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**Cultural Heritage Assessment  
for  
Nuns' Island, Galway,**



**May, 2017**

Client: National University of Ireland Galway, University Road, Galway.

Consultant: AECOM, Heritage Hall, Kirwan's Lane, Galway.



**Rialtas na  
hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland**

**Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040**

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## *1.0 Background*

### *1.1 Introduction*

This report was compiled by the writer on behalf of National University of Ireland, Galway through AECOM, Galway. It concerns a cultural heritage assessment for Nuns' Island, Galway (Illus.'s 1-3).

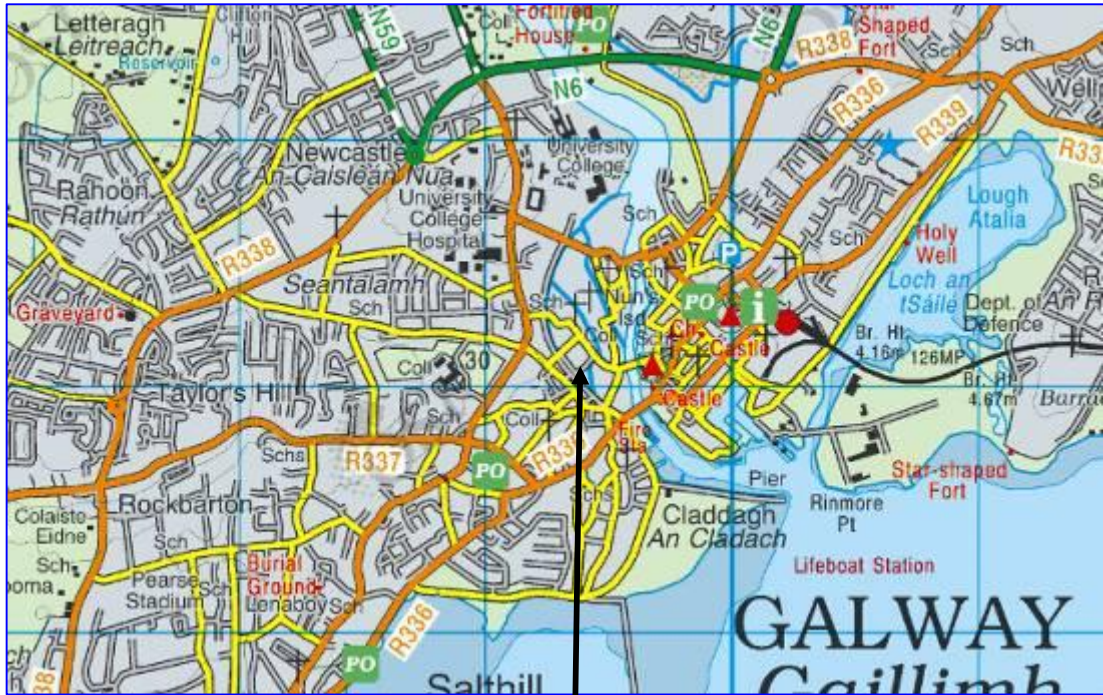
Nuns' Island is located to the west of the medieval city of Galway amid the many natural and man-made waterways that characterise this area. It has been an important location for industry, particularly in the nineteenth century and it was the site of the County and town jails, the sites of which are now occupied by the Galway Cathedral.

National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) is a significant land owner in this area and they have commissioned this assessment to gain a clear understanding of the heritage resource in the vicinity of their building stock.

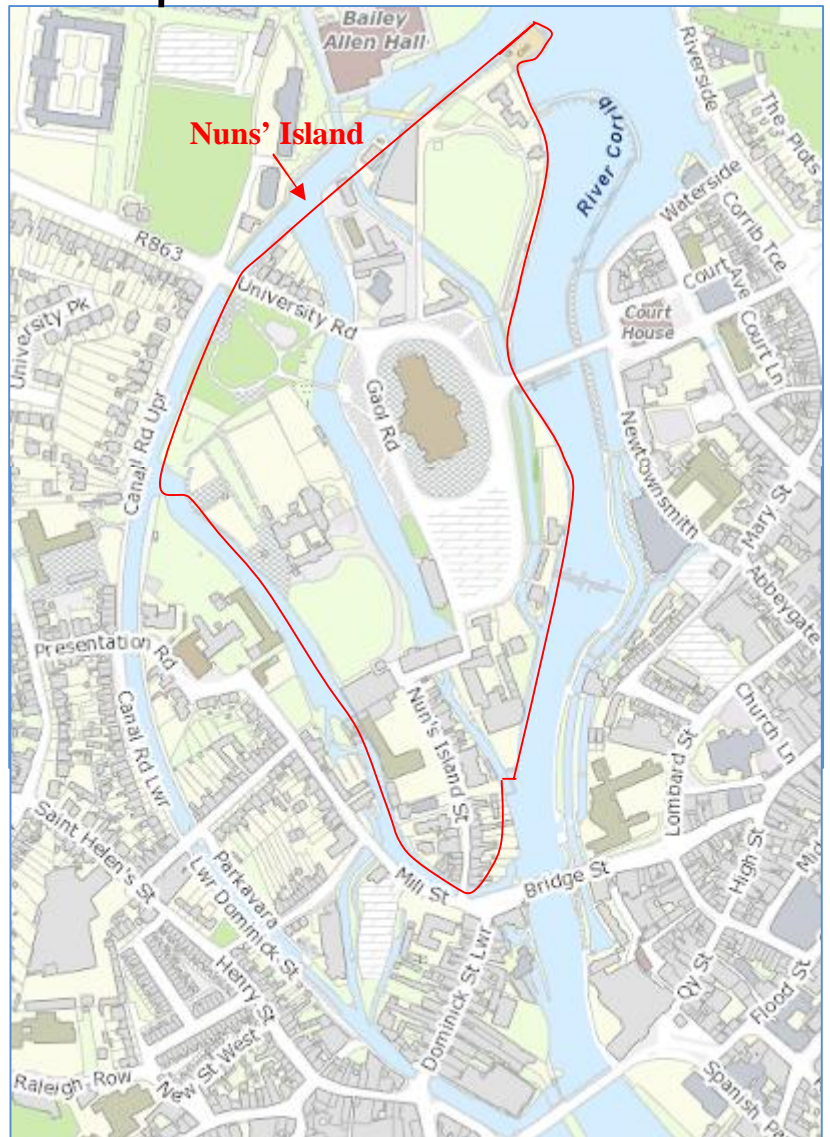
### *1.2 Cultural Heritage Assessment*

The protection of the cultural heritage of the area is of great importance and a profile of the archaeology and architectural and industrial archaeology heritage of the immediate surroundings has been undertaken. The following brief was adhered to in the preparation of the report:

