

The Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork,

School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology,

Queen's University, Belfast



CAF Data Structure Report No. 113

AE/14/200

**Excavations at Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim, carried
out in November 2014**

ANT:052: 059

29th June 2015

On behalf of

Excavations at Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim, carried out in November 2014

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

by

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SMR: ANT:052: 059
Grid Ref: J 41430 87250
Excavation Licence: AE/14/200

29th June 2015

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Excavations at Carrickfergus Castle, Co. Antrim, carried out in November 2014

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1. Summary

Introduction

As part of Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage (NIEA) plans erect a temporary building in the Outer Ward of Carrickfergus Castle, three trenches were manually excavated at the monument between 17th and 25th November 2014 (NISMR ANT 052: 059; Licence No. AE/14/200; Grid ref J 41430 87250; Figs 1-3). The archaeological investigations were commissioned to inform NIEA about suitable ground levels for the erection of the temporary building and excavation within the trenches ceased at various levels, as determined by NIEA, before subsoil or bedrock was reached in any of them. The excavation was carried out on behalf of the NIEA by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast under the direction of Ruairí Ó Baoill.

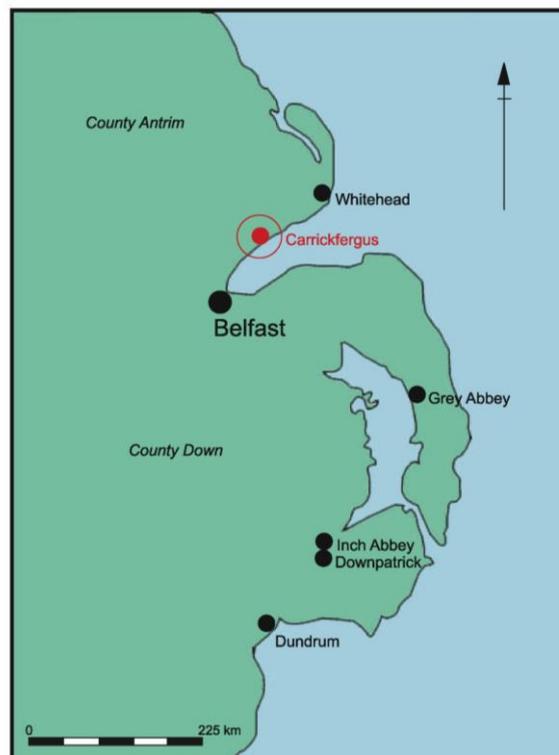


Fig 1. Location map.

As the November 2014 excavation was part of the same NIEA project that generated CAF excavations, comprising 12 trenches, at the castle in spring 2014 (Ó Baoill 2014) the November 2014 trenches were numbered sequentially Trenches 10-12. In the publication arising from the

Carrickfergus Castle excavations carried out by the CAF in 2014, all 15 trenches will be considered part of the same archaeological project.

