

Mews Structure



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Comments on Proposed Addition of [redacted] to the Record of Protected Structures

February 2022

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Preface:

I have been asked by Ms. Valerie Driscoll, the owner of [REDACTED] [REDACTED], to provide an expert opinion in relation to the provenance of the various parts of her property. I am the owner and principal architect of Mesh Architects, a Dublin based architectural practice, with particular expertise in the study and conservation of traditional and historic structures. I hold a Grade 1 Conservation accreditation from the RIAI. The following brief report has been prepared to accompany Ms. Driscoll's submission to Dublin City Council in objection to the proposed addition of her Henrietta Lane property into the Record of Protected Structures.

Background to This Report:

I understand the Dublin City Council has proposed to add two elements of the currently existing structure at [REDACTED] to the Record of Protected Structures, under the premise of their constituting a nationally significant structure, due to their associated with [REDACTED]. The architectural and cultural significance of [REDACTED] and its surviving neighbouring houses has been well established, and all of those large early/mid C18th houses have been included on the Record of Protected Structures. In the case of [REDACTED] that protection does not extend over the property currently owned by Ms. Driscoll immediately behind [REDACTED], because it has been in separate ownership from the main house for nearly a century. In addition, whatever structures were originally built to the rear of No. [REDACTED] to provide stables, stores and miscellaneous mews-style buildings, have been heavily altered, demolished, subdivided and generally redeveloped over the last two and half centuries since they were first built.

I carefully examined the existing structure currently standing on the eastern half of [REDACTED] to the rear of [REDACTED]. I have also closely examined the available historic maps showing this area in some detail, including John Rocque's Map of Dublin from 1756, and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey, surveyed in 1837 and published in 1847.

It is clear that there was a large and relatively complicated mews development behind the grand houses facing onto [REDACTED]. While no complete stable or other mews structure has survived on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] substantial fragments have survived in situ along the lane, including party walls, masonry vaults beneath the raised rear gardens of the main

houses, foundations of mews structures with vaulted lower levels, and fragmentary elevations that faced the main houses across the rear gardens. Over the course of the last two centuries, all of the original mews structures, stable and yards have been redeveloped to serve a variety of different uses. No complete mews or stable structure has survived intact, and most of what is known about their plans or appearance is contained in historic maps and the brief notations found in the records of the Dublin Valuations Office.

Current Description of [REDACTED]

I visited [REDACTED] on the 8th of February, 2022, and carried out a thorough inspection of all of its visible structural elements. In its current form, the property consists of a large single storey garage, fully covered by a low-pitched hipped roof structure. Internally there is a small toilet room in the northwest corner, and a self-contained storeroom/office in the southeast corner. The shared party wall that forms the western edge to the property consists of concrete blocks, and appears to be at approximately 30-40 years old. That wall forms the subdivision of the original stables and yard into two separate properties, which are currently under separate ownership.

The shared party wall on the southern edge of the property is not a straight wall, but has a jog along its length. This wall forms the shared boundary with historic vaulted rooms that are in the same ownership as the adjacent garage at [REDACTED]. A small portion of the storeroom has a lower ceiling and I am told that it projects beneath a portion of the rear garden of [REDACTED], (beneath a now demolished mews structure that stood above that vaulted lower level).

Along the eastern edge of the property is a high rubble-stone wall, forming the shared boundary with the rear garden of [REDACTED]. The east side of that wall is currently exposed to the weather and is visible from [REDACTED]. (Photos of the eastern face of that wall are included at the end of this report, having been taken by myself during a condition survey of that property when it was last for sale in 2016). I would be of the opinion that this stone wall dates from the original construction of the Henrietta Street houses and their stableyards, during the middle of the C18th. Of particular significance is the appearance of the masonry in this wall where it turns the corner onto [REDACTED] forming a corner with the north wall of [REDACTED]. I will describe this wall in more detail below.

Forming the northern wall to Ms. Driscoll's property is the wall that faces onto [REDACTED] and contains a large opening, with an old steel-sheeted sliding door. That wall is partially covered externally by render, and where the render has fallen away, it can be seen to consist of rubble stone at the eastern edge, a mix of brick and rubble stone at the western edge, and brick masonry on top of the large opening. The age of this wall, and the degree to which it contains significant building fabric dating from the middle decades of the C18th is of particular interest to the current proceedings, and I will address these issues in more detail below.

The roof over Ms. Driscoll's property consists of a simple cut-timber structure, covered with corrugated steel and aluminium sheet roofing. This roof appears to date from the C20th century, with some repairs having been carried out at various later dates. No part of this roof appears to date from the C18th or C19th century, and it covers an area that was originally an open stable yard. The floor inside Ms. Driscoll's property is covered by a concrete slab, of unknown age, but obviously not dating from the C18th or C19th.

