station master's house, forms a significant architectural group in Laytown.

## Laytown Railway Station, NINCH, Laytown, MEATH



[View on map](#)

### Survey Data

Reg No	14319002
Rating	Regional
Categories of Special Interest	Architectural, Artistic, Technical
Original Use	Station master's house
In Use As	Station master's house
Date	1845 - 1850
Coordinates	316163, 271369
Date Recorded	27/05/2002
Date Updated	--/--



## Description

Detached three-bay two-storey station master's house, built c.1847, with a single-storey projecting entrance porch. Pitched tile roof with two rendered chimneystacks and cast-iron rainwater goods. Rendered walls with rendered quoins, rendered eaves course, and rendered string course between floors. Raised rendered window surrounds with stone sills and timber sash windows. Circular-plan stone piers with cast-iron gates, and outbuildings to site.

## Appraisal

Laytown station master's house is of apparent architectural design. The modest form of the house is enhanced by the raised rendered elements, of the window surrounds, quoins, plat band, and string course. The survival of many original features enhance the external appearance of the house. Laytown Railway Station, with the station, pedestrian bridge and the station master's house, forms a significant architectural group in Laytown.

## CORBALLIS, Laytown, MEATH



[View on map](#)

## Survey Data

Reg No	14402801
Rating	Regional
Categories of Special Interest	Architectural, Technical
Original Use	Bridge
In Use As	Bridge
Date	1890 - 1900
Coordinates	316258, 271180
Date Recorded	11/07/2002
Date Updated	--/--/--

## Description

Multiple-span cast-iron railway bridge, built 1896-7 by the Cleveland Bridge & Engineering Co. Ltd. Pairs of cast-iron columns supporting bridge with cast-iron parapet railings.

## Appraisal

This bridge replaces another iron bridge built 1859. The original viaduct of 1844 was timber. It makes a dramatic and notable contribution to the streetscape in Laytown. Its imposing form dominates the surrounding landscape. It forms part of an interesting group of railway structures with Laytown station, and with other related structures along the railway line from Drogheda to Dublin.

## Alverno Hotel, NINCH, Laytown, MEATH



[View on map](#)

### Survey Data

Reg No	14319004
Rating	Regional
Categories of Special Interest	Architectural, Social, Technical
Previous Name	Alverno Hotel
Original Use	Hotel
In Use As	Public house
Date	1845 - 1850
Coordinates	316347, 271358
Date Recorded	27/05/2002
Date Updated	--/--/--

### Description

Detached five-bay three-storey former hotel, built c.1847, with return to rear. Now in use as a public house. Hipped slate roof with red brick chimneystacks. Roughcast rendered walls having render quoins and plat band with eaves dentils. Timber sash windows with stone sills. Timber double doors flanked by timber pilasters with carved timber cornice and fanlight above, set in segmental-arched door opening.

### Appraisal

The Alverno Hotel was constructed during the mid nineteenth century to accommodate travellers and tourists arriving at this coastal resort by means of the new railway. The scale of this former hotel is unusual in Laytown. It is set back from the street, however, and does not dominate the streetscape. The survival of many original features and materials contribute to the architectural heritage significance of the building.

## NINCH, Laytown, MEATH



[View on map](#)

### Survey Data

Reg No	14319003
Rating	Regional
Categories of Special Interest	Architectural, Technical
Original Use	House
In Use As	Shop/retail outlet
Date	1850 - 1890
Coordinates	316349, 271327
Date Recorded	27/05/2002
Date Updated	--/--/--

## Description

Detached double-pile four-bay single-storey former house, built c.1870, now in use as office. Pitched slate roof with terracotta ridge cresting, rendered chimneystacks and cast-iron rainwater goods. Rendered walls, with quoins and eaves course. Two modern timber shopfronts inserted.

## Appraisal

Though many original features have been replaced, the former house displays a degree of detailing which is unusual in such a modest house, with the eaves course, quoins, ridge cresting and patterned slates.