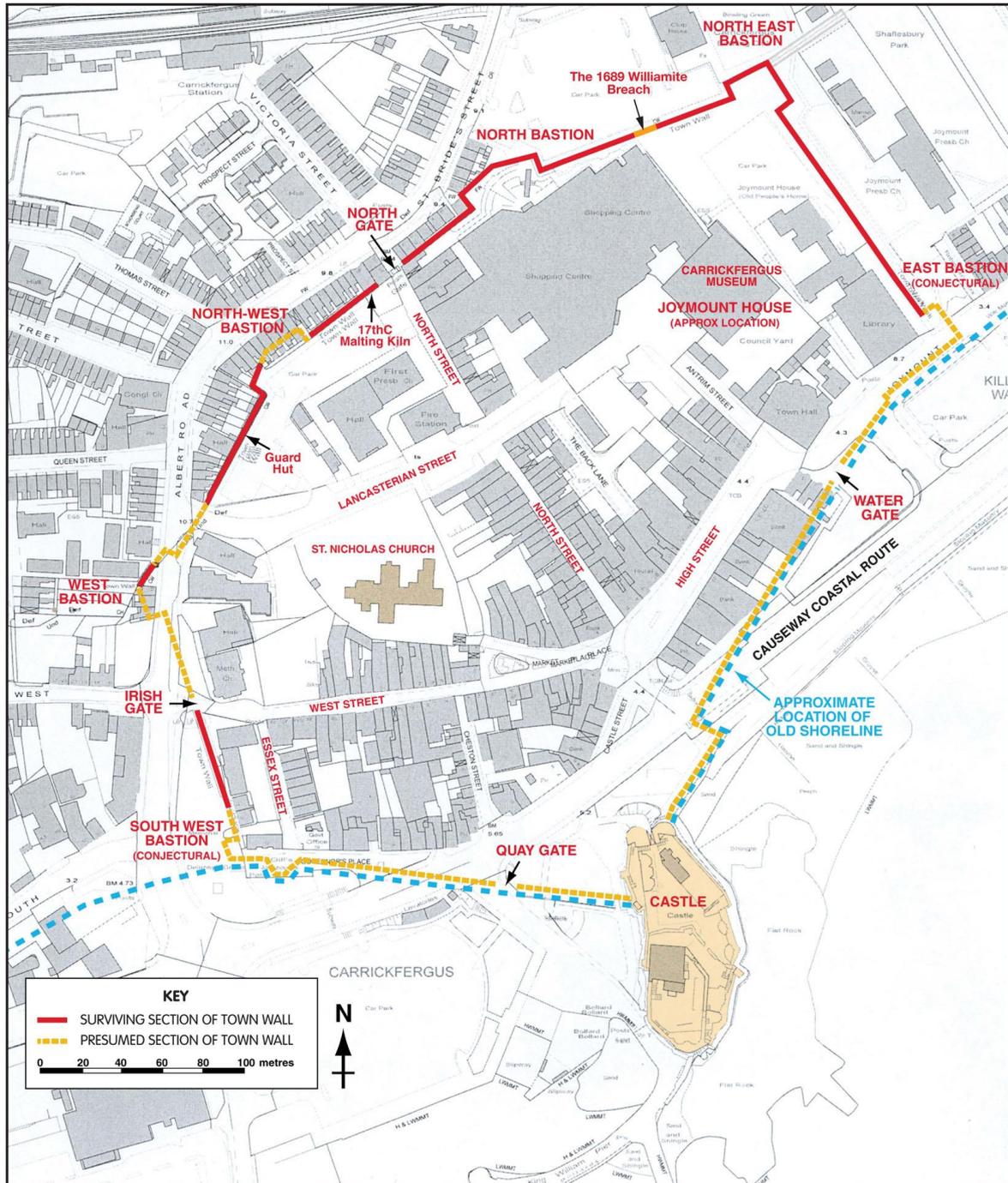


Fig. 2. Plan of Carrickfergus showing the Castle and principal monuments in the town.

2. Introduction and background

2.1 General

This data structure report (DSR) details the results of an archaeological excavation undertaken at Carrickfergus Castle (ANT 052:059; grid ref J 41430 87250; State Care Monument) in November 2014 by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork on behalf of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The excavation was carried out in the Outer Ward of the Castle. The work was carried out over an eight day period from 17th-25th November 2014 and was directed by Ruairí Ó Baoill (Licence No. AE/14/200).

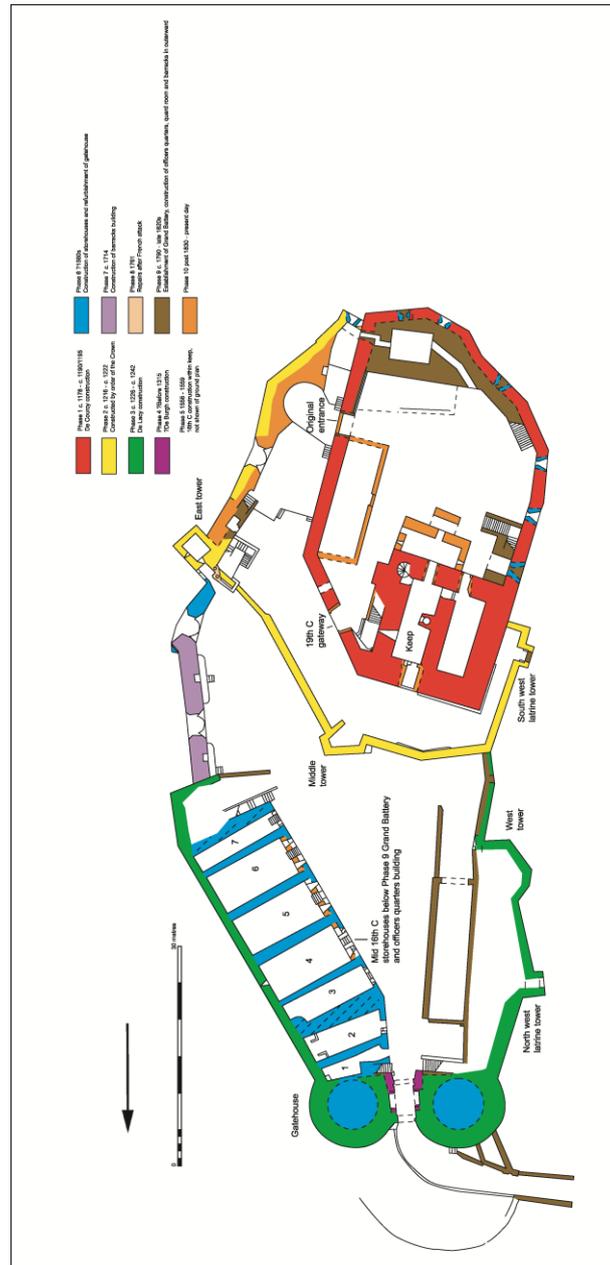


Fig 3. Carrickfergus Castle showing the main phases of the development of the Castle (from Ó Baoill 2008).

2.2 Historical Background

Carrickfergus Castle is the best-preserved Anglo-Norman castle in Ulster. It has a long history and has been continuously occupied since it was constructed in the late-1170s by John de Courcy. The fortification occupies a sea-girt dolerite promontory on the north shore of Belfast Lough, and continued in occupation as a military garrison through to 1928 when it was handed over to the new Northern Ireland government and became a State Care monument.

The promontory on which the castle was constructed contains a natural well of fresh water. The combination of a good defensive site that could be supplied from both land and sea, the natural harbour for ships that lay beside the promontory and the source of fresh water available on the rock made the site very attractive to the Anglo-Normans.

2.2.1 Castle history: a brief overview (Fig 3)

Much has already been written about the architecture of the castle and it is not the purpose of this report to give a detailed account of this aspect of the fortification (McNeill 1981; Ó Baoill 2008).

In summary, the castle was constructed in three main phases (Figure 1; McNeill 1981; Ó Baoill 2008, 16-27). The first involved the construction of the Keep and Inner Ward at the southern end of the promontory. This fortification was surrounded by a deep extra-mural rock-cut ditch or moat dug into the rock on the northern side. This meant that when the drawbridge was pulled up, the castle was surrounded by water on all sides. The Keep (or great tower) was the strongest and safest place within the castle, and is located in the north-western corner of the Inner Ward. Still the most prominent part of the castle it has four floors, is almost 30 metres high and has walls between three and four metres thick. An archaeological excavation carried out in 1993 revealed that construction commenced between 1177 and 1181 when the new Anglo-Norman settlement at Carrickfergus was under constant threat from the Irish living in the surrounding areas. (Donnelly *et al* 2005). The main role of the Keep was not only defensive, but also allowed the lord and his family a comfortable home within the castle. The height of the Keep meant that it could also be used as a watchtower by the garrison to look out for enemies who might approach Carrickfergus either by land or sea.

