

Rathmolyon Churchview Potential Housing Scheme **Rathmolyon, Co. Meath**

(Rathmolyon) Glebe townland

Site Area: Approx. 5,000 sqm

ITM: 679390, 749195 (centre)

Record of Monuments and Places: None.

**Closest point approx. 75m from Rathmolyon Church ME042-020
 (Rathmolyon Graveyard ME042-020001 is c.20m from boundary wall)**

Record of Protected Structures: None adjacent.

**Rathmolyon Church ME042-020 is also Protected Structure MH042-109.
 Rest of Rathmolyon village Protected Structures: MH042-103 to MH042-108
 (NIAH: 14332002-14332007)**

Architectural Conservation Area: None

Desk Based Review and Assessment
 Niall Roycroft

23rd February 2021

Non-Technical Summary

Meath County Council is reviewing lands for potential social housing at various locations across the county. The Churchview lands at Rathmolyon ITM 679390 / 749195 are approx. 5,000 sqm and were acquired by Meath County Council in 1974. They have been vacant since in close proximity to the Church View housing estate on the southern outskirts of Rathmolyon village.

Rathmolyon settlement focusses on the cross-roads of the N-S R159 (Trim Road 7km) and E-W R156 (Summerhill Road 5km). The village was probably designed to be roughly square and measures approx. 150m (N-S) x 200m (E-W). The village focusses on St Michael's and All Angels Church of Ireland on the S side of the R165, which is situated on a natural knoll, presumably occupied by the *Rath* of Rathmolyon. This knoll is a local high point adjacent to a large area of now-drained wetland from the north-east to south-east. The rest of this natural knoll is surrounded by a squared ring of lower ground that effectively formed an almost (natural) moat-like surround to the village. This knoll is presumably the reason that medieval Rathmolyon village was founded as a control point on the local road network. Opposite the church to the N is Rathmolyon House and grounds: perhaps located on an earlier large or fortified house. The village proper lies to the W of the R156-R159 junction running W along the R156 unlit 'The Glebe' housing estate which is being built in the lower ground on this side of the village.

St Michael's Church, RMP ME042-020 / RPS MH042-109 is roughly 75m distant at the closest point, is originally medieval in origin (some remains survive), but the present church dates from 1797. St Michael's is associated with the Vicarial Glebe within Rathmolyon village and the townland immediately to the S is named 'Glebe'.

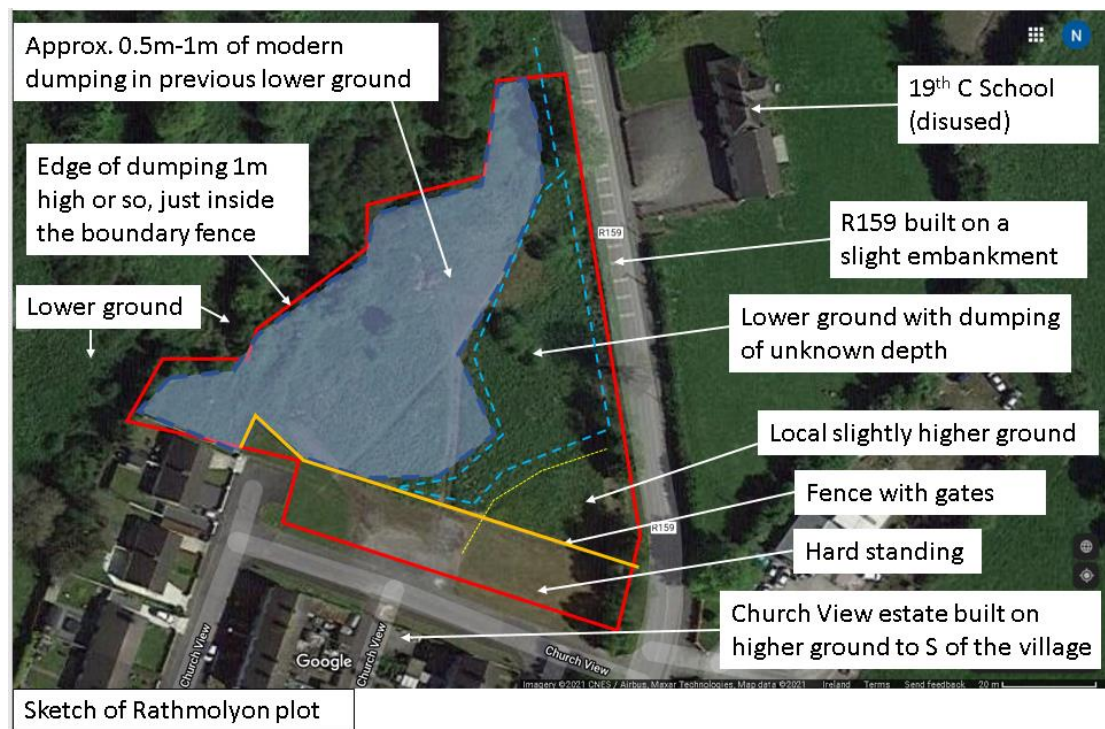
Rathmolyon Church is referenced in the 14th C and Rathmolyon probably grew up as a droving and market area. One function of villages in medieval Ireland was to supervise and defend the road network and the local mound or knoll of St Michael's Church would make an excellent location for a church, perhaps with a tower, to oversee the surrounding countryside. The village was probably once rampart defended and is shown around the cross-roads with large buildings and the church on the 1650s Down Survey. There is no significant nearby stream in the village, so water supply was probably through wells or some now-defunct water supply system. There is a large, linear bog / drained wetland along the E of the town, part of which is shown on 1650 mapping that is now being infilled.

There have been few archaeological works in the immediate area. The nearest was associated with the extensive Trammon Quarry c.1.5-1.8km from the centre of Rathmolyon where a ringfort, two burial grounds a burnt mound and a prehistoric building were found (later transferred to RMP as ME042-033 to ME042-037). The surrounding general area has the usual Bronze Age burial mounds, ring-ditches and early medieval enclosures and ringforts both as standing monuments and ploughed-out crop-marks.

