



Medieval Monasteries

Tigh moling St Mullins

CARA DÉ

Volume 2, Issue 2

St Mullins

St Moling of royal birth and a native of Ui Cinnsealaigh founded this monastery at Ros Bruc as the place was then known. His first church was constructed of wood with a roof of yew shingles, a present from St Laserian of Leighlin. He is mainly responsible for having the Boroma tribute removed by the High King at Tara. The saint is also listed as one of the guarantors of the Cáin Adamnán (a law promulgated by St Adamnán of Iona) for the protection from violence of women, children, clerics and church property. St Moling an undoubtedly saintly man of considerable influence is also reputed to have been a poet, artist and artisan. During his lifetime he built a water mill and dug the required 1 mile long watercourse as a penance. He died in 697 AD.

The Monastery was raided by the Vikings early in the 9th c.

The monastery of St Mullins was granted to the Augustinian abbey of Ferns (1158 AD)



Also in the 12th c a Norman motte and bailey was constructed nearby. A manor house built by Raymond le Gros later passed to his heirs the Carew family. In 1300 AD the foundation was granted to the Cistercian abbey of Tintern in Co Wexford.

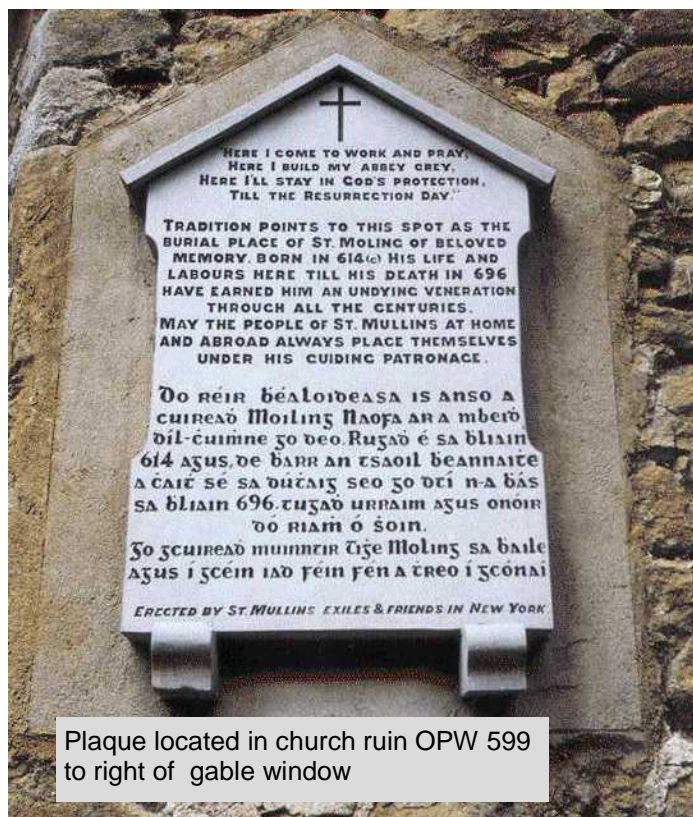
In 1323 AD Edmond Butler Rector of Tullow slew Philip Tallon, his son, and others and burned the church along with men, women and children, also the relics of St Moling.

1348 AD. In September & October came thousands of people on pilgrimage and to wade in the waters. The Black Plague was then raging throughout the land of Ireland.

Art McMurrough King of Leinster (poisoned at new Ross) is buried at the Kavanagh Masoleum. In the 16th c the monastery and lands were granted to the Kavanagh family provided that they maintained a house and castle nearby.

St Mullins was and still is the burial ground of this ancient family of south Leinster.

The Abbey (OPW600) was used as a dwelling after the suppression of the monasteries and modified accordingly. According to Archdall it was destroyed by fire in the year 1738.



Plaque located in church ruin OPW 599 to right of gable window

An unknown poet wrote . *Ḃair na Ḃairibhe*. about 1150 AD. He describes three falls at the site; No 1 on the Barrow River (tidal), No2 at mill location and No3 located at the well.

