

Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork

School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, QUB



CAF Data Structure Report: No. 086

Excavations at Dunluce Castle, County Antrim

AE/11/133

2nd March 2012

On behalf of





DUNLUCE CASTLE, COUNTY ANTRIM

Excavations carried out on behalf of
Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage

by

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1. Summary

An extent of the seventeenth-century cobbled surface (approx. 25m x 8m) located in the approach area to Dunluce Castle was excavated in January 2012 by the CAF. The sod and topsoil were removed using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision and the cobbles were then cleaned-back by hand. Only two artefacts of interest were found – a seventeenth-century traders token and a decorative metal mount or fitting, possibly from a leather strap. Three pairs of postholes were located at the southern end of the trench and these probably represent the remains of a timber structure of some form (approx. 6m x 3m). The postholes were exposed in plan but not excavated. On completion of the excavation the trench was left open for public viewing as requested by NIEA.

A narrow drainage channel (0.3m wide) was cut running from the north-eastern corner of the excavation trench across the tarmac path and into the village field to the west. A cobbled surface survived under the tarmac path (3.45m wide) and was left *in situ* with the precast drain set above it. A short section of cobbling that survived east of the path (0.7m in width east-west) was relatively shallow; these cobbles were recorded and removed to allow the insertion of the subsurface drainage pipe (approx. 5.6m in length) linking the excavation trench and precast drain.

2. Introduction and background: the 2011 excavation

In June 2011 the third joint University of Ulster (UU) and Queen's University of Belfast (QUB) research excavation was undertaken at Dunluce Castle. The excavation was directed by Colin Breen (UU) and was run as an undergraduate training excavation for QUB archaeology students. The excavation ran from June 6th to July 1st. A number of areas were excavated but the largest trench, and focus of the excavation, was Trench 8 which was opened in the approach area to the castle, between the car park and castle entrance, and included the interior of the ruinous three-sided standing 'approach building' (Plates 1 and 2). The excavation of a small trial trench across one of the entrances of this building in the previous year revealed the survival of a cobbled surface external to the building. Given the relatively even surface of the approach area in comparison to the 'village field' to the west (Plate 1) it had previously been thought that this area had largely been cleared and levelled when maintenance works were carried out at the castle in the early twentieth century. However, the discovery of the cobbles *in situ* in 2010 and a reassessment of the geophysical survey results for this area (Figure 1), suggested that an extensive cobbled surface actually survived west of the approach building. The excavation of Trench 8 in 2011 demonstrated this to be true (Plate 2). Excavation within the interior of the three-sided building, however, showed that it had largely been levelled and cleared-out down to subsoil level at some earlier date.

There was much media and general interest surrounding the site during the course of the 2011 excavation and one of the high profile visitors was Alex Atwood, MLA, the Environment Minister for Northern Ireland. He was impressed with the extent and survival of archaeology, in particular the cobbled roadway, and made funds available for its disclosure and presentation to the public, along with other work to be undertaken associated with the site. The excavation subsequently undertaken in January 2012, and described, here was to expose the cobbled roadway for public viewing as requested by NIEA.

3. The 2012 excavation

3.1. Trench location

An excavation trench, with an overall area of around 150m², was opened in January 2012 in the sloping approach area to the castle between the car park and castle entrance (Figure 1). The trench partly overlapped, along the eastern side, with Trench 8 opened in June 2011. The 2012 trench (Trench 8-ext.) measured approximately 25m in length north-south and 8m east-west at the southern end, tapering to 4.3m across at the northern end. The eastern long-side of the trench was aligned

parallel to the western side-wall of the three-sided approach building, and 4m west of it. The southern end of the trench was set approximately 9m north of the stone wall separating the car park from the castle grounds.

3.2. Methodology

As agreed with NIEA, the sod and topsoil were removed with a mechanical excavator (mini-digger KX61-3) with a smooth-edged sheugh-bucket (approx. 1.12m wide) under archaeological supervision. The spoil was temporarily stockpiled within the trench and then moved, by dumper, to the field immediately to the east where it was piled-up over a sheet of terram (Plate 1 – ‘Eastern field’). The trench was then cleaned back by hand and the remainder of the spoil was also transferred to the eastern field. The edges of the trench were cut at a sloping angle as requested by NIEA. A number of features that had cut through and disturbed the cobbled surface were encountered. These were exposed in plan but not excavated. A small drain was inserted at the northern end of the trench, running from the north-eastern corner of the trench across the tarmac path into the village field to the west. This was excavated under archaeological supervision. The excavation trench was cordoned-off with pedestrian barriers during the course of the excavation. The trench was left open (it was not back-filled), and the fencing was removed on completion of the excavation as agreed with NIEA. The finds (washed and catalogued) are temporarily stored at QUB.