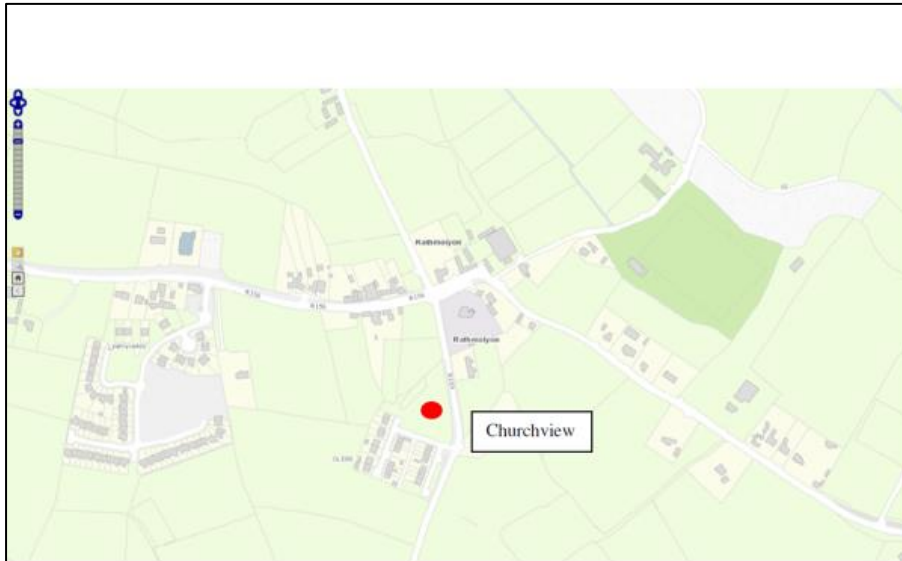
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village, which continues the line of St Michael's graveyard boundary (roughly 20m distant). The W half of the plot has clearly been covered in significant, modern dumping. This dumping forms a raised area around 1m high and the limit is just inside the W boundary fence. In the middle of the plot there is presumably more dumping and the E side is formed by a slight embankment for the R159. The eSE part of the site seems to be an unaltered area of naturally higher ground. This higher ground is the area that the original Churchview estate was built. The area of the proposed Social Housing site is within the low ground that surrounds this side of Rathmolyon and was probably prone to pooling water and poor drainage in the past. This wetland may be the reason it was infilled with dumps.

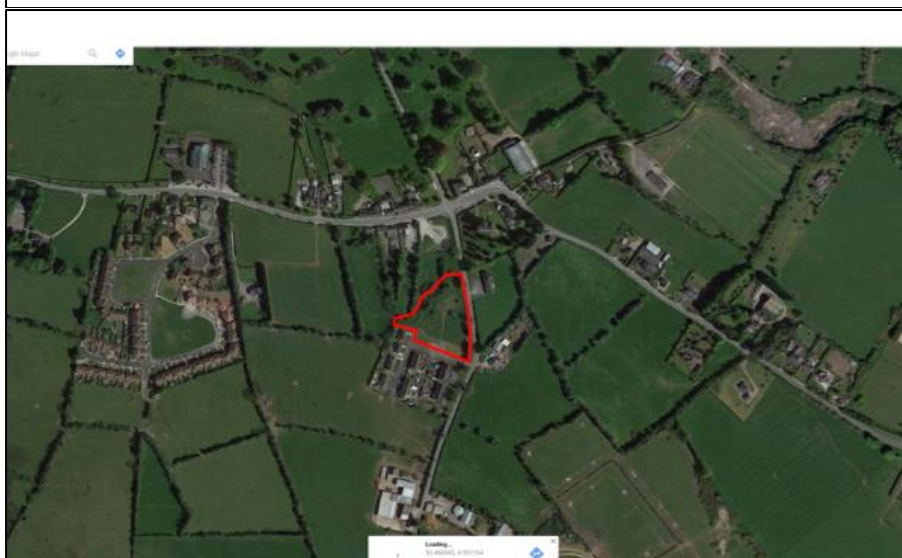
There is clearly too much modern material to complete a geophysical survey and so a programme of advance trial trenching would be appropriate. Perhaps in particular targeting the depth and content to the modern dumped deposits. The quality of the soils beneath the dumping also needs to be assessed. Depending on what is found further archaeological rescue excavations and reporting may be required.



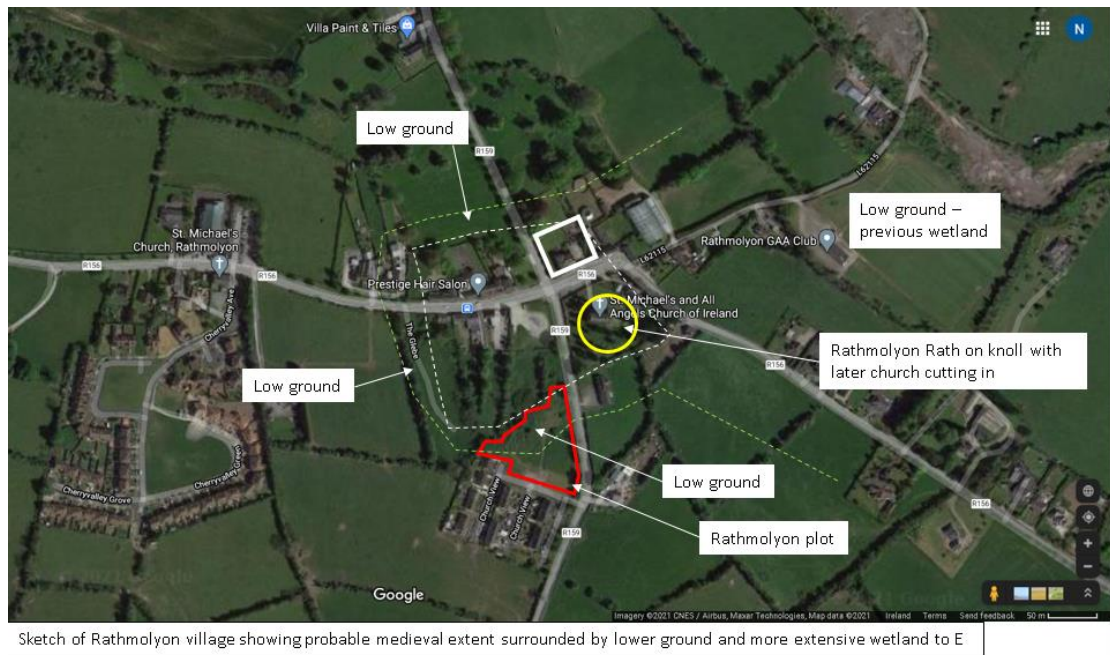
1 Introduction



Maps showing Location of MCC Proposed Social Housing Development in Churchview, Rathmolyon



