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## 2019:335 - N11 Ferns Pavement Rehabilitation Scheme Phase 2 (Castleland, Ferns Upper and Ferns Demesne), Ferns, Wexford

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**County:** Wexford **Site name:** N11 Ferns Pavement Rehabilitation Scheme Phase 2 (Castleland, Ferns Upper and Ferns Demesne), Ferns

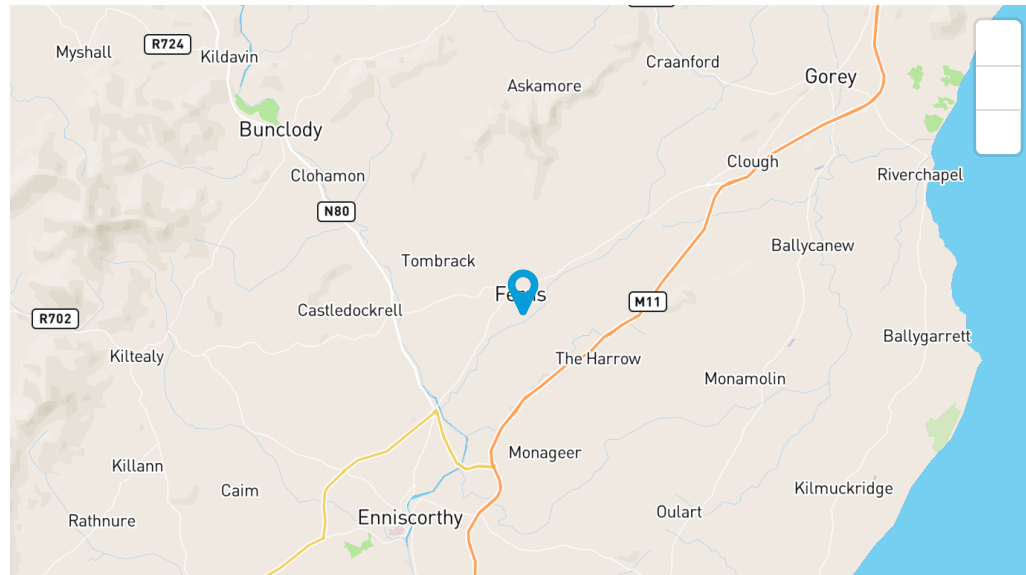
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** WX015-003 **Licence number:** C000709, E004633, R000395

**Author:** Kate Taylor, TVAS (Ireland) Ltd

**Site type:** Early medieval enclosure and medieval settlement

**ITM:** E 702078m, N 649820m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 52.590063, -6.493472



Archaeological testing of the route of proposed pavement rehabilitation, drainage and water pipes, within Ferns village, revealed substantial evidence of probable early medieval and medieval occupation both within a greenfield location and beneath the current roads. Specialist analysis has not yet been carried out and no radiocarbon dates have yet been obtained.

A single 121m long trench was excavated along the northern edge of the field in which St Mary's Augustinian Abbey (WX015-003004, National Monument 133) stands, on the route of a proposed drainage outflow pipe from the N11 to a small stream. The trench revealed numerous cut features in its western half, including several large ditches and a number of smaller gullies and pits, whilst the eastern half of the trench mostly contained a series of deposits that slope down towards the stream at the east, having been used to build up the ground level over several centuries. The archaeological features and deposits in this trench are found immediately beneath the topsoil and extend to depths of almost 2m in places. Although a small number of features and deposits are clearly early modern in date, many yielded medieval pottery and appear to represent generally undisturbed activity of this date. Some features, including the larger ditches, did not produce any immediately dateable artefactual material and could potentially be earlier. A geophysical survey conducted by the Discovery Programme in 2015 (Dowling 2015) indicated that the early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure ditches, amongst other features, should extend across the line of this trench and it is likely that one of the ditches revealed during testing does indeed represent the inner enclosure of the monastic settlement.

Six trenches were excavated in the existing road on Station Road which is proposed for resurfacing and a potential watermain. The trenches demonstrated that, despite the presence of numerous existing services (both water and sewage, in addition to other unmapped pipes), archaeological deposits survive in places beneath the modern road surface, particularly in the central section of the road. In addition to the occasional small cut features that were discovered, a large spread of apparently medieval occupation material was recorded, with some features revealed beneath the spread that could potentially be early medieval in date, including two large possible ditches, one of which is likely to be the inner ditch of the ecclesiastical enclosure.

Nine trenches were excavated along Main Street (the N11) which is proposed for resurfacing and drainage; mostly trenches were north-east of the junction with Station Road. These trenches revealed fewer areas of potential, although this may be because excavation to depth was more difficult. Trenches south-west of the junction with Station Road did not contain any archaeological material, nor earlier road surfaces. Trenches opposite the western end of St Edan's Cathedral revealed a series of earlier road surfaces beneath the current tarmac surface and at a number of undated features beneath, some of which could potentially be early medieval in date. Trenches north-east of the cathedral did not reveal substantial archaeological remains, but did demonstrate that the road surface, as seen today, has been built up with imported clay that reaches depths of up to at least 1.2m, becoming increasingly deep to the north-east. A trench at the north-eastern end of the scheme, east of St Mogue's Well, was positioned on the line of the former eastern edge of the road prior to its realignment and the previous road boundary wall was encountered below the modern road.

Further archaeological work, including excavation and monitoring, will be required before and during construction for the various elements of this project, which was funded by Wexford County Council.

Reference:

Dowling, G, 2015, Geophysical investigations at Ferns, Co. Wexford, 15R042, unpublished Discovery Programme report.

The project was funded by Wexford County Council.

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