3.3. Results: the cobbled surface

The depth of the sod and topsoil (C.8500), which directly overlay the cobbled surface (C.8501), varied across the trench, increasing in depth downslope towards the northern end of the trench. At the southern end the cobbles were encountered at a depth of 0.18-0.2m, thinning slightly towards the middle of the trench and location of the 2011 excavation, where the cobbles were located at a depth of around 0.14m below the surface. At the northern end of the trench the depth of the sod and topsoil reached around 0.35-0.38m.

The topsoil was a relatively loose mid-brown sandy loam and, as was discovered during the 2011 excavation, contained pockets and spreads of a sandier loam within it. It is probable that the latter represents the re-sodding and re-seeding of the area at various times. Small stones were present throughout. Occasional larger stones were encountered within the topsoil with increasing frequency in the northern half of the trench. The cobbled surface was also less even in this part of the trench (Plate 3) with an extensive area of disturbance at the north-western corner and it seems probable that some or all of the larger loose stones are dislodged cobbles. Some of the unevenness within the cobbling may also be due to repairs – perhaps certain areas of the cobbled roadway were exposed to greater wear and tear.

Within the cobbling were two interconnecting linear cobble details (see Figure 2). These were represented by lines of pairs of stones: one line ran across the trench in a southwest/north-easterly direction for around 13.8m, with a width 0.7-0.8m, and this was met towards the southern end by a second line of about 10.8m in length aligned roughly north-south, also 0.35-0.4m in width. The stones were not set at an angle to form a gully or effective drain. It also seems likely that the linear detail uncovered in Trench 8 in 2011 (Plate 2) and the longer of two lines uncovered in 2012 intersect east of the 2012 excavation trench. Perhaps this patterning would be easier to appreciate if a larger area was exposed.

Miscellaneous finds were recovered during the cleaning back over the cobbled surface (see Appendices). The most numerous of these were sherds of pottery, many glazed, along with fragments of window and bottle glass. The only two finds of note were a copper-alloy token (see Section 3.6) and a copper-alloy mount or fitting (Figure 2). The latter, a decorative metal mount or fitting (23mm in length by approximately 10mm in width) could be of seventeenth-century date and may have been fitted to a leather strap, for equestrian use or as a personal dress accessory (Philip Macdonald pers. comm.).

3.4. *Cut features*

Within the cobbling (C.8501) were a number of areas of disturbance where features had been cut through the cobbles and the stones had been removed. Towards the middle of the trench was a sub-rectangular spread of loose blackish-brown loam (C.8502). Cleaning back over this deposit revealed an area where the cobbles had been removed: the disturbed area or cut (C.8503), aligned northeast-southwest, measured approximately 5.4m in length by 0.7-0.8m in width, and had an uneven edge (Plates 4 and 5). This feature was exposed in plan but not excavated. The reason for the disturbance is unclear but it is possible that it correlates to an area of disturbance (i.e. a light-coloured white-grey area), discernible within the geophysical survey plot (Figure 1).

At the southern end of the trench, and highest part of the site, were three pairs of sub-rectangular pits or postholes (C.8504 - C.8509). These were aligned roughly northeast-southwest and set 2.2m apart, north-south (Plate 6). These were not excavated but on average measured 0.40m-0.48m across (0.43m x 0.46m; 0.5 x 0.45m; 0.45m x 0.54m; 0.34m x 0.52m; 0.44m x 0.3m; 0.38m x 0.7m). It seems probable that these once supported the timber posts of a structure of some sort post-dating the laying down of the cobbled surface. This may have been broadly contemporary with the village or date to a later period, possibly to the time of the Dunluce Fair in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

The third main disturbed area or feature (C.8510) was located at the north-western corner of the trench where the cobbles had all been removed (Plate 3). On consultation with the geophysical survey results (Figure 1) there is a light-coloured, grey-white stripe running along the western side of the grey-black triangular area of which the latter, excavation has demonstrated, represents the cobbled surface. Excavation within the three-sided approach building in June 2011 showed that it did not have a cobbled surface and had been cleared at some earlier time. The plot of the survey results for this area depicts it as light-coloured/white which can be compared with the linear strip west of the cobbling from which can be inferred a likely absence of stones. This strip of removed cobbling can also be discerned topographically and is represented by a linear shallow dip or depression running between the excavation trench and tarmac path. Initially it was thought that this area had been stripped for the laying of the tarmac path or an earlier version thereof and possibly also for the laying of associated drainage or other services. However, excavation of the drainage gully (see below) and further consultation with the geophysical survey results (Figure 1) both show that this strip of disturbed cobbles terminates several centimetres short of the eastern edge of the path, widening out towards the southern end, and that cobbling survives under the tarmac path. No cut or built features were found in the excavated area of disturbance but it was excavated to an arbitrary depth (the subsoil/bedrock was not reached) and therefore a sunken path or other features may still be buried at a deeper level. On completion of the excavation, and on direction from Rhonda Robinson of NIEA, the north-western corner of the excavation trench (Trench 8-ext.), where the cobbles had been removed, was partially back-filled (Plate 11).