The Inner Ward (an open courtyard or area of a castle enclosed by walls) was, along with the Keep, the first part of the castle to be built by John de Courcy. It consists of a high curtain wall enclosing the Keep and a small bailey. The Keep is built against and over the north-west angle of the curtain wall. Within the courtyard and opposite the eastern wall of the Keep are the masonry remains of a rectangular building, usually interpreted as the surviving evidence of a two-storey Medieval Great Hall, where John de Courcy and his wife Affreca could have entertained visiting guests. This interpretation is based on the position of two arched Medieval sandstone windows with window seats in the eastern curtain wall of the Inner ward. A store house was later built in this part of the Inner Ward and this building is illustrated on an 1811 map of the castle.

The area between the Keep and the defensive walls of the Inner Ward would have enclosed several other buildings needed for the functioning of the castle. These buildings were probably constructed of wood and stone, and may have included kitchens, a small chapel, a blacksmiths and stables for the horses of the lord and his knights.

In the first quarter of the 13th century the castle was enlarged when the Middle Ward was constructed. New additions included three new mural towers (the Sea Tower-also known as the north-east angle tower-, the south-west latrine tower and the south-east latrine) three of which still survive above ground. It was still defended by the extra-mural rock-cut ditch.

In the second quarter of the 13th century the new resident lord, Hugh de Lacy, further enlarged the castle by filling in the extra-mural ditch, constructing the Outer Ward, including two projecting mural towers on the western side, and a large Gatehouse, consisting of two cylindrical towers linked by masonry above the gate. When these new building works were finished the castle completely occupied the promontory.

During the 16th and 17th centuries the castle underwent various improvements such as the Gatehouse towers being lowered to facilitate the mounting of ordnance. The Middle Ward walls were lowered in the 18th century to provide more room within the castle. Later the castle was used as a prison at the time of the 1798 Rebellion and was heavily defended during the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century.

The castle ceased to be used as an infantry barracks in the 1830s but became the base for the Antrim Artillery in 1855 and more building took place within the castle then (McSkimin 1909, 226; McNeill 1981, 50). A military munitions railway was constructed in 1889 leading from the pier beside the castle into the castle. According to McSkimin (McSkimin 1909, 226-227) 'it was entered by a tunnel five feet in diameter at the south-west corner of the Inner Ward, and ended at a crane in the middle of the Inner ward, which hoisted munitions and other materials up to the ground level. From here the tramway led through the present entrance to the storehouses on the east side of the Outer Ward, and perhaps along the north wall of the Keep to the hoist'. It is uncertain exactly how long this railway was in use. McNeill noted that 'the last section of its tracks was covered in July 1978' (McNeill 1981, 51). Substantial evidence of this railway was uncovered during the 2014 excavation. The castle remained in use as a magazine and armoury in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1928 it was handed over to the Ministry of Finance of the new Northern Ireland government and became a State Care monument.

2.2.2 Cartographic evidence (Plates 1-8)

Carrickfergus was the earliest mapped town in Ulster, reflecting its importance as a garrison, settlement and port. The castle is portrayed on all these maps but the level of detail about the minor buildings within the castle varies from map to map and it is difficult to know how accurate this

information is. However, with these reservations in mind, they are still probably are a good indicator of some of the buildings, at least from the 16th century onwards, that were in the castle. For evidence of the earlier minor buildings that once stood within the castle walls only excavation will bring these to light.

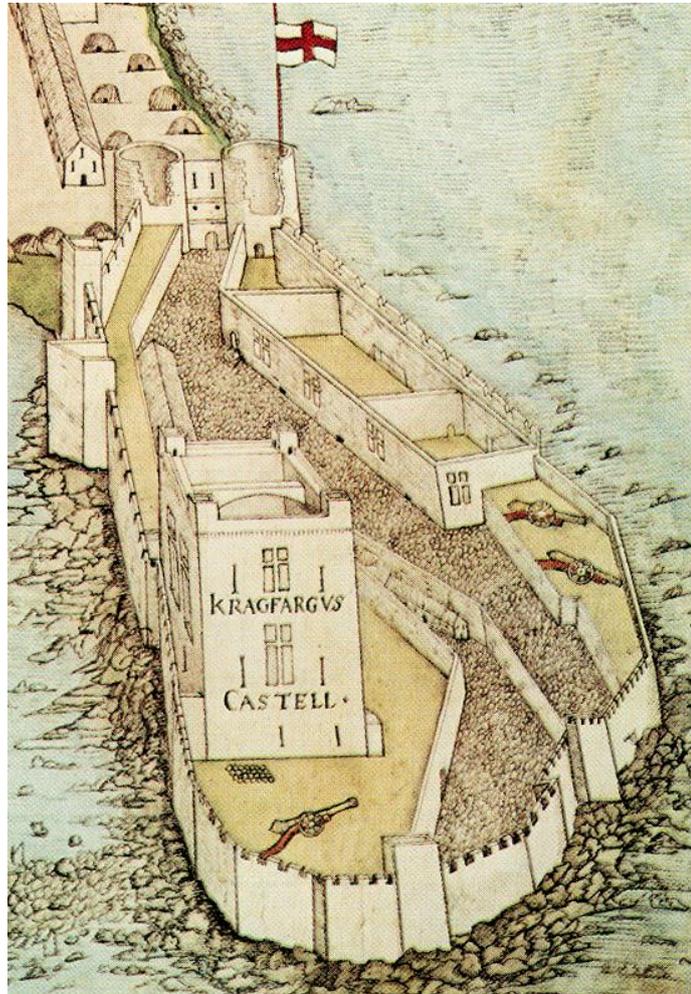


Plate 1. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from the *circa* 1560 map of Carrickfergus (BL Cotton Augustus I ii 42).