## NINCH, Laytown, MEATH



[View on map](#)

### Survey Data

Reg No	14319005
Rating	Regional
Categories of Special Interest	Architectural, Social, Technical
Original Use	Public house
In Use As	Public house
Date	1950 - 1970
Coordinates	316487, 271314
Date Recorded	29/05/2002
Date Updated	--/--/--

## Description

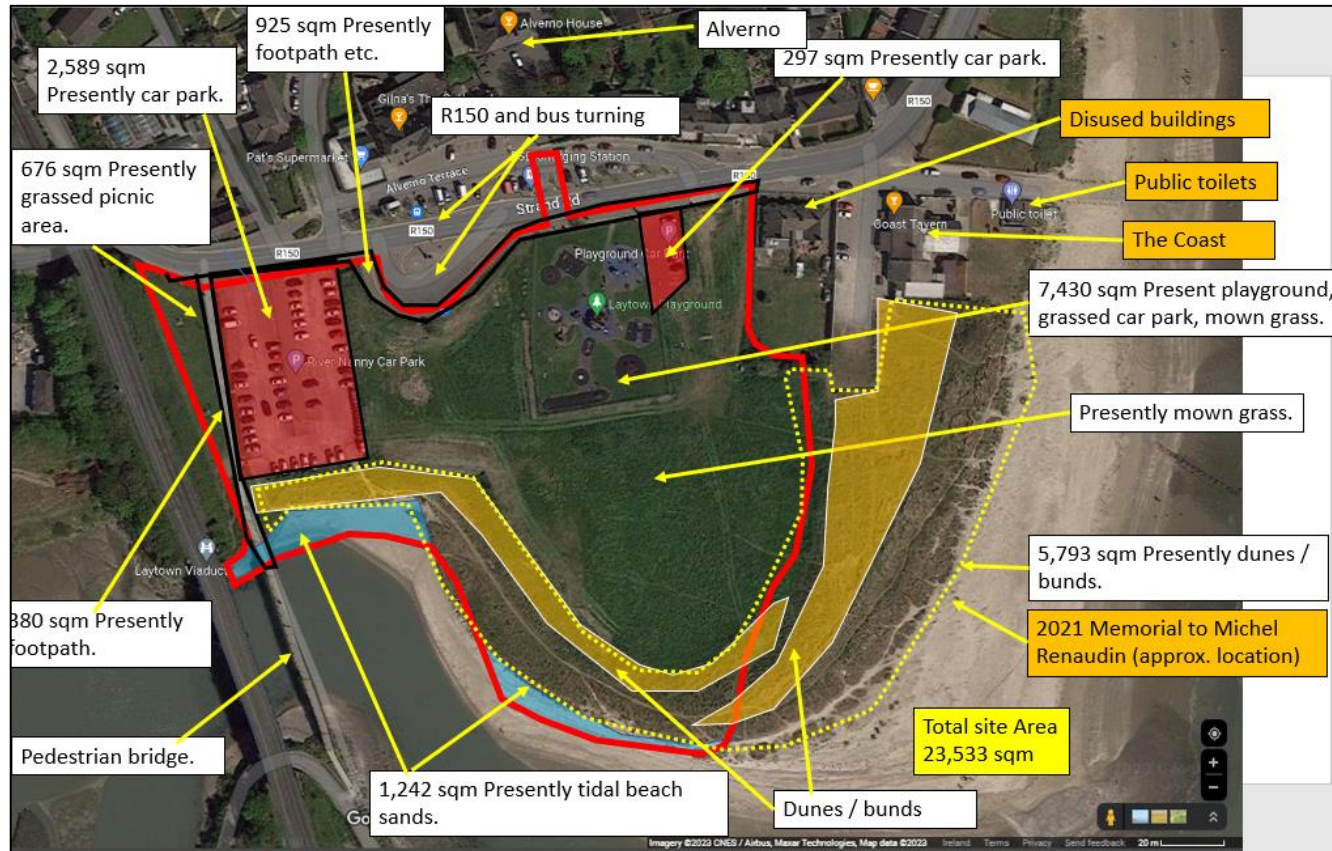
Detached stepped gable-fronted three-bay single-storey public house, built c.1960. Pitched tile roof with a red brick chimneystack. Roughcast rendered walls with red brick dressings to parapet and quoins. Fixed timber windows with concrete sills. Timber glazed door with concrete canopy above. Concrete engaged columns flanking entrance door and windows, supporting concrete projecting panel with recessed name band.

## Appraisal

The Coast Tavern is an interesting example of modern architecture in Laytown. This structure is simple in design but it displays some interesting architectural features, in particular the execution of the main entrance.