This Survey

St Mullins site was surveyed by the authors in autumn of 2002 and formed the basis for a public lecture to the Graignamanagh Historical Society on 29th Nov 2002.

General remarks; Not all the buildings are "churches " as described in the Carlow Archaeological Inventory". The underground structure described as a "vault" was in our view actually a wine cellar. Another cellar of similar size (but now completely buried) is located in close proximity to the west. The signposted St Molings mill stone is neither the original nor is it at the original location.

599 ST MULLIN'S (St Mullin's Borough)

OS 26:6:3 (387,451) OD 0–50 27278,13799

Church Fifteenth-century rectangular structure (Dims 19.5m x 5.7m) of roughly coursed granite rubble with some ashlar, represented by W gable of nave and chancel walls. Entrance at centre of W gable, with pointed arch and small granite water stoup adjacent at N. Nave and chancel divided by wall with pointed chancel arch, now blocked and pierced by doorway.

Gables of chancel and side walls stand to full height (*c.* 7m and *c.* 4m respectively). Double belfry surmounts nave/chancel wall. (Bradley 1989, 57 (A))
26:11(04)

600 ST MULLIN'S (St Mullin's Borough)

OS 26:6:3 (387,451) '*St. Mullin's Abbey (in Ruins)*'
OD 0–50 27278,13799

Church Rectangular structure (Dims 23.3m x 7.2m) represented by N, parts of S and E wall of nave and chancel church of uncertain date, modified for domestic and defensive purposes. Original structure divided by chancel arch, chancel interior being slightly narrower than nave. Ogee-headed window in N wall of nave. S wall survives only at W corner, with now broken out spiral stairs in wall thickness leading to upper levels, or to adjacent round tower. Corbels inserted in N and S walls to carry first floor. Chancel remains consist of N wall, with twin-light window, standing to full height and levelled E and S walls. Filling of chancel removed (*D c.* 2m) to reveal stone altar against E gable, tomb niche with worn thirteenth/fourteenth-century grave slab and piscina. Barrel vault over chancel and spiral stairs in cross wall. (Bradley 1989, 58 (B); *JRSAI* 1892, 377–88; *UJA* 1970, 68)
26:11(05)

601 ST MULLIN'S (St Mullin's Borough)

OS 26:6:3 (387,451) OD 0-50 27278,13799

Church Rectangular structure (Dims 7.3m x 4.9m) of uncoursed granite rubble (H of side walls 2m; H of gables 5m). Lintelled doorway in W gable. Two lintelled opes in both N and S walls, ope in W gable and rectangular ope in E gable now masked by memorial stones on inside. Foundations of two further structures attached to N and E of building. (Bradley 1989, 59 (C); *JRSAI* 1892, 382-3)

26:11(06)

602 ST MULLIN'S (St Mullin's Borough)

OS 26:6:3 (387,451) OD 0-50 27278,13799

Church Rectangular structure (Dims 11m x 6m) of uncoursed granite rubble (H of walls c. 5m). Lintelled doorway in W gable. E gable has diamond-shaped ope and two wall niches. Lintelled window in S wall towards SW corner. Fireplace in N wall. (Bradley 1989, 59 (D); *JRSAI* 1892, 382-3)

26:11(07)

