

Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork
School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology
Queen's University Belfast



Data Structure Report: No.2.

Investigations at Carrickfergus Town Walls, Co. Antrim
AE/02/92

On behalf of



Data Structure Report: Carrickfergus Town Wall, County Antrim

Ruth Logue

(CAF DSR 002)
(Licence No. AE/02/92)
(SMR No. Ant. 052:061)

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1 Summary

- 1.1 During September 2002 an excavation was carried out at the junction of the town walls and the Mid-West Bastion in Carrickfergus (Licence Number AE/02/92) by Ruth Logue of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, based within the School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology at Queen's University Belfast, on behalf of the Environment and Heritage Service, DOE NI.
- 1.2 The investigation of the post-medieval town wall foundation involved the excavation of a small assessment trench, intended to establish its position relative to current ground levels immediately prior to the commencement of a conservation programme. The excavation comprised a single, L-shaped trench situated around the surviving outer corner of the bastion on the inside of the town wall, in a narrow area of ground between the wall and an adjacent footpath. The archaeological deposits at this location had been previously excavated and recorded for Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch (DoENI) in 1992, by Ruairi O'Baoill.
- 1.3 Excavation of a sequence of superficial and modern deposits revealed the surviving extent of the town wall. Excavation was halted when the first construction deposit, contemporary with the post-medieval town wall, was uncovered. The relationship between the wall's foundation and the modern ground surface was successfully established.
- 1.4 It is recommended that further work comprises an account of the excavation in the *Excavations Bulletin* for 2002, and that any relevant finds be included in the specialist reports for the 1992 excavation if necessary.