The earliest map of Carrickfergus from *circa* 1560 (Plate 1), compiled nearly 400 years after the castle was constructed, shows no buildings in the Inner Ward other than the Keep/ Great Tower and a long narrow building in the Outer Ward close to where Trenches 5-8 were located.

Robert Lythe's map of Carrickfergus from a decade later (1567; Plate 2) shows a building in the south-western corner of the Inner Ward and a building along the western wall of the Outer Ward, again close to where Trenches 5-8 were located.

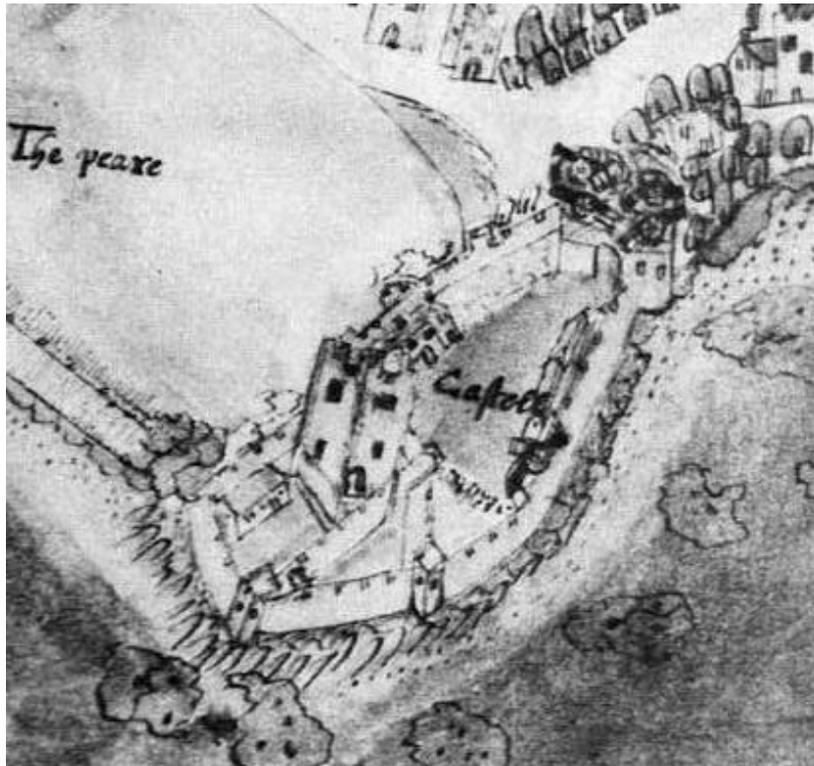


Plate 2. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from the 1567 Robert Lythe map of Carrickfergus (Trinity College, Dublin, MS 1209 (26)).

The third 16th-century map of Carrickfergus, drawn *circa* 1596 (Plate 3), during the period of the Nine Years' War, appears to show a stone building adjacent to the stairs leading up to the Keep/ Great Tower in the Inner Ward. Once again, a long narrow building is illustrated in the Outer Ward hard against the western curtain wall.

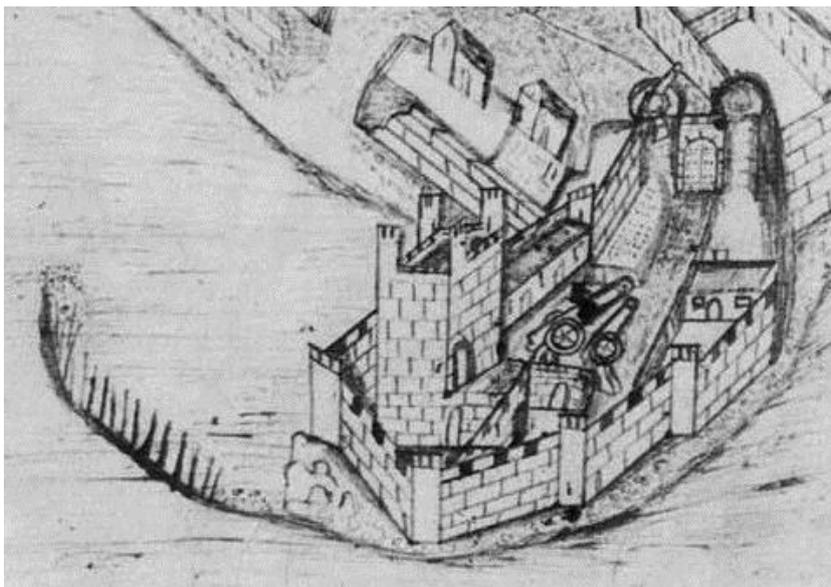


Plate 3. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from the *circa* 1596 map of Carrickfergus (Public Record Office, London, MPF 98 (ex SP 64/1/31)).

Thomas Phillips' 1685 map of Carrickfergus (Plate 4) shows walls emanating at right angles from the eastern curtain wall of the Inner Ward roughly where the later store House was sited but it is unclear if these represent a building. A series of buildings are shown along the western side of the Outer Ward.

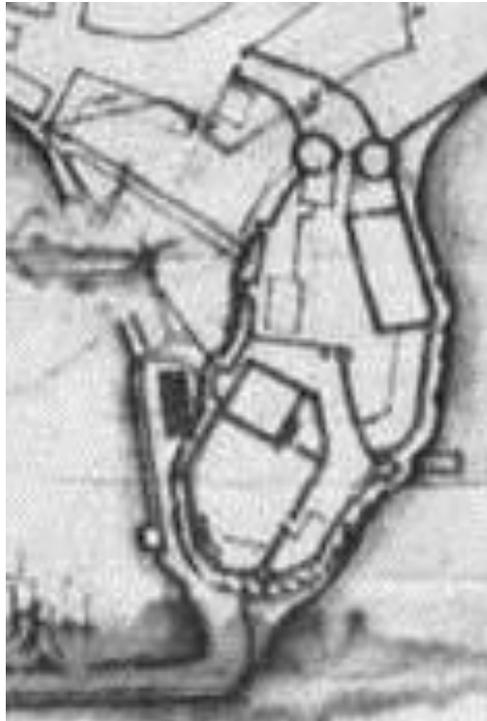


Plate 4. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from Thomas Phillips' 1685 map of Carrickfergus (National Library of Ireland, MS 3137 (42)).

