



Evaluation/monitoring Report No. 241

KING'S CASTLE NURSING HOME
ARDGLASS
CO. DOWN

AE/12/19

SARAH GORMLEY

Site Specific Information

Site Name: King's Castle

Townland: Ardglass

SMR No. : DOW 045:024

Status: The site is not Scheduled or in State Care

Grid Ref.: J5583037280

County: Down

Excavation Licence No. : AE/12/19

Planning Ref / No. : NA

Dates of monitoring: 13 February 2012, 15-17 May 2012

Archaeologist Present: Sarah Gormley

Brief Summary: An extension to King's Castle Nursing Home (the site of a tower house) is scheduled to take place with planning permission already having been granted. Monitoring of topsoil removal was undertaken on 13 February in a grassed garden area and subsoil was reached with nothing of archaeological significance uncovered. The monitoring of the removal of the tarmac to natural subsoil in the area between the grassed area and the nursing home was undertaken from 15 to 17 May; again, nothing archaeological was found.

Type of monitoring: Mechanical excavation of topsoil from a grassed recreation area, using a smooth-edged 'sheugh' bucket and supervised by an archaeologist, followed by monitoring of the removal of tarmac using a toothed bucket and the underlying hardcore with a smooth-edged 'sheugh' bucket.

Size of area opened: The grassed area measured 15m x 10m and the tarmac area 15 m x 20m.

Current Land Use: Urban: garden and driveway.

Intended Land Use: Urban: nursing home.

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

Archaeological monitoring was requested by NIEA inspector Liam McQuillan in advance of the construction of an extension to King's Castle Nursing Home in Ardglass. Ardglass harbour, located on the south east coast of County Down (Fig. 1), is rich in archaeological remains. A number of tower houses survive extant within the small town today, including Cowd Castle, Margaret's Castle and Jordan's Castle. King's Castle Nursing Home itself is on the site of (and indeed may incorporate) a tower house. Reportedly a smaller tower stood beside King's Castle (ASCD 1966, 225).



Figure 1: 2nd ed 6" map (c.1857) showing Ardglass harbor and location of King's Castle highlighted.

The extension to the nursing home covers the area to the west of the present nursing home (Fig. 2). When the outline of this extension is overlaid with an estate map of 1768 and the first edition 6" map it is clear that buildings have been located within the area of the proposed extension from at least the 18th century. The area is currently in use as a driveway and garden with no evidence of the buildings shown on the early maps. Given the location of the extension, therefore, there was considerable potential for significant archaeological remains to survive within the footprint of the extension; including the foundations of medieval and later buildings and associated material culture. As a result the current programme of archaeological monitoring was required.

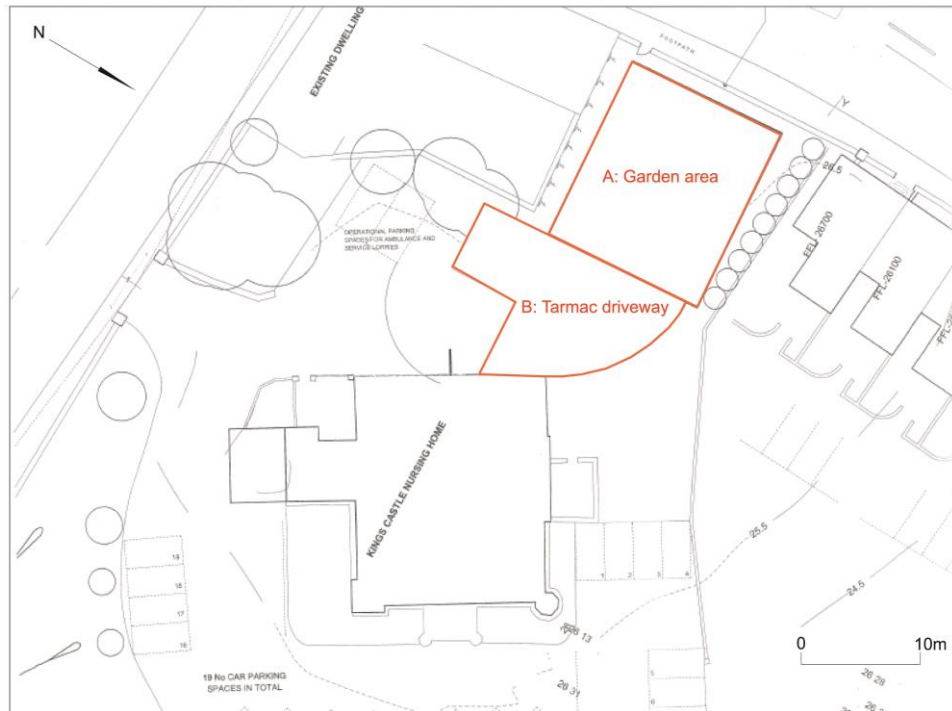


Figure 2: Location of the extension to the nursing home outlined in red.