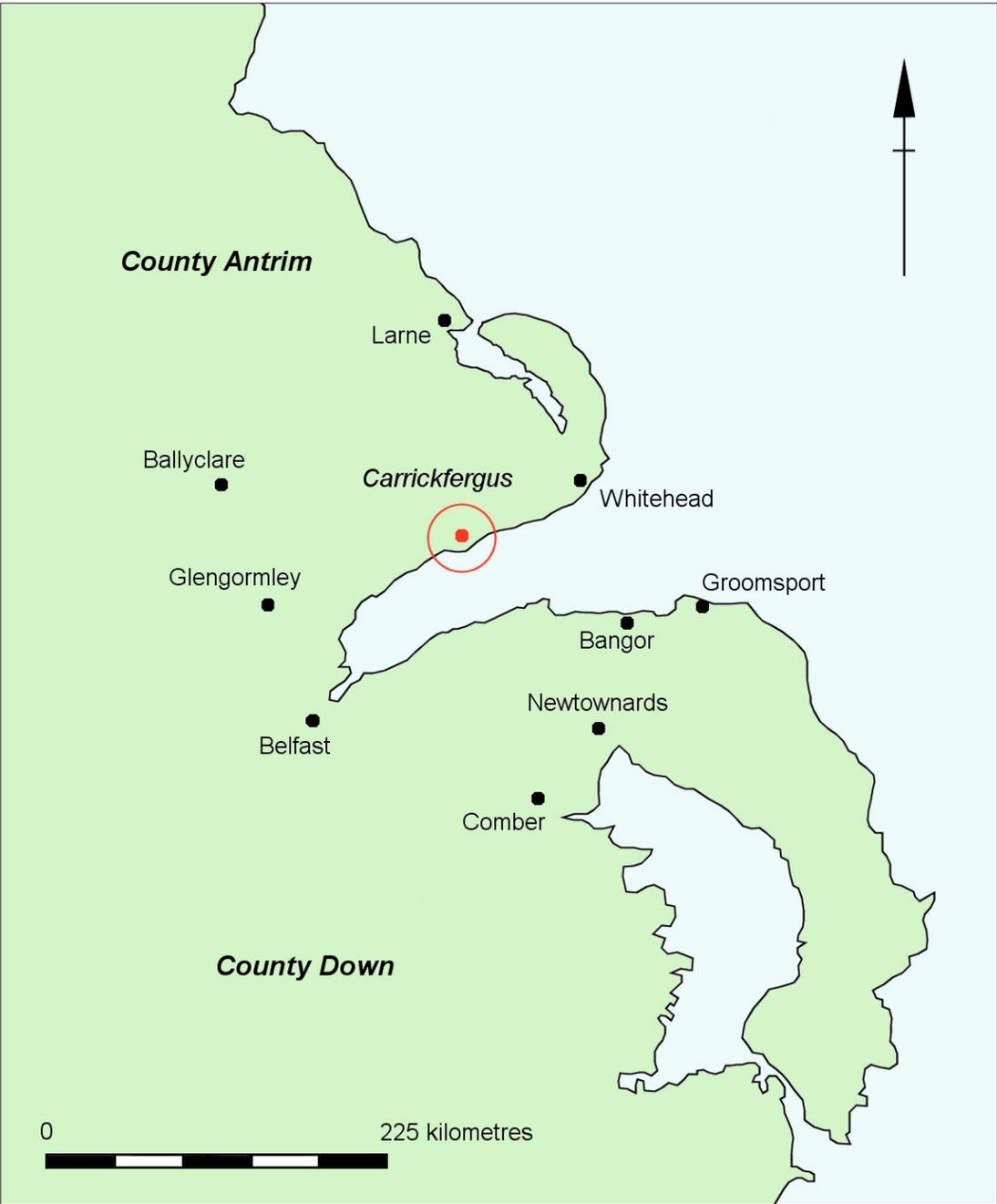


Figure One: Location Map

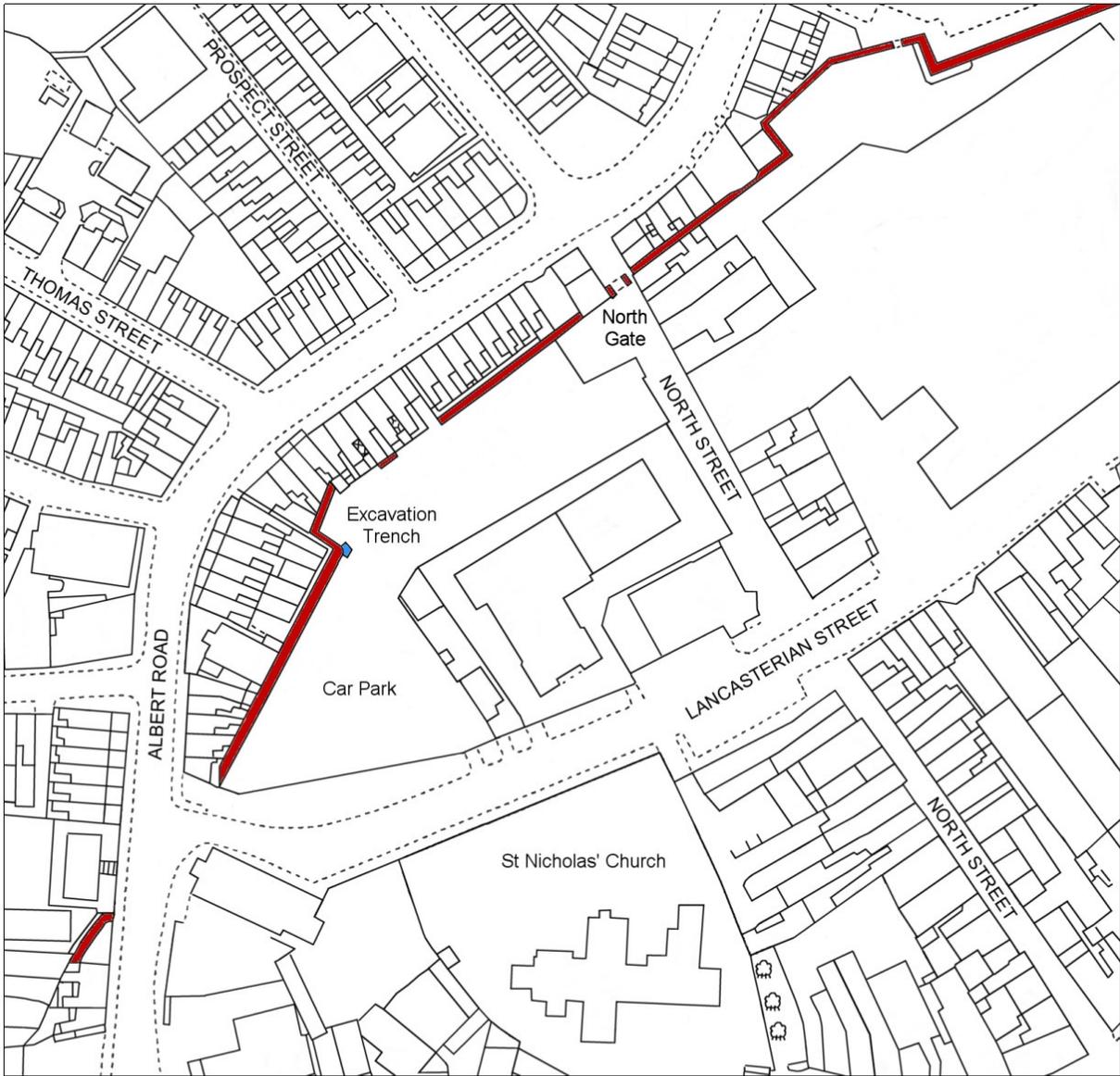
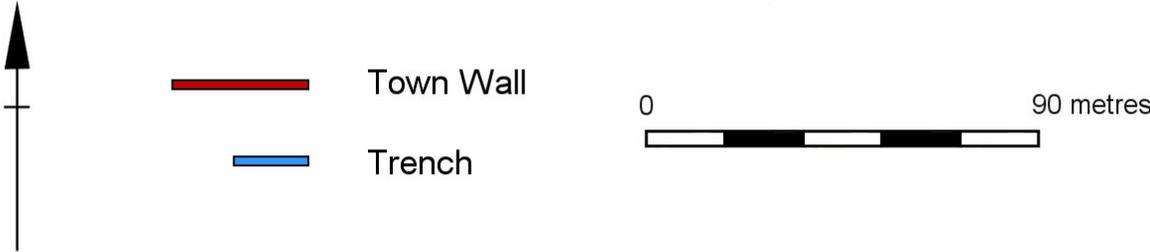