Historic Map Evidence:

According to *Rocque's Map of Dublin* from 1756, the attendant structure behind [REDACTED] consisted of a small stable yard, with a gated entrance from [REDACTED]. A roofed structure was shown running along the west side of that yard, along with another roofed structure facing onto the south side of the yard and forming a mews across the rear of the garden to [REDACTED]. Of particular note is that in 1756 the rear boundary walls onto Henrietta Lane are shown as running in a straight line, from east to west. Rocque shows the layout of the stable and yard behind [REDACTED] at odds with its later depiction in the C19th **Ordnance Survey Maps**. I hold the opinion that Rocque has misrepresented the location of the stables behind [REDACTED] on this map, by colouring in the open yard instead of the stables. The physical evidence on the surviving wall between the stables at [REDACTED] and the original stable yard at [REDACTED] shows the presence of ventilation openings and high level, and pockets for floor beams that were supported along the length of this wall. That wall was obviously the back of the long narrow stable range, with a ventilated loft above for hay and feed. In fact this is exactly what was depicted in the later Ordnance Survey Maps, leading me to conclude that Rocque simply coloured in the wrong rectangle in that laneway, and made it look like the open yard was on the western side boundary instead of the eastern side boundary.

In the first edition of the **Ordnance Survey**, as surveyed in 1837 and published in 1847, the houses on [REDACTED] and their stables on [REDACTED] are shown much more accurately than Rocque's earlier map. Most of the stables, yards and mews structures appear to have changed very little in the intervening ninety years, however a few details are different, and are pertinent to this report. As mentioned above, the layout of the stable range and open yard behind [REDACTED] appears to have flipped between Rocque and the OS maps, but as I have already stated, the physical evidence on the old stone wall strongly suggests that Rocque had misrepresented the layout of that area, and it was shown correctly in the OS map.

Another aspect of Henrietta Lane that has changed by the time of the first OS map is that the east end of [REDACTED] has been widened at some date during the intervening years. The effect of this widening was that the northern walls along the laneway behind [REDACTED], and the eastern half of the wall behind [REDACTED], were taken down and rebuilt on a different angle to the rest of the stableyards. This could have been done to allow for larger carriages or goods wagons to be able to turn the right angle corner in [REDACTED] to accommodate the changing uses in the large stableyards. It is of course important to establish whether that slight crank in the alignment of the northern walls behind [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was actually a change from 1756, or simply another example of Rocque's lack of precision in his mapping. I believe there is clear physical evidence in the masonry where the old stone party wall between the stableyards behind [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] join with the existing north wall of Ms. Driscoll's structure, that show a definite alteration to whatever existed there in the middle of the C18th century.

I have included a recent photo showing the corner formed by the junction of the shared rubble-stone wall between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as it currently exists. (Fig. No.5). According to the 1847 Ordnance Survey, there was a roofed structure along that shared boundary wall, facing into the stableyard at [REDACTED]. That structure is believed to be a stable, and the shared wall with [REDACTED] was its western wall. The north end of that structure would have formed the boundary to [REDACTED] and it would undoubtedly have been built from the same rubble stone masonry as the remaining western party wall. In my long experience working with traditional masonry buildings in Ireland, it would be expected that the original stone masonry would have turned the corner, and that substantial physical evidence should remain to show where the rubble stone wall had

been cut off when that wall was removed. In fact, there is no evidence that the wall turned the corner to form the north wall of the stable range, but there is evidence that the wall has been roughly cut off, and a new north wall built behind [REDACTED] without any attempt to tooth in the new masonry in that corner. The exception to this is that very good stone masonry can be seen at the eastern jamb of the large door opening into [REDACTED]. That masonry is quite different in character to the rest of the shared stone wall with [REDACTED], and would have been carefully built to form the jamb for the large door opening in the wall.

It is also important to note that the northern boundary, between what is now [REDACTED] and the laneway, was shown in 1847 as being a thin wall, (or fence), with a small pedestrian gate. The large garage door opening, with its steel door was not formed until well into the C20th, when the opening was widened to the east, and a new reinforced concrete lintel was installed to support the brick masonry over the opening. At approximately the same time, a large new door opening was made through the masonry wall on the north side of what is now [REDACTED] leaving a small section of heavily altered masonry between those two large doors. That masonry is shown in Figure No. 6, and consists of rubble stone, with brick and stone infill to the upper half.

Summary:

In relation to the proposal by Dublin City Council to add [REDACTED] to the Record of Protected Structures, I fail to see any reasonable argument to support this proposal. The only part of the structure that currently stands at [REDACTED] that reliably contains building fabric relating to the early Georgian mansions on [REDACTED] is its shared boundary wall with [REDACTED]. That wall is already protected from destruction or inappropriate works due to it being a part of the curtilage of [REDACTED] a structure that is already on the Record of Protected Structures. In relation to the northern boundary wall between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] it has been shown that nothing of significance remains from the original C18C development. I have presented examples of physical and archival evidence to support this opinion, and which show that only a small amount of possibly C18th, but highly altered, masonry remains on the north elevation to [REDACTED].

