



Monitoring Report No. 80

**Hill Street
Ardglass
Co. Down**

AE/06/149

Kara Ward

Site Specific Information

Site Address: Hill Street, Ardglass

SMR No.: Just outside boundary of historic settlement of Ardglass (DOW:045:030).

State Care *Scheduled* *Other* ✓

Grid Ref: J55903745

County: Down

Excavation Licence No: AE/06/149

Planning Ref / No.: R/2002/0939/F

Date of Monitoring: 12th June and 4th July 2006

Archaeologist Present: Kara Ward

Brief Summary:

Archaeological surveillance of topsoil stripping was required as a condition of the grant of planning permission for the construction of twelve dwellings. The site is located just north of the boundary of the historic settlement of Ardglass (DOW:045:030).

Type of monitoring:

Archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping and site preparation works. Topsoil stripping was undertaken by a mechanical excavator equipped with a grading bucket.

Size of area opened: Approximately 3250 square metres

Current Land Use: Waste ground

Intended Land Use: 12 dwellings

Account of the evaluation

Archaeological monitoring was required as a condition of the grant of planning permission (R/2002/0939/F) for the development of twelve dwellings at Hill Street, Ardglass. The site is located on an area of land measuring approximately 3250 square metres and situated opposite 24-26 Hill Street, Ardglass (Figs 1, 2 and 3, Plate 1). The proposed development site is located immediately north of the boundary of the historic settlement of Ardglass (DOW:045:030), as indicated on the Sites and Monuments Record map. The site in question was subject to a small-scale archaeological evaluation in 2000 by Dr. Mark Gardiner, Queen's University Belfast (Fig. 4). This evaluation was undertaken to determine whether the original medieval centre of Ardglass may have stood further north than thought. The only archaeologically significant finds uncovered at this time were some struck flint flakes and pottery fragments in a colluvial deposit. No finds, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered during this programme of archaeological monitoring.

Ardglass is situated on the shore of a little harbour of the same name in the barony of Lecale, Co. Down. It is a small town located in one of the only natural harbours on the north-east Irish coast. Prior to the fifteenth century there was little mention of Ardglass in the records of the time. The town's rise to prominence coincided with the construction of a number of tower houses in the area representing the development of a series of estates set on the arable lands of Lecale and south Down (McNeill, 2005). Three of these tower houses were built within the port of Ardglass itself and point to the success and prosperity of the town as a commercial centre. Ardglass was an ideal location for the establishment of a trading port, lying close to the herring and cod fisheries offshore. It was also a more accessible port than the earlier centre of Strangford which is dominated by the tidal race of the Narrows (McNeill, 2005).

The archaeological evaluation undertaken by Dr. Mark Gardiner in 2000 involved the excavation of four test trenches by mechanical excavator (Fig. 4). The area chosen for placement of these trenches was on the uphill side of the site closest to King's Castle and St. Nicholas' Parish Church. King's Castle is a 19th century rebuild on the site of an earlier tower house. The parish church of St. Nicholas is also built on the site of an earlier church. This location was chosen as the place most likely to be the focus of possible settlement in this area both because of its proximity to the historic centre of Ardglass and the presence of level land. The only archaeological deposit encountered was at the eastern end of Trench A (Fig. 4) where some flint flakes and fragments of pottery were retrieved from a light clay thought to be a colluvial deposit. The deposit was very localized, possibly infilling a gully. This discovery points to the possibility of a previously unrecorded prehistoric settlement nearby. No other artefacts or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered in the other trenches excavated (Gardiner, 2000).

