

## Ballyhogue Famine Wall (as mapped)



### Historical Background

The Ballyhogue Famine Wall or Bellevue/Brookhill estate Boundary Wall which remains substantially intact and in reasonable condition built c. 1845-1850 of brick and lime mortar construction as a famine relief works project.

'Famine Walls' were often built as famine relief works projects, they were created by men employed on Work Schemes – usually run by church groups or by landlords – whose main purpose was to create employment for and provide income to the impoverished, often starving, local communities at the time of the potato famine.

A substantial section of this brick wall remains which is approximately 1km in length between Brookhill and Bellvue and a further (now isolated) section exists to the north extending from the now abandoned twin gate lodges. The wall was originally connected at either end to an earlier stone wall boundary (which is still visible at the southern end).

It is widely understood locally and documented by historians (the late Peter Doyle, Eithne Scallan and David Rowe) that the wall known as the Famine Wall or the wall that was built twice was built as a boundary wall for the Bellevue estate separating it from the Brookhill Estate which to this day continues to act as a boundary between the two estates.

David Rowe and Eithne Scallan, Houses of Wexford, Historical, Genealogical and Architectural Notes, Ballinakella Press, 2016 tell us that

“Historic documents would suggest that part of the demesne now attached to Brookhill House once belonged to the largest property owners in the district, Cliffe’s of neighbouring Bellevue and according to local knowledge, the Brookhill estate was run by Anthony Cliffe up to the early 1900s.”

The late local Historian Peter Doyle made many references to the wall and its origins in his book Memories and Musings, Ballyhogue Long Ago published in 2001 as follow.

“When Cliffe family acquired Bellvue in 1825, the boundary wall has been left unfinished. It started at both ends, first at the river’s edge at Stacey, and, about a mile further down the river, at keenlawn. Both sections a few hundred yards long, were built originally with stone and lime mortar.”

“When the famine began, the Cliffe’s decided to finish the wall, even though there was more than a mile of it still to be built. It is reckoned that the family

spent over £2,500 on the relief work involved, which in today's money would represent more than £250,000 and local folklore has it that the building of the new boundary wall was one of the last jobs to be done, and on nearing completion the workers were wondering what was going to happen to them. Then, just as the wall was completed, the orders came to dismantle it brick by brick from beginning to end. When that was done, and the bricks laid neatly on either side, the order came to build the wall again! To this day that old wall is known locally as the 'Famine Wall' or 'the wall that was built twice'"

"several pits were opened to get suitable marl to make bricks. These were since filled in but it is known locally where these were and pits were both in Brookhill and Bellevue lands and the sites of 2 lime kilns are marked in close proximity at the southern end of the wall on Brookhill lands)."

### Special Interest

The special interest of the wall set between the estates originally of Bellevue and Brookhill is thus well recognised and has been well documented.

This structure/feature is a very important representation not only surviving as an interesting relic of the Bellevue estate following the demolition of the eponymous country house (1825; burnt 1923), and of the still surviving Brookhill House 'both elegant mansions...beautifully situated in extensive demesnes [forming] an interesting feature in a landscape of great beauty but also clearly illustrating the continued development or "improvement" of both estates and making a pleasing visual statement in a sylvan setting overlooking the River Slaney'.

But an intrinsically important component of the experience and circumstance of the local population during the famine and an important remaining example of famine relief works and locally recognised, appreciated and celebrated for the role it played in ensuring that the people of the area fared better than most during this terrible time.

**It is thus considered to be of special architectural, historical, cultural and social interest and should be protected.**

### Important Note

Given that this structure acts as a boundary between two estates - Brookhill (Brookhill House RPS Ref No: WCC067) and Bellevue (Bellevue House destroyed by fire in 1920's - only features of estate remain some of which are listed on the RPS (namely Bellevue Church RPS Ref No: WCC0653 and Bellevue Gatelodges WCC0620)) but appears to fall predominantly within the ownership of former Bellevue estate and given the ownership and land holdings of the former estates has changed significantly and has been subdivided there is a difficulty here in identifying if the Famine Wall/Boundary Wall forms the curtilage of a Protected Structure (particularly since Bellevue House is no longer surviving and that research would suggest it related more appropriately to the Bellevue estate and thus could only be attached to Brookhill House today) but in any event it is a feature of the attendant grounds of both estates and it is recommended by the Planning Authority to be entered onto the record of protected structures in its own right.

### Definitions and Legal Requirements

A structure is defined by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as 'any building, structure, excavation, or other thing constructed or made on, in or

under any land, or any part of a structure'. In relation to a protected structure or proposed protected structure, the meaning of the term 'structure' is expanded to include:

- a) the interior of the structure;
- b) the land lying within the curtilage of the structure;
- c) any other structures lying within that curtilage and their interiors, and
- d) all fixtures and features which form part of the interior or exterior of the above structures.

A 'Protected Structure(s)' and building(s) together with their settings and attendant grounds, fixtures and fittings, or group of structures and buildings or sites that a planning authority considers to be of special interest is included in the RPS(Record of Protected Structures), that special interest could be:

- architectural,
- historical,
- archaeological,
- artistic,
- cultural,
- scientific,
- social, or
- technical

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that planning authorities create a record of protected structures (RPS) which includes all structures or parts of structures in their functional areas which, in their opinion, are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. This record forms part of a planning authority's development plan.