3.5. *The drain*

Heavy rain leads to a huge amount of water flowing down the slope of the tarmac path leading from the car park to the castle entrance and into the reception area and Outer Ward. To try and alleviate and divert some of this run-off, and the potential accumulation and overflow of water at the northern end of the excavation trench, a drain was inserted running from the north-eastern corner of the trench across the tarmac path and into the village field (Plate 7).

A narrow channel, 0.3m in width and 5.6m in length, was cut by hand linking the north-eastern corner of the excavation trench to the path. Removal of the sod showed that the loose loamy brown topsoil encountered at the northern end of the main excavation trench also continued north-westwards for a further 4.8m. This was excavated to a depth of around 0.2m-0.3m and no features or finds were encountered. Removal of the sod adjacent to the path unveiled a narrow, 0.7m in width, section of cobbling (C.8511; Plates 8 and 9) and on lifting the tarmac cobbling (C.8512) was also found to continue westwards under the path as far as the stone wall (Plate 10). The latter were located at a depth of 0.15m below the surface of the tarmac and this was a sufficient depth to allow the precast drain to be built above the surface of the cobbles without having to damage or remove them. The

small section of cobbling east of the tarmac path was, however, at a shallower depth (approx. 0.05m). In discussion with Rhonda Robinson, NIEA, it was agreed that these would be recorded and lifted to allow the insertion of the artificial pipe to carry the water from the trench to the precast drain traversing the path (see Figure 2).

3.6. The merchant's token by Robert Heslip

The coin (110m in diameter) discovered on the cobbled roadway in January 2012 (Trench 8-ext.) is a seventeenth century merchant's token for one penny issued in the name of William Craford, Antrim, dated 1656. The same man put out a token with a slightly different design in 1657, as did Bryce Craford, also in Antrim and presumably a relative (Williamson 1889-91, 1355). There is a further undated token issued by a William Craford in Sligo (*ibid.* 1411). This is undated and it is not known if it is the same person.

The token from Dunluce has suffered in the ground, but the design of other specimens make clear a central design of a merchant's mark and the name William Craford around. The other side has a D over 1 within a heart, to indicate the denomination, and the legend IN ANTRVM MERCHANT 1656 around. Both designs are very typical of Irish tokens of this date.

Tokens are essentially 'promises to pay'. During Charles I's reign and at other periods the monarchy usually kept a tight grip on its monopoly of coinage, even though only gold and silver was regarded as 'proper' money. James I and Charles issued patents for the production of copper farthings under the royal license. These arrangements came to an end under the Commonwealth and private individuals started to put out their own coins, from 1653 in Ireland. Shortly after his restoration in 1660 Charles II granted a patent to Sir Thomas Armstrong to coin farthings, not much different in size to many of the token pennies. Efforts were made to suppress the tokens and none were issued in 1661 and 1663, though they did reappear in 1663 and the Armstrong coinage does not seem to have been a success. Private coinage was not finally done away with until much larger royal halfpennies became the standard from 1680.

Whilst firm information is lacking, it seems not unlikely that the earlier tokens will have stopped circulating in the period 1661-62 and this might provide the terminus for the Craford piece, giving a tight six years for the period of its loss. At worst, we can be sure that the token went into the ground no later than 1680. William Craford seems to have been a relatively common name in seventeenth century Ireland – for example one was Sovereign in Belfast in the 1680s – making tracking the token issuer difficult. It is worth noting, however, that Craford, spelt thus, is recorded as a common name in the Barony of Glenarm in 1659 (Pender 1937).

4. Discussion

The uncovering of the cobbled surface was expected given the results of the 2011 excavation (Plate 2) and the indications and interpretation of the resistivity survey results (Figure 1). The linear details and patterning within the cobbles is also a feature that has been recorded elsewhere at Dunluce.

The six-post structure at the southern end of the excavation trench post-dates the laying of the cobbled surface. It could be a structure contemporary with the village or date to the later use of the site. After the 1641 rebellion the castle was subsequently occupied and exploited by English soldiers during the 1650s and '60s while the annual Dunluce Fair, held in November, appears to have continued throughout this time and into the late-eighteenth century (McDonnell 2004, 45-6; Day and McWilliams 1992, 115 and 121). The token found in the 2012 excavation, which has been dated to the 1660s and which could potentially have been lost in a short time period of between 1656-1662, suggests activity of this date in this area of the site. The merchant's house excavated in the village field in 2009 was re-used and seemingly partly rebuilt during the time of the fair and used as a liquor and seafood 'booth'. Other temporary structures are also likely to have been erected for the fair of which the six-post structure may be one.