Archaeological surveillance of topsoil stripping and site preparation works was required as a condition of the grant of planning permission (R/2002/0939/F) for the construction of twelve dwellings (Fig. 5 and 6). This was to ensure that archaeological remains which survived within the application site were properly identified and recorded. Archaeological surveillance of topsoil stripping commenced on 12th June 2006. The majority of the site was stripped of topsoil on 12th June apart from two areas where the spoil heaps were located. These areas were topsoil stripped under archaeological supervision on 4th July after the removal of the spoil. The topsoil had an average depth of 0.39m at the northern end (Plate 2) of the site and up to 0.65m at the southern end (Plate 3). The depth of topsoil at the southern end of the site may be accounted for by the accumulation of additional soil washed down the slope. The topsoil (C101) was a mid-dark brown silty clay with occasional inclusions of modern pottery

and building rubble. The underlying subsoil (C102) was a yellowish brown clay with a small amount of silt and sand with some limestone inclusions (Plates 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10). In places, after the removal of topsoil, it was possible to see the trace of some of the evaluation trenches excavated by Dr. Mark Gardiner in 2000 (Plate 5). There were no remnants of the colluvial deposit from which the flint artefacts were retrieved in the 2000 evaluation. The deposit was described as being very localized and it is possible that it was excavated in its entirety.

No finds, features or deposits of archaeological significance were uncovered on any part of the site during this programme of monitoring.

Archive:

Finds: n/a

Photographs: 29 digital images, held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: n/a

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Bibliography:

Gardiner, M. 2000. *Excavations at Ardglass, 2000. Work at Jordan's Castle and Hill Street*. Unpublished preliminary report, The Queen's University of Belfast.

McNeill, T.E. 2005. Three Medieval Buildings in the Port of Ardglass, Co. Down. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*. Vol. 105C, No. 1, 1-21.

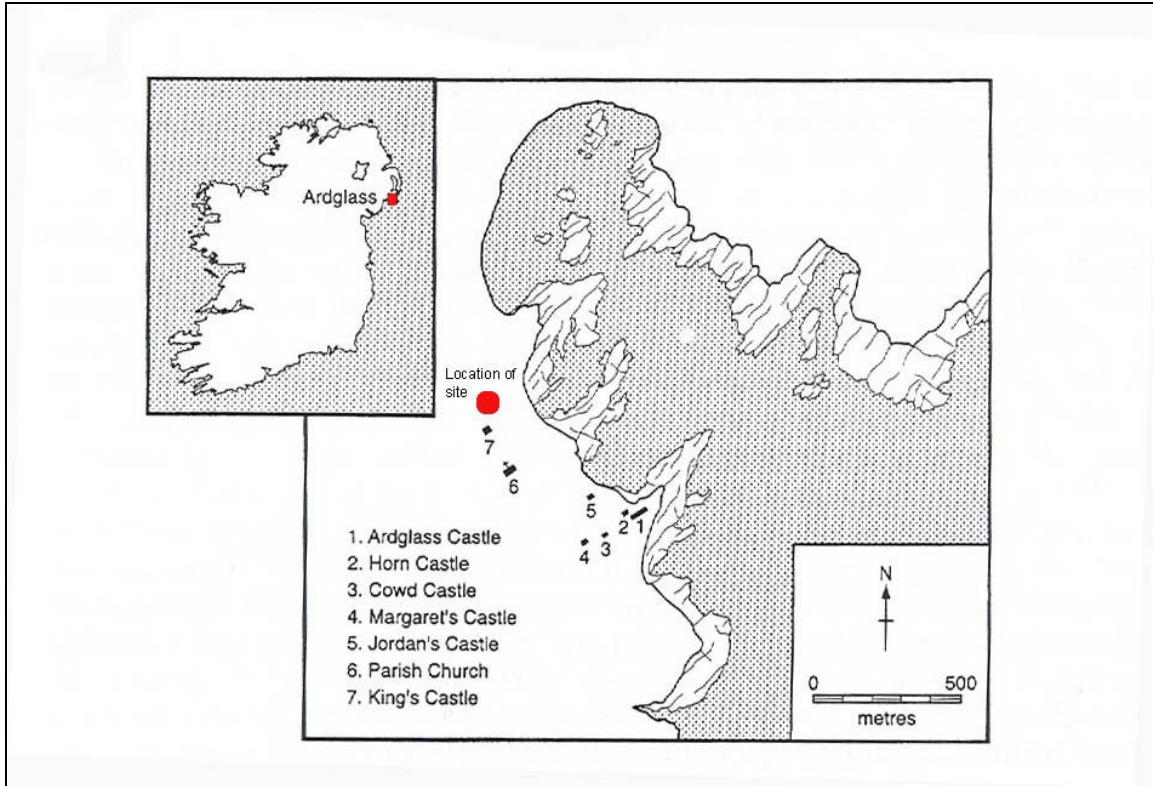


Fig. 1: Map showing location of site (red circle) (after McNeill, 2005).