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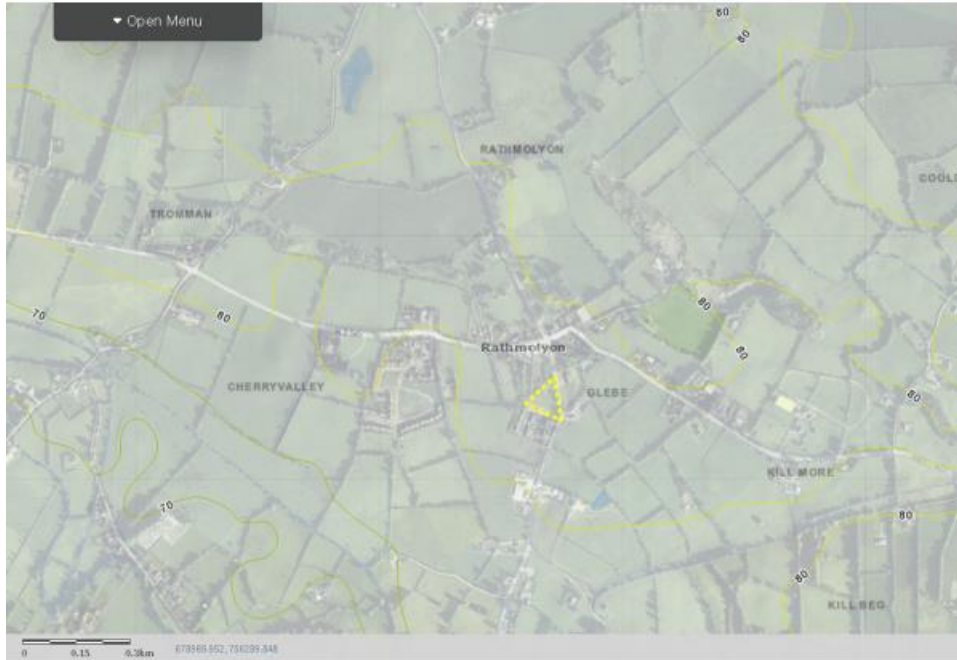


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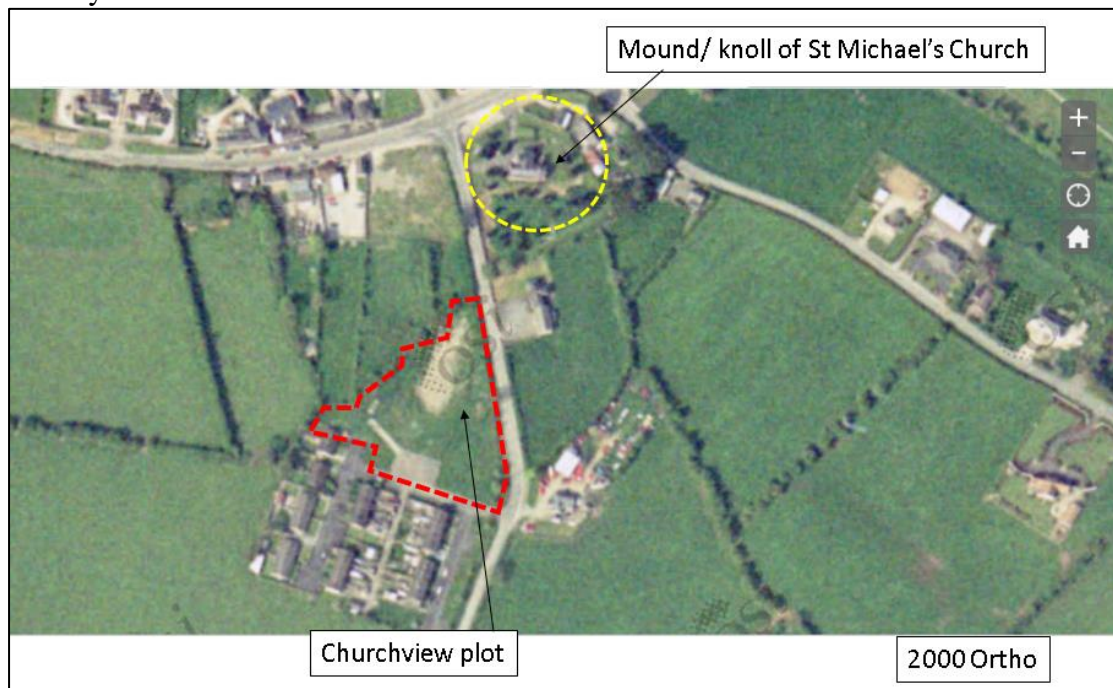
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2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

