



**Monitoring Report No. 17**

**WOODGRANGE TOWER HOUSE  
WOODGRANGE  
COUNTY DOWN**

**AE / 04 / 153**

**DR EIMÉAR NELIS**

## Site Specific Information

*Site Name:* Woodgrange Tower House

*Townland:* Woodgrange

*SMR No (if applicable):* DOW 030:004

State Care                      Scheduled                      Other                      [delete as applicable]

*Grid Ref:* J 4446 4648

*County:* Down

*Excavation License No (if applicable):* AE / 04 / 153

*Planning Ref / No. (if applicable):* N/A

*Dates of Monitoring:* Phase 1: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2004; Phase 2: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

*Archaeologist(s) Present:* Dr Eiméar Nelis; Cormac McSparron; Naomi Carver.

### *Brief Summary:*

Test-trench and monitoring was conducted in advance of structural consolidation of monument; consolidation work will involve excavation of foundations for supporting wall to carry overhanging masonry at south and west of existing wall (Figure One; see SMC). The work was undertaken in two phases, as outlined in License Application (Section 14). It was agreed that, prior to foundation excavation, a test-trench (Phase 1: Trench 1) would be excavated to west of wall, in order to investigate the nature of underlying deposits, and to assist in predicting likely foundation depth required for consolidating wall. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified. Subsequently, excavation of wall foundation (Phase 2: Trench 2) was monitored; similarly, no archaeological features or artefacts were found.

### *Type of monitoring:*

Phase 1: Test trench: excavated by archaeologists by hand, using trowels and hand shovels.

Phase 2: Monitoring: excavated by PHM District Labour Force by hand, using long-tail shovels.

*Size of area opened:* Approx 2m<sup>2</sup>

### *Current Land Use:*

Area in vicinity of monument is grazing farmland.

### *Intended Land Use:*

No change intended

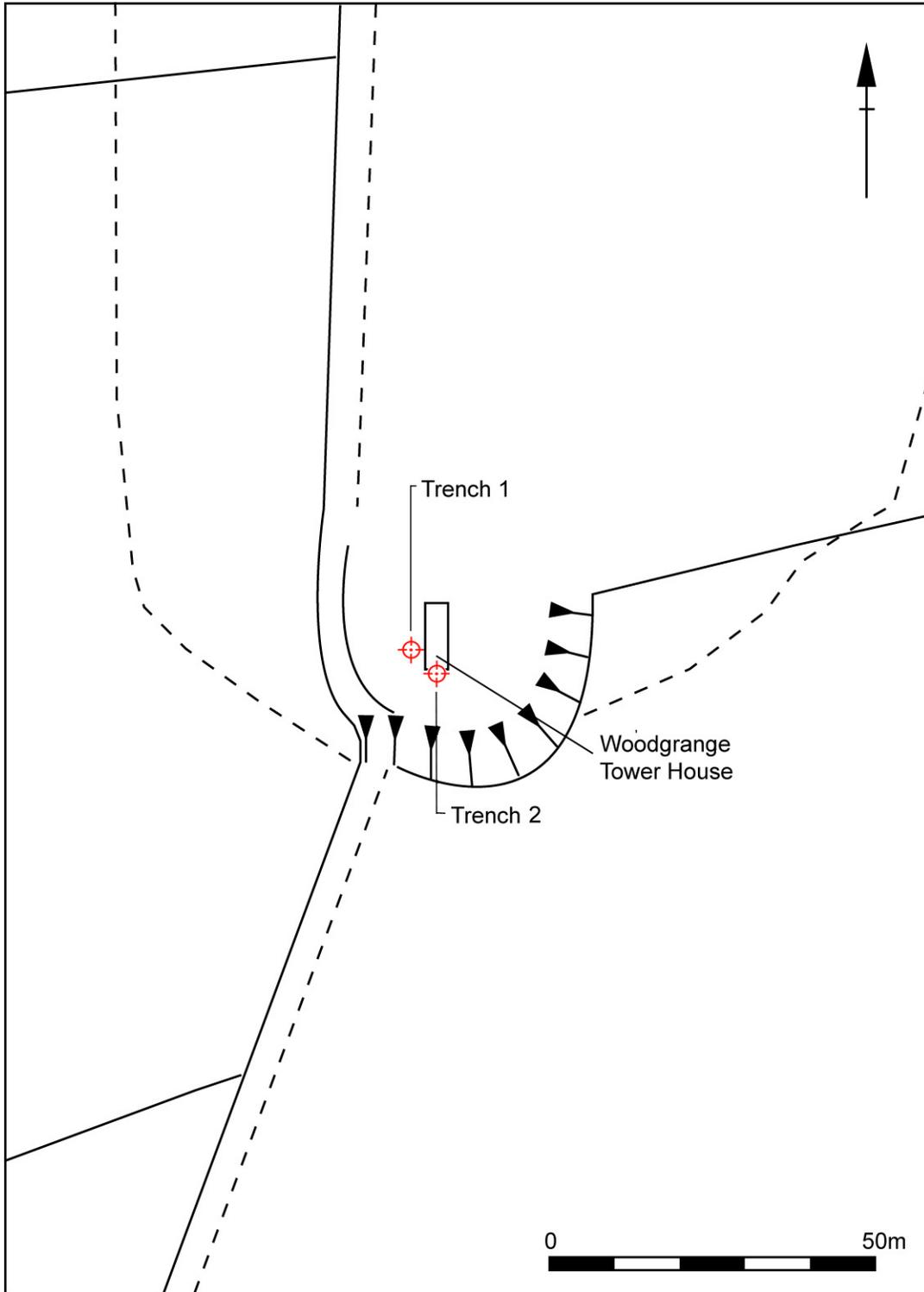


Figure One: Plan showing location of Woodgrange Tower House, Co. Down, and location of Trenches 1 and 2.