Fig. 2: Location of site (red dot).

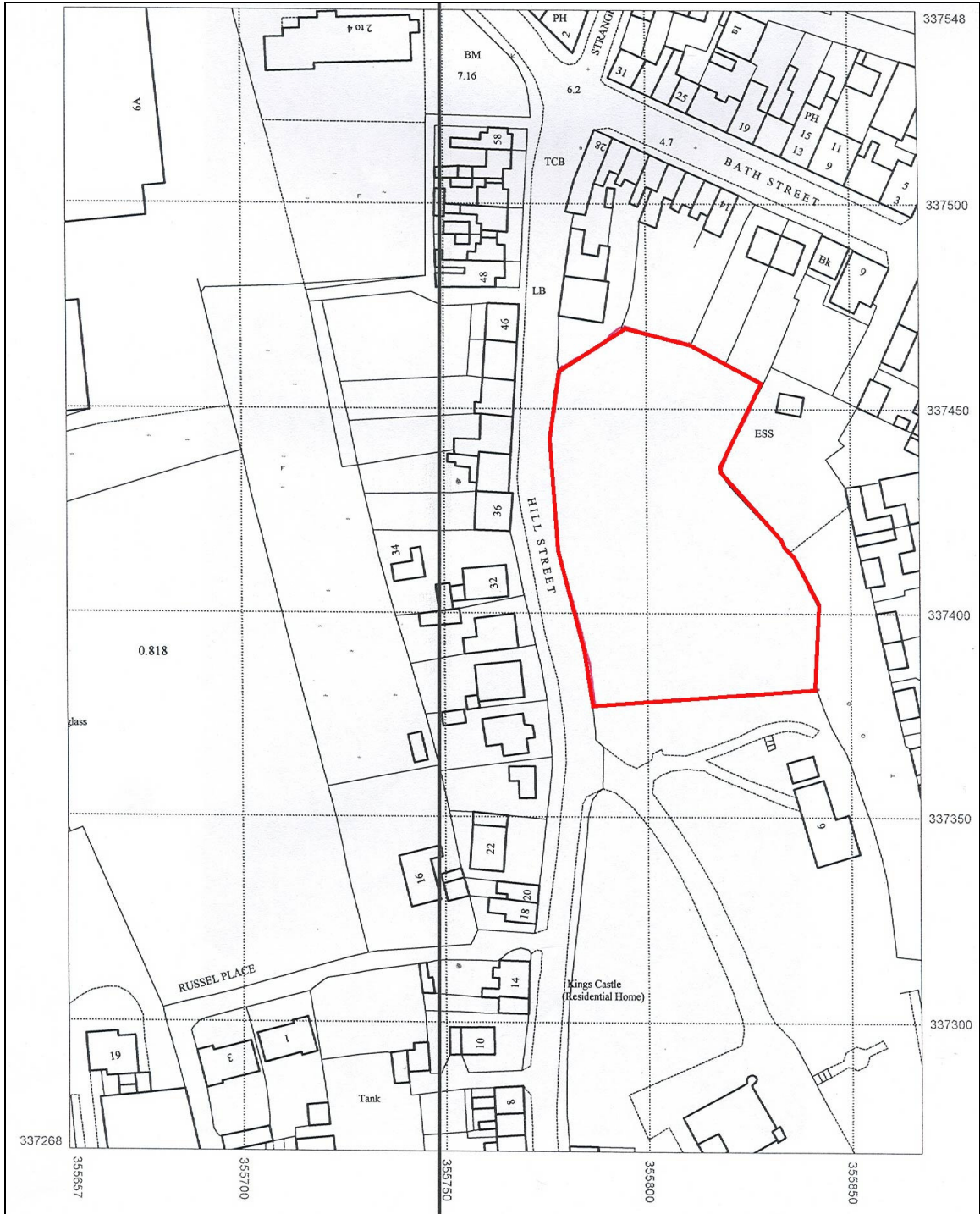


Fig. 3: Location of site (outlined in red).