Figure Two: Carrickfergus street map showing location of Excavation Trench



2 Introduction

2.1 General

2.1.1 The following report details the preliminary results of the excavation at Carrickfergus town walls, undertaken by Ruth Logue of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology at Queen's University, Belfast, during the period from 3rd September to 6th September 2002 (Licence No. AE/02/92). This programme of work was undertaken on behalf of the Environment and Heritage Service, DOE NI, who funded the investigations.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 The site is located along Carrickfergus town walls (SMR No. Ant. 052:061) at the outside corner of the Mid-West Bastion near the North Gate, on the inside of the wall in what is now Lancasterian Street Car Park (Grid Reference J4123 8749) (Figures 1 and 2).

2.2.2 The town wall runs south-west of the North Gate for a distance of nearly 87 m to the Mid-West Bastion. This portion of the wall and the Mid-West Bastion have suffered some damage, only two walls of the bastion survive. When the houses in Albert Road were being constructed in 1860-70 part of the wall and two faces of the bastion were demolished. The interior of the bastion became a Victorian garden.

2.2.3 An excavation was carried out at this section of the town wall in 1992 by Ruairi O'Baoill, for Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch, DOE NI, within the yard of what was then No.22 Lancasterian Street. A trench measuring 4.40 m (north-west/south-east) x 2.90 m (north-east/south-west) was opened adjacent to the corner of the Mid-West Bastion. The aim of the 1992 excavation was to examine the construction and function of the town defences. A medieval ditch was discovered, the western edge and part of the base of which lay within the excavated trench. The director thought it possible that the ditch was part of the original town defences shown on the early maps of Carrickfergus, or else part of a medieval mill run (O'Baoill 1995).

2.2.4 The following description was given to this portion of the wall after the 1992 excavation: "It is notable that the early 17th century wall here was constructed with a plinth, whereas a short distance away (the CF21 site) none existed. This plinth projected out a maximum of 0.20 m from the wall face. The town wall survives to a height of 3.26 m (1.86 m above modern ground level). As elsewhere, it is built of mortared basalt stone in clearly definable courses. The wall plinth continues around the junction of the wall and bastion and out beyond the limit of excavation. Whether the plinth then peters out beyond this important

junction or whether the whole of the bastion was constructed on a plinth is unclear. The internal face of the bastion is similar in build to that of the town wall.” (O’Baioill 1995).