The map of Carrickfergus drawn up in May 1760 (Plate 5), just months after the French troops of Commodore François Thurot had stormed and occupied the town, portrays buildings along the eastern curtain wall and in the south of the Inner Ward. A long building is illustrated along the western side of the Outer Ward, stretching from the wall of the middle ward up to close to the gate tower of the castle.

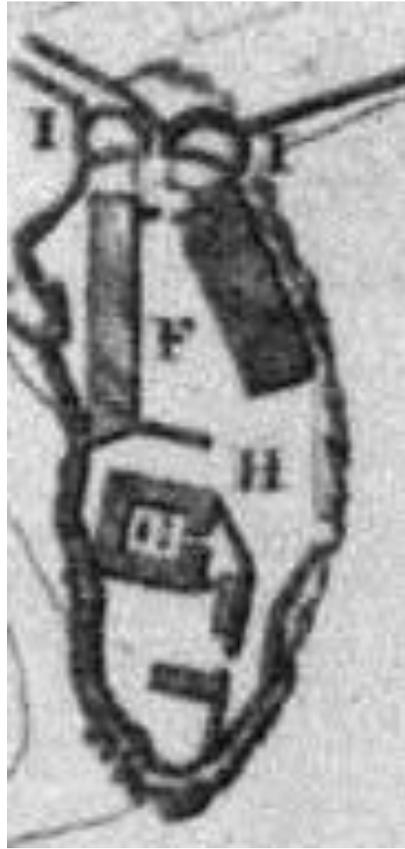


Plate 5. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from *Plan of Carrickfergus*, 1760 (British Magazine, May 1760).

The most detailed early drawing of the castle is the plan from 1811 (Plate 6). In the Inner Ward, the building sitting along the eastern curtain wall and around which most of the excavated trenches in 2014 were sited is clearly marked as a *Store House*. The building is shown as having two doors in the middle of its west wall and a larger entrance in the southern gable. Elsewhere, the old Medieval entrance into the Inner Ward through the eastern curtain wall is still visible as are another *Store House* and an *Engine House*. In the Outer Ward, among a number of buildings named, an *Artillery Barracks* is illustrated immediately north of where Trenches 5-8 were excavated but no building is shown stretching back as far as that location.

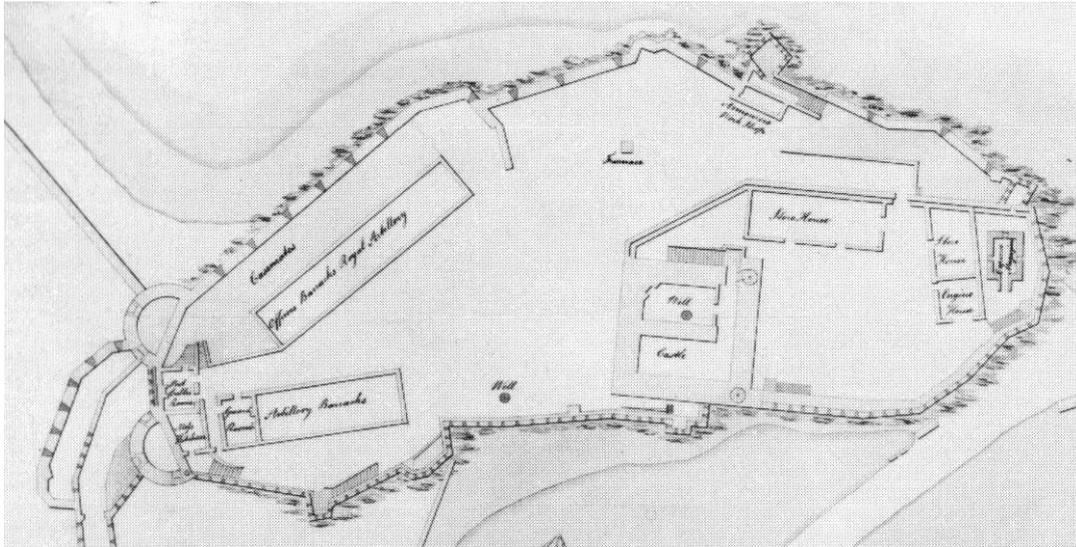


Plate 6. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from 1811 plan (PRO wo 78/1158).

The same buildings are marked on the 1821 map of Carrickfergus compiled by James o' Kane and the Ordnance Survey map of the town from *circa* 1840 (Plates 7 and 8).

