

The town of Longford developed at a fording point of the Camlin River, on the route known as Slige Assail, which connected the royal sites of Tara in Meath and Rathcroghan in Connacht during the early medieval period. Evidence of early medieval occupation at Longford is scant, however it has been suggested that the unidentified place referred to as Cluain Lis Becc in the annals may have been located to the north of the Camlin River in the vicinity of the present barracks (Gearty et al 2020). Cluain Lis Becc translates as 'meadow of the enclosure of Becc'. The town's name does not derive from its position on a ford, but comes from the Irish Longphort, meaning fortress or stronghold (Irish Placenames Database). The longphort, later replaced by a stone castle, is believed to have been constructed in the mid to late thirteenth century by the O'Farrell or O'Ferrall clan who controlled the surrounding territory known as Annaly. No trace of the longphort has been found, but it is assumed that it was located in the vicinity of the area now occupied by the barracks north of the Camlin River. A substantial gaelic settlement developed around the O'Ferrall castle and the Dominican priory of St Brigid which was established in the fifteenth century. A complaint in the Irish parliament dating to c.1480AD about markets being held in Longford is the earliest reference to a town at this location.

After the creation of the County of Longford in 1570 the castle served as the centre of administration by the English and later became the property of Francis Aungier who was granted the town of Longford in 1620 during the plantation. Aungier built a castle to the south of the present barracks complex in 1627, at the west end of present day Church Street, likely on the site of the earlier castle. Longford castle was sold in 1774, by the Earl of Longford, who also leased the surrounding land to the British government for the establishment of a cavalry barracks. This castle, immediately south of the main barracks entrance, was gradually demolished (Gearty et al 2020). The first Cavalry Regiment to serve in the barracks, in 1778, were the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars. The Irish regiment, including a man from Longford named John Reynolds, took part in the charge of the Light Brigade on October the 25th 1854. Two horses owned by the 8th Hussars, 'Paddy' and 'Smiler', are buried in the barracks grounds (Longford Historical Society).

The current main barracks building, designed by architect John Behan, was built in 1815 and contained living quarters and the officer's mess (NIAH 2005). Over time the barrack complex was extended to include an infirmary and stables, the latter housed in the 18th century market house, as well as a jail, guard house and various outbuildings. Following Irish independence, the barracks were handed over by the British on February 17th 1922 and renamed after Brigadier Sean Connolly, of the Longford Brigade, who was killed in action at Selton Hill in 1921. The barracks were decommissioned in 2009.



Fig.  
Photograph showing Lower (Cavalry) Barracks in 1922 (Source: Longford Historical Society)

The detail on historic cartographic sources demonstrates the nature of past settlements and land use patterns in recent centuries and can also highlight the impacts of modern developments and agricultural practices. This information can aid in the identification of the location and extent of unrecorded or partially levelled features of archaeological or architectural heritage interest. The cartographic sources examined for the study areas include the 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map (1829-1834), the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (1863-1924).