**Brief account of the monitoring, including recommendations for further action (if applicable).**

Excavation and monitoring was undertaken in advance of conservation work at Woodgrange tower house during September and October 2004. A single wall now stands of the tower house, which seems to have been constructed over the remains of an earthen enclosure. The standing wall had been secured with scaffolding and props prior to conservation and an area of overhanging masonry at the south-west of the structure had been retained with sandbags.

The focus of archaeological monitoring was the original footprint of the structure beneath the area of overhanging masonry where a supporting wall would be constructed (Trench 2); however, there were significant safety concerns with regard to excavation in this area, given the overhanging nature of the existing masonry. As a consequence of the noted risks, it was agreed that a test-trench (Trench 1) would be excavated to the west of the existing wall and overhang, in order that the nature of underlying soils could be clarified, and therefore the likely foundation depth required for the consolidating wall might be predicted. Investigations, therefore, took place in two phases:

Phase 1: A preliminary test trench measuring <1m (north-south) by 1m (east-west) was opened to the west of the existing wall (Figures One-Three; Plate Two). The excavation of this test trench was intended to clarify the nature of the underlying soils, with a view to predicting the likely foundation depth required for consolidating the structure.

A thin layer of mortar debris (C001: c 3cm) was removed to reveal a thin deposit of topsoil (C002: c 5-8cm), which was then removed to immediately descend onto an extremely compact, natural subsoil (C003). No archaeological features or artefacts were identified. The integrity of underlying deposits to the west of the wall had therefore been ascertained, suggesting that similar stratigraphic remains may be encountered during the excavation of the footprint (Trench 2) for the support wall. The compactness of the subsoil was such that it was considered suitable for foundation, and should similar deposits be found in Trench 2, then little excavation would be required.

Phase 2. Following the excavation of Trench 1, monitoring was undertaken at the site during the excavation of the foundations for the new supporting wall.

Prior to archaeological monitoring, the supporting sand-bags were removed, and the area cleared of mortar debris/rubble (C001) by the PHM District Labour Force (Plate Three). The extent of excavation was dictated by the requirements of the footprint for the new wall, and depended upon the density and strength of underlying deposits. A thin layer of topsoil (C002: c 5-8cm) was removed to reveal an extremely compact, natural subsoil (C003) at a depth of less than 10cm (Plate Four). Given the fortitude of the subsoil deposits, it was agreed that an excavation measuring approximately 1.5m (north-south) by 1.5m (east-west) in which only topsoil was removed, would be

sufficient to provide foundation for the new supporting wall. The excavation was undertaken and completed by staff of the PHM District Labour Force, using long-tail shovels, and monitored by the License holder. Due to the instability of the structure, however, personnel were not permitted to enter Trench 2 in order to undertake a drawn record of the excavation, and it was felt that a photographic record of the excavation of Trench 2 would suffice.

No further work is required in anticipation of consolidation work as outlined in SMC, and agreed on-site.

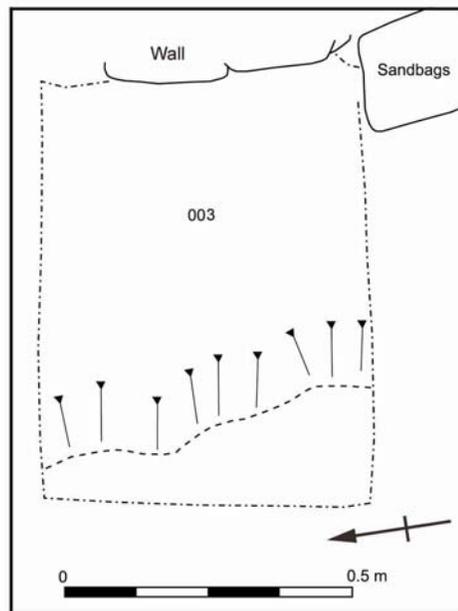


Figure Two: Plan of Trench 1 after excavation, showing westerly slope of natural subsoil (C003). Trench 1 extended westward from the west face of the structure.

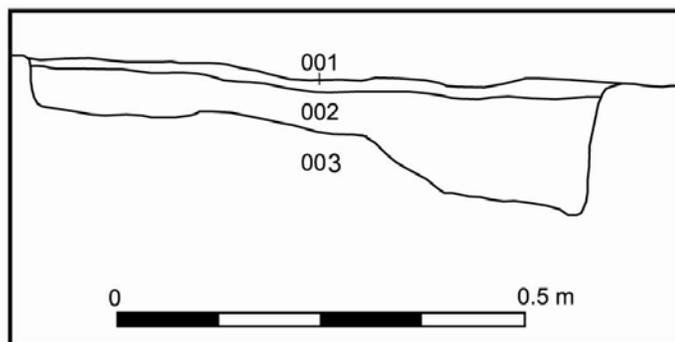


Figure Three: North-facing section, Trench 1, showing shallow deposits of rubble/mortar debris (C001) and topsoil (C002), overlying natural subsoil (C003).



Plate One: Woodgrange Tower House: from south, prior to monitoring.



Plate Two: Phase 1: Trench 1 Post-excavation, showing excavation to subsoil (C003) facing east.



Plate Three: Phase 2: Showing area to be monitored, beneath overhanging masonry.



Plate Four: Phase 2: Trench 2 Post-excitation, showing excavation to subsoil (C003), facing east.

**Archive:**

(List any records from the monitoring e.g. finds, photos and plans and state where they are currently available for inspection.)

*Finds:* None

*Photographs:* See Plates One-Four

*Plans / Drawings:* See Figures One-Three

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_