Figure 3: Detail from a survey of the Manor of Ardglass in the Barony Le Cale, Co. Down, estate of James, Duke of Leinster by Bernd., dated 1768 (PRONI D2223/M/1). The present footprint of King's Castle Nursing Home is outlined in red, while the proposed extension is given in solid red.

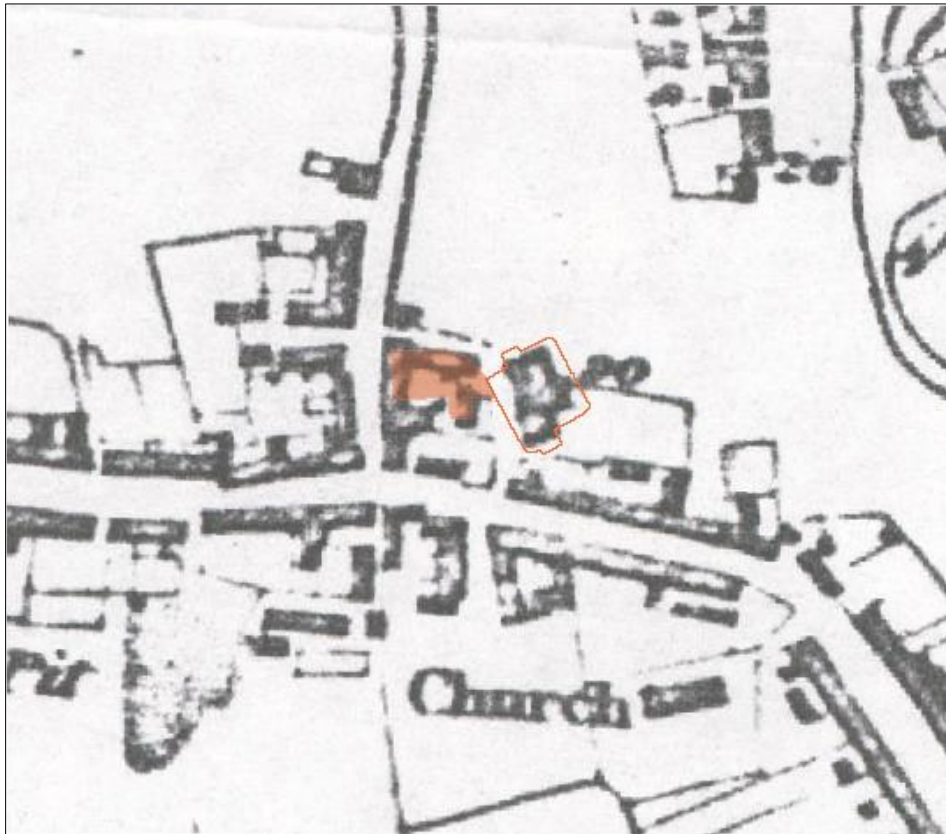


Figure 4: 1st ed 6" map (c.1833) with the present footprint of King's Castle Nursing Home outlined in red and the proposed extension given in solid red.



Plate 1: Garden area and tarmac driveway in the foreground which is to incorporate the new extension, looking west.



Plate 2: King's Castle Nursing Home from the garden looking north east across the tarmac area.

Initially the grassed garden area was topsoil stripped (Fig. 2, Area A and Plate 1 & 2) by a machine fitted with a straight edged 'sheugh' bucket. In this area approximately 10m x 15m was stripped to natural sand, with nothing of archaeological significance uncovered. Below the sod (C101; up to 13cm thick) was a layer of grey blue stoney hard core and mixed sand (C102; up to 12cm thick) which lay above a dark brown loamy soil (C103; up to 5cm thick) which overlay the natural sand (Plate 3). These layers covered the entire area. In the south west corner, above the natural was a spread of loose stones, brick and concrete within a matrix of red-brown gritty soil (C104; up to 15cm thick; Plate 4). Although not bonded, many of the large angular stones (up to 30cm in size) and brick had mortar adhering. The thin spread of stone covered an area 4m by 3m (Plate 5) and may represent a leveled garden wall. In association were two cement bases, possibly of gateposts (Plate 5). The components of this stone layer (brick, cement, flag stones, glass) indicate that it is of recent origin and the recovery of a beer tin from beneath the layer suggests that the spread was deposited very recently, perhaps part of leveling work undertaken to create the garden area.



Plate 3: North facing section, looking south.