The excavation of the main trench and drainage channel, and the geophysical survey results all suggest that a linear strip of cobbles, running parallel to and just east of the tarmac path and widening-out towards the southern end, have been removed. This is also discernible in the topography of the site and is possible to make-out in the 1930s aerial photo (Plate 12). The latter would suggest that their removal predates the State Care conservation works at the site. Only a short section of this disturbed area was excavated (north-western corner of the excavation trench and within the drainage channel) and no features or finds were discovered within it. The date and function of this linear feature is therefore not known.

The excavation of the gully for the drain uncovered a small area of cobbles surviving immediately east of the tarmac path. Cobbles also survived under the path but these were at a lower level. The latter also had the appearance of being more even than the cobbled surface within the trench and also larger and more regular in size. It could be suggested that this cobbling represents a path following the same route as the later tarmac path, but distinct from the rest of the cobbled surface and which may be contemporary, or later, than the seventeenth-century cobbling. The nineteenth-century OS maps all have a line and division of some form marked between the car park and castle entrance – only on the most recent maps have the main access paths around the castle been marked-in in full (Figures 4-7). The line on the earlier maps could represent a field boundary and/or a path of some form and the maps are therefore not helpful or informative in trying to work-out if there was an earlier path or roadway.

Unfortunately, the OS Memoirs for Dunluce (Day and McWilliams 1992, 104-123) provide no informative descriptions of this area of the site.

A photo of ‘the land end’ buildings at Dunluce held in the MBR (Plate 13) which predates the building of the visitors centre and other developments at the site, shows a metalled, apparently cobbled, path leading down to the castle bordered by grass to the east. It is possible that this is the cobbled surface uncovered under the tarmac which is of a different (later?) date to the extensive cobbled seventeenth-century surface uncovered in Trenches 8 and 8-ext. (2011 and 2012) and within the village field (2009 and 2010 excavations – see Breen *et al.* 2011).

Also held in the MBR is an Interim Report, dated 9 December 1929, which provides an account of works carried out at the castle between September and December 1928, to a meeting of the Advisory Committee (accessed through the SMR online 31/01/2012). In this document, under the section headed the ‘Approach Road’, the following account is given:

‘A cobbled roadway has been uncovered leading down from the field gate at public road. The excavation varied from the thickness of a sod at the upper end to three feet [approx. 0.91m] at the lower end... The width of the clearing is 9’0” [approx. 2.74m], but this does not represent the full width of the original road’.

This indicates the existence of a cobbled path connecting the car park and castle – probably the same one shown in the old site photo (Plate 13). Perhaps this was simply buried under the tarmac when the latter was laid at a later date. The entry also suggests that the ‘clearing’ made in 1929 was narrower than the current tarmac path (3.45m wide) and that the cobbling extended beyond it.

Elsewhere in the Interim Report it is clear that there are at least two phases of superimposed paving or cobbles surviving in parts of the castle. In 1641 there is also a reference to a ‘new pavement’ in the Outer Ward (McDonnell 2004, 35) which it has been speculated may have been laid down by the second earl as improvements and renovations to his father’s earlier building schemes (*ibid*). It seems probable that the cobbling in the excavation trench and the cobbling under the tarmac represent two different phases of cobbling, the latter potentially post-dating the former, though whether this is of seventeenth century date or later is not possible to determine at this stage.

In conclusion, the excavation uncovered more of the seventeenth-century cobbled surface including the remains of a 6-post timber structure, a seventeenth-century traders token and a metal clasp. The excavation also identified two possible horizons of cobbling under the current tarmac path and main thoroughfare leading into the castle, and several areas of disturbance, all undated.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that the metalwork, the token and the decorative mount/fitting, are both professionally conserved. It is also recommended that the pottery, glass, tobacco pipe, flint and bone assemblages are examined by the relevant specialists jointly with the finds from the 2011 excavation (Trench 8).

6. Acknowledgements

The excavation team from the CAF were Cormac McSparron, Dermot Redmond, Grace McAlister and Stuart Alexander. Particular thanks go to Cormac for taking the vertical photographs and monitoring the excavation of the drain. The site plan was drawn-up by Ruth Logue, Sapphire Mussen, Sarah Gormley and Naomi Carver all of the CAF. Séan McKinley helped out with the movement of the spoil in the last week of the excavation. Robert Heslip and Philip Macdonald kindly identified the metal finds and Robert provided a report on the token. Tommy Campbell (NIEA) facilitated our access and use of the yard and depot and Tony Corey provided the scanned images of the site held in the MBR.

7. References

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- Williamson, G. 1889-91 *Trade tokens issued in the seventeenth century*. London. Stock.

PLATES



Plate 1 Aerial photograph showing the village field and garden terraces, the Outer Ward and approach area. The relatively even surface of the latter compared to the former is evident from this photo.



