






# New Ross Town and Environs Development Plan 2011-2017

## Town Walls

Below: Map showing how the Town Wall may have looked superimposed on a map of present day New Ross



**MAP LEGEND**

-  Gate
-  Tower
-  Water Gate
-  Street pattern c. 1649
-  Sections of wall which are upstanding at present



Above: Ros Tapestry panel depicting the building of the wall

### Construction of the Town Walls

The Norman town of *Ros Mhic Triúin* was one of the first Irish towns to be developed by the Normans. It is traditionally believed to have been founded by the Earl of Pembroke, William Marshall, his wife Isabella de Clare, daughter of Strongbow and Eva MacMurrough, between 1192 and 1207. The town was developed in a strategic location near the manorial centre at Old Ross and was intended to serve as a port for the Marshall lands of the Barrow, Nore and Suir valleys. By 1210 William Marshall had built so fine a bridge that the new town became known as Ros ponte and subsequently New Ross. By the first half of the thirteenth century New Ross had established itself as a successful port due to its key location. By the end of the century custom returns showed that it was the busiest port in Ireland.

The town itself was without defences until the late thirteenth century when the 'frequent inroads and predatory excursions of the neighbouring Chieftains' and a feud between the Fitzmaurices and the De Burghs in 1264 convinced the inhabitants of the necessity to construct a defensive wall. A Norman poem of 1265, preserved in the British Museum, gives a remarkable contemporary account of the erection of the fortifications of New Ross. It was written in the French tongue by Friar Michael "Bernardi", of Kildare and provides many illuminating details: 'They made a resolution thus: that a wall of stone and mortar they would build around the town, for that war was causing them concern. At Candlemas [2 February] they began; to mark out the fosse they went, how the wall was to go, the chief citizens went to mark it out...they summoned labourers directly...but the hired men got little done. They sat in Council and discussed the plan as never was [put into effect] in England or France...on Monday to begin with the vintners would go to the fosse...from daybreak till the stroke of three...on Sunday the ladies go...to heave the stone and carry it out of the fosse...declaring that they will built a gate...the fosse is 20 feet [6m] deep and extends for a full league [c.4.5km]. When it is complete there will be no need to have a watch; they can sleep soundly - no on should blame them for wanting to enclose their town; when the town is securely closed and the wall encircles it, completely, not an Irishman in Ireland will be so bold as to dare attack it. (BM Harl, MS Sheilds 1975-6, 28-32).

Above is an extract from Appendix IV New Ross Town Walls Conservation Plan.