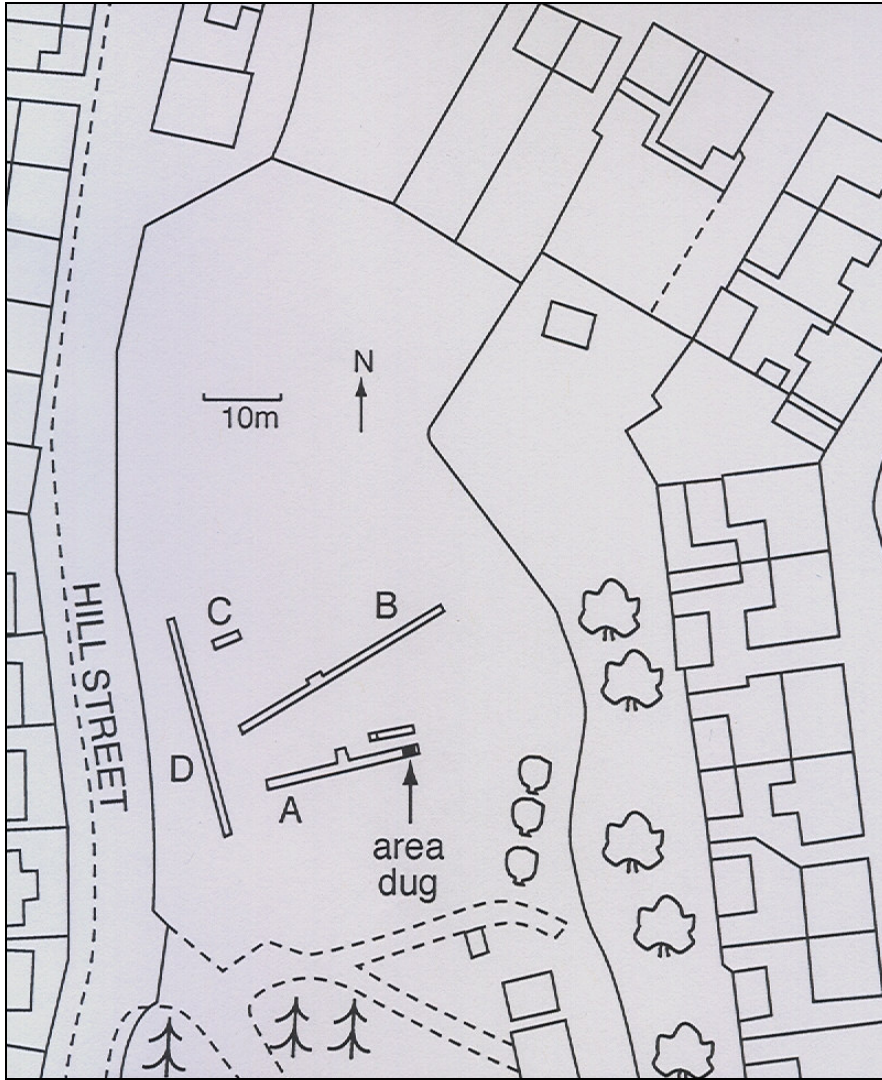


Fig. 4: Location of evaluation trenches excavated in 2000 by Dr. Mark Gardiner (after Gardiner, 2000).