Plate 2 Post-excavation photo of the 2011 excavation (Trench 8) in the approach area (T. Corey, NIEA).



Plate 3 A vertical photo of the northern end of the excavation trench (Trench 8-ext.) showing the north-western corner where the cobbles have been removed.



Plate 4 Vertical photo of the southern half of the trench showing the linear detailing in the cobbling to the left (west) and the irregular sub-rectangular area of disturbance on the right.



Plate 5 The cobbled surface and irregular sub-rectangular area of disturbance, with the buildings of the Outer Ward in the background.

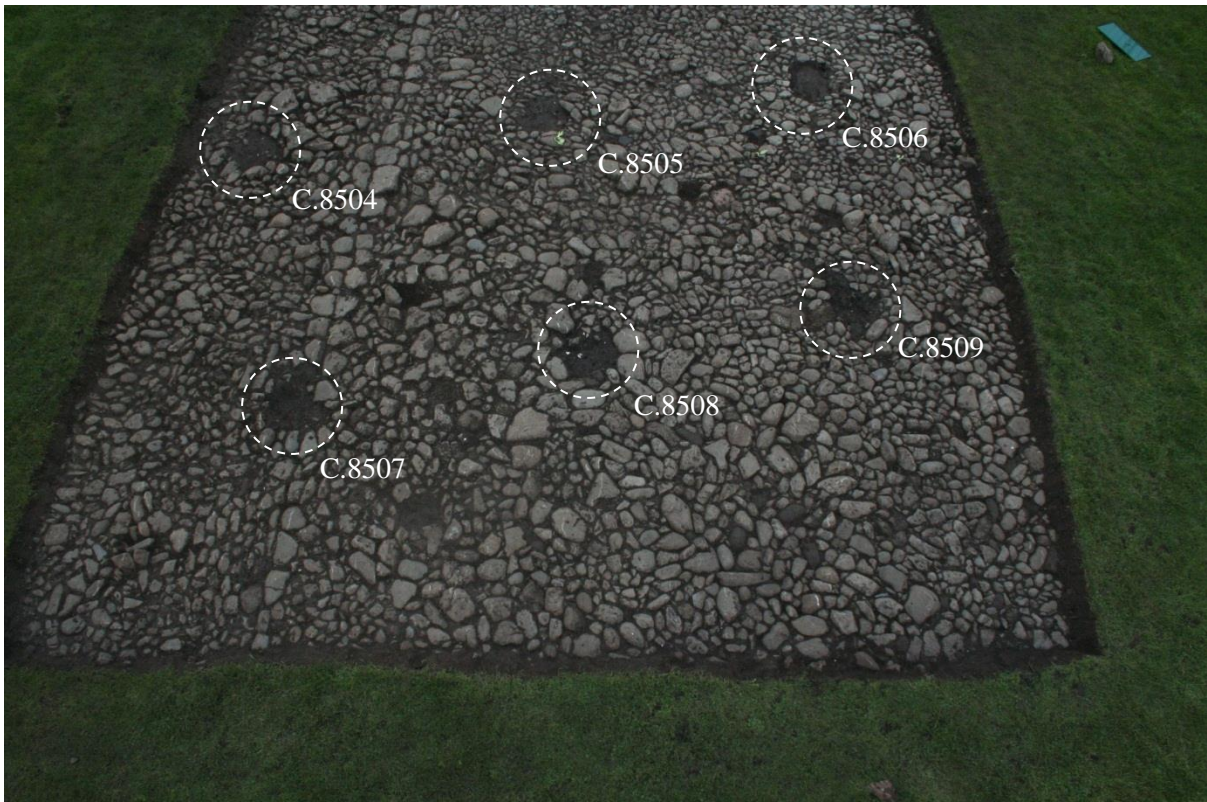


Plate 6 The southern end of the trench showing the linear detailing in the cobbling (to the left), aligned roughly north-south, and the three pairs of postholes.



Plate 7 The orange line indicates the line and direction of the drainage pipe sited below ground level to displace storm water from the dig to the precast drain. The white line indicates the position of the precast drain across the tarmac lane (pre-excavation photo).



Plate 8 The narrow trench linking the excavation trench and tarmac path to host the artificial drainage pipe.



Plate 9 The short section of cobbles uncovered immediately east of the tarmac path.



Plate 10 The western half of the drainage channel cut across the path with the underlying cobbles exposed.



Plate 11 The northern end of the excavation trench with the north-western corner (where the cobbles had been previously removed) back-filled.



Plate 12 Detail from an aerial view of Dunluce taken in 1930 showing the ‘approach area’ to the castle before it was landscaped and the new visitor’s centre was built and other changes made (NIEA MBR).



Plate 13 Harold Meek photo - “Dunluce Castle land end buildings” (NIEA MBR: 1531_11_Dunluce_HM6-5).