## 5 SITE VISIT

The site was visited on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023.



Site Summary





R150, E side. Beach carpark entrance.  
Facing E



Beach carpark. Facing S



Disused Houses on E side. Facing SW



R150. Beach parking to Playground  
Parking. Facing W



Disused Houses on E side. Facing SW



The Coast. Facing SW



Public toilets on beach. Facing SW



Beach to E of site. Facing S



Beach to E of site. Facing S



Beach to E of site. Facing W



Seaward dune-bund. Facing NW



1930s Mass concrete wall buried in dune.





From E dune bund. Facing W



From E dune bund. Facing N



From E dune bund. Facing SE



From E dune bund. Facing NW



From E dune bund. Facing S



From S end of E dune bund. Facing W





From S end of E dune bund. Facing W



From S end of E dune bund. Facing NW



From S end of E dune bund. Facing N



Michel Renaudin memorial. Facing N



Nanny Estuary. Facing W



Nanny Estuary. Facing NW



Nanny Estuary. Facing W



Nanny Estuary. Facing N



Nanny Estuary. Facing NE



Nanny Estuary. Facing E



Nanny Estuary. Facing SW



Nanny Estuary. Facing W





Nanny Estuary. Facing W



Nanny Estuary. Facing N



Nanny Estuary. Facing S



Laytown Carpark. Facing N



Railway viaduct. Facing SW



Pedestrian bridge and carpark. Facing NE





From pedestrian bridge. Facing NE