2.3 Excavation Objectives

2.3.1 The 2002 excavation was undertaken in order to inform the latter stages of a conservation programme for the town wall at this particular point of its circuit. A research design/method statement was prepared along with the application for a licence to excavate for archaeological purposes and submitted to the EHS in September 2002. The principle objective of the excavation was to establish the level of the foundations of the wall relative to the present ground surface, prior to reconstruction of the corner of the bastion.

2.3.2 It was also intended to record any archaeological features not fully excavated in 1992 encountered above the level of the old ground surface/wall foundations, if any survived, and to record sections detailing the profile and condition of the wall.

2.4 Archiving

2.4.1 A copy of this report will be deposited with the Environment and Heritage Service, DOE NI. All site records and finds will be initially archived within the School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology.

2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

2.5.1 The excavation was directed by Ruth Logue. The excavation team included Keith Adams, Janet Bell and Thom Kerr.

2.5.2 Assistance during the course of the excavation and the preparation of this report was kindly provided by Nick Beer (Queen’s University Belfast), Declan Hurl (Environment and Heritage Service, DOE NI), Philip Macdonald (Queen’s University Belfast), Ruairi O’Baioill (Archaeological Development Services Ltd.) and John O’Neill (Queen’s University Belfast). The illustrations for this report were prepared by Keith Adams and Bronagh Murray (Queen’s University Belfast).

3 Excavation

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Excavation was undertaken by trowelling, mattocking and shovelling. No plans were necessary but section drawings of the east and south-facing sections of the excavation trench were completed. In addition, elevation drawings of the south and east-facing lengths of exposed wall were prepared. Details of the on-site illustrations, stratigraphic sequence and photography, as well as registers of the excavation contexts and finds, are detailed in Appendices 1 to 5.

3.1.2 An L-shaped trench, situated around the surviving outer corner of the bastion on the inside of the town wall, was excavated. It extended east-west for 1.79 m and extended north-south for 2.36 m. Its southern and eastern edges were defined by the concrete rim of an adjacent footpath, whilst its northern and western edges were defined by the town wall itself. The width of the trench extended 0.98 m to the south of the town wall and 1.10 m to the east of the town wall.

3.1.3 No environmental sampling of any of the excavated deposits was undertaken because of their recent date.

3.2 Account of the excavations

3.2.1 It is intended that the Harris Matrix for the site (see Appendix 2) is referred to whilst reading the following account of the stratigraphic sequence of the excavation trench.

3.2.2 The initial three contexts excavated represented material associated with the construction of a recent footpath. The initial deposit was a layer of gravel (100), which varied in depth from 0.04 to 0.11 m and which covered the entire trench. Underlying the gravel (100), was a layer of orangey brown sticky clay (101) which had a maximum depth of 0.22 m and also extended throughout the trench. Its removal revealed a localized deposit of gravel and cement at the western end of the trench (102), with a maximum depth of 0.13 m.

3.2.3 Following the removal of the localized gravel and cement deposit (102), a sequence of four deposits ((103), (104), (105) and (106)) representing the backfill of the 1992 excavations was uncovered. The main deposit of backfill was a layer of dark brown silty clay (103), which varied in depth from 0.08 to 0.87 m and extended throughout the trench. Within this deposit (103) were a couple of small lenses of redeposited sticky orange clay subsoil (106) and a lense of light brown-grey sticky clay (104). The lense of light brown-grey clay was a minimum of 0.22 m wide and extended for a length of 0.44 m before running into the

north-facing section of the trench. Underlying the main deposit of backfill (103) at the northern end of the trench was a localized deposit of backfill consisting of orangey-brown sandy clay with a maximum depth of 0.90 m (105).

- 3.2.4 The removal of the deposits identified as the 1992 excavation backfill, revealed redeposited sticky orange clay subsoil (107) upon which the 17th century town wall had been built. This deposit was not excavated in 2002; however it was identified during the 1992 excavation as being a redeposited layer associated with the construction of the town wall (O'Baoill 1995).