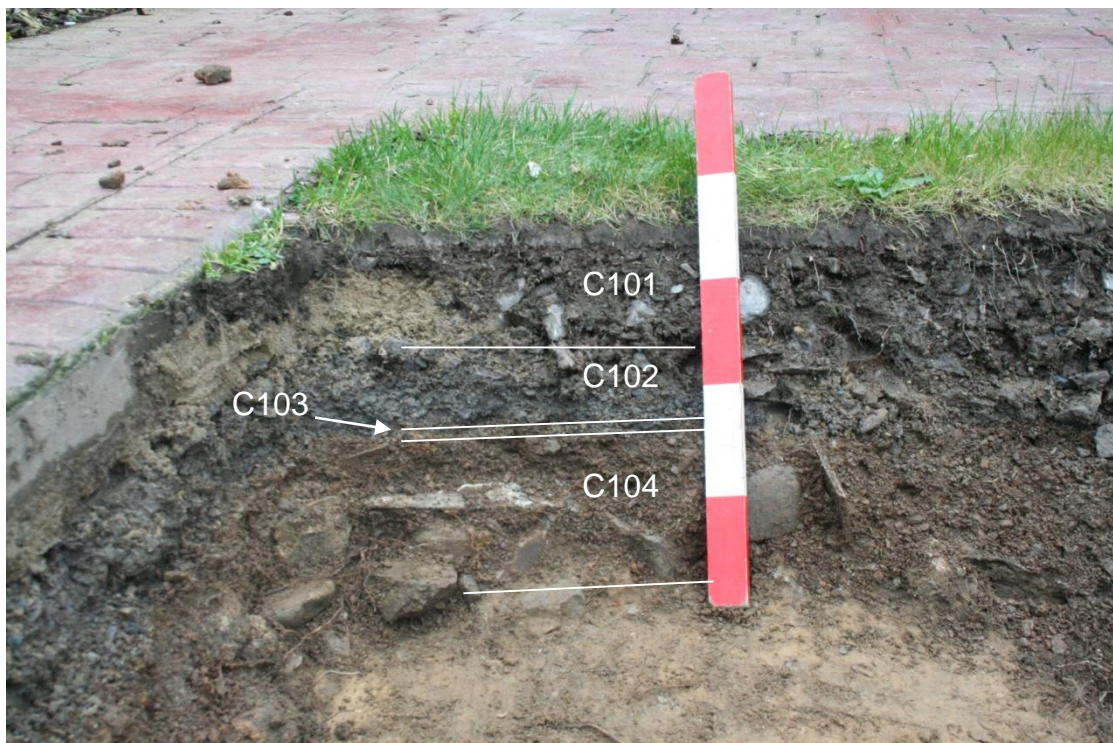


Plate 4: East facing section, looking west.



Plate 5: Stone layer (C104), looking north.

These layers (C101-104) were removed to reveal the natural subsoil (Plate 6) which had two recent features cut into it; a linear cut for a plastic pipe (Plate 7) and an 'L' shaped cement feature, a base or plinth for a brick garden wall (Plate 8).



Plate 6: Garden area on the removal of contexts 101-104, showing natural sand subsoil, looking south east.



Plate 7: Modern pipe cut into natural subsoil.



Plate 8: Concrete plinth, cut into natural subsoil

The tarmac was removed in the area between the garden and the nursing home (Plate 9) using a mini digger fitted with a back acting toothed bucket. On removal of the tarmac, a grey blue stoney hard core layer (C102) was revealed.



Plate 9: Tarmac area, between the garden and the nursing home, looking north.

This layer (C102) was removed using a smoothed edged 'sheugh' bucket. The natural sand subsoil was revealed on removal of this hardcore layer (C102; Plate 10 and 11). A continuation of the 'L' shaped cement feature (see Plate 8) was also uncovered in this area, cut into the natural subsoil and it is clear that this is the remains of a garden wall feature.



Plate 10: Driveway area on removal of tarmac and hardcore layer (C102), showing natural sand subsoil, looking east.



Plate 11: Tarmac driveway area on removal of tarmac and hardcore layer (C102), showing natural sand subsoil, looking south west.

No features or finds of an archaeological nature were encountered in this area. It seems that the area which is to be developed may have been leveled and cleared at some point in the recent past. It is likely that the naturally sloping ground in this area has been reduced to create a level garden. The lack of any finds, except those of a very recent origin (plastic etc) would suggest that this happened in the recent past and perhaps accounts for there being no trace of the buildings shown on the earlier maps.

Archive:

Finds: Only finds of recent origin were uncovered, including glass, iron and plastic. No finds were retained.

Photographs: The photographs taken during the monitoring are stored digitally with the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Samples: No samples were taken.

Drawings: No drawings were compiled.