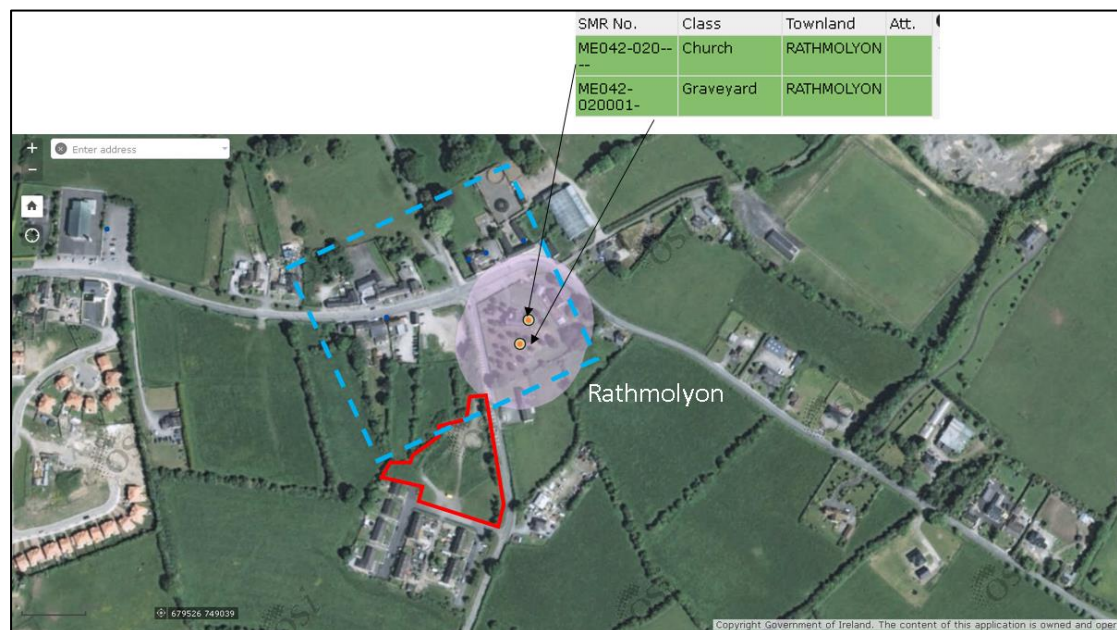
2.1 Topography



Rathmolyon lies between 70m OD and 80m OD. St Michael's Church is located on a localised knoll and there do not appear to be any significant streams in the immediate vicinity.



2.2 Record of Monuments and Places



St Michael's Church from the R156 facing S



R159 on S side of Rathmolyon facing N

ME042-020----

[Scope note](#)

Class: Church

Townland: RATHMOLYON

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

Description: Situated on a slight rise in a fairly level landscape. A church at Rathmolyon is listed in the ecclesiastical taxation (1302-06) of Pope Nicholas IV (Cal. doc. Ire., 5, 257). Ussher (1622) describes the church and chancel of Rathmullian as ruinous (Erlington 1847-64, 1, lxxxvii). According to the Dopping (1682-5) and Royal (1693) visitations St Michael's church had been in disrepair since 1641 but the chancel and some of the church had been repaired by 1693. At that time the windows were glazed and the roof was of slates, but the floor was bare and most of the necessary liturgical paraphernalia was missing, although a font was present (Ellison 1972, 11). The names of some of the clergy from the 16th century are known (Cogan 1862-70, 2, 374). The present Church of Ireland church was built in 1797 (Lewis 1837, 2, 504). The site of the medieval parish church is within a subrectangular graveyard (dims c. 75m NW-SE: c. 45m NE-SW at NW to c. 80m NE-SW at SE) defined by masonry walls, with headstones dating from c. 1780 to the present. There is one piece of window surround (H 0.52m) from the medieval church re-used as a grave-marker.

The above description is derived from the published 'Archaeological Inventory of County Meath' (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1987). In certain instances the entries have been revised and updated in the light of recent research.

Compiled by: Michael Moore

Date of revision: 23 March, 2015

References:

- 1. Cal. doc. Ire. - Calendar of documents relating to Ireland 1171-1307, ed. H.S. Sweetman (5 vols., London, 1875-86).
- 2. Cogan, Rev. A. 1862-70 Ecclesiastical history of the diocese of Meath: ancient and modern. (3 vols) Dublin: John Fowler, Joseph Dollard
- 3. Ellison, Rev. C. C. 1971-5 Bishop Dopping's Visitation Book 1682-5, Ríocht na Mídhe, 5, 1, 28-39; 5, 2, 3-13; 5, 3, 3-11; 5, 4, 98-103; 6, 1, 3-13.
- 4. Erlington, C. R. (ed.) 1847-64 The whole works of the most Reverend James Ussher. 17 vols. Hodges and Smith, Dublin
- 5. Lewis, S. 1837 A topographical dictionary of Ireland, 2 vols. London. Lewis and Co.

ME042-020001-

[Scope note](#)

Class: Graveyard

Townland: RATHMOLYON

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

Description: Situated on a slight rise in a fairly level landscape. The site of the medieval parish church of Rathmolyon (ME042-020----) is within a subrectangular graveyard (dims c. 75m NW-SE: c. 45m NE-SW at NW to c. 80m NE-SW at S) defined by masonry walls, with headstones dating from c. 1780 to the present.

Compiled by: Michael Moore

Date of upload: 23 March, 2015

[Zoom to](#)

Further afield the surrounding landscape looks like the image below:



2.3 Details of the Excavations.ie entries

2007:1380 - Tromman Quarry, Rathmolyon, Meath

County: Meath **Site name:** Tromman Quarry, Rathmolyon

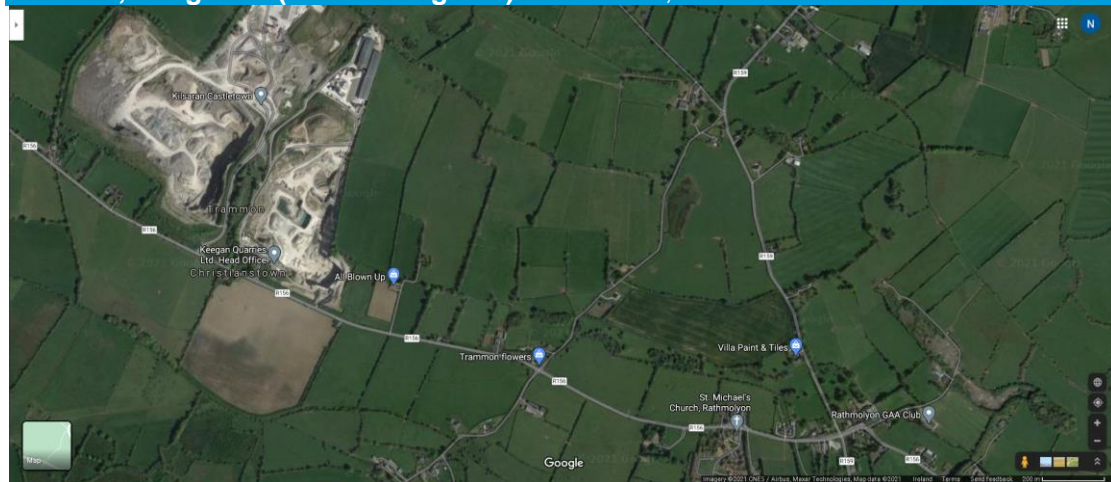
Sites and Monuments Record No.: N/A **Licence number:** 07E0667

Author: Stuart Halliday, for Arch-Tech Ltd, 32 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.