Thomas C. McGimsey, MRIAI, Grade 1 Conservation Accreditation

10 February 2022

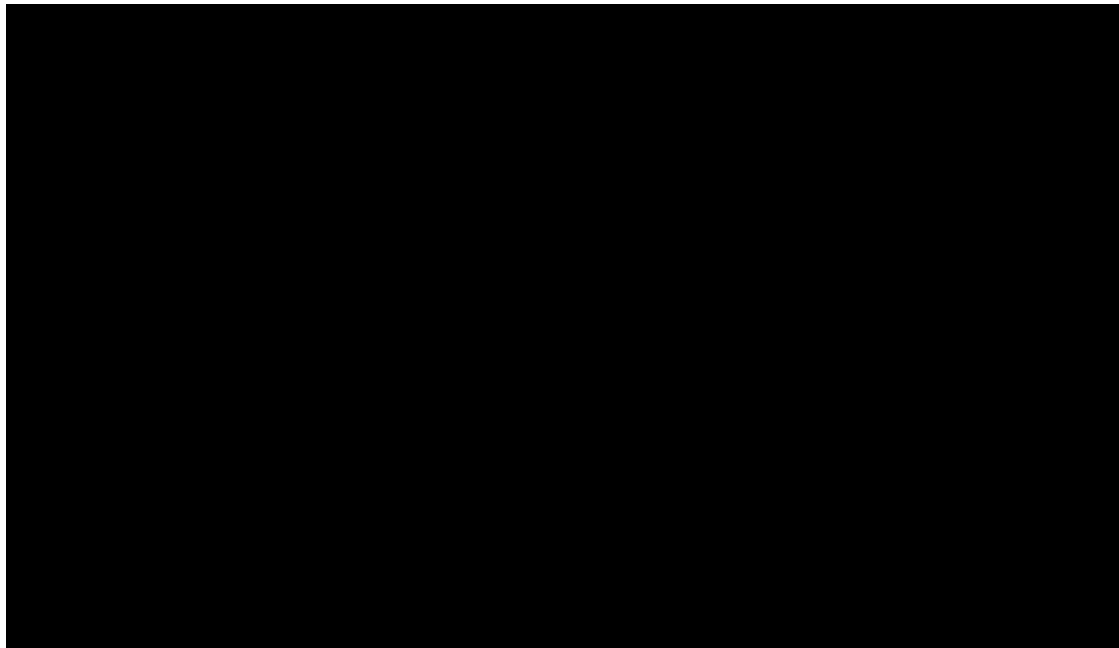


Figure No.1. Extract from Rocque's Map of Dublin, 1756, showing the north side of [REDACTED] and the stable lane to the rear, now called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and its original rear garden are outlined in red, along with the substantial stableyard and mews structure to its rear. Note the similar mews/stableyard buildings behind [REDACTED] adjacent to the right. In this map, Rocque has shown a similar layout behind [REDACTED], with a long narrow courtyard, and a much wider stable to its right. The author of this report believes that this was either an intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of that stableyard, and that the stable structure is actually the long narrow strip along the boundary with [REDACTED]. Also note the straight boundary along the southern edge of the rear laneway, and the right angle turn that coaches and carriages were required to make when entering the rear lane. At some time between the publication of this map and the publication of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey, the east end of the stable lane was widened, presumably to make it easier for larger vehicles to turn that tight corner.