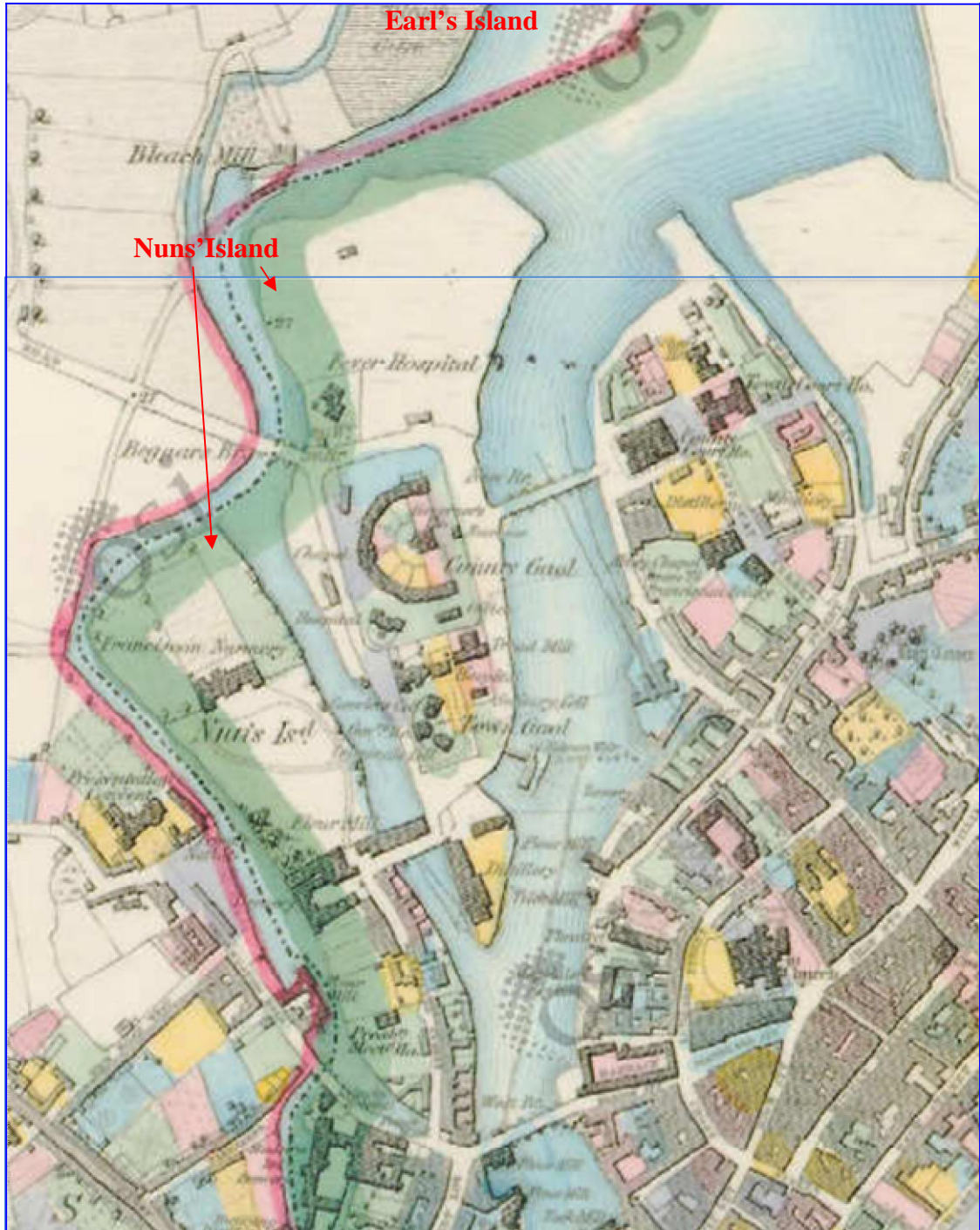
- Historical background to the site, including cartographic evidence.
- A full description of protected sites within Nuns' Island, including photographs, with a detailed written description of the upstanding fabric and features.
- Statement of Significance, describing Nuns' Island in the context of historical developments.
- Recommendations and mitigatory measures on all aspects of the protected sites and buildings.



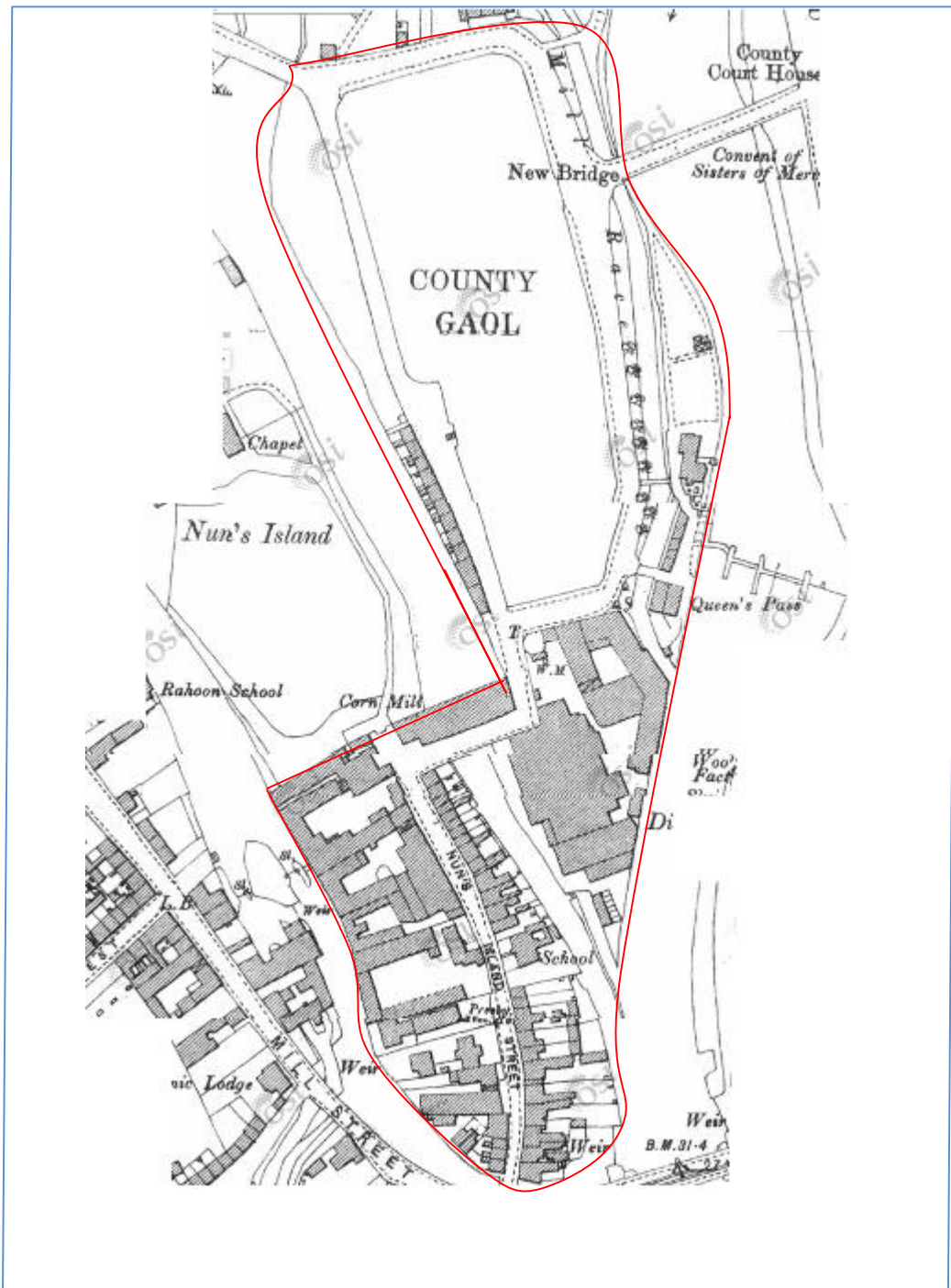
**Illus. 1 Site Location Map. Nuns' Island, Galway.**



**Illus. 2 Site Location Map.**



**Illus. 3 Site Location Map. First Edition OS Map, GA094, 1838.**



**Illus. 4 Second Edition OS 25" Map GA094, 1890-98, showing extent of site under investigation.**



## 2.0 Methodology

An archaeological and architectural and industrial heritage assessment was carried out on the subject site at Nuns' Island. This comprised the following:

### 2.1 Field and Desk Study

As a starting point, the desk study involved a search of historic sources on Nuns' Island. The Archaeological Survey of Ireland files and the Record of Protected Structures for Galway City were consulted. Recorded Monuments are identified in the text by their numbers beginning 'RMP No.' and Protected Structures are identified by their numbers beginning 'RPS'. Other written sources were also researched as were aerial photographs and cartographic sources. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) was consulted, as was the database of excavations undertaken in Galway City. Site visits were carried out.

### 2.2 Legislative Context

Part of Nuns' Island is within the *Zone of Archaeological Potential* of Recorded Monument GA094-100 (medieval town) and there are a number of additional RMP's within the redline boundary of the subject site (see below). The RMP designation means the area within the *Zone of Archaeological Potential* is protected under the National Monuments Acts, 1930-2004. Nun's Island is not an Architectural Conservation Area but there are sixteen Protected Structures in the area covered by the Masterplan (see below). These sites are protected under the Local Government Planning and Development Act, 2000. These acts are the main legal mechanisms by which the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage resource is protected in Ireland.