From pedestrian bridge. Facing E



From pedestrian bridge. Facing S



From pedestrian bridge. Facing NE



R150 and Railway embankment



R150. Facing E



R150 entrance to carpark. Facing E



R150. Facing N



R150. Bus turning loop. Facing SW



R150. Bus turning loop. Facing E



R150. Bus turning loop. Facing S



Playground. Facing E





Hard Standing from previous planting. Facing NE



R150. Facing N



Alverno Hotel



R150 Facing E



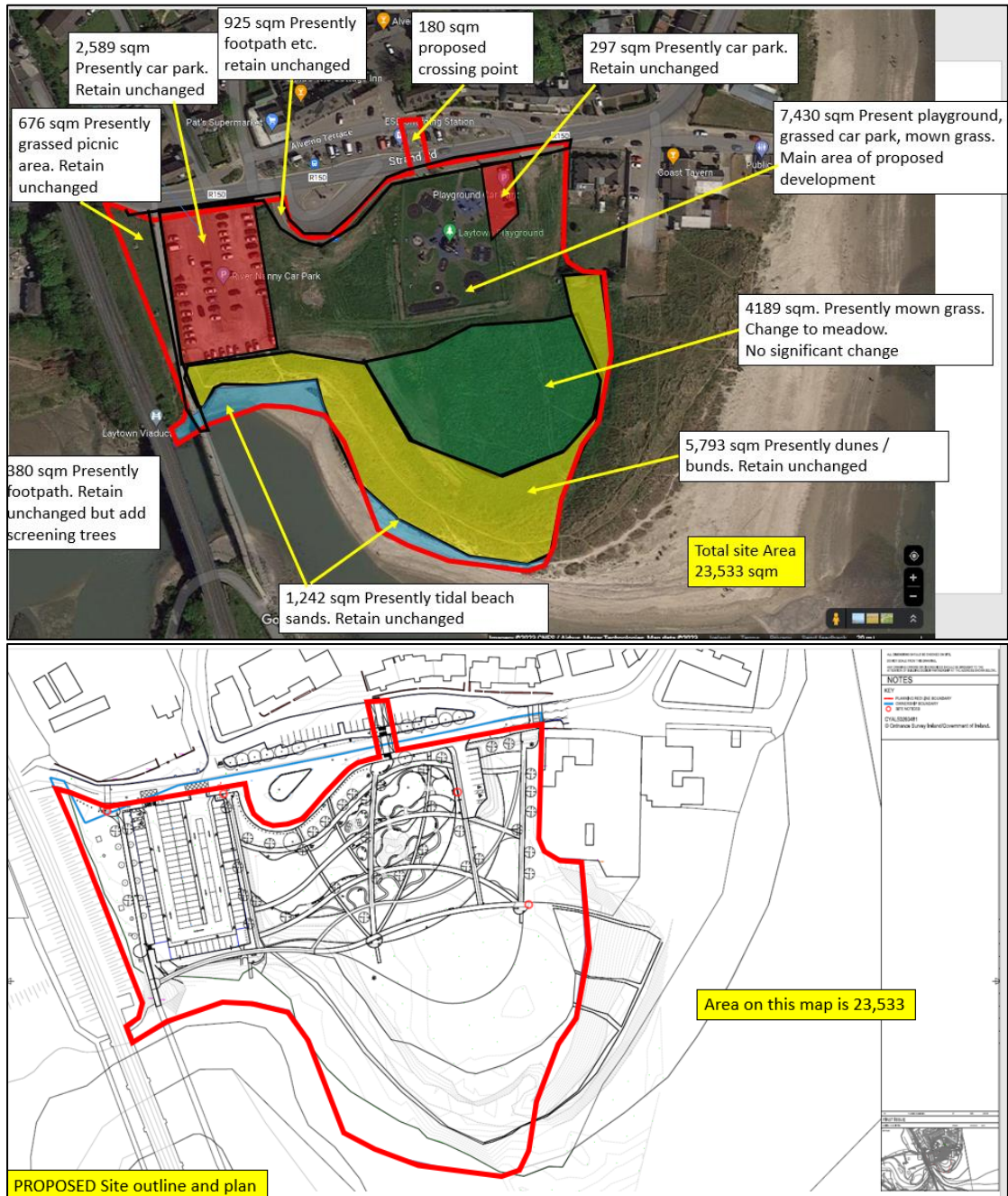
Playground Carpark. Facing S



Parking outside Alverno on old coast road. Facing SW



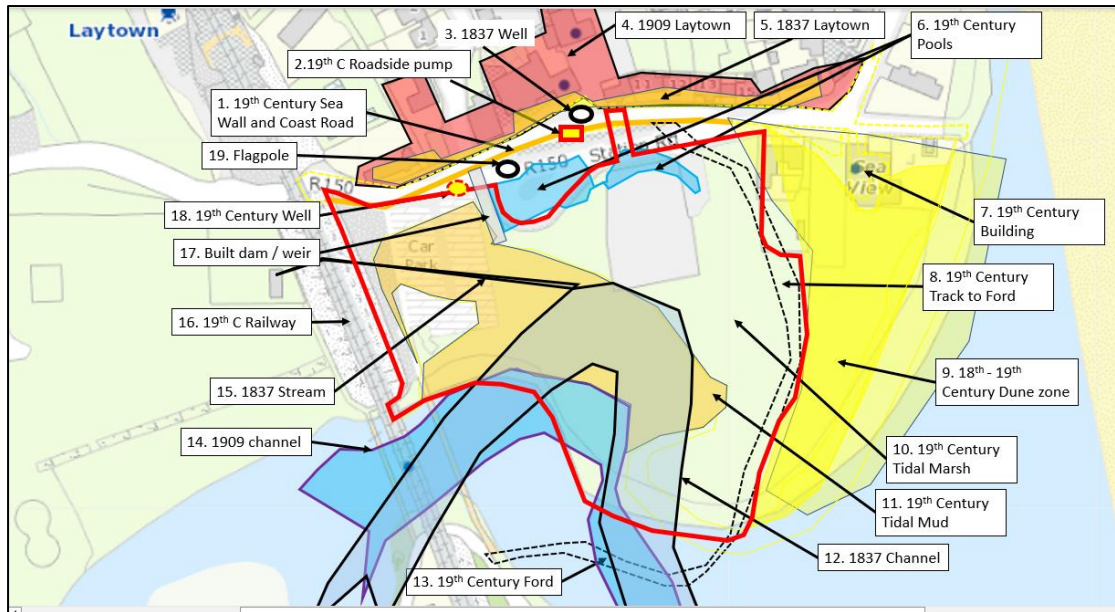
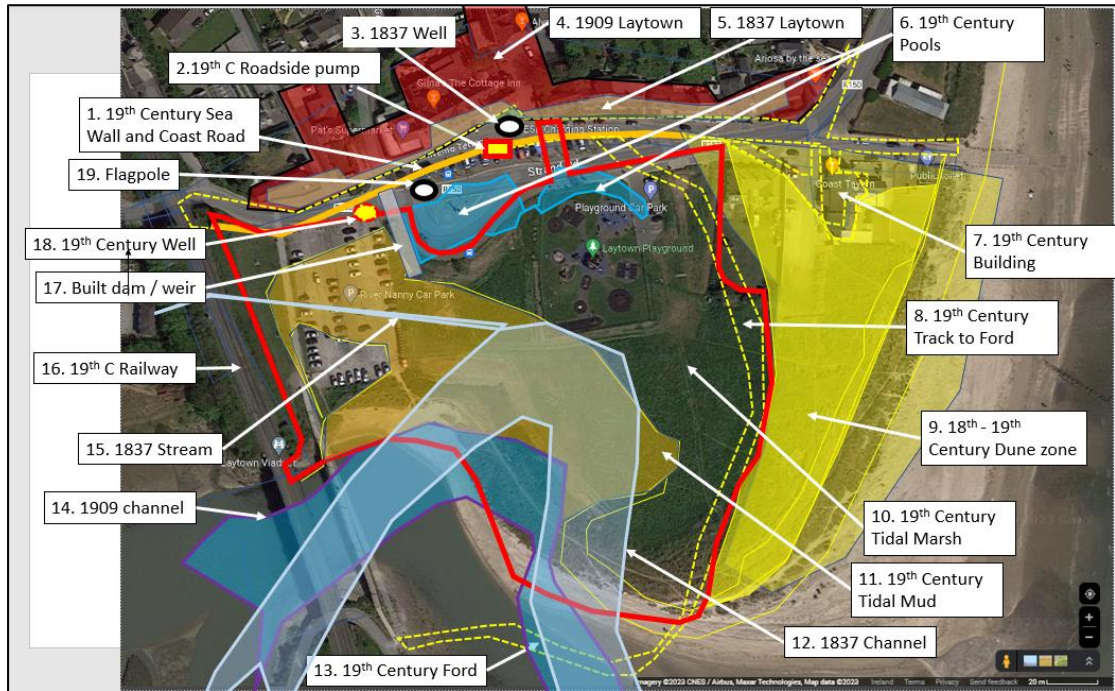
## 6 Proposed Works