Site type: Prehistoric/early medieval

ITM: E 679271m, N 751073m

Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees): 53.503670, -6.805086



Test-trenching was undertaken as part of a request for further information from Meath County Council in response to a planning application for an extension to Tromman Quarry, Rathmolyon, Co. Meath.

In total 48 trenches were excavated across the southern area of the proposed development. A significant level of potential archaeology was identified, mainly in the east and south of the area.

Fields 1 and 2 were relatively void of archaeological features of potential, with the exception of one or two possible ditches. These were not investigated during this phase of work. Therefore, at this stage it is impossible to say whether they are archaeological or not.

Remains of archaeological significance were identified in Field 5 (the middle field of the proposed development), with c. 25 features being identified. The most significant of these comprised part of a circular ditched structure with internal post-holes and a central hearth. This structure appears to be typically prehistoric in date and could potentially be associated with other (as yet unidentified) structures and an associated landscape. Other

features identified in this area include possible pits and post-holes, and ditches that may or may not be archaeologically significant.

To the east of Field 5, Field 3 reveals a very high number of archaeological features. Most significant of these is the presence of a number of human remains. Within the confines of three trenches located on the high ground, 29 separate concentrations of human bone were identified. While some of these may be part of the same burial, the visible remains indicate that there is likely to be a burial-ground of some significance in this area. Furthermore, their east–west orientation indicates a potentially early medieval graveyard. Typically, with similar excavations undertaken in Ireland, the scope of this graveyard could be extensive. Two things are of note with regard to these remains. Firstly, they lie within the remains of what appears to be (both from geophysical survey and testing results) a circular enclosure measuring up to 45–50m in diameter. This ditch was investigated and was found to be up to 5m in width and 1.5m in depth. Secondly, some of the grave-cuts identified were found to truncate linear features, indicating that the linear features were earlier in date. If the burials were found to be early medieval in date, the underlying earlier ditches clearly represent an earlier phase of occupation across this area. Other features identified in the area of the burials suggest that there may be a secondary enclosing ditch within the confines of the outer ditch.

A number of other features were also identified in Field 5. Within the confines of the testing programme, none of these features was investigated and it is therefore impossible to interpret them at this stage. However, it was possible to identify a number of pits, post-holes and kilns as being archaeologically significant.

The final field assessed during this phase of work (Field 4) also produced a significant burial-ground. Centred upon the high point of the mound and surrounded in part by a ditch, a minimum of fourteen individual grave-cuts, along with other burials identified during testing, were recorded which comprised infant and neo-natal burials to the north and adult burials to the south. As with those identified in Field 3, all were oriented east–west, indicating an early medieval date at the earliest.

To the south of these burials, potential fulachta fiadh material was found close to the stream. Such material is typical of this location and is typically prehistoric in date.

Discussions were entered into with the DoEHLG and the proposed development was altered to ensure that the archaeological remains will be preserved in situ and will not be impacted upon by the development.

NOTE: These sites were transferred to RMP as ME042-033 to ME042-037 and have been retained in situ

2.4 Map regression

1650s Down Survey

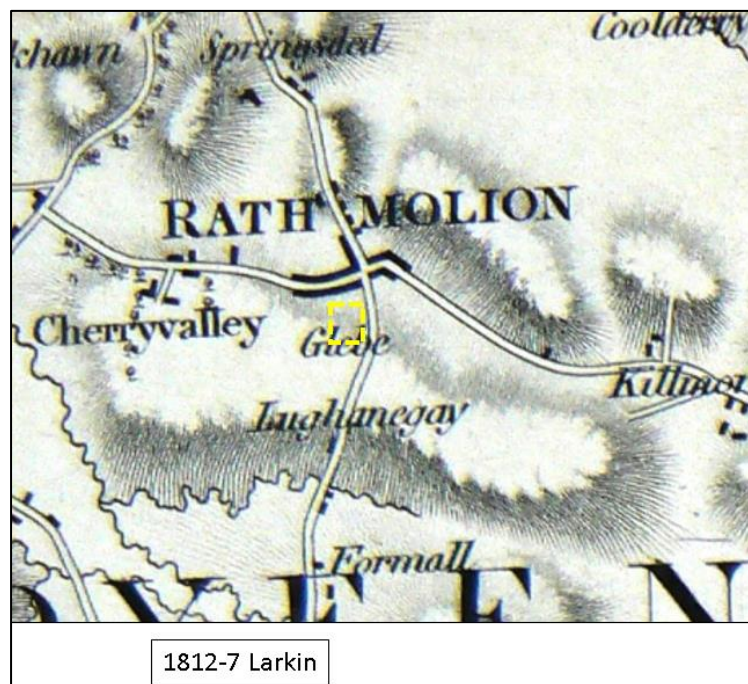


The Moyfenrath Barony map shows Rathmolyon as a cluster of houses and a church. The church is marked in the wrong place. The other buildings would typically represent fairly high status properties, probably clustering around the cross-roads junction area.