**Recorded Monuments** are sites, structures and features that are considered to be of archaeological importance and are listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). Notice of proposed works in relation to a Recorded Monument should be given to the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs two months before commencement of the works. This is to allow the National Monuments Service time to consider the proposed works and how best to proceed to further the protection of the monument.

**Protected Structures** are defined as

“Any building, structure, excavation, or other thing constructed or made on, in or under any land, or any part of a structure”.

The meaning of the term ‘structure’ is expanded to include

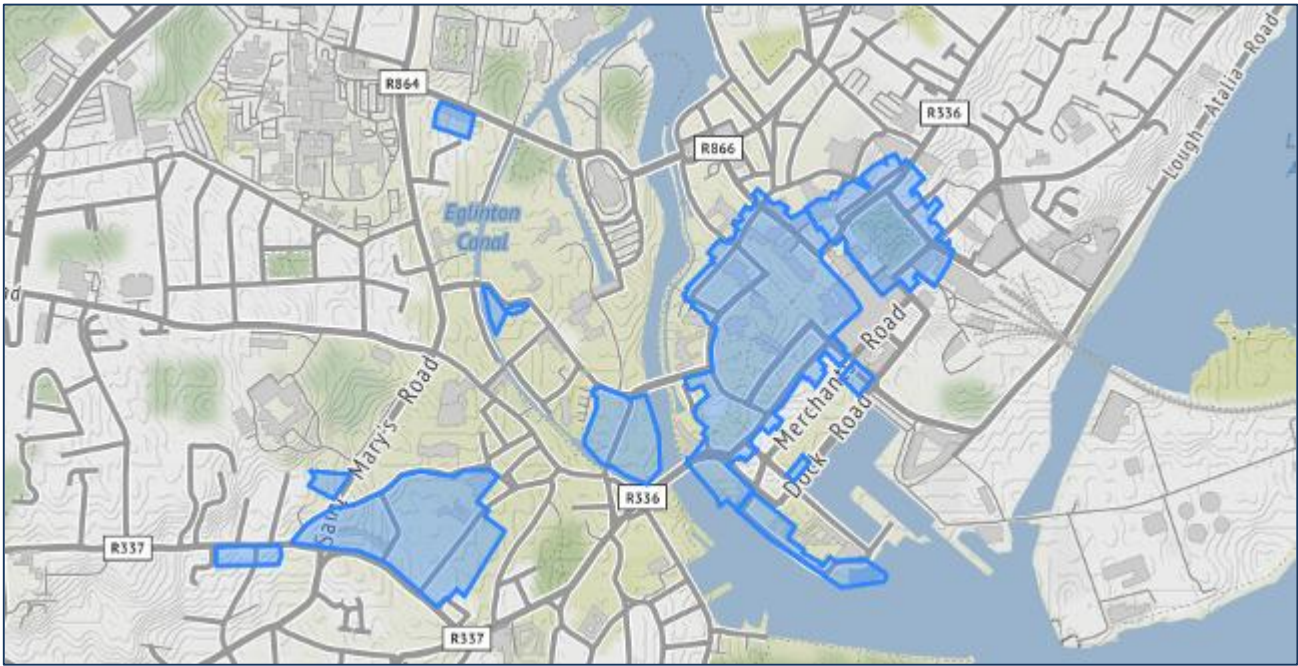
The interior of the structure, the land lying within the curtilage of the structure; any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors; and all fixtures and fittings which form part of the interior or exterior of the above structures.

**Curtilage** is defined as:

The land immediately associated with the structure and what is (or was) in use for the purposes of the structure.



**Illus. 5 Site Location Map. Extract from OS 6” Sheet GA094, RMP Edition.**



**Illus. 6 Architectural Conservation (ACA's) Areas, Galway City**

**Illus. 7 Aerial Photograph of Nuns' Island, showing the extent of the NUIG Masterplan.**



### *3.0 Physical Setting*

Nuns' Island is located on the western bank of the River Corrib, amid a network of watercourses of both natural and man-made origin. Though the placename originally referred to one island only, it now encompasses two islands that measure over 560m in length and over 180m in maximum width, with the island to the north being slightly larger than that to the south. Both islands are of irregular shape and both are wider to the north-western end than to the south-eastern end. The topography of both islands is flat, with ground falling sharply to the river's edge to the east of the northern island. This eastern edge is planted with mature trees and has a number of buildings related to the river facing to the east, high on the eastern edge of the island.

The islands are separated by the Gaol or Cathedral River (Plate 28) which has an average width of c. 23m (Plate 1). The southern island is flanked to the west by the Western or Convent River and the northern island is bordered to the east by the River Corrib. They are linked at three points; Beggars Bridge to the north (Plate 2), which runs from the north-west of the northern island across the top of the southern island onto the mainland; a pedestrian bridge (Plate 3) c. 40m to the south-west of Beggars Bridge and a bridge over the Gaol River to the south-west of the northern island.

There are two streets on the islands; Gaol Road (Plate 4) which surrounds the Cathedral on the northern island and Nuns' Island Street (Plate 5), which leads southward through the lower reaches of the southern island. Though the islands comprise a relatively small area, they have a rich and varied stock of built heritage, much of which is in use and in fair to good condition. More than half of the northern parts of both islands are occupied by ecclesiastical sites, with the southern island having the Poor Clares Convent buildings and grounds (Plate 6) and the northern island having the Galway Cathedral and extensive car parking area (Plate 4). There is a concentration of industrial heritage buildings (Plate 7) to the south of the northern island and terraces to both sides of Nuns' Island Street to the south of the southern island.

The subject site comprises the entire northern island and it excludes the northern section, which contains the Poor Clares Convent, of the southern island.



**Plate 1 Gaol River, from n.**

**Plate 2 Beggars Bridge, from sw.**



**Plate 3 Pedestrian bridge, from s.**



**Plate 4 Gaol Road and Cathedral, from s.**



**Plate 5 Nuns' Island Street, from s.**



**Plate 6 Poor Clares Convent, from se.**

**Plate 7 Hydrology Department, from se.**



#### 4.0 Historical Background

Located to the north-west of the medieval city of Galway, Nuns' Island are part of a series of islands that extend northward from Dominick Street to Newcastle. These islands; Ballymanagh, Maderia, Nuns' Island (two islands) and Earl's Island, were formed due to the natural topography of the area which saw the River Corrib divide itself into a number of streams around the islands as it approaches its final descent to the sea. The river and streams would have been fast moving at this point, having a significant drop of 4m to the sea over a relatively short area. The folklore of Galway preserves the name *Baile na Shruathan* or 'town of the streams' (Spellissey, 1999), for the pre-Anglo-Norman settlement though *Bun na nGallimhe* is known from the historical record (Mac Niocaill, G., 1995, 123).



**Nuns' Island**    **Illus. 8 Pictorial Map 1651.**



**Illus. 9 Map of Galway and Environs, J.N. Bellin c. 1691.**

The seventeenth century mapping shows the string of these islands to the west and north-west of the medieval city, with the Pictorial Map giving an indication of the locations of the islands and Bellin's map giving a clearer view of the extent of the River Corrib and its associated streams and islands. The northernmost island, Earl's Island, is depicted on the early mapping as a crescent-shaped island wrapping itself around the mainland at Newcastle, with just a narrow water channel dividing the two. This island ceased to be recognised as a separate entity by the mid-to-late nineteenth century due to silting and later industrialisation in the area. To the south are the twin-islands that make up Nun's Island, called *Oileán Ealtanach* in early mapping. The name *Oileán Ealtanach* means 'island of the flocking birds' and Walsh has noted that the northernmost island may have also been called *Oileán na nGabhar* or 'island of the goats'. The name Nuns' Island was given to the southern island due to its association with the Poor Clares since the seventeenth century but over time the name was applied to both islands. In recent times, the name Earl's Island has been used with reference to the northern island, most notably in the Record of Protected Structures Galway City Council.