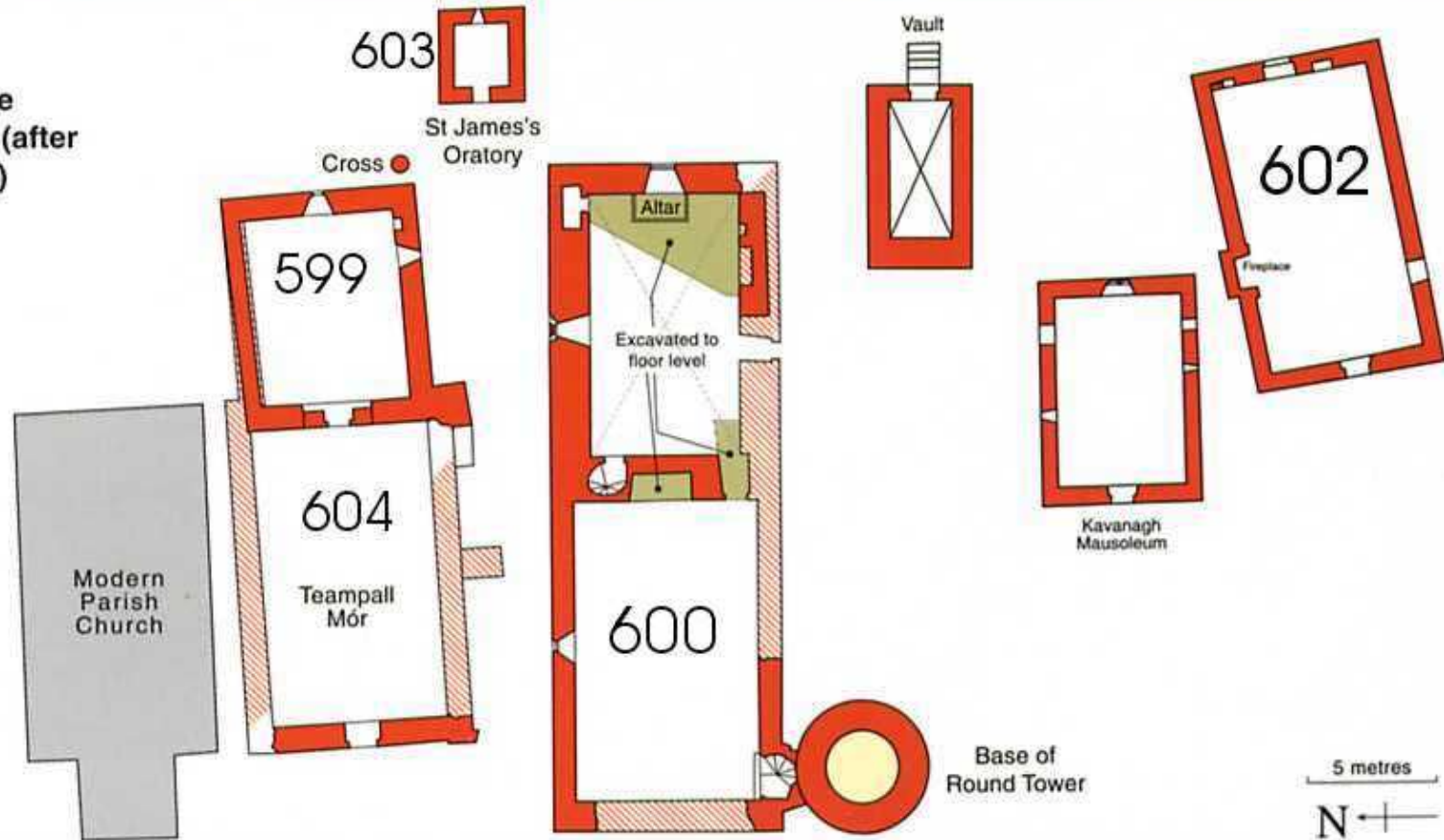
603 ST MULLIN'S (St Mullin's Borough)

OS 26:6:3 (387,451) OD 0-50 27278,13799

Church (oratory) St James's Chapel. Rectangular structure (Dims 2.1m x 2.5m) of roughly coursed granite rubble (H of N, S and W walls c. 1m; H of E gable 3m). Small lintelled splayed ope in E gable. (Bradley 1989, 60 (E); *JRSAI* 1892, 382-4)

26:11(08)

Plan of the churches (after Cochrane)