3.3 *Finds*

- 3.3.1 The trench contained mostly modern material, the only finds of interest were two sherds of possible 17th century pottery, recovered from Context No.103, and three flints recovered from Context No.101 (a flake and two possible cores). In total, fifty-nine pieces of flint were found, the majority of it being water-rolled, two of the pieces were burnt. Bricks, mortar, modern pottery, glass and animal bone were also recovered. Modern material, which was recovered but not retained, included: tile, glass marbles, slate, miscellaneous metal, plastic, pieces of ceramic pipe, fuse box, glass.

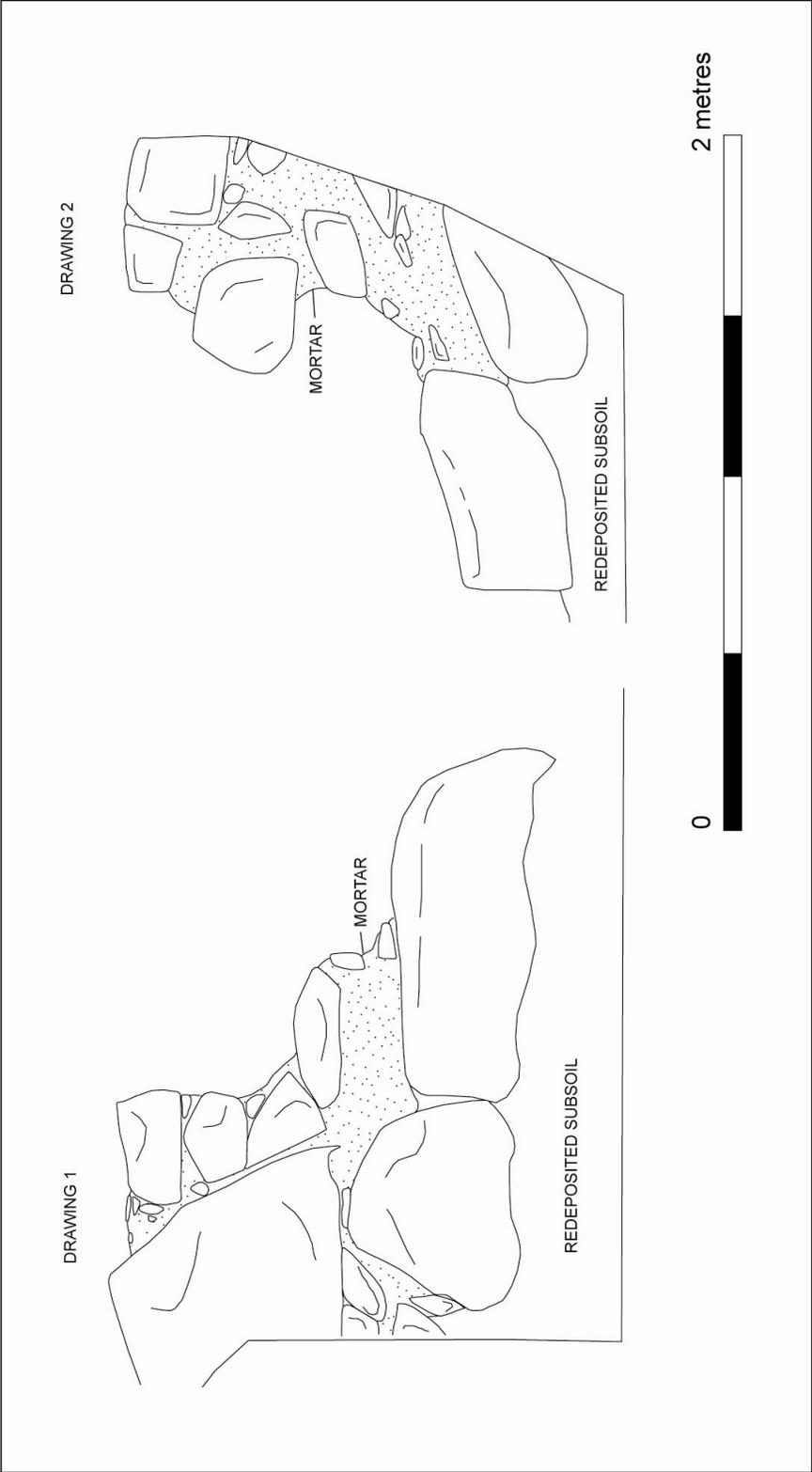


Figure 3: Drawings 1 and 2.