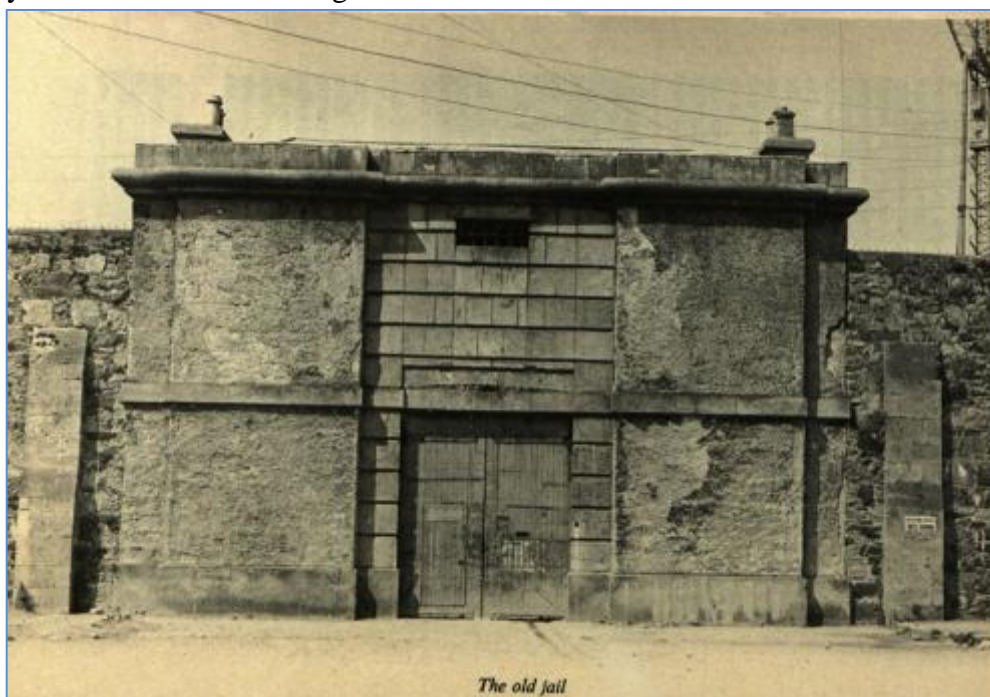
The town of Galway owes its name to the river, the Gaillimh, later called the Galway River and now known as the River Corrib (Spellissey, 1999). The appearance of the river and the islands along its western bank has altered significantly in the last two centuries due to the many man-made interventions along the important stretch from Newcastle in the north to the Claddagh in the south.

The earliest recorded activity on Nuns' Island relates to a petition in the mid-seventeenth century by Sister Mary Bonaventure, Abbess of the Poor Clares, to establish a monastery (RMP GA094-106; *Religious House, Franciscan*), gardens and an orchard on the southern island (Spellissey, 1999, 120). This request was acceded to by the Corporation of Galway on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1649 on the condition that they 'make a common bridge to the other island'. A bridge or causeway is shown on the Pictorial Map of 1651 between both islands though this causeway is not shown on Bellin's map. The islands are known variously as the Islands of Altona, Islanaltenas and Island Altagneach up until 1800 when there is the first recorded use of the placename Nuns' Island. By 1812 it is clear that the name Nuns' Island was being used for both islands (Spellissey, 1999, 121). The Franciscan monastery at Nuns' Island was occupied briefly by the Poor Clares and no trace of the building survives (Archaeological Survey of Ireland). The main building relating to the current monastery on the site has been



dated to the late eighteenth century by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH; RPS Reg. No. 30313017).

The northern island does not appear to have been developed prior to the early nineteenth century. This island was chosen as the site for the new County and Town Gaols which were opened in 1810, due to its 'open and healthy situation' (Hardiman, 1820, 301). The site was purchased at a cost of £664.7s.6d (Galway County Council Archives) and it covered an area of over 3 acres (Spellissey, 1999). The new jails were located adjacent to each other and they were eventually merged in 1870. The Town Gaol was located to the south and it was three-storeys in height. The County Gaol, a crescent-shaped, two-storey building to the north, was designed by Thomas Hardwicke and was reportedly inspired by the design of Gloucester Gaol. Construction was supervised by Richard Morrison, Architect, who has also been tenuously connected with the design of the Town Gaol.



**Plate 8 Image of old jail, reproduced from Galway Cathedral by the Very Reverend Michael Browne, 1967.**

The siting of the new Courthouse across the river from the Gaols in 1815 brought another element of public building to this western suburb and the construction in 1819 of the Gaol Bridge (now the Salmon Weir Bridge) provided an important link between both the court and the gaols but also between the burgeoning suburbs beyond the medieval city walls in Woodquay and the lands on the western bank of the River Corrib. These lands would

eventually house the Galway Union Workhouse, which opened in 1842 on the site of the current University College Hospital and the Queen's College, which opened in 1845 and is now the National University of Ireland Galway. A Fever Hospital (now the Galway University Irish Centre for Human Rights) was also built on Nuns' Island, to the north-east of the Gaol site in the early nineteenth century.

When Galway Gaol was closed in 1939, it was identified as an appropriate site for a proposed new Catholic cathedral, to replace the small Pro-Cathedral in Middle Street. A fund had been established for the project in 1876 and the site of the old Shambles Barracks at O'Brien's Bridge had initially been proposed for the new building but by the time Michael Browne was appointed as Bishop in 1937, it was regarded as being too small. Following the closure of the gaol, it was transferred to Galway County Council and then conveyed by deed to the Bishop of Galway and trustee (Browne, 1967, 6). Almost all the building associated with the jail were demolished by 1941 and in 1949 architect John J. Robinson, Dublin, was appointed. A design was ready by 1954 and construction began in February 1958, with John Sisk as the contractor. There had been a late attempt to get the cathedral site moved to Eyre Square but the gaol site prevailed and the cathedral was dedicated in August 1965, with the name Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and St. Nicholas.



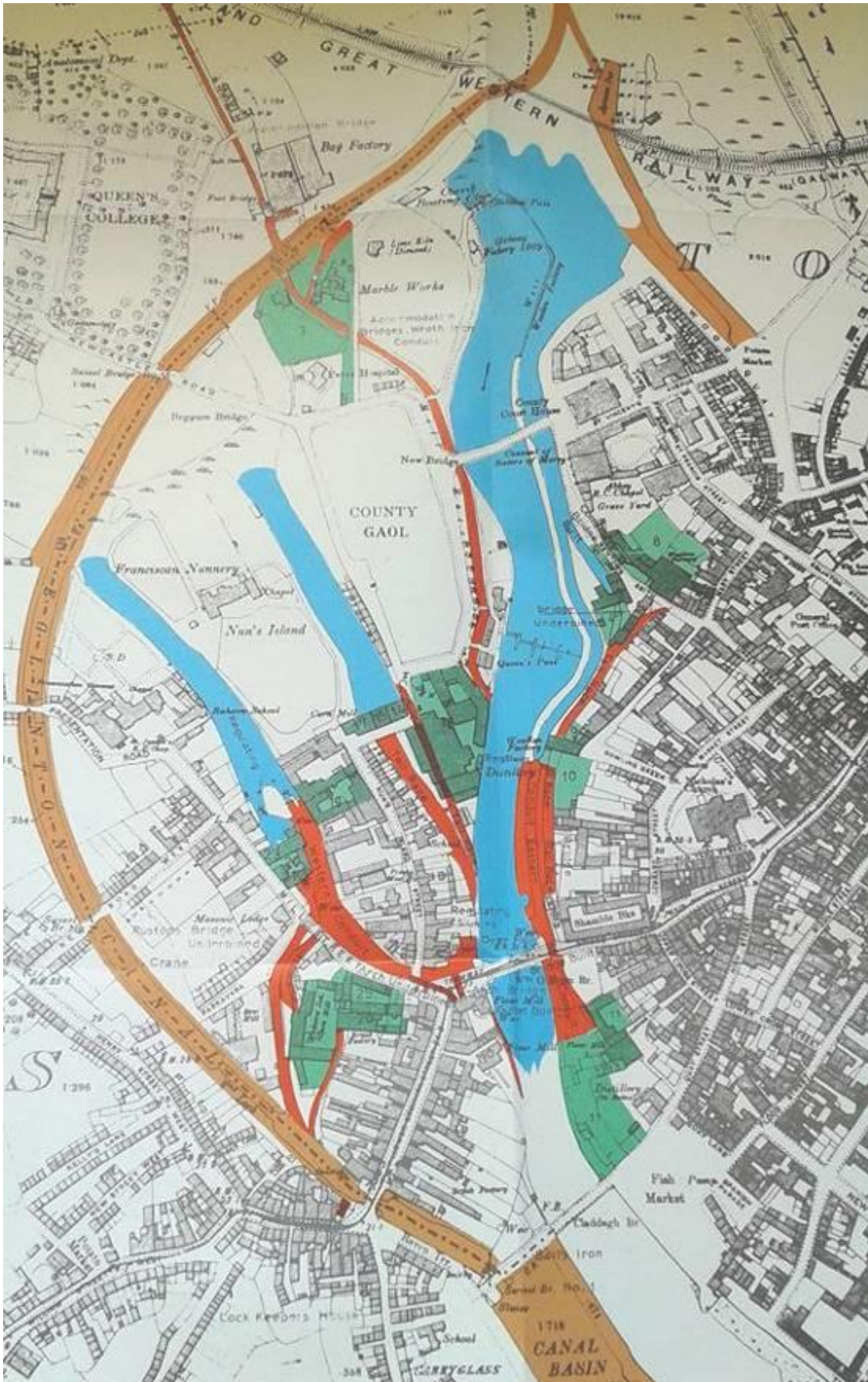
**Plate 9** Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and St. Nicholas, from sw.