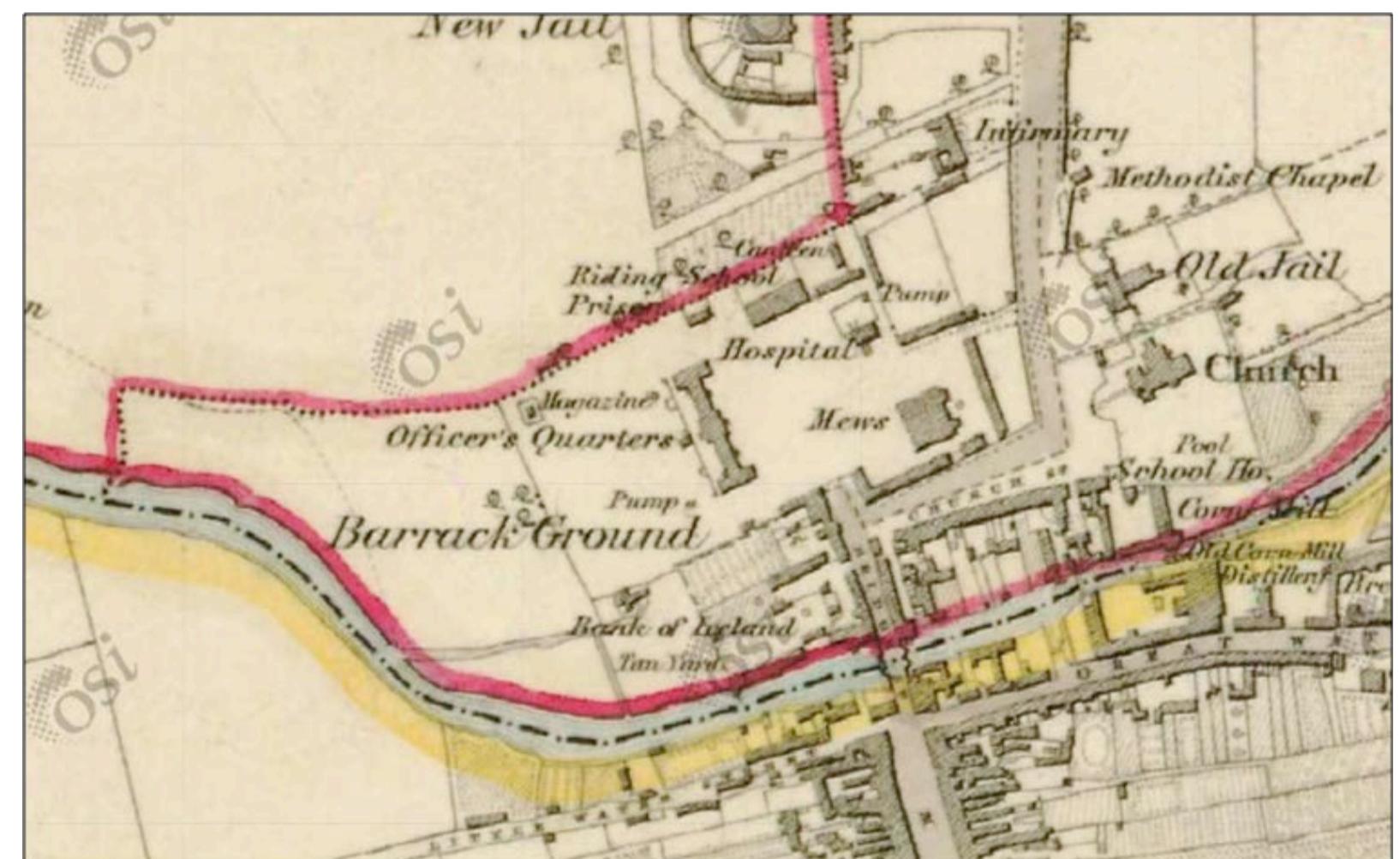


Fig.  
Extract from 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map (1836) (Source: Tailte Eireann)

A map of the Cavalry Barracks dating from 1863 (see Figure 5) shows the subject site in greater detail with areas within the main barrack building labelled 'Officer's Quarters', 'Mess establishment' and 'Soldier's Quarters'. A 'Turf House', 'Urinal' and 'Larder' are depicted within a drying ground to the rear of the building. The square 'Magazine' building which includes a lightning conductor, and two pumps are also depicted to the rear of the building. The field behind the barracks is divided into a Sick Horse Field and Arable Grounds. A hospital, prison, riding school, stables, canteen, and mews barracks as well as several outbuildings for hay and straw, and yards for forage, coal and manure are also depicted as part of the barrack complex.

The Final Edition 1:2500 (or '25-inch') Ordnance Survey maps dating from late 19th/early 20th century (see Figure 7 and Figure 8) showed little change had taken place in the area from the 1863 detailed map. The main barracks remained unchanged with the addition of a rectangular building and a second pump to the rear and a number of ancillary buildings within the eastern portion of the barrack complex.