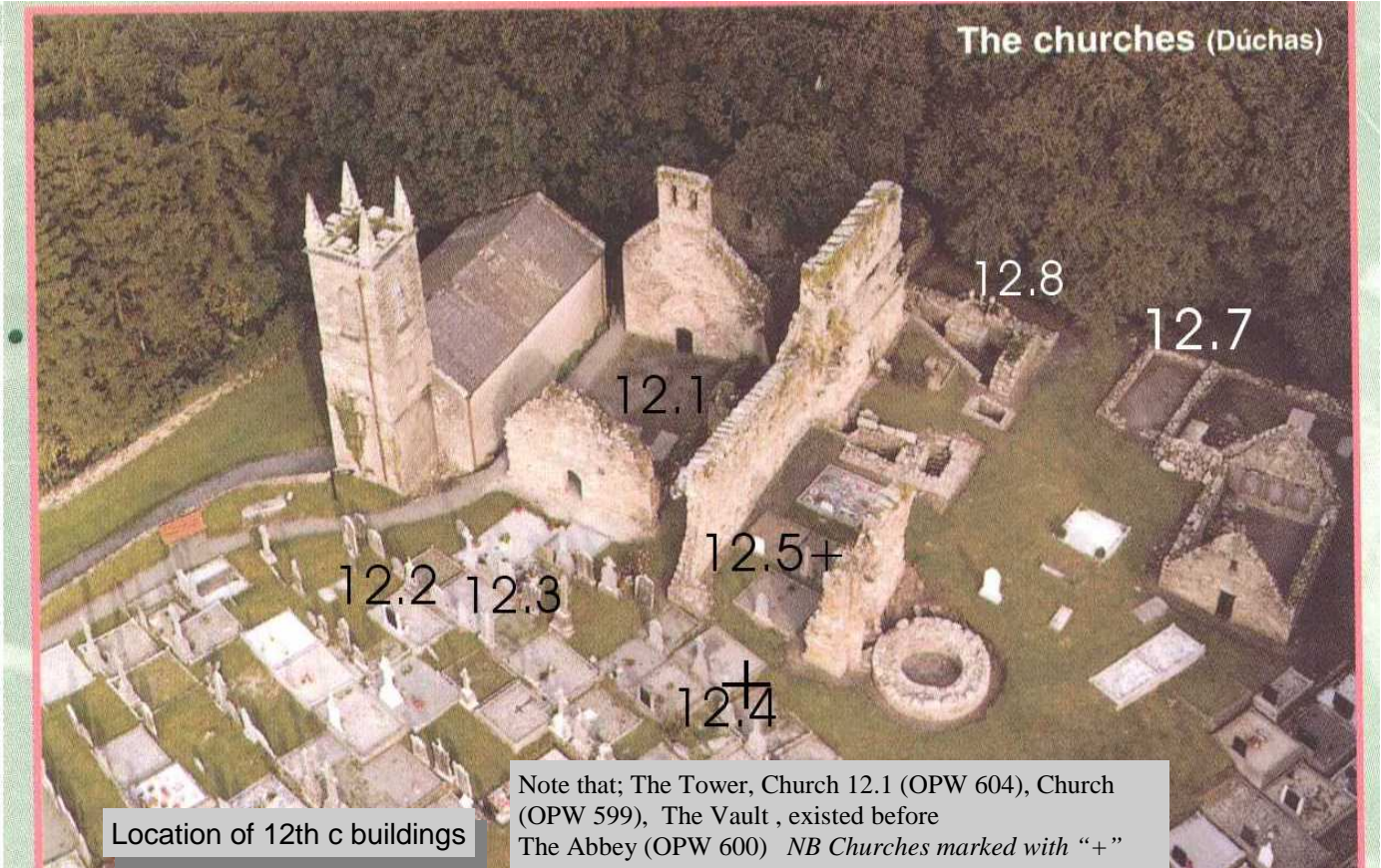


Plan of existing ruins
Reproduced from
Archealology Ireland
Heritage Guide No5

List of Stone Buildings Feeley/Sheehan

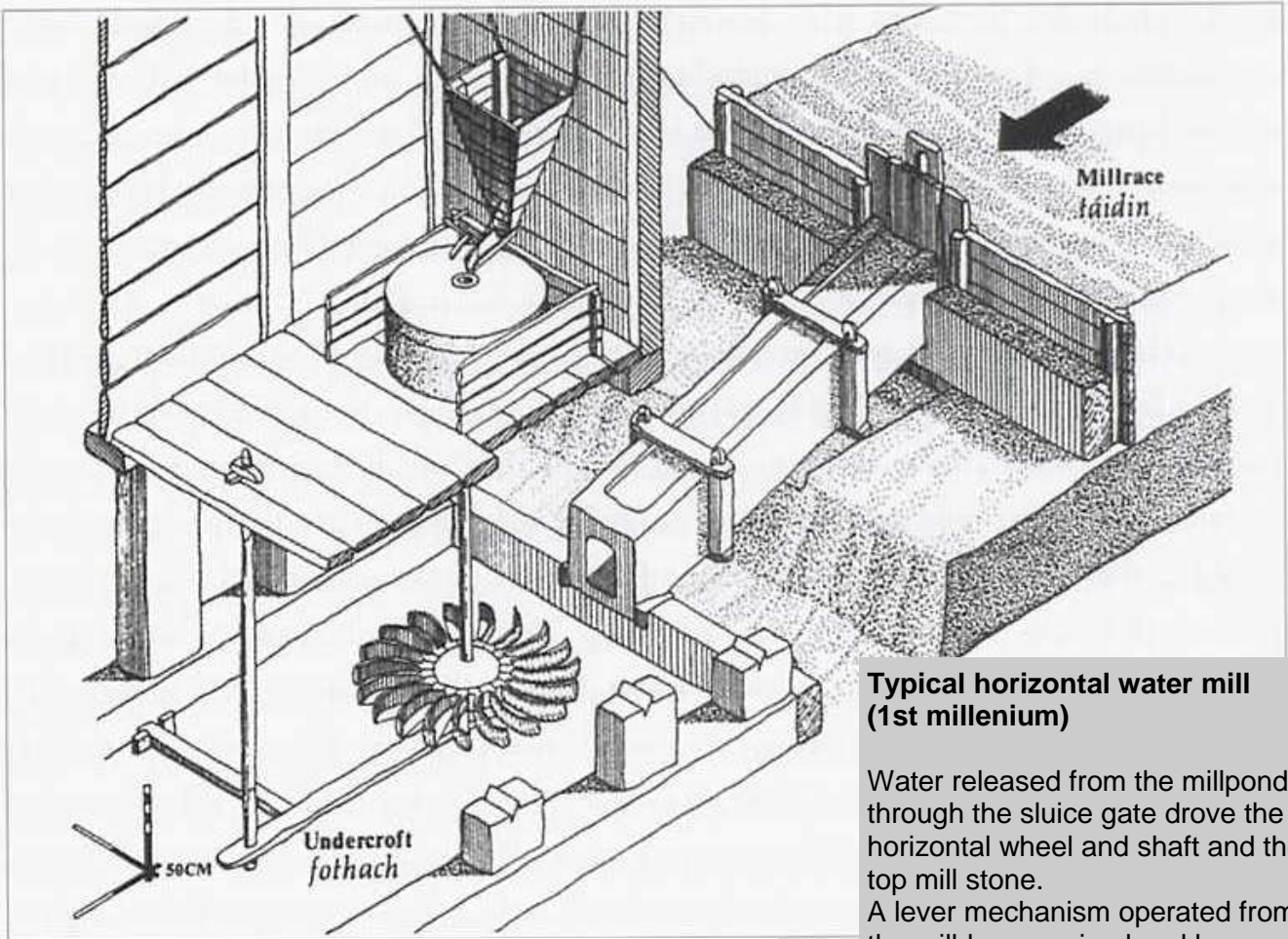
- *10.1 Church (OPW 599) . Ruin next Protestant Church
- *11.2 Vault (Wine Cellar) . .
- 11.3 Vault (Wine cellar II) Completely buried. Immediately W of Vault 1 and parallel to Oratory
- 11.4 Store. 10' L x 6' W. Internal dimensions
- *11.5 Round Tower. Dia; 16'-10" tapering to 16'-3". 5 floors. Total Height 74'.
Original door @12' above gnd facing south
- 11.6 Unknown Purpose. 17' L x 8' W.
- *12.1 Church. (OPW 604) *An Teampall Mor*.
- 12.2 Dormitory. Location 12 paces west of Protestant church
- 12.3 Refectory. Location 19 paces west of Abbey.
- 12.4 Church. (Next Abbey to West)
- 12.5 Church. (Within site of Abbey). 21' L x 8' W. Wall 14'.
Windows; 1E 2N,1S. Door @ SW corner. Demolished in 13th c.
- 12.6 Workshop. 13'-0" L x 9'-6" W, internal dimensions.
- 12.7. Guesthouse. (Immediately E of Vault.). 6 windows.
2 Doors, 1W,1S mid
- 12.8. Cloisters. Situated between Vault and St James' Oratory
- *13.1 Oratory.(OPW 601 -Kavanagh Mausoleum)
- *14.1 The Abbey Building (OPW 600)_Church barrel vaulted with dormitory overhead,
accessed by winding stairs. Nave of church later used as dining hall.