FIGURES

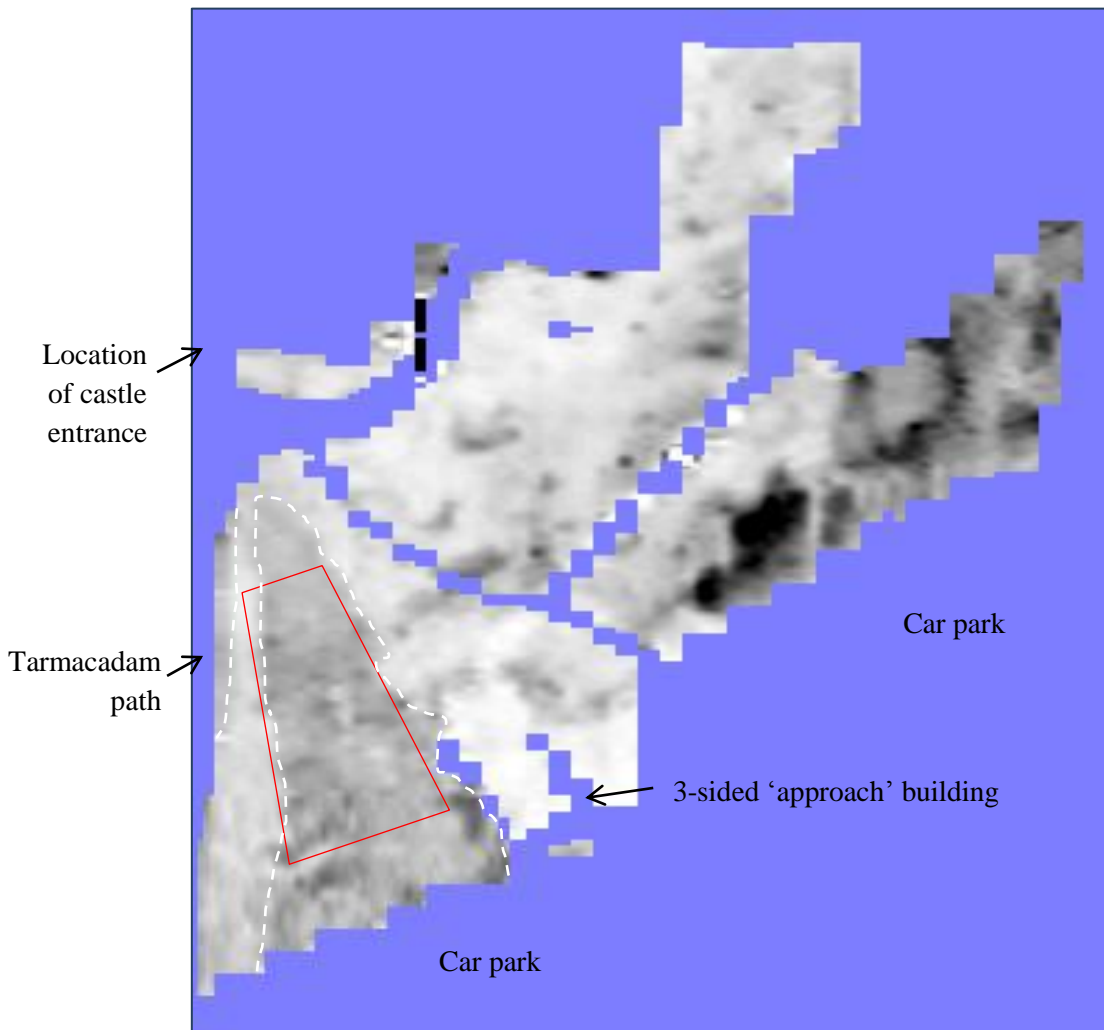


Figure 1 Plot of resistivity survey results of the approach area to the castle (CAF). The linear gaps in the plot represent paths and upstanding buildings. The triangular area of dark-grey mottling to the left (west) of the 3-sided approach building represents the cobbled surface (marked with a dashed white line). There is a light-coloured linear stripe left of this, between the cobbled surface and the path, which appears to represent an area of disturbance. This can be correlated with the 'white' area within the 3-sided building which excavation demonstrated to be clear of cobbling. The red box shows the approximate location of the 2012 excavation trench (Trench 8-ext.).

Figure 2 Post-excavation plan of Trench 8-ext.



Figure 4 Detail from the 1st edition 6" OS Map showing Dunluce Castle and environs before the modern Dunluce Road (A2) was built.