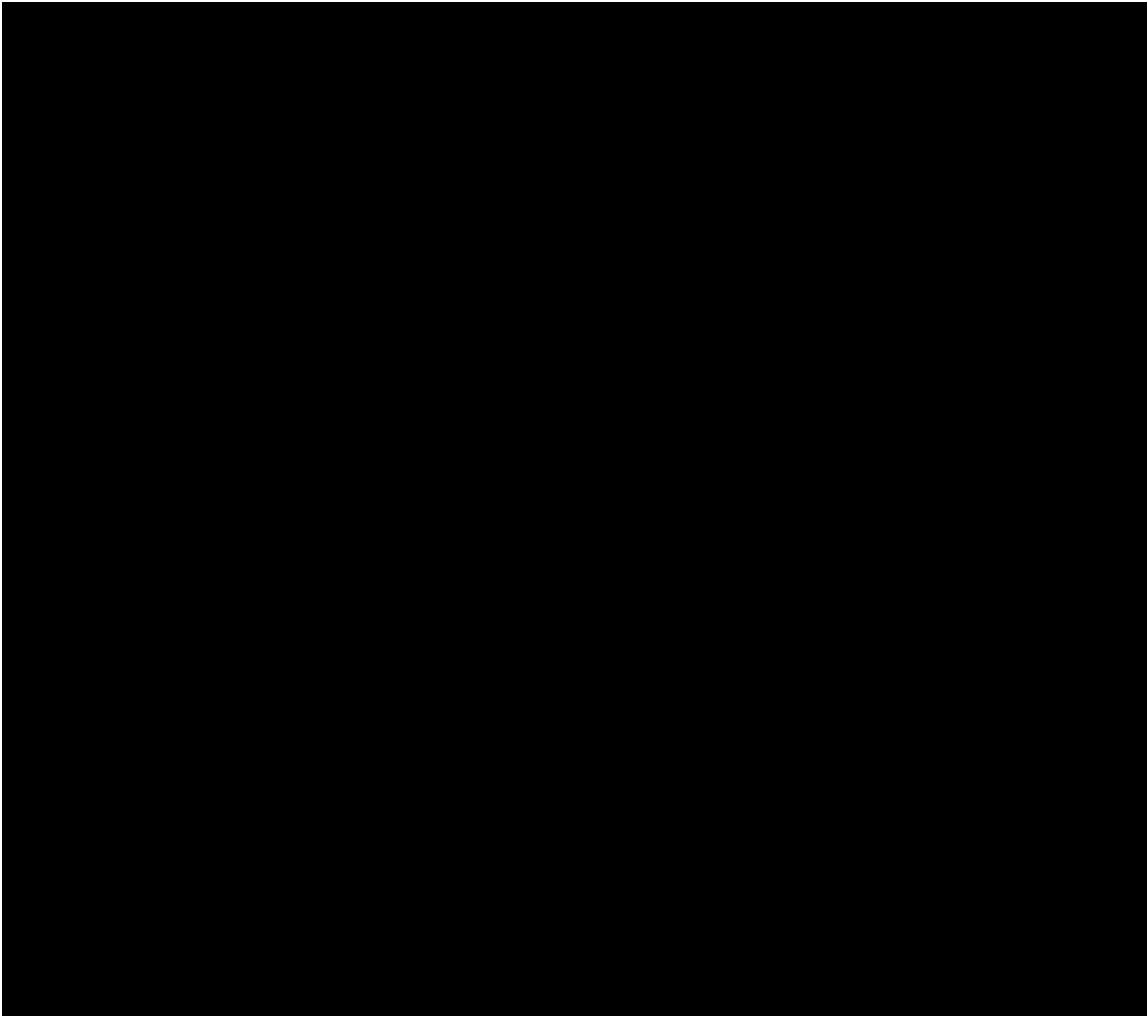


Figure No.2. Detail from the first edition of the Ordnance Survey, surveyed in 1837, and published in 1847. The Ordnance Survey maps were much more accurately surveyed and show more detail than Rocque's Map from 1756. It is apparent in this map that the extensive mews and stable structures associated with the large houses on [REDACTED] were largely intact, and relatively unchanged from the way they were depicted in 1756. Of particular note, in relation to the subject of this report is the way that the east end of [REDACTED] has been widened, starting at corner behind [REDACTED]. The north wall behind [REDACTED] has been relocated further south and rebuilt at an angle. This would have made the narrow laneway more useable for larger wagons and carriages that would have been needed to serve the growing commercial uses that were being developed in the large mews yards. Furthermore, the north wall behind the stable yard behind [REDACTED] has been modified, with the eastern half of that wall being rebuilt at a different angle, to follow the new line of the laneway. The rebuilt part of that boundary wall behind [REDACTED] also was drawn as a fence with a narrow gate, and not as a thick masonry wall. That is at variance with the currently existing masonry wall with a large opening onto [REDACTED].