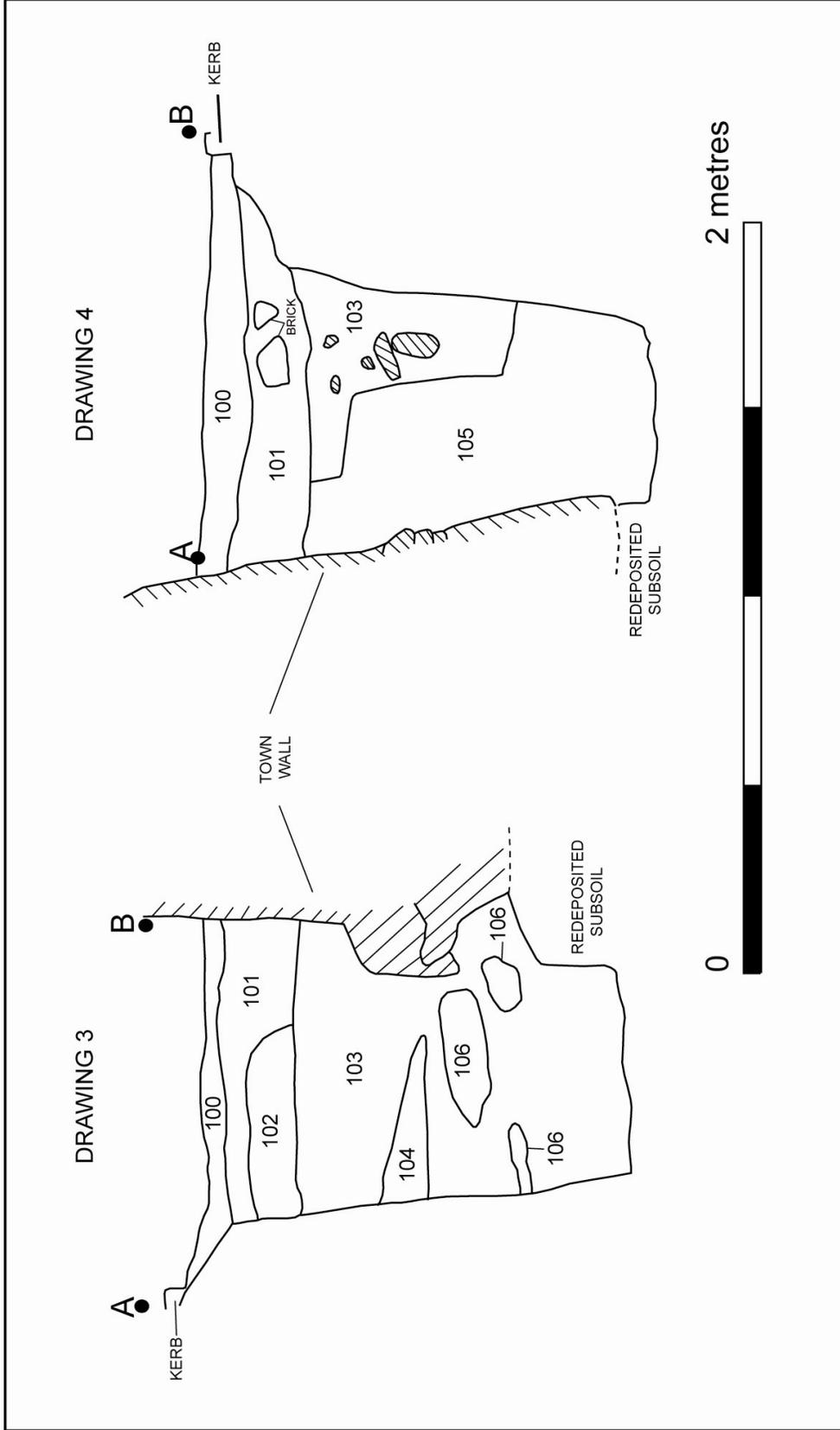


Figure 4: Drawings 3 and 4.