In general, the proposed works are fairly minimal in terms of groundworks impact. They focus on redesigning the playground and public space that is not highlighted in the middle of the site image above. The grassed, Beach Parking zone seems to be proposed for removal.

There is potential for archaeological impact on the proposed R150 crossing area, the old track along the E side of the site and any deeper drainage or other groundworks. However, the depth of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> C ground surface pre-infill is not known across the site.

## 7 DISCUSSION



The site is large, adjacent to a settlement and port / estuary with a fording point across the River Nanny. A significant amount is known about its relatively recent past, but it is presumed that the proposed works will have a relatively minor potential archaeological impact. The discussion points above comprise:

[1] 19th century Sea wall. Probably put up at the same time as the Railway (opened 1844). The 1837 OS shows an unbounded track, but later 19th C



photographs show a high wall with through points / stiles and a niche for a roadside water pump [2].

[2] Late 19<sup>th</sup> C water pump with roadside niche.

[3] Circle on 1837 OS in open area now in front of Alverno House. Possibly a town well.

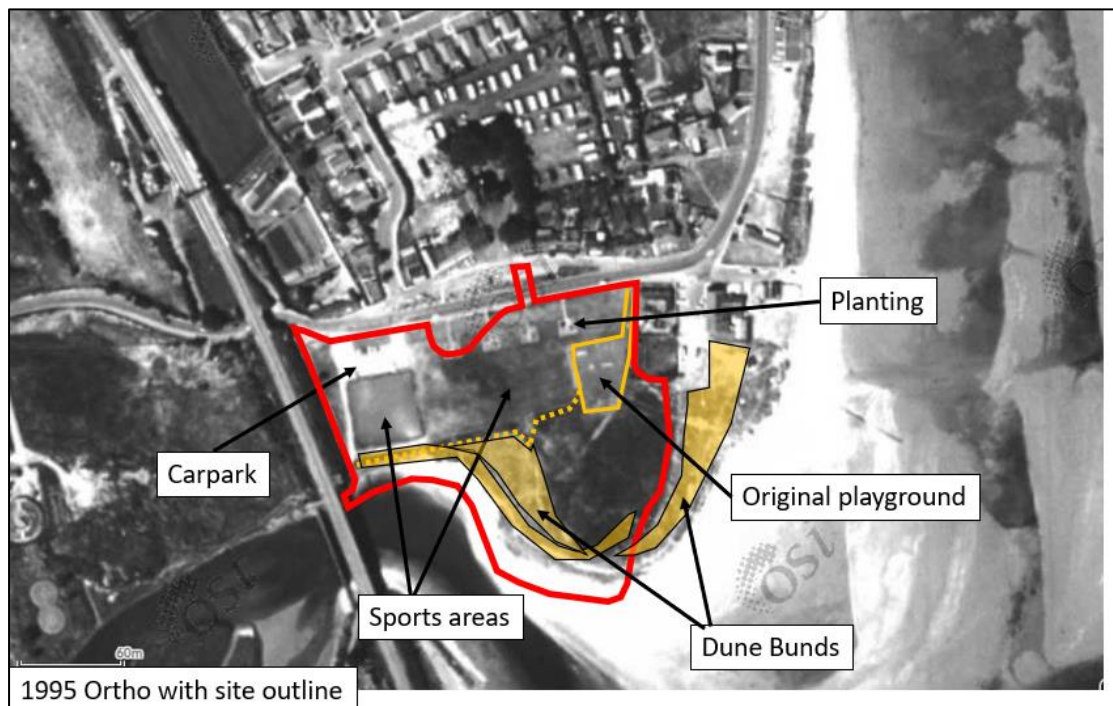
[4] Extent of Laytown on 1909 OS.

[5] Extent of Laytown on 1837 OS. Potentially a settlement going back to the medieval period if the fording point [13] is ancient. Any early medieval settlement would generally be on higher ground up to 500m away from a typical crossing point.

[6] Pools seen on 1909 mapping and in historic photographs. May have been used for temporary shellfish or other 'wet' storage (eg netted salmon or eels in the River Nanny).

[7] 19<sup>th</sup> C Building seen to be a shop or public house in historic photographs. Now The Coast Public House. Noted on NIAH but is not on RPS.

[8] 19<sup>th</sup> C track to River Nanny Fording point. Unsurfaced, but presumably goes around the edge of the normal high water mark. Quite possibly an ancient fording point for a 'Coast Road': which might mean a minor settlement at Laytown going back a long way in time.



[9] Present Seaward dunes. The longshore drift on the Irish East Coast is from North to South. So, although not marked on 17<sup>th</sup> C Down Survey mapping, it is



possible that a dune spur extended south, roughly in the area of the present dunes in the distant past. The Dunes have been recently raised to include a relatively high bund along the head of the beach. Some of this bund has swamped a mid-20<sup>th</sup> C mass concrete wall that seems to be associated with the garden of [7] The Coast. The Dune-bunds appear to be hooked to allow drainage between the sea-side bund and the 1990s estuary bund seen on the 1995 Ortho. This image also shows the location of the original playground, sports areas, planting and car parks.

[10] 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> C tidal marsh. With vegetation and presumably only covered briefly in the higher tides. Seen on 1909 and 1939 mapping and historic photos.

[11] 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> C tidal mud. No vegetation and presumably covered by all high tides. Seen on 1909 and 1939 mapping and historic photos.

[12] Location of permanent River Nanny Channel on 1837 OS. Fording point not marked at this time.

[13] Ford marked on 1909 mapping. The date and historical use of this ford is not known, but typically such fords can be used for thousands of years. Sometimes fords are strengthened with hurdles and brushwood and sometimes they move around depending on the channel bars and storm-based destructions. Either way, a ford is an important point in the landscape and the original settlement of Laytown may relate to a N-S Coast Road crossing here. Typically, many items are lost at fording points making them archaeologically significant locations. However, the fording point here has perhaps been dredged and is outside the area of proposed development.

[14] Location of permanent River Nanny Channel on 1909 OS. Fording point marked.

[15] Stream marked on 1837 OS. Re-routed when Railway [16] built.

[16] Dublin-Drogheda Railway opened 1844. Originally the viaduct was made of timber, but this was soon replaced and then replaced again c.1895 with the present viaduct structure. RPS Viaduct and Station buildings.