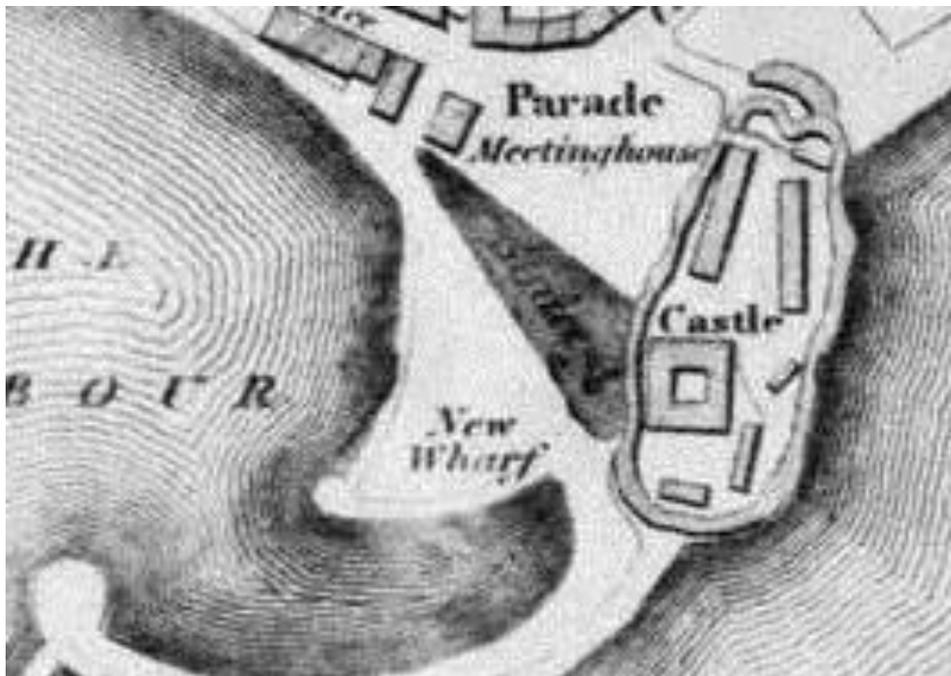


Plate 7. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from *Carrickfergus, 1821* by James O' Kane (copy in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D. 1954/6/13).

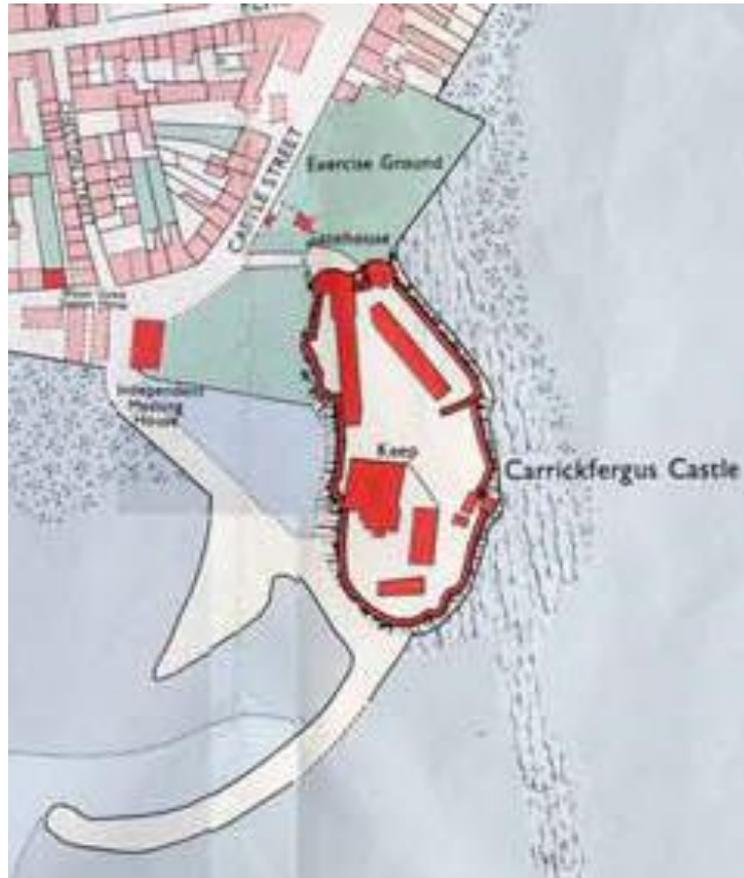


Plate 8. Detail of Carrickfergus Castle from Ordnance Survey map of Carrickfergus, circa 1840.

2.3 Previous archaeological investigations in the Middle and Outer Wards

In the last fifty years there have been a number of archaeological excavations and evaluations undertaken in the Middle and Outer Wards of Carrickfergus Castle.

2.3.1 Archaeological investigations in the Middle Ward

In 1955 and 1962 a series of trenches were excavated across the line of the curtain wall of the Middle Ward, lowered in the 18th century. Although these investigations remain unpublished, a summary of the results have been provided by McNeill along with a location plan of the trenches (McNeill 1981, 39-40 and 61-84). The excavations uncovered the full line of the curtain wall, including the Middle Tower, exposed the inner face of the then blocked-up Postern Gate and investigated a portion of the extra-mural rock-cut Medieval defensive ditch. No Ordnance Datum information is provided for any of the 1955 or 1962 trenches in McNeill's summary. A section across only one of the 1955 trenches in the area of the 2014 excavation is reproduced in McNeill (McNeill 1981, 63, McNeill Fig 20). Bedrock on the outer northern/ Outer Ward side of this trench is illustrated at a depth of approximately 3m below the 1955 ground level. The strata illustrated in section appear to represent the later infilling of the Medieval rock-cut, extra-mural, defensive ditch. No information is provided in McNeill on the backfilling of the 1955 trenches after excavation was completed. Presumably it was the material

removed during the excavation and piled close by. It is uncertain how the modern ground level in 1955 differs from modern ground level today in this area of the castle.

2.3.2 Archaeological investigations in the Outer Ward

In 2010 the first ever archaeological excavation in the Outer Ward was undertaken on the Grand Battery, the upper storey of a range of buildings that run along the eastern curtain of the Outer Ward (Murray 2010 and 2011). At least ten phases of activity were recorded 'spanning the 1560s, or earlier, through to the 20th century' (Murray 2010, 23).

2.3.3 The Spring 2014 excavation

Between February and April 2014 archaeological investigations were carried out within Carrickfergus Castle by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast under the direction of the writer (Ó Baoill 2014). The work was carried out on behalf of the NIEA. During the 2014 excavation a total of twelve trenches (Nos. 1, 2, 2B, 2 Northern Extension, 3, 3B, 4-9) were investigated. Eight of these trenches were located within the Inner Ward and four in the Outer Ward.