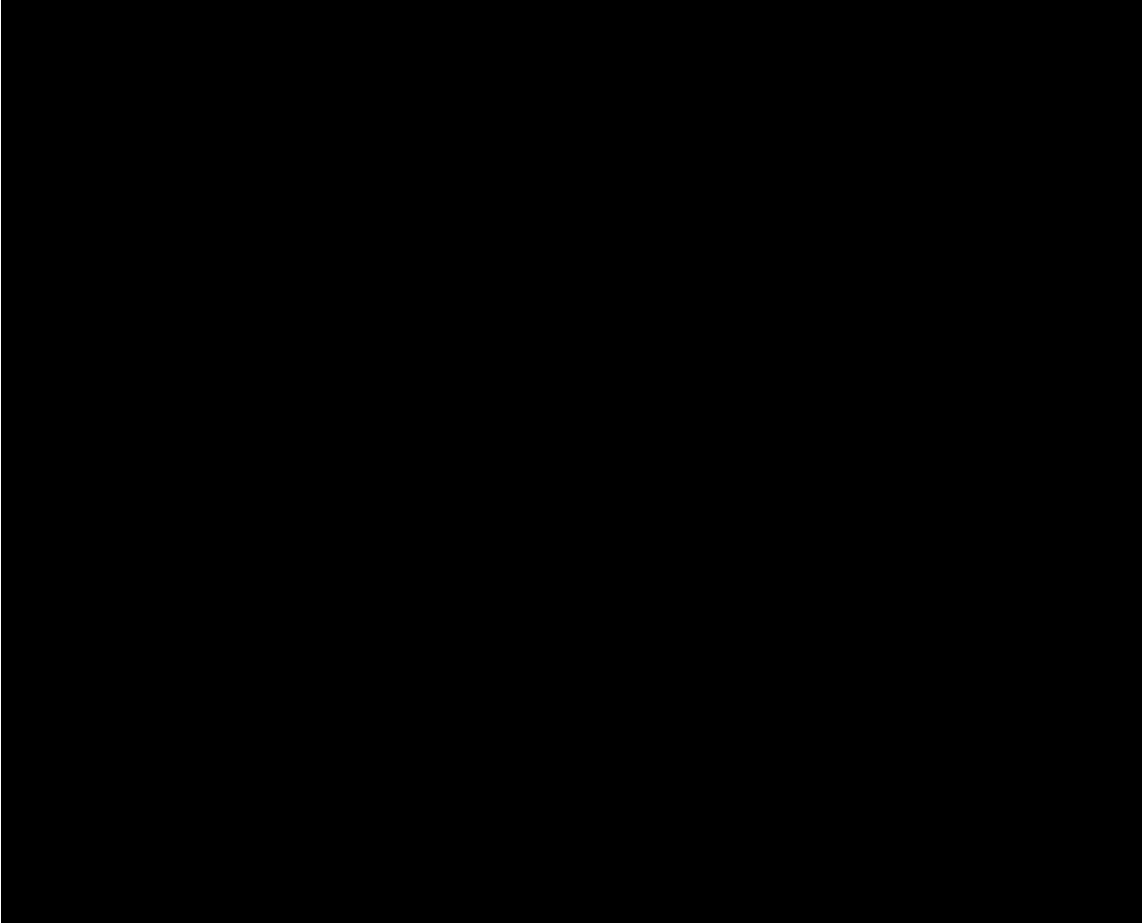


Figure No. 3. Recent photo looking southwest on [REDACTED], showing the junction between [REDACTED] at the left, and [REDACTED], the blue structure at the right. The general appearance of the subject property at [REDACTED] is well illustrated in this view.