In addition to the ecclesiastical and public buildings on Nuns' Island, there was a considerable expansion in industrial sites in this location in the early nineteenth century. Galway had become increasingly industrialised in the late eighteenth century and had used its situation well with relation to utilising water power. From Earl's Island, adjacent to Newcastle in the north, to the Claddagh in the south, the watercourses were harnessed for milling and manufacturing from the beginning of century in a development that would radically change the appearance of the islands and their streams. The river to the west of Nuns' Island, the Western or Convent River and the river between both islands, the Gaol or Cathedral River, were an important part of the industrial infrastructure of Galway in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with a variety of mills, breweries and factories operating along both watercourses. It is recorded that by 1846 'there were 29 mills using water-power' in the city (Semple, 1981, 44).

The configuration of the waterways that are now extant at and in the vicinity of Nuns' Island are a direct result of the 1846 'Report on the Loughs Corrib, Mask and Carra Drainage and Navigation Scheme' (McMahon Report), produced by the Commissioners of Public Works.

This ambitious scheme had a number of objectives, including wide scale dredging of the Corrib, Gaol and Western rivers as well as the various tailraces serving mills in the area. Part of the plan was to improve the power to mills and to upgrade the mills to suit the new levels. An essential element of the plan was the construction of the Eglinton Canal, a three quarters of a mile long canal that curved around the top of Nuns' Island, serving both smaller rivers between it and the River Corrib. Another aim of the Eglinton Canal was to provide a navigable link between Lough Corrib and the sea and consequently it was never envisaged to be a very long or technically challenging undertaking, given the relatively short distance that was required.

Construction of the canal commenced on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1848 by the Commissioners of Public Works, under the supervision of Samuel Ussher Roberts, a district engineer with responsibility for the Lough Corrib, Mask and Carra drainage district. Water was introduced to the canal in September, 1851 and it was officially opened in 1852. The canal commenced just to the east of the University, curving gently south-westward past Nuns' Island, onward through Parkavara and then on to its terminus in the Claddagh basin, a short distance to the south. It was made with two locks, one at Parkavara and the other, a sea lock, at the tidal basin. It was constructed of a fine limestone block-lined bank and had five hand-operated

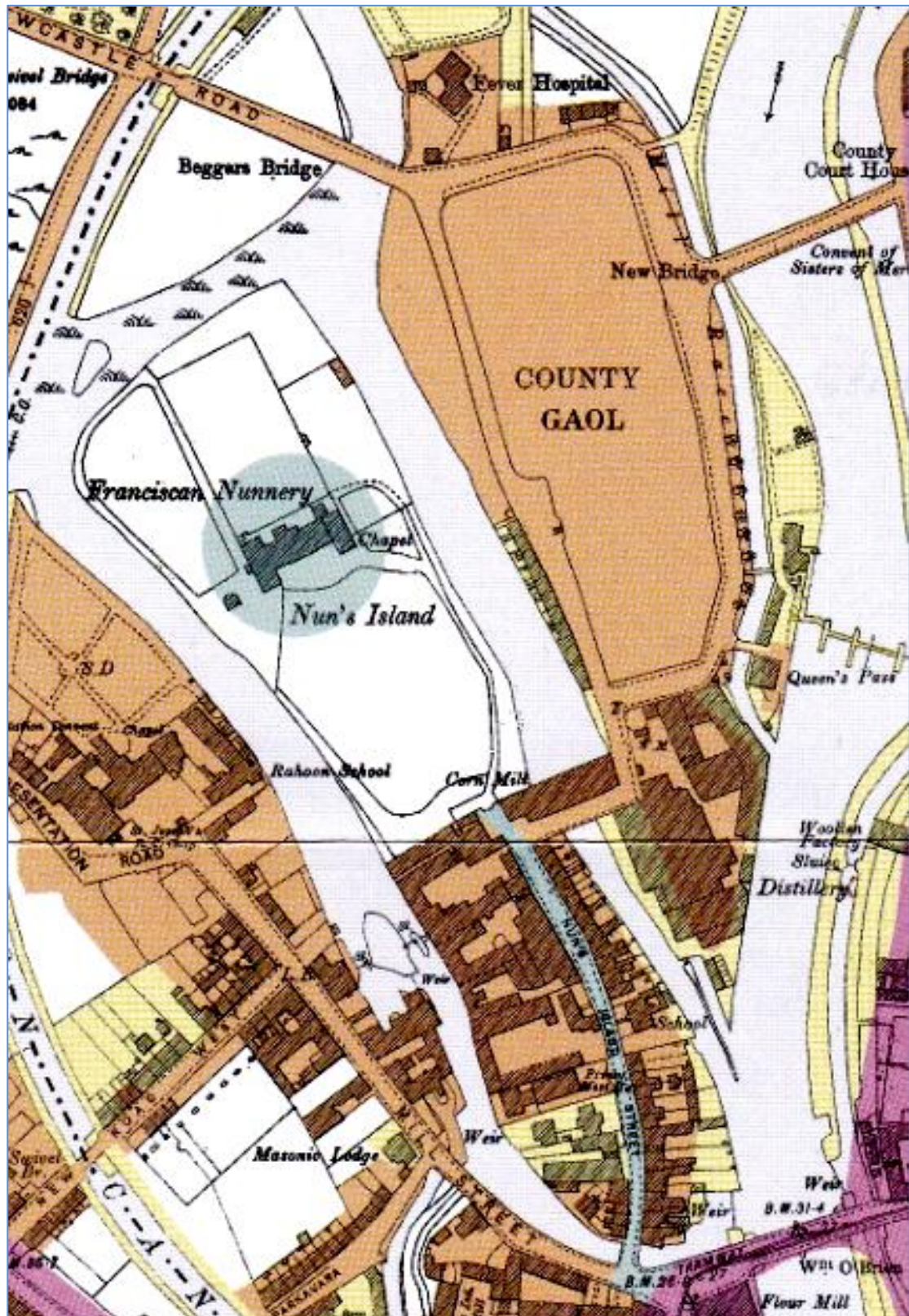


Illus. 10 Waterways surrounding Nuns' Island, after Semple, 1981.

swivel bridges along its length. These bridges were of wrought iron with timber decking. The canal was opened on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1852 by the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Eglinton and was named after him. The canal continued in use until 1954. Following this, a number of the swivel bridges on the canal, such as that at University Road, were replaced with fixed bridges. The scheme also saw the construction of a tailrace that ran south from the distillery at Newcastle to the Marble Works at the northern island and onward along the eastern side of the island before entering the River Corrib just before the southern terminus of the island. This channel was named Hunter's Tailrace or Hunter's Channel after the Hunters factory that replaced the Marble Works.