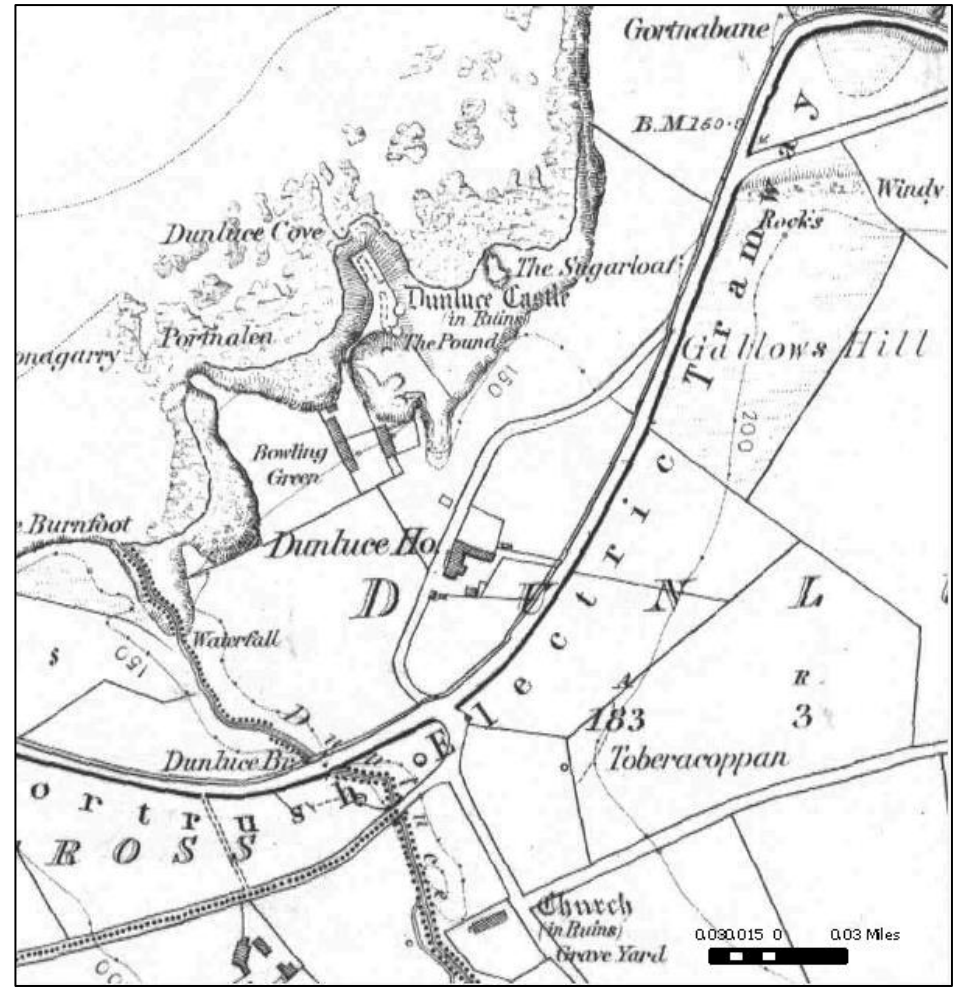


Figure 5 Detail from the 2nd edition 6" OS Map showing Dunluce Castle.