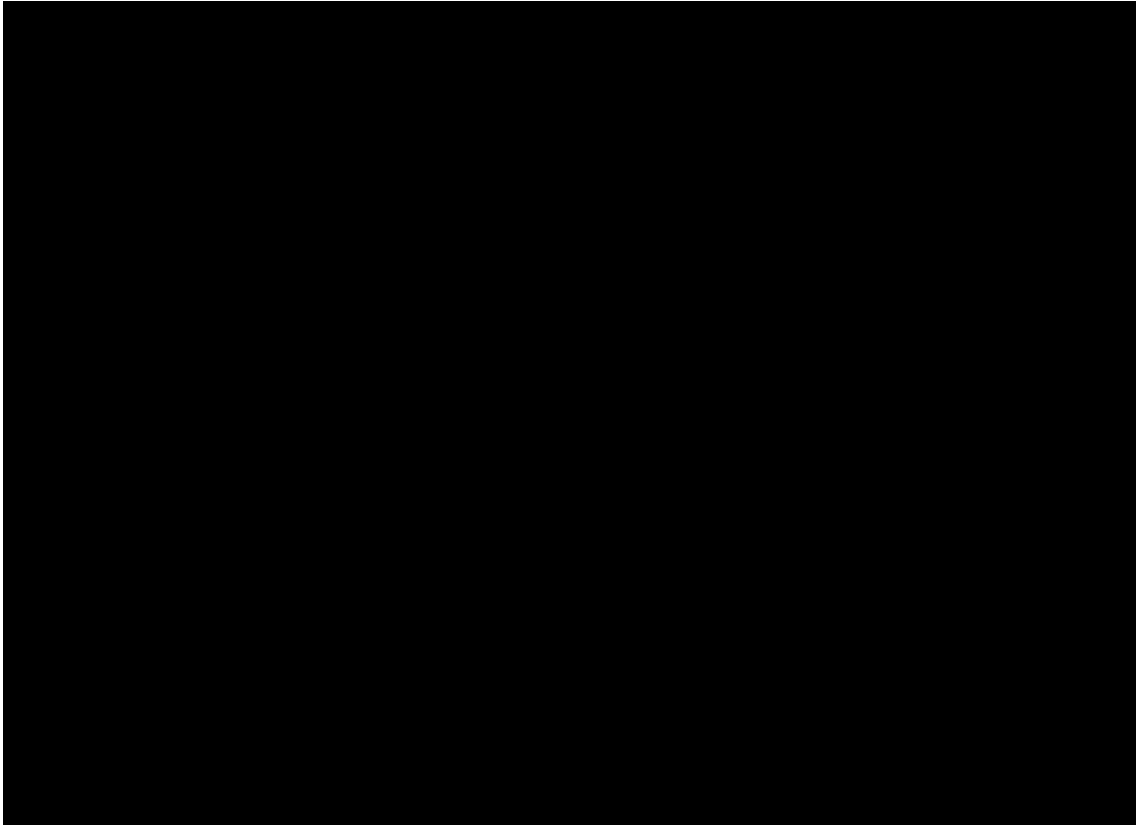


Figure No. 4. General view looking west, showing the east elevation of the wall that separates [REDACTED] from the rear north end of the garden behind [REDACTED]. This photo dates from 2016, and was taken by the author of this report during a pre-purchase survey of the property. Several pertinent features are visible in this view, showing that this wall formerly served as a structural wall of a stable building that was part of the stableyard and mews development behind [REDACTED]. There is a row of pockets across the middle of the wall that show where large timber beams were supported in the wall. At the right end of the wall, close to its top, are two blocked openings that still retain the timber frames for louvred vents. There thick timber jambs of these frames contain slots for timber louvres that are angled so that rainwater would be repelled by the louvres. In other works, those frames are proof that this wall had a ventilated loft over its ground floor, and the vents we placed in the party wall with the neighbouring property.

It is important to note that this wall is considered by Dublin City Council, to form part of the curtilage of the Nationally Significant Structure at [REDACTED], and is therefore protected because of the inclusion of [REDACTED] on the Record of Protected Structures.