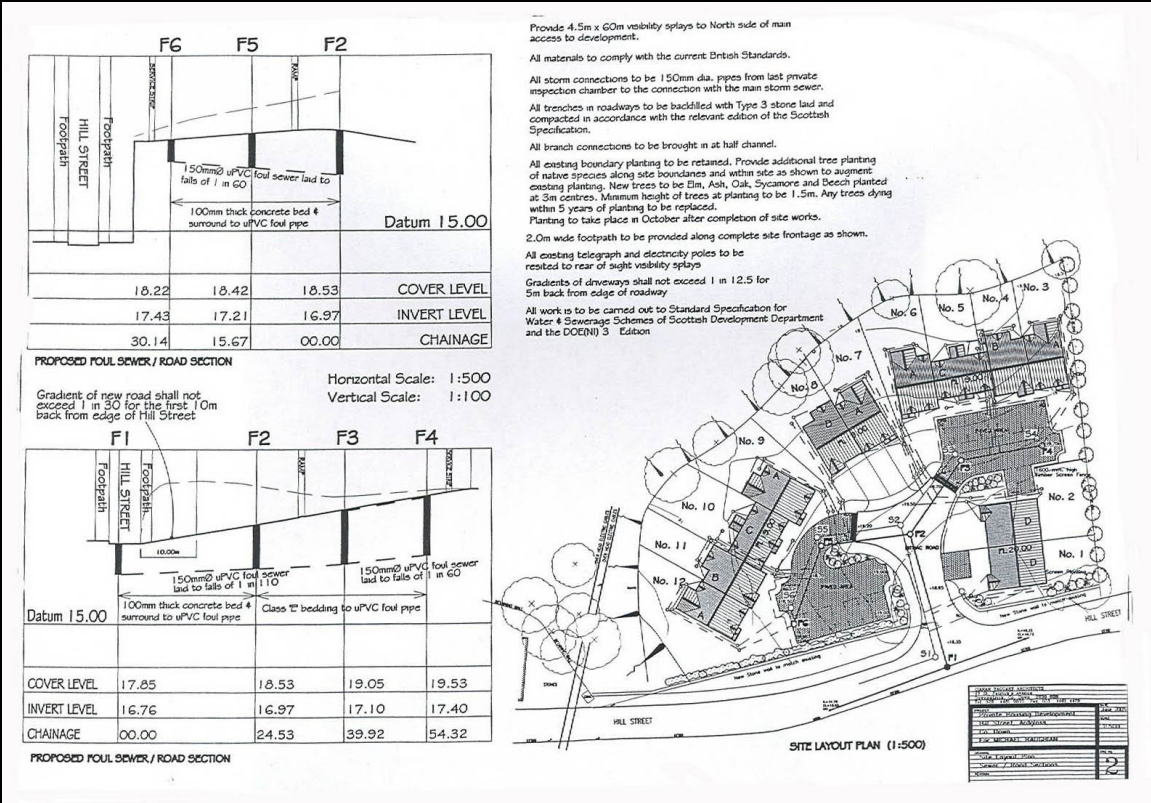


Fig. 5: Plan of proposed development of twelve dwellings.



Fig. 6: Plan of proposed development overlaid on site location plan.



Plate 1: Overall view of site from south-east prior to removal of topsoil.



Plate 2: View of section at northern end of the site showing depth of topsoil (C101) overlying the subsoil (C102).



Plate 3: View of section at southern end of site showing depth of topsoil (C101) overlying the subsoil (C102).



Plate 4: View of topsoil stripped area from north with King's Castle in the background.



Plate 5: View of topsoil stripped area showing traces of trenches (Trench A and extension) excavated during the archaeological evaluation by Dr. Mark Gardiner in 2000.



Plate 6: View of topsoil stripped area from south-west.



Plate 7: View of topsoil stripped area from south-west.



Plate 8: View of topsoil stripped area in south-west of site after removal of spoil heap.



Plate 9: View of topsoil stripped area in south of site after removal of spoil heap. Note, some relict traces of topsoil remain along the line of the bucket.



Plate 10: View of topsoil stripped area in south of site. Note, some relict traces of topsoil remain.