The churches (Dúchas)



Location of 12th c buildings

Note that; The Tower, Church 12.1 (OPW 604), Church (OPW 599), The Vault, existed before The Abbey (OPW 600) NB Churches marked with “+”



Typical horizontal water mill (1st millenium)
 Water released from the millpond through the sluice gate drove the horizontal wheel and shaft and the top mill stone.
 A lever mechanism operated from the mill-house raised and lowered the water wheel/mill stone assembly

Reproduced from; High Island– An Irish Monastery in the Atlantic
 Marshall & Rourke. Town House Publishing
 ISBN 186059-121-3

District of Timothy Buildings Seeley & Sheehy

- 6.1. Church; 19'-0" L x 7'-6" W
- 6.2 Unknown Purpose; 8'-6" L x 5'-0"
- 6.3 Unknown Purpose; 10'-0 L x 9'-0" W
- 6.4 Cooking & Dining; 9'-6"L x 6'-0" W. Wall 7'. Extended rafters.
- 7.1 Church. (Within Abbey); 17'-0" L x 7'-6" W. Wall 8'. Apex 13'. Hipped roof.
- 7.2 Unknown Purpose. (Partly within Abbey). Dormitory ? . 13'-0" L x 8'-6" W.
- 7.3 Workshop
- 8.1 Church. (East of Tower). 19'-0" L x 9'-0" W. Windows; 1E,1S,1N. Door; 1W
- 8.2 Workshop.(Partly within area of Vault). 14'-0" L x 10'-0" W
- 8.3 Unknown Purpose. 12'-0" L x 9'-0" W. Wall 6'
- 8.4 Unknown Purpose . (Within tower). Dormitory? 16'-0" L x 5'-0" W.
- 8.5 Cookhouse/ Dining. 10'-6" L x 6'-0" W.
- 8.6 Sleeping Hut. 8' L x 6' W
- 8.7 Seeping Hut with loft. (Within Abbey). 9' L x 6' W.
- 8.8 Sleeping Hut. 11' L x 7' W.
- 9.1 Church. 17' L x 8' W
- 9.2 Dormitory. 13'-6" L x 8' -6" W
- 9.3 Refectory. 14' L x 11' W.
- 10.2 Workshop
- 10.3 Oratory. 12' -0" x 8' - 6" W

Post Monastic Buildings (Located next main entrance to graveyard)

* 16.2 Dwelling (OPW 602).