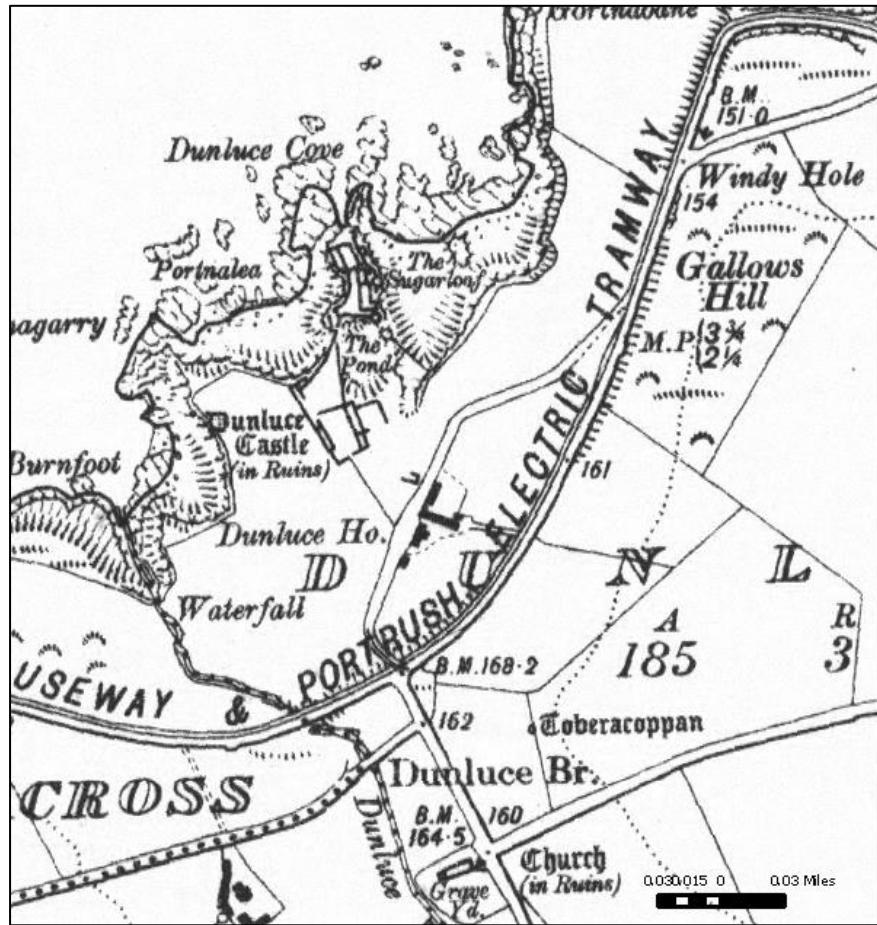


Figure 6 Detail from the 3rd edition 6" OS Map showing Dunluce Castle.

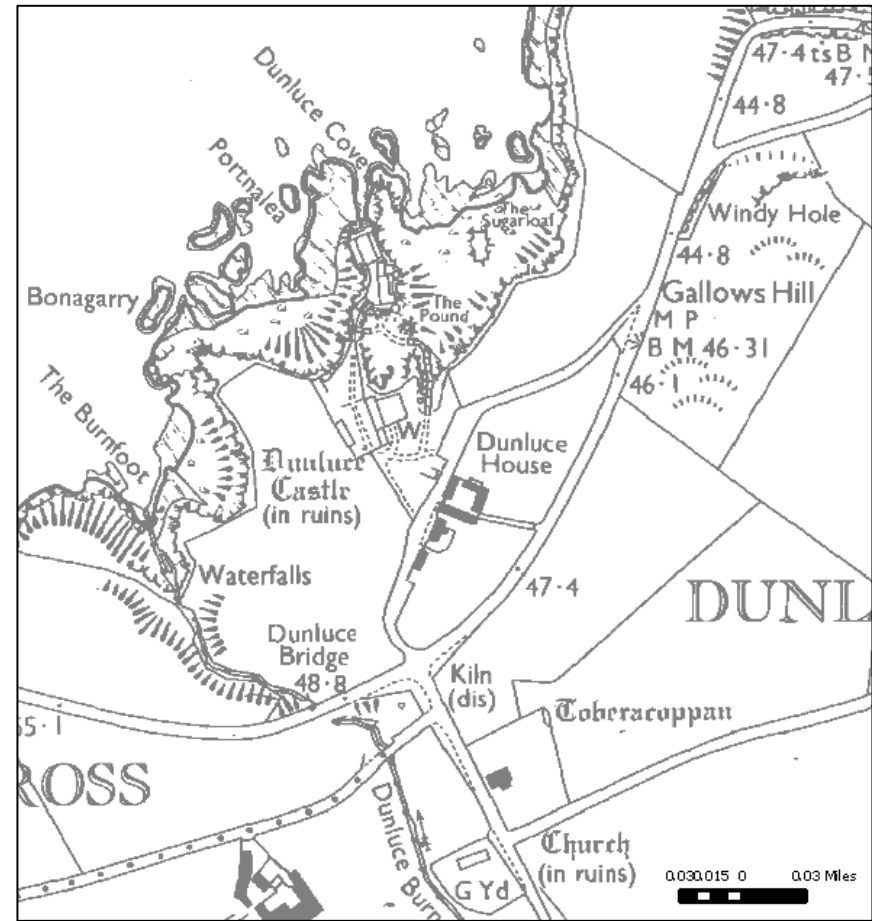


Figure 7 Modern OS map showing Dunluce Castle including paths at the site.

Appendices

A.1 Context register

Context	Description
8500	sod and topsoil
8501	cobbles
8502	black-brown dark spread
8503	sub-rectangular cut feature through cobbles: containing C.8502
8504	pit/post-hole S end of Tr. 8-ext.
8505	pit/post-hole S end of Tr. 8-ext.
8506	pit/post-hole S end of Tr. 8-ext.
8507	pit/post-hole S end of Tr. 8-ext.
8508	pit/post-hole S end of Tr. 8-ext.
8509	pit/post-hole S end of Tr. 8-ext.
8510	irregular cut/disturbance of cobbles N & NW corner of Tr. 8-ext.
8511	short extent of cobbling W of tarmac path (= C.8501 & cut by C.8510)
8512	cobbling underlying tarmac path

A.2 Finds register

Context	Type	Number
C.8500	Pottery	271
	Glass	40
	Bone	10
	Clay pipe	28
	Flint	3
	Metal	12
	Copper-alloy token	1
	Metal fitting/mount	1
C.8502	Pottery	12
	Glass	4
	Bone	4
	Clay pipe	2
	Flint	1