- 4.1 The purpose of the excavation was to inform the conservation strategy for this section of the town walls prior to its restoration. The principle objective of the project, which was to establish the level of the foundations of the wall relative to the modern ground surface, was successfully fulfilled. The specification that any archaeological features encountered above the level of the old ground surface be recorded was nullified by the fact that the trench fills were all modern.
- 4.2 The fills of the trench were removed to a maximum depth of 1.18 m. At this depth redeposited subsoil was reached. No foundation cut for the wall was found and the wall itself appeared to have been built directly onto redeposited subsoil. The redeposited subsoil directly in front of the wall had been partly truncated, presumably during the 1992 excavation. In the east-facing section (Drawing 3) the wall reached a depth of 0.80 m below current ground level and the base of the trench was at 1.08 m depth. In the south-facing section (Drawing 4) the wall reached a depth of 1.09 m below current ground level and the base of the trench was at 1.18 m depth.
- 4.3 The excavation also determined the extent of damage to the corner of the wall below modern ground level. The only corner stone to survive was that of the lowest course. This was a large rectangular stone about a metre long, 0.60 m wide and 0.38 m high. The loss of the other corner stones was presumably due to relatively recent stone robbing.

5 Recommendations For Further Work

5.1 Post-excavation Analysis

5.1.1 The objectives of the excavation were to inform the conservation strategy for Carrickfergus town walls and consequently, as the scale of the intervention was small and the level of disturbance to intact archaeological deposits was minimal, the results of the excavation do not justify publication beyond a short summary account in the *Excavations Bulletin* for 2002.

5.1.2 It is recommended that the artefacts recovered during the 2002 excavation should be passed to those specialists preparing reports on the finds for the 1992 excavation of the site for evaluation. If considered relevant these finds could be included in the specialist reports relating to the 1992 excavation. It is not anticipated that more than the two sherds of pottery of possible 17th century date will warrant inclusion in the 1992 excavation report.

6 Bibliography

McConnell, C. 2002. *Ramparts – The Defences Of Carrickfergus*, Carrickfergus.

O'Baoill, R. 1995 *Excavations at no 22 Lancasterian Street, Carrickfergus, Co Antrim*, (unpublished summary account of excavations).

Appendix 1 - Context List

Context Number/Description

100

A modern gravel layer used to 'landscape' the area between the footpath and the town wall. Covers entire surface of trench, 0.04 to 0.11 m deep.

Finds: mortar, brick, pottery and flint.

101

Layer of orangey-brown clay, sticky and fairly compact, below (100). A modern fill with patches of sand throughout and bricks scattered on top - the sand and bricks are waste from the laying of the adjacent footpath. This layer extends over the entire trench and is 0.22 m deep. Below (100), above (102), (103) and (105).

Finds: mortar, brick, pottery, flint, burnt flint, animal bone, burnt bone and glass.

102

Layer of gravel and cement waste, 0.50 m width of which is visible in section, 0.13 m deep. Below (101), above (103).

Finds: brick, glass, pottery, flint.

103

Layer of very dark brown sticky silty clay, from 0.08 to 0.87 m deep, width and length indeterminable. Above (105), below (101) and (102), contains (104) and (106).

Finds: brick, glass, animal bone and burnt bone, flint and pottery (including the two pieces of possible 17th century date).

104

Lense within (103) of light brown-grey compact and sticky clay. Depth is 0.10 m; length and width are indeterminate (runs east to west in section for 0.22 m, and north to south in section for 0.42 m).

105

Layer of very compact orangey-brown sandy clay, 0.90 m deep. Below (101) and (103).