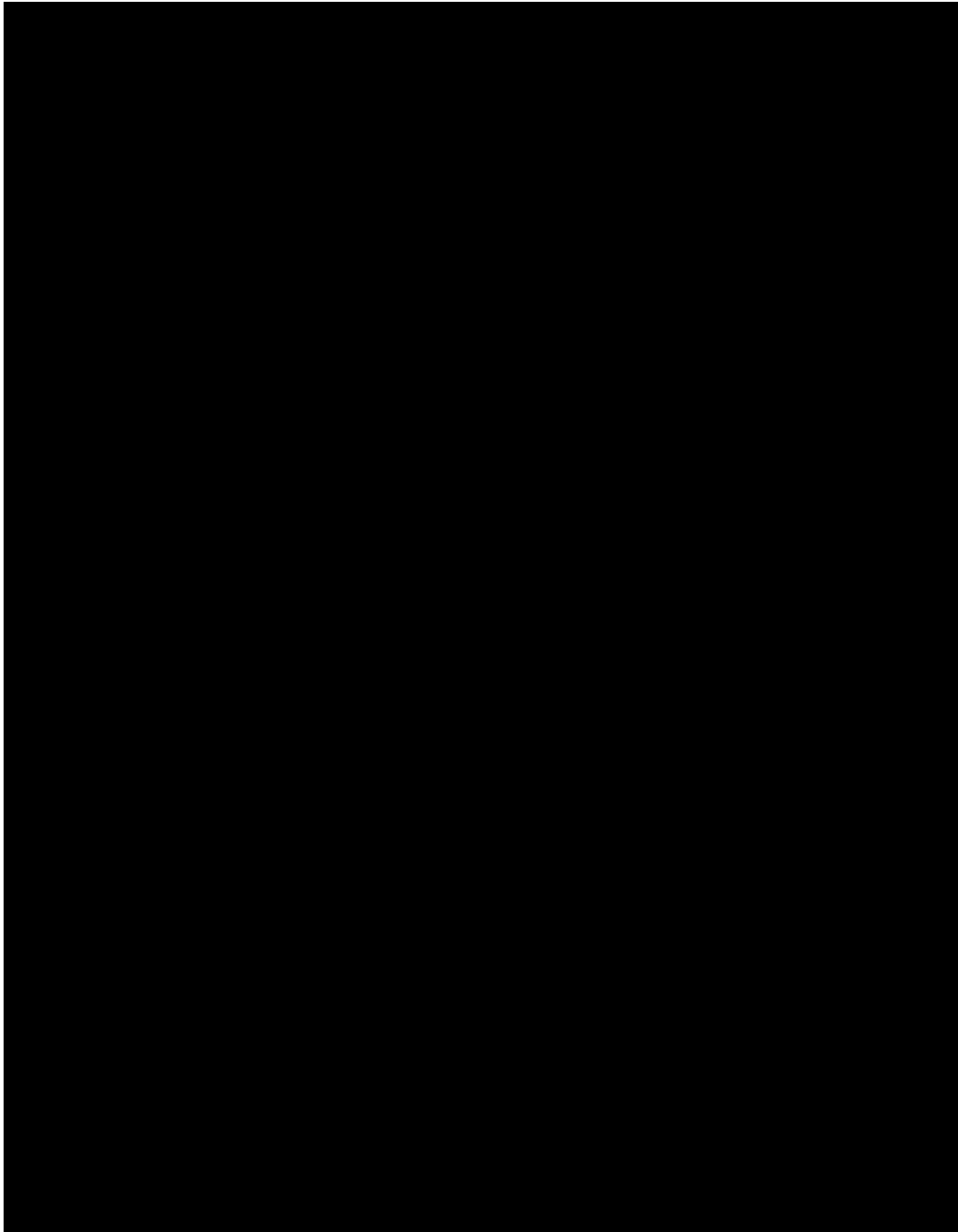


Figure No. 5. Detail view showing the important junction of the C18th shared boundary between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] at the left, and the later north wall to [REDACTED], with its large vehicular gate. Of particular interest in this photo is the character of the rubble stone masonry in the upper half of this corner. It does not turn the corner to the left, as would be expected if the original north wall had actually been in location of the current rendered wall below. Instead of a jagged corner with large stones projecting from the corner, the wall plane continues out to the current corner. A jagged line of stones can be see just to the left of the corner, suggesting that this wall originally continued to the right, until the laneway was widened and the original wall taken down.

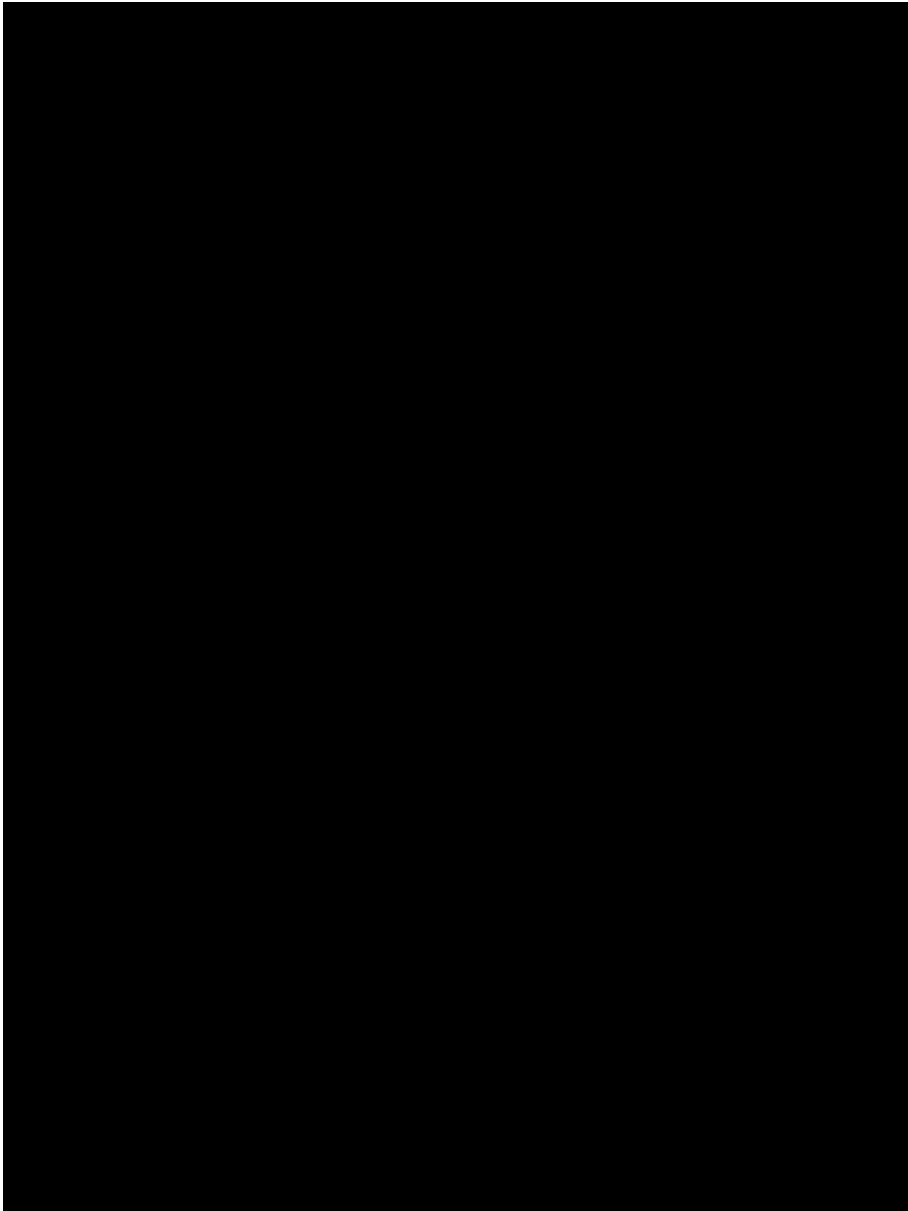


Figure No. 6. Detail view showing the external face of the north boundary wall to [REDACTED] at its junction with [REDACTED] to the right. The sand and cement render has fallen away over portions of the wall, exposing the masonry structure of this wall. The mixture and bricks and rubble stone shows an area of wall that has been much altered over time. The junction between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] occurs behind the black downpipe, at the right side of the photo. The change in alignment of the wall can be seen in the top edge of the wall. Starting at the jamb of the large door opening for [REDACTED], the wall is angled back to accommodate the widened laneway. It is possible that the lower half of the wall between the two large door opening is a part of the C18th laneway wall, however it has been heavily altered over the last two and a half centuries. That piece of wall is only a small fragment of the larger property and contains no significant architectural details. It would be remarkable to consider this small piece of masonry to confer National Significance on the structure that currently stands at [REDACTED].