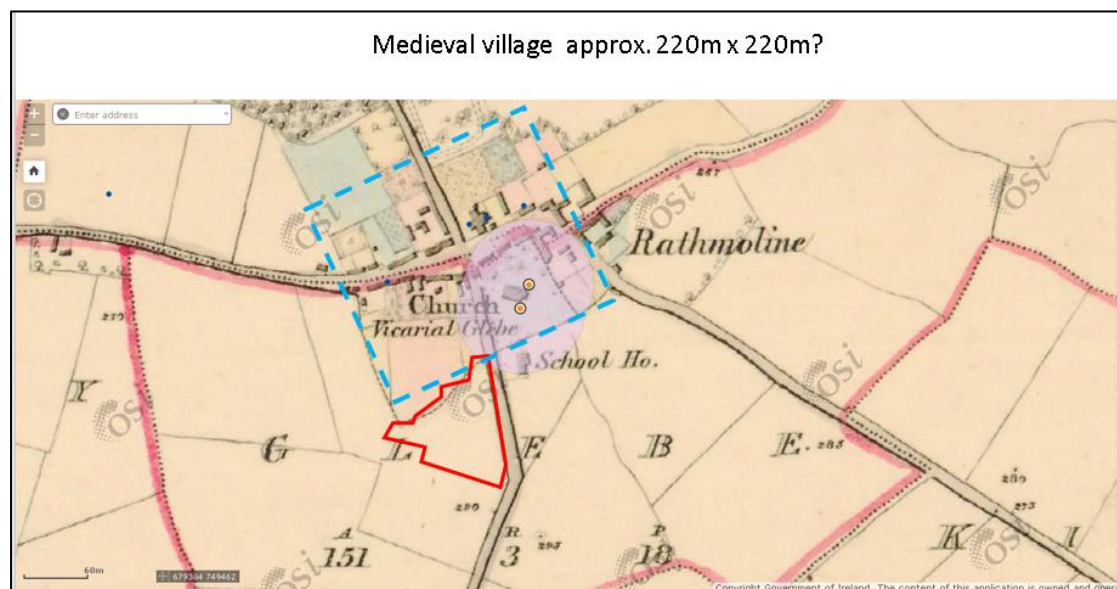
The Rathmolyon Parish map does not show any features of the village.

William Larkin Map 1812-17



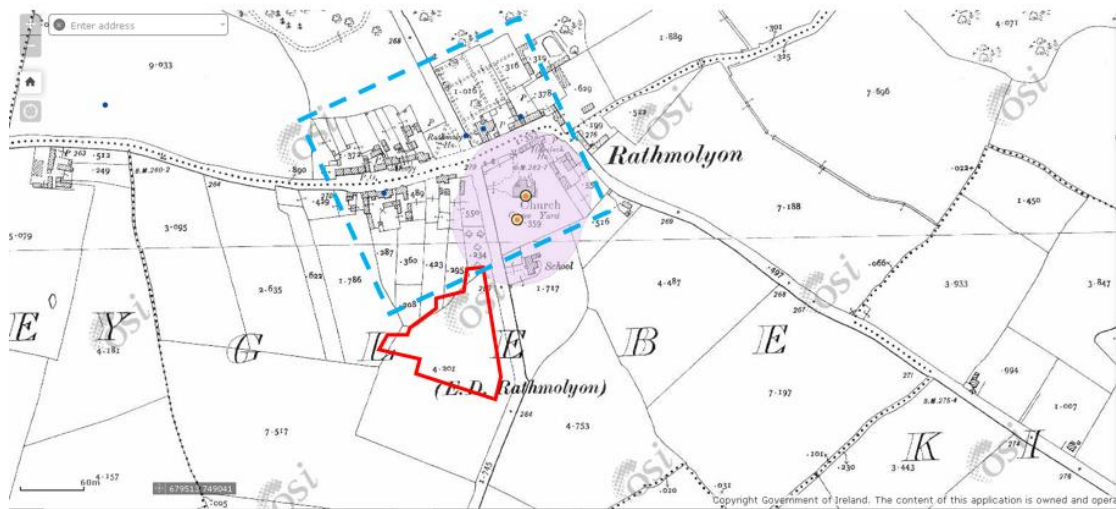
Larkin does not show the St Michael's Church. The plot of Churchview is shown as open fields outside the village.

1837 OS



The proposed Churchview plot is open field adjacent to the village boundary.

1888-1913 OS



The proposed Churchview plot is open field adjacent to the village boundary.