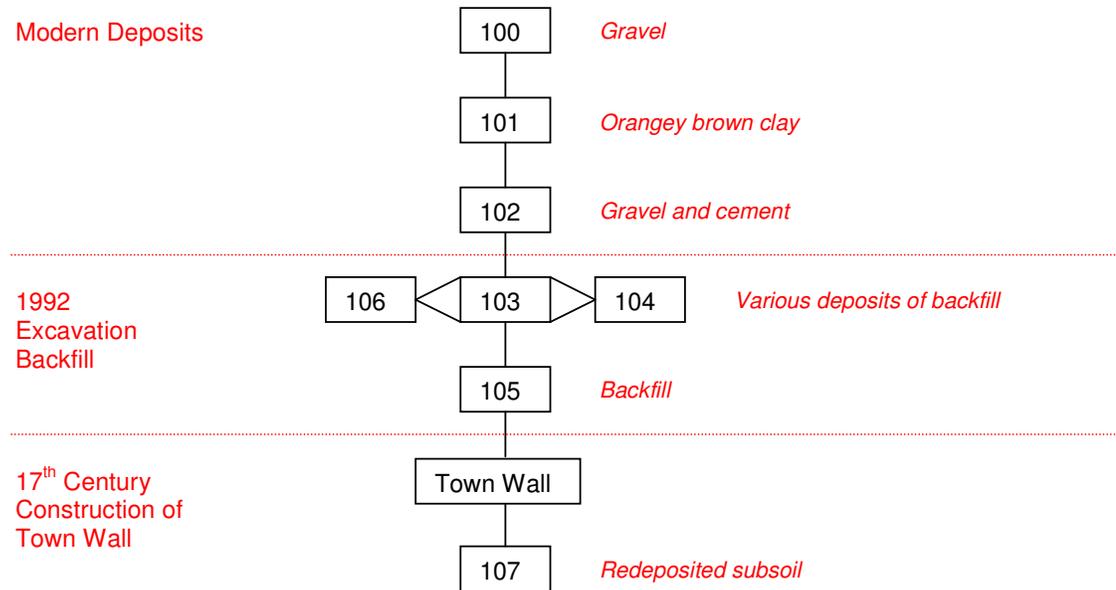
106

Lenses of redeposited subsoil within (103).

107

Redeposited subsoil. Orange clay, very sticky and compact. (Orange keuper marl subsoil). Below (103) and (105).

Appendix 2 – Harris Matrix



Appendix 3 - Photographic Register

Film One: Colour Print

Photo No.	Description
1	General view of corner before excavation
2	Lowest course corner stone following excavation
3	Exposed length of south-facing wall
4	Exposed length of east-facing wall
5	South-facing section following excavation, showing Context Nos.100, 101, 103 and 105.
6	East-facing section following excavation, showing Context Nos.100, 101, 102, 103, 104 and 106
7	South-facing wall and south-facing section following excavation
8	Corner stone of lowest course of wall following excavation

Appendix 4 - Field Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Description	Type	Scale	Date
1	Town wall, south-facing	Elevation	01:10	06.09.02
2	Town wall, east-facing	Elevation	01:10	06.09.02
3	East-facing section of excavation trench showing Context Nos.100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106	Section	01:20	06.09.02
4	South-facing section of excavation trench showing Context Nos.100, 101, 103, 105	Section	01:20	06.09.02

Appendix 5 - Finds Register

Find Bag No	Description	Context No.	Quantity
1000	Mortar	100	2
1001	Brick, Handmade	100	2
1002	Pottery, Modern	100	1
1003	Flint	100	1
1004	Mortar	101	13
1005	Brick	101	2
1006	Pottery, Modern	101	32
1007	Pottery, Black-glazed	101	3
1008	Flint	101	34
1009	Flint, Burnt	101	2
1010	Flint, Cores?	101	2
1011	Flint, Flake	101	1
1012	Bone, Animal	101	7
1013	Bone, Burnt	101	3
1014	Glass	101	51
1015	Brick, Handmade	102	3
1016	Glass	102	13
1017	Pottery, Modern	102	6
1018	Flint	102	1
1019	Brick, Handmade	103	12
1020	Brick, stamped 'BROWN...'	103	1
1021	Glass	103	86
1022	Bone, Burnt	103	1
1023	Bone, Animal	103	6
1024	Flint	103	18
1025	Pottery, Modern	103	70
1026	Pottery, 17th Century?	103	2
1027	Pottery, Black-glazed	103	2



Plate 1: General view of corner before excavation



Plate 2: Lowest course corner stone following excavation



Plate 3: Exposed length of south-facing wall



Plate 4: Exposed length of east-facing wall



Plate 5: South-facing section of excavation trench (Context Nos.100, 101, 103 and 105)



Plate 6: East-facing section of excavation trench (Context Nos.100, 101, 102, 103, 104 and 106)