The hydro-powered industries on Nuns' Island were mainly concentrated in the southern half of the northern island, with the exception of the Marble Works which were located to the north-east of the northern island. The Irish Historic Towns Atlas for Galway lists the many different uses and owners that occupied these buildings had throughout the nineteenth century. The mill owners included the Persse, Palmer and McDonagh families and properties often changed hands between these families. The history of one of the larger sites, the Persse Distillery (RPS 7408) at the end of the northern island, indicates what a long and varied history these industrial sites had (Prunty and Walsh, 2016, 2016, p30). The site was originally occupied by Joyce Distiller in 1813. It was sold in 1840 to Persse, who converted it to a woollen factory and subsequently a flour mill but it was working as a distillery by 1860. By the time it was sold to Hygeia it comprised a substantial building, much of which dated to the late nineteenth century, with numerous outbuildings.

The main streets on the islands can be dated from cartographic evidence. Gaol Road, which surrounds the Cathedral on the northern island dates to the construction of the Town and County Gaols at the site and Nuns's Island Street, which occupies the southern half of the southern island was in place in the seventeenth century. Nuns' Island Street runs from the causeway linking the two islands southward to the bridge over the Western River adjacent to Mill Street. Bellin's map of 1691 shows buildings on either side of the street, though none of these appear to have survived into the modern period. In contrast to the rest of Nuns' Island, Nuns' Island Street is densely developed with a wide variety of building types, including a church, an asylum, a nineteenth century monastery, fine nineteenth century dwellings constructed by the mill owners and a modern school. The architectural style of the dwellings largely Georgian, with some fine examples on both sides of the street.



Illus. 11 Growth of Galway, after the Irish Historic Towns Atlas. 1200-1600

1600-1750

1750-1839

1840-95

## 5.0 Cultural Heritage Inventory

### 5.1 Archaeological Heritage

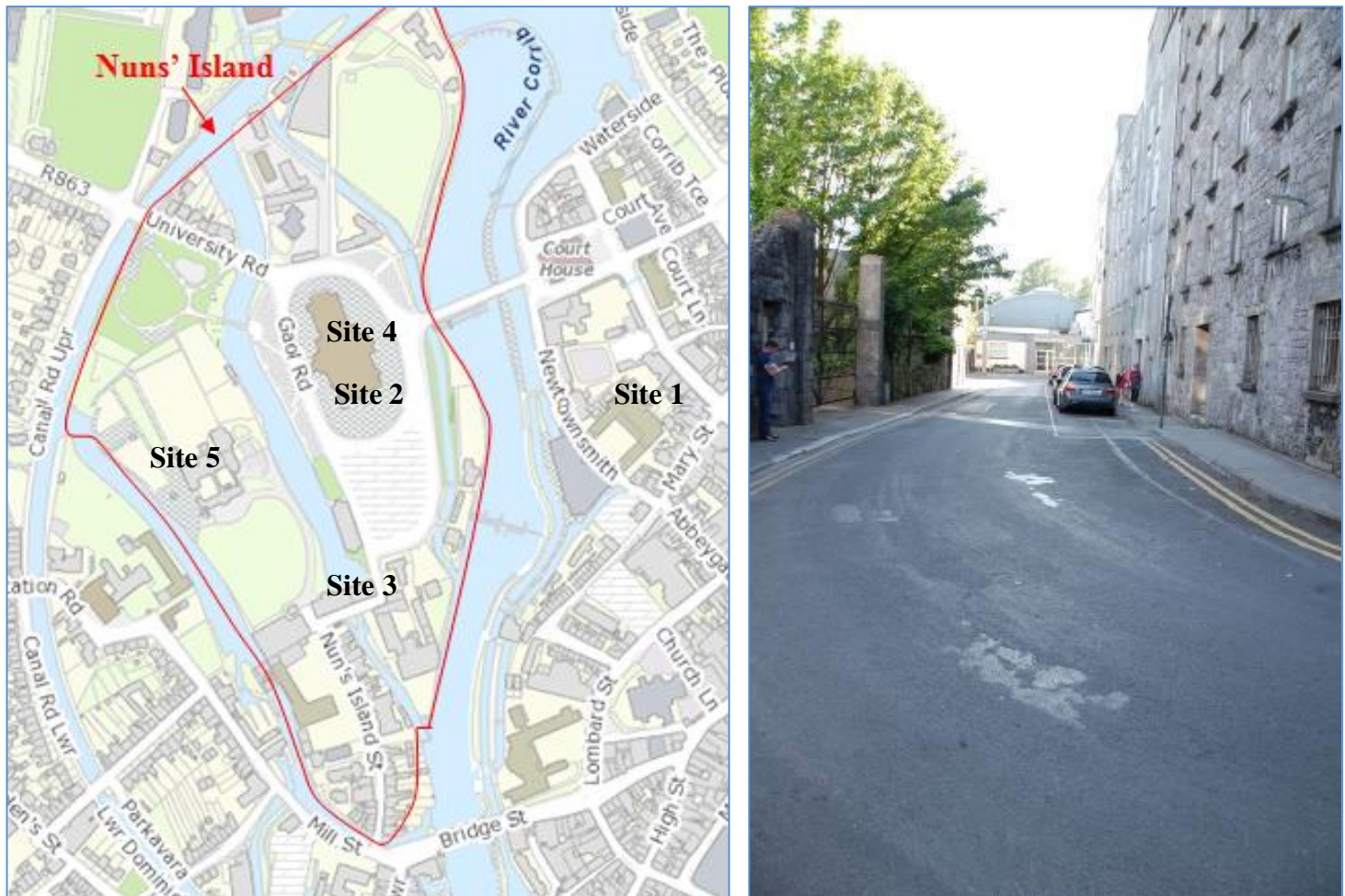
As the Growth of Galway map shows, the known archaeological heritage on both islands does not pre-date the seventeenth century (Illus.11). There are four Recorded Monuments within the redline boundary and one Recorded Monument in the Poor Clare monastery on the southern island. The *Zone of Archaeological Potential* for the medieval city of Galway (RMP No. GA094-100) includes the southern island only. The prison site (RMP No. GA94-103) relates to the *site of*, as both gaols have been demolished but there may be remains relevant to the occupation of the site surviving sub-surface. A grave containing burials from the prison is located in the car park (see RPS below). The causeway (RMP GA094-100033) marks the original seventeenth century bridge between the islands and the stone panels located in the Cathedral (RMP No. GA094-139) are not original to the site, having been moved from St. Nicholas' to the Pro-Cathedral in the nineteenth century.

*Table 1 Record of Monuments and Places within the redline boundary (see Illus. 12)*

Site No.	RMP No.	Description
1	GA 94-100	<i>Medieval walled town of Galway, located on the east bank of the River Corrib. The Zone of Archaeological Potential extends to the western side of the medieval town to include the southern island of Nuns' Island.</i>
2	GA94-103	<i>Prison, including the Town and County Gaols, constructed on the northern island in the early nineteenth centuries.</i>
3	GA094 - 100033	<i>Causeway, connecting the northern and the southern islands that comprise Nuns' Island. The construction of a bridge or causeway between both islands was requested by the Corporation of Galway in a response to a request from the Poor Clares to construct a religious house on the southern island in 1649.</i>
4	GA094 -139	<i>Three stone panels in the reredos above the altar in Galway Cathedral, dating to the mid-seventeenth century. They were transferred from the Pro-Cathedral, having come originally from St. Nicholas' Church in the nineteenth century.</i>

*Table 2 Record of Monuments and Places immediately outside the redline boundary (see Illus. 12)*

Site No.	RMP No.	Description
5	GA094 -106	<i>Franciscan monastery. Erected by the Poor Clares following permission from the Corporation of Galway in 1649. Non extant</i>