During the spring 2014 excavation four of the trenches (Trenches Nos. 5-8) were excavated at right angles to the inner face of the western curtain wall of the Outer Ward, immediately south of the castle Visitor Centre. Trenches 6-8 uncovered the remains of a long building, of probable 19th century date, aligned north-south. The building had redbrick founds along both of its long walls and a stone gable end at its southern end. Evidence of a central wooden internal partition was visible in Trench 7. The floor of the building was constructed of mortar mixed with red brick fragments. In Trenches 6 and 7, excavation stopped at the level of the 19th century mortar floor of the building.

In Trench 7, the most northerly of the excavated trenches, shelved bedrock was observed centimetres below modern ground level and the cement floor had been inserted between the stones. The level of bedrock dived considerably from this point southwards and was not encountered in the most southerly trench (Trench 5) when excavation ceased here at a depth of 1.20m below modern ground level.

In Trenches 5 and 8 a heavily mortared stone wall, possibly dating to the 17th century, was uncovered sitting on a cobbled surface of cobbles. Excavation stopped at this level and it is uncertain what function the wall played.

Post-Medieval pottery from the excavation included fragments of North-Devon gravel tempered and gravel free ware, Sgraffito ware, German Stoneware, Saintonge Polychrome, Bristol- Staffordshire tankards, Tin glazed earthenwares and Brown and Black glazed earthenwares. Fragments of North Devon gravel tempered roof tile and North Devon gravel free tiles were also recovered.

Unsurprisingly for a castle that was continuously occupied for hundreds of years many of the small finds reflected this. These included a thimble, buttons, slate gaming pieces and clay tobacco pipes.

2.3.5 Archaeological investigations in the area of the Gatehouse

Excavations at the entrance to Carrickfergus Castle in 1950 uncovered the drawbridge pit protecting access to the Gatehouse (Waterman 1952) and which h was dated to the late-13th or early 14th centuries. Another investigation close by in 2008, monitoring the replacement of service pipes north of the Gatehouse, uncovered only a modern wall (McSparron 2008).

3. The November 2014 Excavation

3.1 *The Circumstances of the Excavation*

Between 17th and 26th November 2014, archaeological excavations were carried out within Carrickfergus Castle by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast under the direction of the writer. The excavation was carried out on behalf of the NIEA. Three trenches (Trenches 10-12; Plates 9-10) were manually excavated along the external face of the Middle Ward curtain wall. The archaeological investigations were commissioned to inform NIEA about suitable ground levels for the erection of the temporary building and excavation within the trenches ceased at various levels, as determined by NIEA, before subsoil or bedrock was reached in any of them.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1 General

All of the three trenches were excavated manually. Investigation within all trenches ceased, as directed by the NIEA, once sufficient information about the stratigraphy underlying the location of the proposed new temporary building had been recorded.

3.2.2. Recording methodology

The context records for the excavation were created using the standard context recording method: all built features and deposits were assigned a unique context number and a pro-forma (Context sheet) was completed for each. All features were photographed both prior to, and following, excavation and a series of plans and section drawings were completed throughout the excavation at scales of 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate. A field notebook was also maintained.

The Harris Matrix is presented in Appendix 1 and The Context Register is detailed in Appendix 2. The Drawing Register is presented in Appendix 3 and the Photographic Register is contained in Appendix 4. The Small Finds Register is Appendix 5.

3.2.3 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the NIEA. All site records and finds are temporarily archived within the School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University, Belfast.

3.3 Acknowledgements

The writer would like to thank the following people.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA): Built Heritage who commissioned and paid for the excavation and also the post-excavation analysis.

In The Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast: Dermot Redmond and Stuart Alexander, who were the other two archaeologists who worked on the excavation.

Also in CAF: Dr Colm Donnelly. The Appendices for this report were compiled by Stuart Alexander and Dermot Redmond. Naomi Carver, Ruth Logue and Dr Siobhán McDermott compiled the drawings and plans.

NIEA: Built Heritage: Paul Logue, Edith Logue and Tony Corey.

Carrickfergus Castle: Janis Smith and Nyree Mayne.



Fig 4. Plan of Carrickfergus Castle showing location (right to left) of Trenches 10-12.