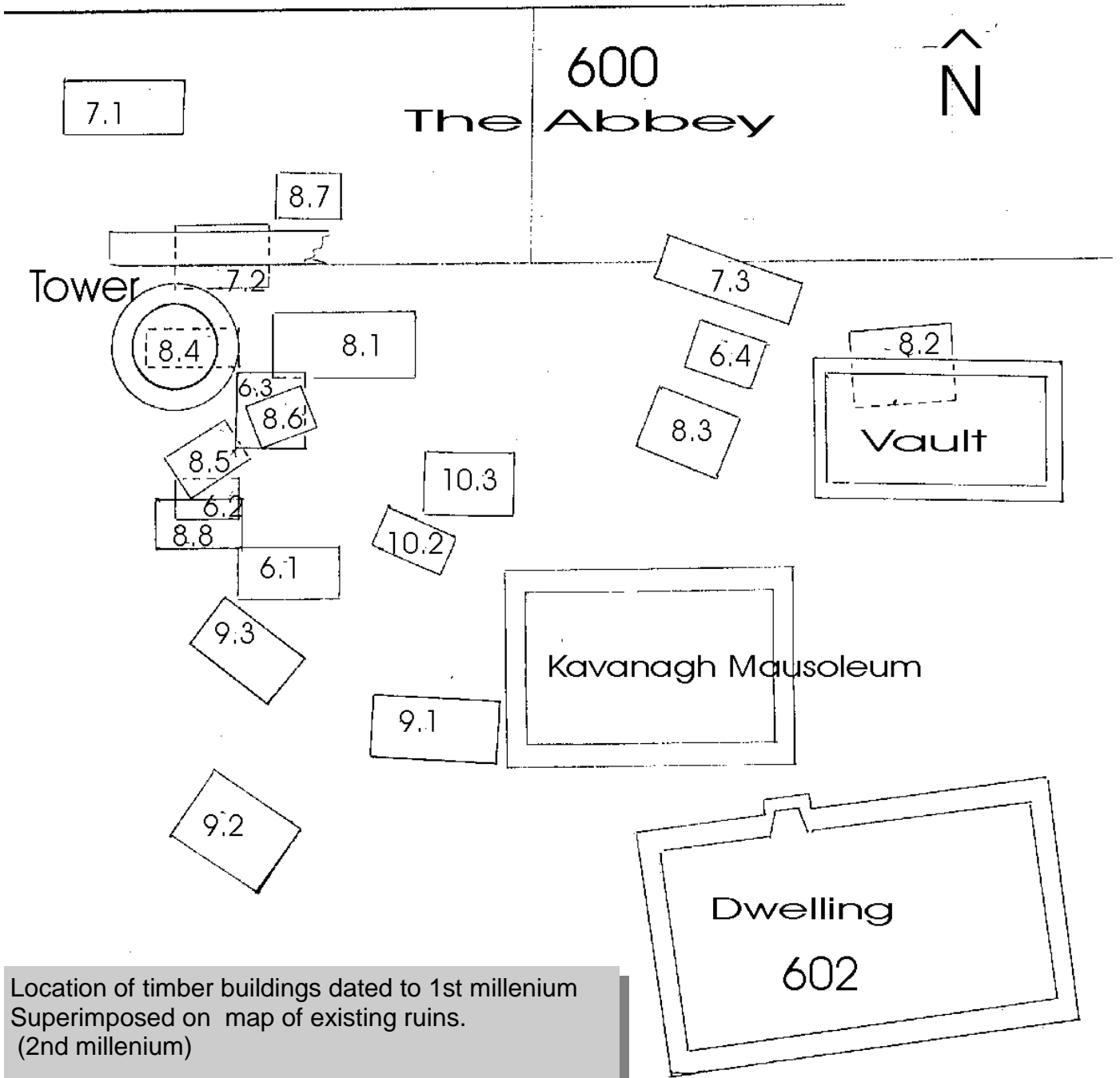
15.1 Parish Church. 20' L x 11' W. Windows; 1E, 1W, 2S, 2N, Door @ SW corner.

16.3 Dwelling; Dividing wall between sleeping and cooking /dining areas.

Later Centuries:

* Penal Altar.

* Grave enclosure with gable (The Bath)



Location of timber buildings dated to 1st millennium
Superimposed on map of existing ruins.
(2nd millennium)



Nave

chancel



View of Abbey from south