Modern mapping and aerial images





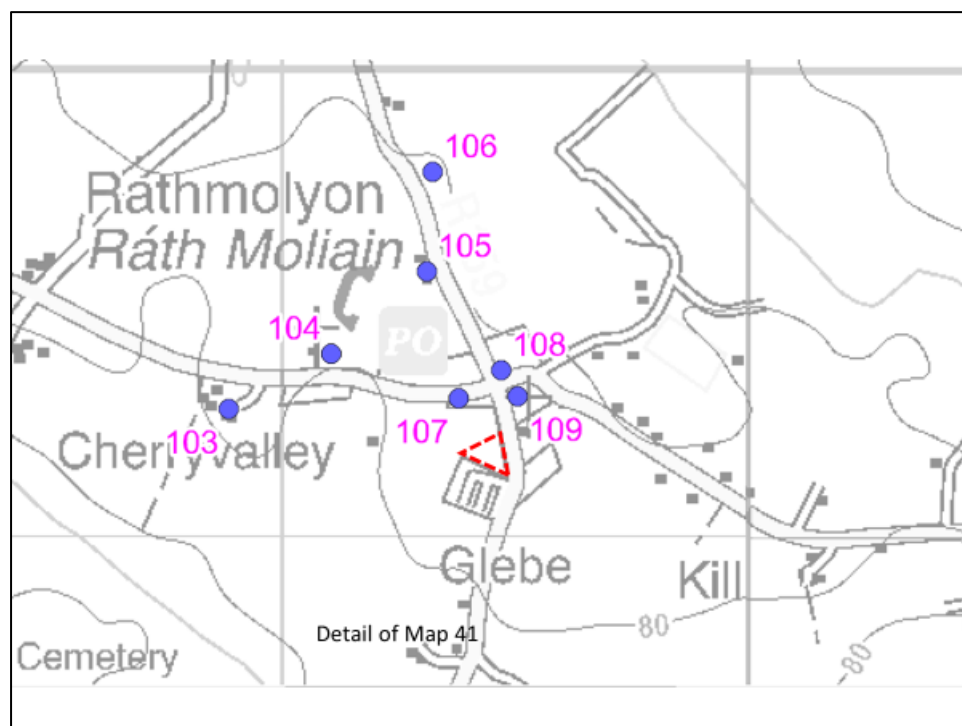
2.5 Place-name survey



The Rath on the plain of St. Liadhain

3 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

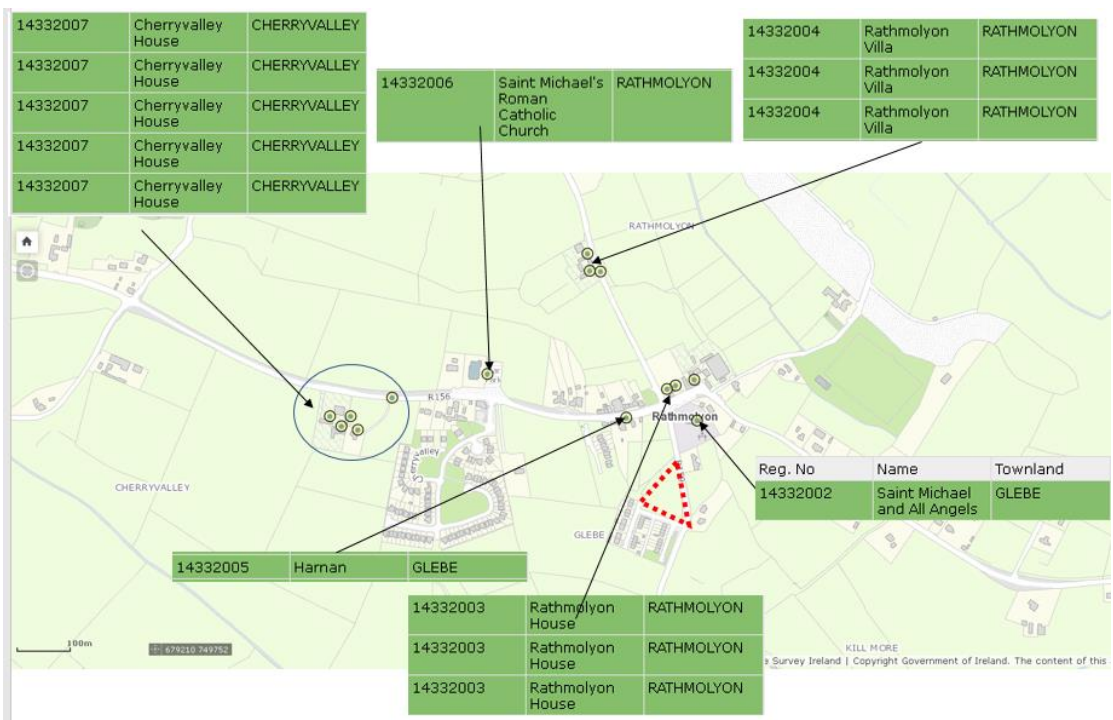
3.1 Record of Protected Structures



MH042-103	Cherryvalley House	Cherryvalley	Rathmolyon	House (detached)	Detached three-bay two-storey house, built 1877, with return.	14332007
MH042-104	Saint Michael's Roman Catholic Church	Rathmolyon	Rathmolyon	Church (R.C.)	Detached gable-fronted church, built 1967. Pitched copper-clad roof with rendered chimneystack. Freestanding square-profiled roughcast rendered bell tower.	14332006
MH042-105	Rathmolyon Villa	Rathmolyon	Rathmolyon	House (detached)	Detached three-bay two-storey over basement house, built 1836. Rendered gate piers with stone name plaques and caps, having wrought-iron double gates. Stone outbuilding to rear with pitched slate roof.	14332004
MH042-106	Nenthorne	Rathmolyon/Glebe	Rathmolyon	House (detached)	Detached single storey 1940's house.	
MH042-107	Harnan's Pub	Glebe	Rathmolyon	Thatched house	Detached three-bay single-storey house with attic accommodation, built c.1880, with gabled porch. Hipped thatched roof with brick chimneystack. Rendered and roughcast rendered walls. Timber sash windows.	14332005
MH042-108	Rathmolyon House	Rathmolyon	Rathmolyon	House (detached)	Detached six-bay two-storey house, built c.1800, with three-storey return. Rubble stone boundary walls with lugged and pedimented stone architrave and wrought-iron gate.	14332003
MH042-109	Saint Michael and All Angels	Glebe	Rathmolyon	Church (C of I)	Detached L-plan church, built 1797, with single-bay apse and vestry additions to the east. Three-stage tower with ashlar limestone spire added to the north-west corner, c.1857.	14332002

There are no Protected Structures associated with the Churchview plot.

3.2 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage: Buildings and Gardens



Saint Michael and All Angels - Reg. No. 14332002

Date: 1795 - 1800

Original Use: church/chapel

In Use as: church/chapel

Rating:

[View Main Record](#)



[Z](#)

Rathmolyon House - Reg. No. 14332003

Date: 1780 - 1820

Original Use: house

In Use as: house

Rating:

[View Main Record](#)



[Z](#)

Rathmolyon Villa - Reg. No. 14332004

Date: 1835 - 1840

Original Use: house

In Use as: house

Rating:

[View Main Record](#)



[Z](#)

Harnan - Reg. No. 14332005

Date: 1860 - 1900

Original Use: house

In Use as: house

Rating:

[View Main Record](#)



[Z](#)

Saint Michael's Roman Catholic Church - Reg. No. 14332006

Date: 1965 - 1970

Original Use: church/chapel

In Use as: church/chapel

Rating:

[View Main Record](#)



[Z](#)

Cherryvalley House - Reg. No. 14332007

Date: 1875 - 1880

Original Use: farm house

In Use as: farm house

Rating:

[View Main Record](#)



[Z](#)

3.3 Architectural Conservation Area

None

4 SITE VISIT

The site was initially reviewed using Google Street View with image capture of June 2009.