**Illus. 12 Location Map of RMPs, Tables 1.& 2 Plate 10 Site of Causeway, from e.**

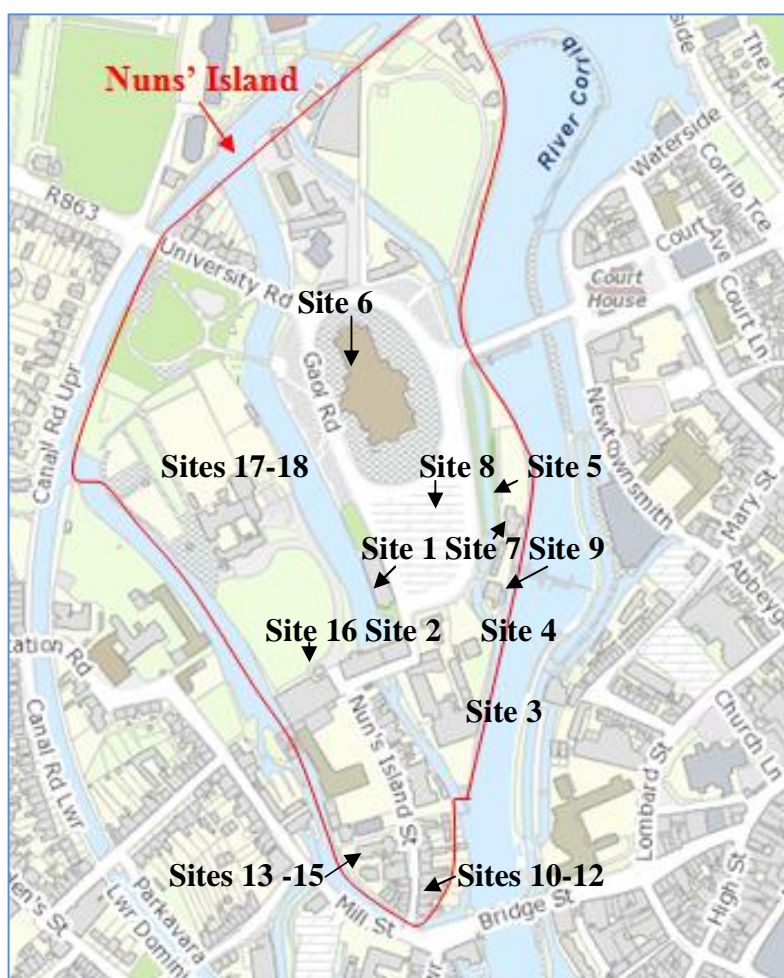
### *5.2 Architectural Heritage, including Industrial Heritage*

The architectural heritage of Nuns' Island can be broadly divided into ecclesiastical, industrial, domestic and public. The area is dominated by the imposing Cathedral that is visible from far beyond the confines of Nuns' Island. The lack of buildings near the Cathedral and the large amount space surrounding it, albeit under tarmac for car parking, contributes to its dominance in the landscape. The Presbyterian Church, which is now a theatre, is a delightful work of Classical architecture, which, though small, uses features like the Egyptian doorway to great effect.

The industrial sites are good examples of tall imposing, buildings, and largely unadorned but nonetheless enhanced by regular and frequent fenestration and of sturdy rubble construction. They are located directly adjacent to the waterways, which reinforces the industrial



connection. The fisheries buildings are isolated from all the other buildings on the northern island, both physically and visually, but they are also impressive, particularly the Country Club building with its Tudor-Revival style elegance. These buildings overlook the River Corrib from a vantage point high above the water and they are intriguing when viewed from the eastern bank of the river. The Georgian terrace to the south of the southern island attests to the increased affluence due to the growing industries in nineteenth century Galway and many retain fine features. The later buildings, dating to c. 1900 at the end of the street are also of good appearance. There is some dereliction to the south-west in what was Canavans but the site has been sold. The public buildings are largely of modern date and are not Protected Structures. They include the modern building of St. Joseph's School 'the Bish', which is visually stark but functional. To the east is St. Joseph's Patrician College or 'the Monastery' which dates to the 1950s. It is a plain functional building that is very much part of the school.



**Illus. 13 Location Map of RPSs, Tables 3-5.**

*Table 3 Protected Structures (industrial) within the redline boundary*

Site No.	RPS No.	Description
1	3605	<i>Island House (former mill)</i>  <i>Dating to c. 1840, it comprises a five-bay, three-storey central block flanked by two three-bay, two-storey wings. In use by Galway County Library Planning permission for alterations granted 2016 (Ref. 15/292)</i>
2	7406	<i>McLaughlan Building (McDonagh Flour Mills) McLaughlin Building (Palmer's Flour Mills)</i>  <i>Substantial and important mill buildings, constructed partly over the Western River. Constructed c. 1810, it was bought by NUIG (then UCG) in 1980 and has been used as a Hydrology Department. Rubble limestone walls to the seven-bay, six-storey building, with three cambered arched head-races beneath. Rendered attached mill to the east.</i>
3	7408	<i>Old Hygeia building (Persse Distillery)</i>  <i>Large former mill of rubble stone, of eight-bays and five-storeys over basement, backing onto apartment complex in what was a former wood factory attached to the rear of the distillery building. Occupying a prominent site on the western bank of the River Corrib. Not in use but in NUIG ownership.</i>
4	7409	<i>Mill building of three-bay, three-storeys, formerly attached to a four-storey wood factory that has since been demolished, with apartments occupying the site. Building now in use by NUIG.</i>
5	8501	<i>Tailrace. Hunter's Tailrace, constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. It discharges into the River Corrib above the former Persse Distillery building.</i>

*Table 4 Protected Structures (all other) within the redline boundary*

Site No.	RPS No.	Description
6	3602	<i>Cathedral. Imposing cruciform plan stone-built cathedral copper-roofed dome, 1965, with substantial car park surrounding and to the south.</i>
7	3604	<i>Country Club House. Tudor Revival-style house dating to c. 1880, having three-storey river elevation, pitched slated roof with rendered chimney stacks and cut limestone quoins.</i>
8	3606	<i>Grave in Car Park. A cruciform memorial to the deceased of the prisons that once occupied the site. The cross is formed with large square slabs rising slightly above the ground surface.</i>
9	3607	<i>Fisheries Office A five-bay single storey building with associated buildings fronting onto the River Corrib on the east side of the northern island of Nuns' Island.</i>
10	7400	<i>No. 4 Nuns' Island Street. Terraced house, c. 1815, having battened timber door with distinctive rectangular diamond-glazed fan light and three-bays of square headed windows with two-over-two timber sash windows.</i>

11	7401	<i>No. 5 Nuns' Island Street. Terraced three-bay, three-storey house early nineteenth century house. Round headed door opening with spoked fanlight and Eucharistic congress plaque over the door.</i>
12	7402	<i>No. 6 Nuns' Island Street Three-bay, three-storey building within terrace, with replacement windows and round-headed door opening with fanlight.</i>
13	7403	<i>No. 24 Nuns' Island Street (Grace Home). Former Protestant Asylum, dating to 1840, three-bay, two-storey with hipped slated roof and replacement uPVC windows, set back from the street in enclosed front yard. Inscribed plaque to the front wall.</i>
14	7407	<i>Arts Centre (former Presbyterian Church). Three-bay gable-fronted, double-height front elevation, having five-bay side elevation. Ashlar walls with Doric pilasters to front facade. Egyptian-style doorcase with pediment in square-headed door opening.</i>
15	7410	<i>No. 25 Nuns' Island Street. End of terrace two-bay, three-storey early nineteenth century building. Elliptical headed door having Doric columns and spoked fanlight. Fine panelled timber door.</i>
16	7411	<i>Postbox. Freestanding post box. 1930.</i>