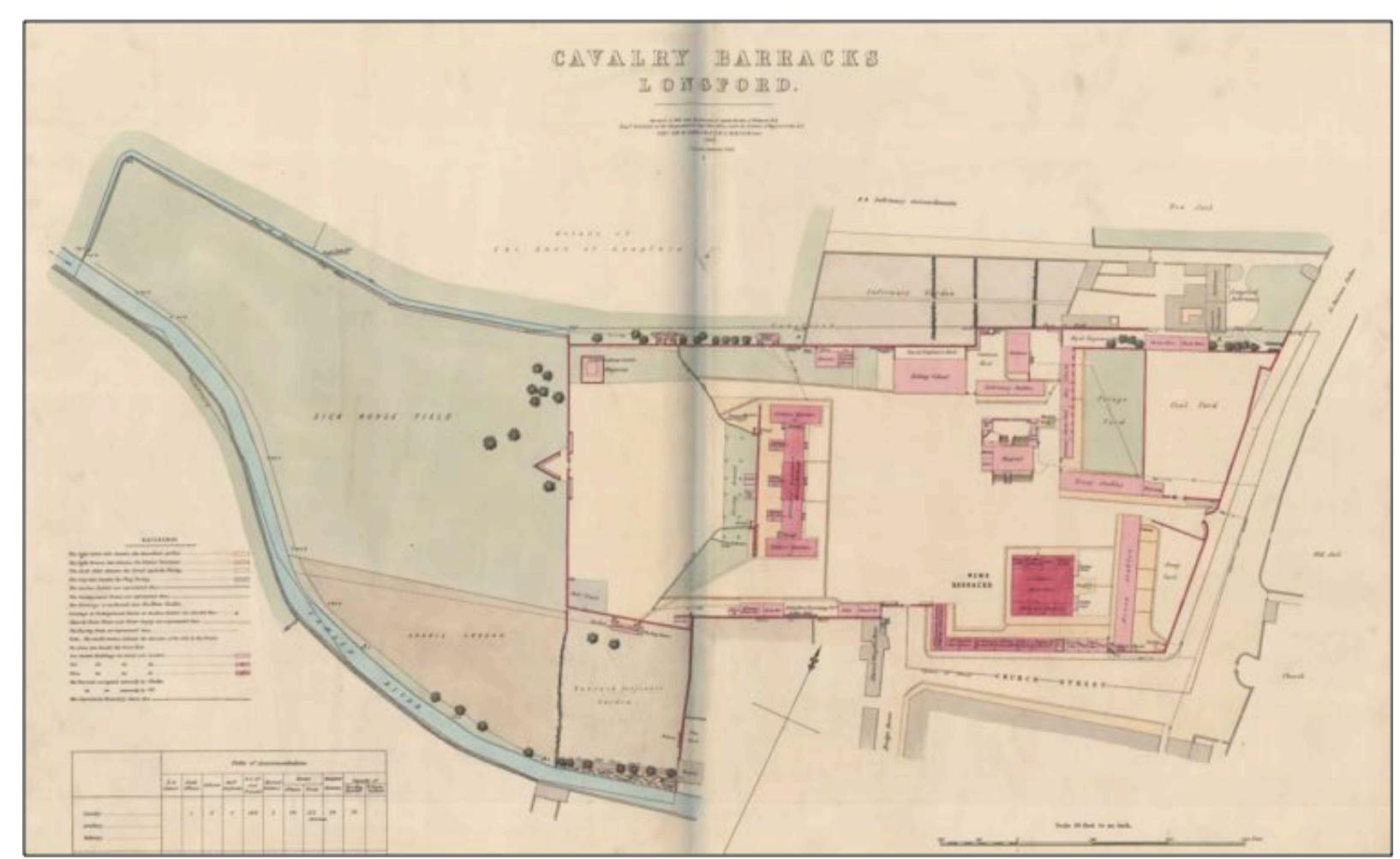


Fig.  
Cavalry Barracks site map from 1863 (Source: www.militaryarchives.ie)



Figure 6: First Edition 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map (1829-1834)