[17] Deliberately built dam or weir to form the ponds [6]. May have doubled as an access track from Laytown to the area leading to the Ford [13]. Visible in some historical photographs.

[18] A Well noted on 1909 map. On beach side of Sea Wall [1].

[19] Very tall flagpole seen in historical photos.

Meath County Council is proposing to redesign the existing Laytown Park at Laytown, Co. Meath ITM 716315, 771254. The defined site outline is 2.35 ha, but the large area to the east includes grassed dunes at the beach head, as well as the estuary sands to the south, that would raise the site influence beyond 3.50 ha. Previous mapping and photographs show that the entire 2.35 ha site was previously an estuary with a tidal inlet including pools, muds, marshes and a track leading to a ford, until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The River Nanny once had a sharp meander in the middle of the site; but has since moved south into its present channel. The present R150 road along the N site boundary is a mid-20<sup>th</sup> C creation: the original road survives as a cut-off along the old houses to the north. The southern side of this early road was the original sea wall and head of the tidal zone. The E site boundary was a road leading S to a ford on the River Nanny. This road was perhaps an ancient N-S 'Coast Road' that led to the original estuary settlement at Laytown. The road was around the high tide mark and may not be buried too deep under present ground level. The adjacent Dublin-Drogheda Railway to W was opened in 1844.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> C Down Survey maps, Laytown (Leyton) was located on higher ground facing the sea to the north, in the area of the present Race Course. It was a settlement named after water-meadows (fields that flood in winter) that probably lay between present Laytown and Bettystown, as well as meadows around the River Nanny estuary. Laytown is named as a small village in its present estuary location on the 1837 OS and there may have been some form of port and boat beaching facilities here. The town really took off with the arrival of the Dublin-Drogheda Railway (with River Nanny viaduct RPS MH028-303/ NIAH 14402801) and the construction of the Alverno Hotel (RPS MH028-305/NIAH 14319004). 19<sup>th</sup> C photos show a sea wall along the original road line with no port facilities visible. A ford once existed across the River Nanny estuary to the south of the proposed site, and this was accessed by a rough track along the E site boundary – presumably around the high tide mark.

When the estuary area was infilled in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a carpark and sports grounds were built in the western and central parts, and the eastern part included a children's playground. The whole construction was protected by linear dune-bunds that are still clearly visible. The dune-bunds have an overlapping outflow arrangement for drainage at the southern end. The central grassed area becomes wet in winter.

The area was upgraded again in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century when the realigned R150 Strand Road was built. Further works after 2000 created the present River Nanny Car Park, the River Nanny Footbridge (replacing a footbridge on the W side of the viaduct), the present Laytown Playground and associated carparks, and the R150 bus turning loop.

Proposals include redesigning the Laytown Playground and associated lawns only. This is approx. 1 ha and most excavations would probably need to be several metres deep to impact on the previous ground surfaces. However, the old track on the E side is probably not much under present ground level. So some archaeological trial work would be useful in understanding the archaeological potential of the area. This work may or may not lead to further excavations, environmental coring or monitoring.

## 8 REFERENCES

[www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie) – Summary of archaeological excavation from 1970 +.

[www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) – National Monuments Service website listing all SMR sites with aerial photographs.

[www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie) – Ordnance Survey aerial photographs (1995, 2000 & 2005) and historic OS mapping (first edition 6" and 25"). <http://map.geohive.ie/mapviewer.html>

<http://www.logainm.ie/> - Placename index

<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/> -National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

Environment Protection Agency website

<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php> Down Survey mapping

[http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS\\_ID=LCN14679989\\_001](http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS_ID=LCN14679989_001)

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National Library of Ireland nli.ie