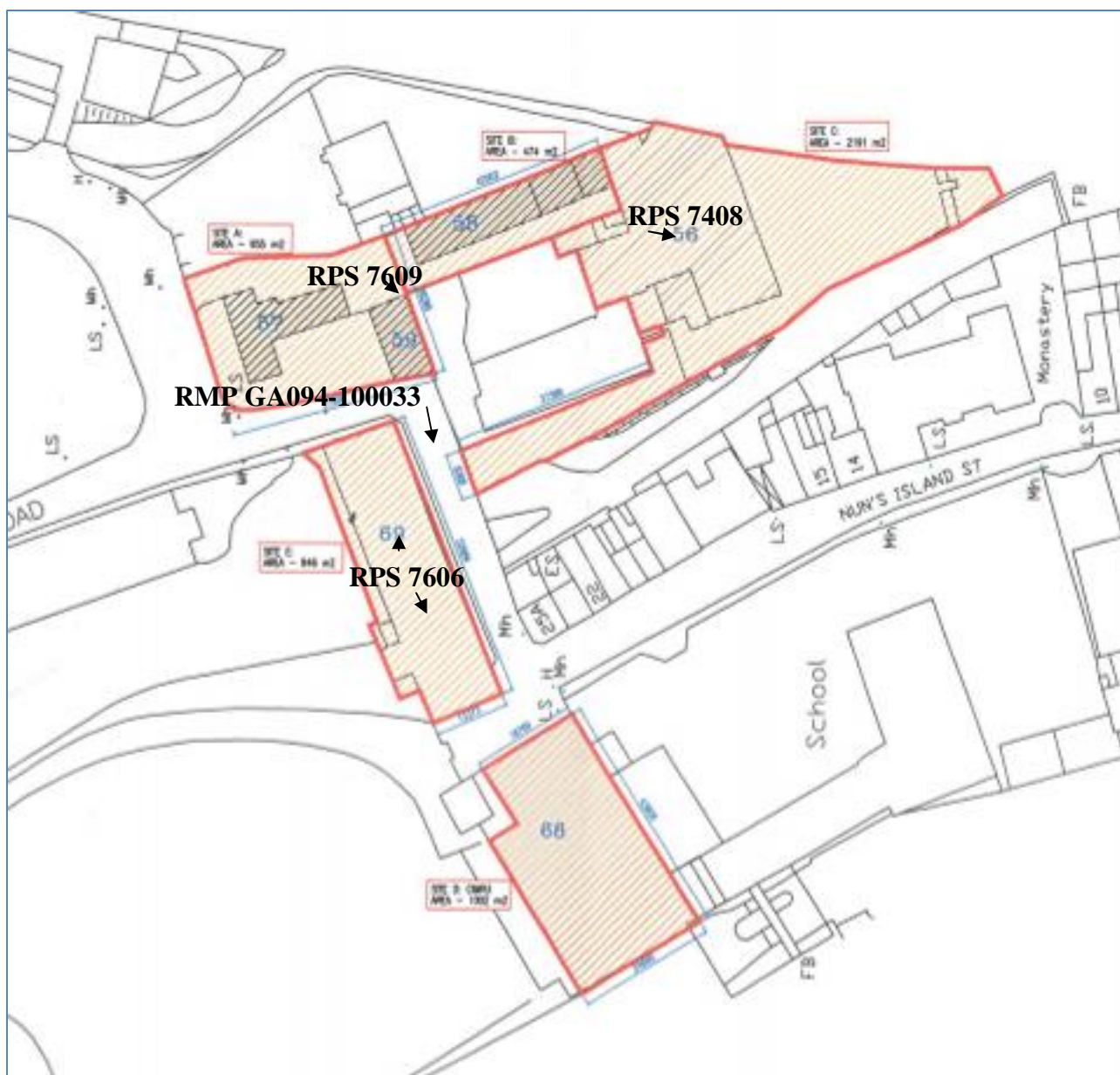
*Table 5 Protected Structures (all other) within the redline boundary*

Site No.	RPS No.	Description
17	7404	<i>St. Clares Monastery</i>
18	7405	<i>Poor Clares Burial Ground</i>



**Plate 11 Site 1 Island House, from se.**

### 5.3 RMP and RPS's relating to NUIG property only



**Illus. 13 Site Location Map of NUIG property, Nuns' Island.**

There are three Protected Structures in the ownership of NUIG within the redline boundary of the Masterplan study area. They are the McLaughlin Building (RPS 7606), a former mill (RPS 7609) and the former Hygeia Building (RPS 7408). There is a Recorded Monument (RMP No. GA094-100033, causeway) in the public road to the south of the McLaughlin Building. These sites are protected by legislation (Local Government Planning and Development Act 2000 and the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004) which provide statutory protection and which require either engagement with the Planning Authority in the case of Protected Structures and with the National Monuments Service in the case of the Recorded Monument, where two months notice is required of any works.



**Plate 12 Site 2, McLaughlin Building, from n.**



**Plate 13 Site 3 Former Hygeia Building, from se.**



**Plate 14 Site 4 Former mill building, from nw.**



**Plate 15 Site 6, Galway Cathedral, from nw.**



**Plate 16 Site 7, Country Club House, from e.**

**Plate 17 Site 8 Grave in car park.**



**Plate 18 Site 9  
Fisheries House, from  
se.**

**Plate 19 Sites 10-12,  
No.'s 4-6 Nuns's Island St.,  
from ne.**





**Plate 20 Site 13, former Protestant Asylum,  
from w.**



**Plate 21 Site 14 Nuns' Island Theatre, from e.**



**Plate 22 Site 15, No. 24 Nuns' Island Street, from e.**





**Plate 23 Site 16 Postbox, from s.**



**Plate 24 New apartment development between former mill buildings, from n.**



**Plate 25 St. Joseph's College, 'the Bish', from north-east.**



**Plate 26 The Monastery, St. Joseph's College, from sw.**



**Plate 27 View at southern end of Nuns' Island Street, from s.**

## *6.0 Previous Archaeological Work*

There were relevant three licences noted on the [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie) database.

**07E00147**     **Rory Sherlock**     House, Nuns' Island Street, northern end.     No archaeological significance.

**11E0203**     **Finn Delaney** Earl's Island, Nun's Island. During monitoring of the Galway Sewerage Scheme, Phase 3, some features associated with the Town and County Gaols were found in the vicinity of the Cathedral. They comprised of a number of walls that could be identified from the plans of the gaols as well as the cavernous arched sewers mentioned by James Hardiman in his History of Galway, 1820.

**15E0343**     **Richard Crumlish** Limekiln, Fisheries Field. No archaeological significance

## *7.0 Statement of Significance*

The cultural heritage of Nuns' Island dates from an age of expansion and confidence, where increased prosperity is visible in the growth of the city outside the walls of the medieval town. As part of the industrial heartland of Galway City, the waterways of Nuns' Island powered mills that were themselves to finance a building programme that has given the city some fine late eighteenth and early nineteenth century architecture. The islands have also been an important setting for ecclesiastical sites, with the long and enduring association of the Poor Clares with the area and with Galway Cathedral proving a prominent landmark in the city. The construction of the County and Town Gaols on the site the Cathedral was subsequently built on was the first step in a public building programme that was to see a new Courthouse and important bridge cross the River Corrib in a move that undoubtedly allowed the wider area to be open to other developments. Most notable among these are the University itself and its associated buildings on Nuns' Island of both public and industrial origin, including the former Fever Hospital and the former Marble Factory.



**Plate 28 View of Gaol or Cathedral River, with Poor Clares to west and Cathedral and Library to east.**

There is a fair to good level of preservation of the built heritage resource on Nuns' Island and while all buildings are not in use or in good condition, there are fine examples of continued use and appropriate reuse of buildings of note, particularly with regard to the former

Presbyterian Church, which is now a theatre and the former Protestant Asylum, which is in use as accommodation. Allied with that the ongoing use by the University of its own buildings on the islands and the employment of buildings like Island House for library/office and storage use, the building stock is being protected through continual use. A number of the Georgian houses are the subject of planning applications and some of these will be restored in the immediate future.

The significance of Nuns' Island lies very much in the industrial heritage that is preserved there and the variety of buildings seen in a relatively small area. This diversity enlivens the streetscape and, with good conservation practice, the special elements that make this area an important one in Galway will be preserved.

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