SE corner. Facing W



Church View. Facing N



Church View. Facing NW



Church View. Facing NE-E

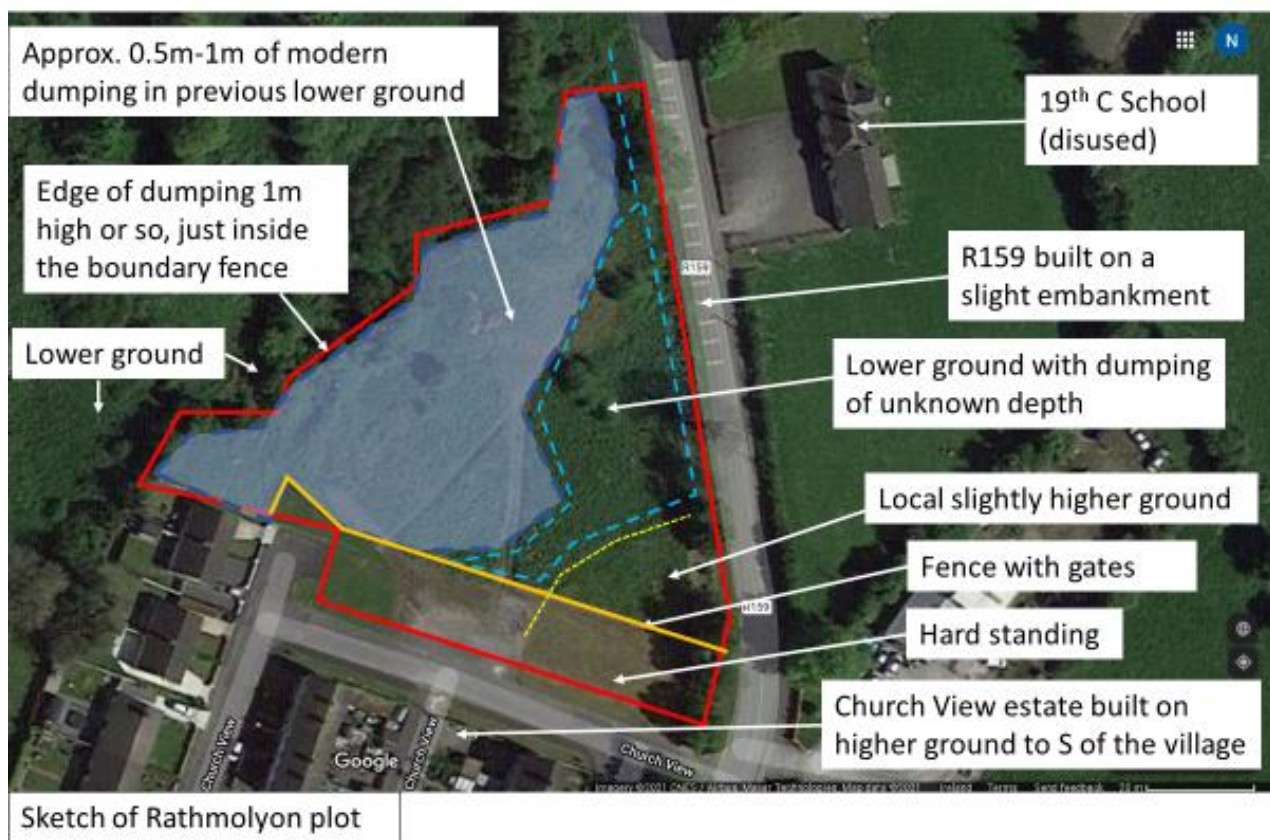


June 2019 R159 Facing SW



R159. Churchview plot to left and St Michael's Church in top-right. Old School building on far right.

The site was then visited in February 2021.





IMG_0151. From S (middle) Facing E



IMG_0152 From S (middle) Facing W



IMG_0153 From S (middle) Facing NW



IMG_0154 From S (middle) Facing NE



IMG_0155. SW corner. Facing N



IMG_0156 SE Corner, facing SW



IMG_0157. SW corner, facing NE



IMG_0158 SW corner, facing E



IMG_0159. From S side facing N showing drop into lower ground



IMG_0160 Dumping



IMG_0161. Dumping



IMG_0162. Dumping approaching W boundary



IMG_0206. Higher ground in SE corner



IMG_0205. Middle lower part of site facing :



IMG_0164. General desire line towards N end of site. Facing S



IMG_0163 General desire line towards N end of site. Facing N



IMG_0202 N end of site showing St Michael's Graveyard wall (left) and old School wall(right)



IMG_0203. Disused School on R159



IMG_0204. R159 facing S



IMG_0165. R159 slight embankment on left. Facing S



IMG_0166. R159 slight embankment on left. Facing S



IMG_0167. Clearing in overgrown area at N end of site

5 Proposed Works

The site is being reviewed for potential use for social housing.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

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7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ciara Casserly Assistant Engineer, Housing Department Technical
Paul Barrell Executive Engineer, Housing Department Technical

8 REFERENCES

Electronic Sources

www.excavations.ie – Summary of archaeological excavation from 1970–2009.

www.archaeology.ie – National Monuments Service website listing all SMR sites with aerial photographs.

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

<http://countydevelopmentplan.meath.ie/adoptedplan/> - Meath County Council 2013, Meath County Council County Development Plan 2013-2019

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
Taylor & Skinner 1777-85 Maps of the Roads of Ireland

Google Maps

Bing Maps

APPENDIX 1 – OTHER IMAGES OF RATHMOLYON



IMG_0169 Car park on SW side of R159/R156 Junction



IMG_0168 Car park on SW side of R159/R156 Junction



IMG_0173 R156 Facing E



IMG_0172 R156 Facing W



IMG_0175 St Michael's Church. Facing SE



IMG_0176. R159 Facing S



IMG_0177. St Michael's Church. Facing E



IMG_0178 St Michael's Church. Facing SE



IMG_0179 St Michael's Church. Facing W



IMG_0181 St Michael's Church E side. Facing S



IMG_0182 St Michael's Church E side. Facing W



IMG_0183 St Michael's Church E side. Facing W



IMG_0184 St Michael's Church NE side. Facing W



IMG_0185 St Michael's Church E side. Facing N



IMG_0186. Medieval masonry from ogee-arched window
(15th-16th C)



IMG_0187 St Michael's Church N side boundary wall. Facing W



IMG_0188 St Michael's Church N side boundary wall. Facing E



IMG_0189 St Michael's Church N side boundary wall with fallen section. Facing S to old School



IMG_0190 St Michael's Church N side boundary wall with fallen section. Facing E



IMG_0191 St Michael's Church W side boundary wall. Facing N



IMG_0192 St Michael's Church N side boundary wall. Facing E



IMG_0194. Octagonal worked stone being used as a grave marker to NW of church.



IMG_0195. W side of church. Facing S



IMG_0196. R156 E end of town. Facing W



IMG_0197 R159 facing N



IMG_0201. R156 w end of village. Facing E



IMG_0198. New build in Glebe estate