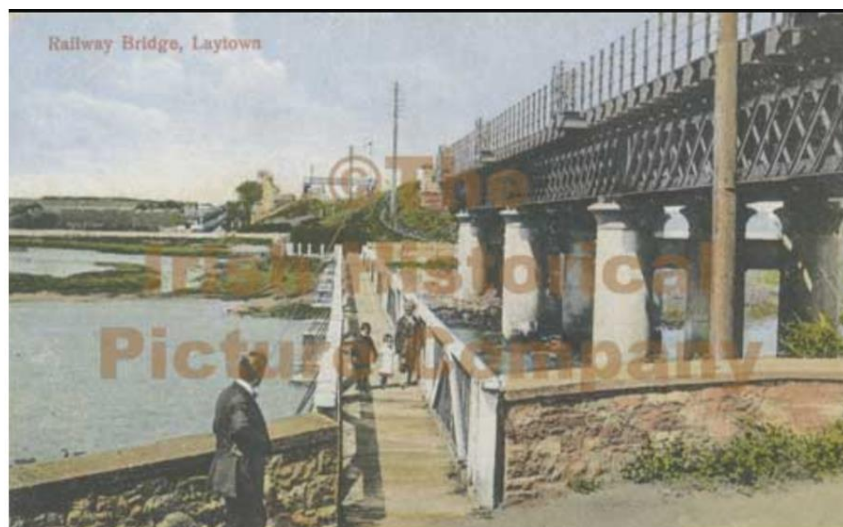
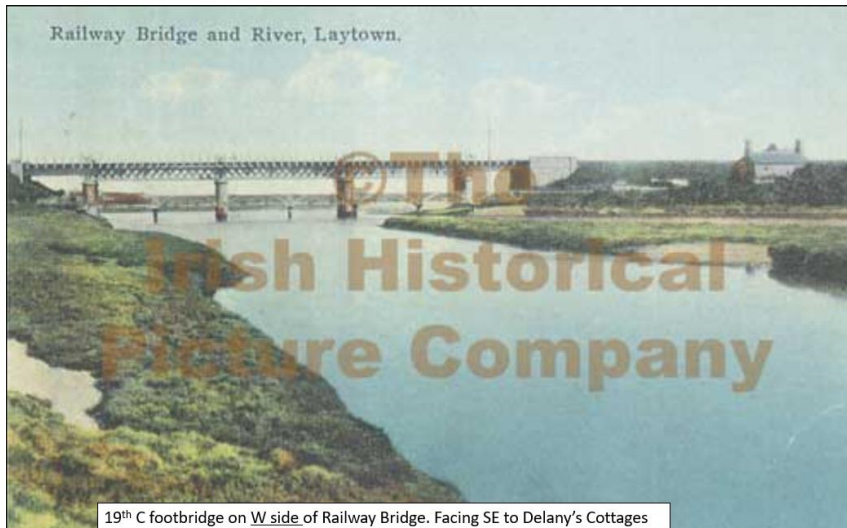
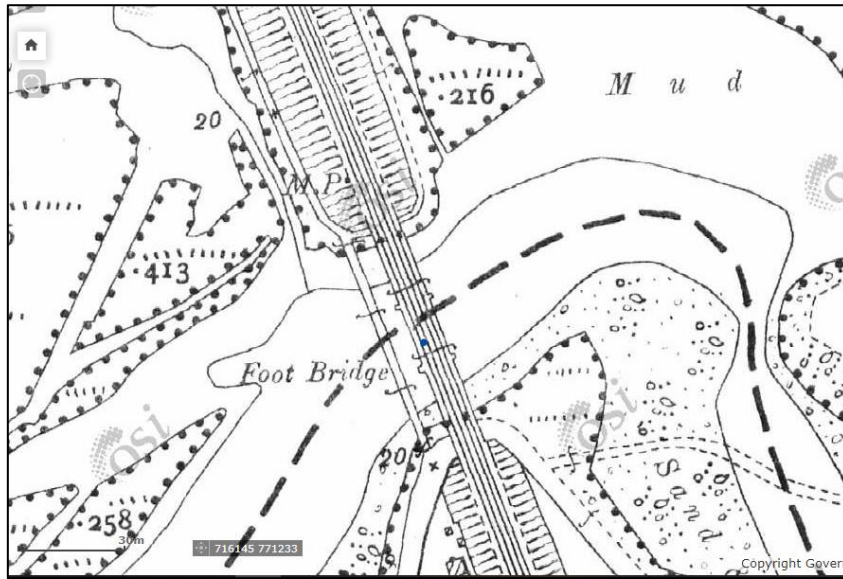
Irish Historical Picture Company

Google Maps

Bing Maps



**APPENDIX:** Images of the original 19<sup>th</sup> C footbridge on W side of railway viaduct





Demolition of Laytown footbridge © Kieran Campbell ::  
Geograph Ireland

[Visit](#)