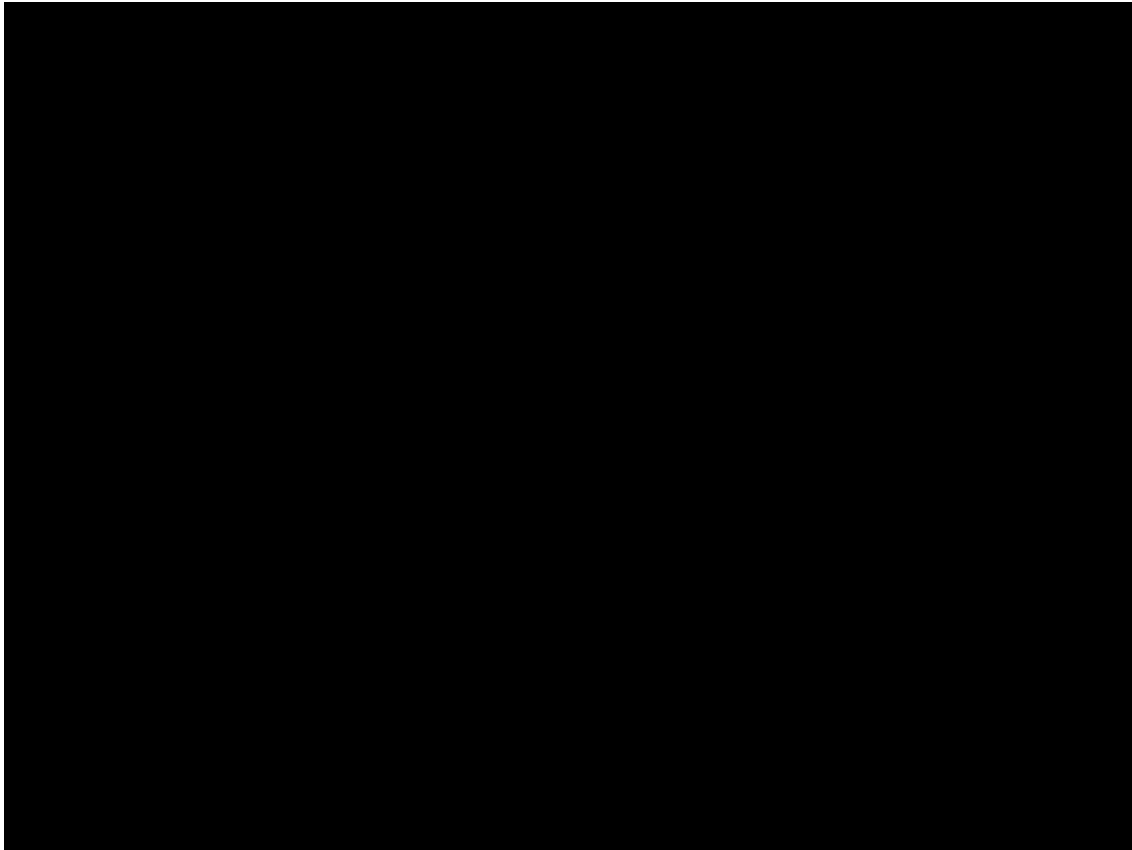


Figure No. 7. Detail view showing the heavy steel sheeted door in the north elevation to [REDACTED]. Note the in situ concrete with steel reinforcing used to form the lintel over this large door opening. These materials and their relatively haphazard construction, are consistent with the kind of building practices used during the middle decades of the C20th in Dublin, when derelict old structures were modified for new uses. The Dublin Valuations Office records included in Ms. Driscoll's detailed submission provides additional information about the subdivision and improvements that occurred to the former stable yard and derelict structures that stood at the rear of [REDACTED], during the 1930s.



Figure No. 8. Internal detail view showing the rubble stone pier that forms the northeast corner to the current structure at [REDACTED]. This pier also forms the east jamb to the large vehicular gate. The old rubble stone wall behind this pier can be seen to continue across behind this pier to the corner, suggesting that they were not built at the same time.



Figure No. 9. Internal view showing the lightweight timber roof structure to [REDACTED], covered with corrugated steel and aluminium sheeting. This roof contains no materials that could date from the C18th or early C19th, and appears to have been built and repaired since the middle of the C20th.