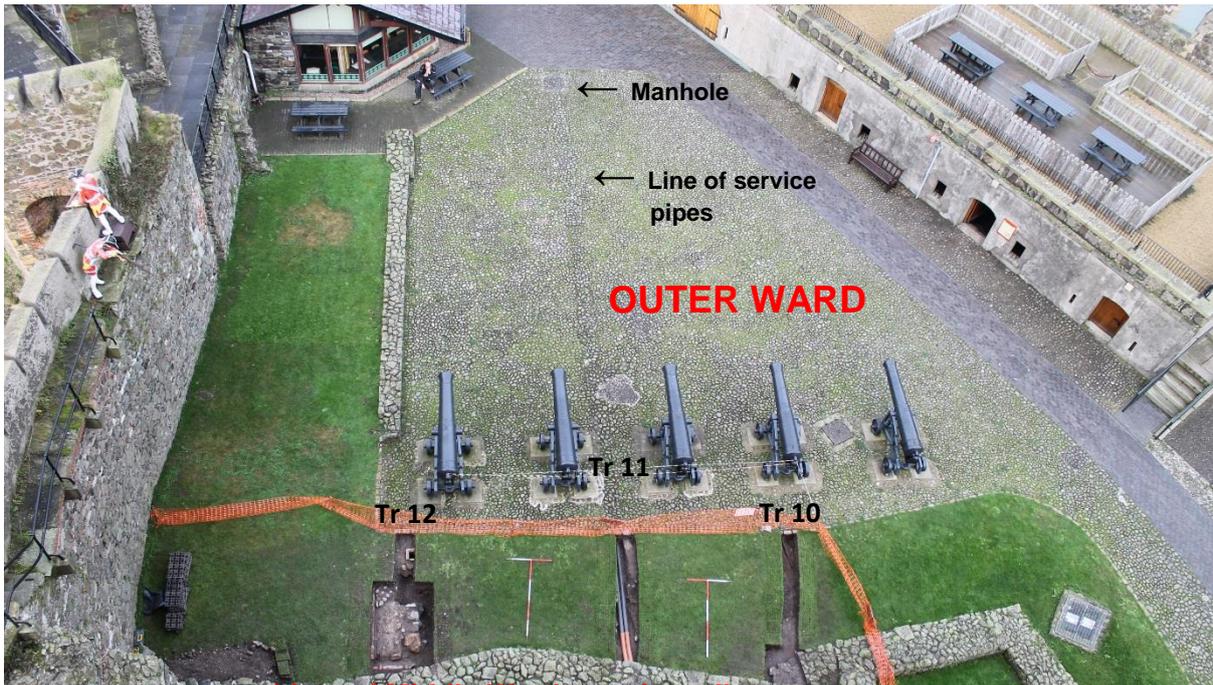


Plate 9. Overhead shot of Trenches 10-12 during excavation. Taken from the roof of the Keep and looking north.

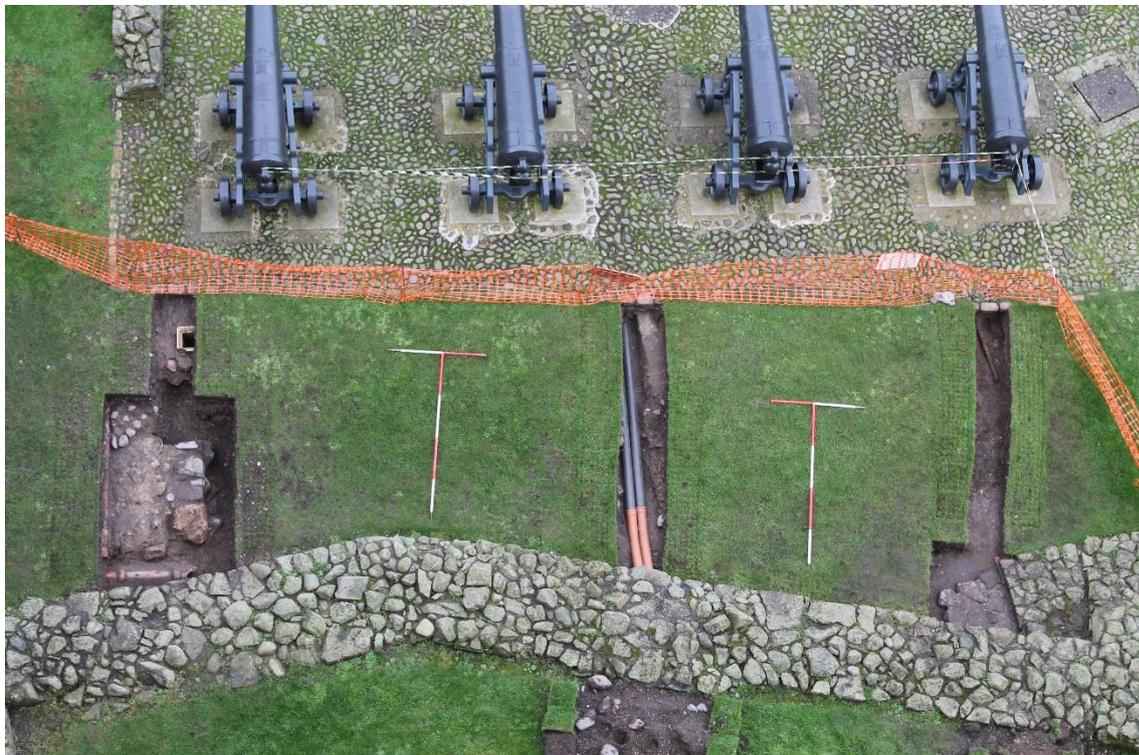


Plate 10. Detail overhead shot of (right to left) Trenches 10-12 during excavation, taken from the roof of the Keep. Looking north.

3.4 Account of the November 2014 Excavation

3.4.1 Introduction

Following the excavation of twelve trenches in spring 2014, in November 2014 three further trenches (Trenches 10-12) were manually excavated by the CAF along the outside face of the Middle Ward curtain wall, across the grassed area in front (north) of it and up to the edge of the modern cobbles that comprise the main surface of the Outer Ward. The ground immediately outside the Middle Ward curtain wall is fairly level but slopes up to the southern edge of the Outer Ward cobbled surface. The three trenches were spaced across the section in front of the Middle Ward curtain wall east of the Middle Tower. All of the trenches were initially 0.50m wide by approximately 4m long, but two of these (Trenches 10 and 12) were slightly expanded in size during the excavation, as directed by NIEA. Excavation within the various trenches ceased at levels determined by NIEA when appropriate information about the strata had been covered.

3.4.2 Trench 10 (Figs 5-10; Plate 11)

Introduction

Trench 10 was the most easterly of the three excavated trenches and was located close to the junction of the Middle Tower and Middle Ward curtain wall. The trench was 4.10m long, north-south by 0.50m wide, east-west. Close to the external face of the curtain wall the trench was later extended to a 1m in width, to more fully investigate aspects of the masonry there. A maximum of 0.36m depth of stratigraphy was investigated within the trench before excavation here ceased. Most of the stratigraphy in the middle and north of the trench appears to represent dumped deposits, some of which possibly represent the backfilling of some of the 1955 excavation trenches and subsequent landscaping.

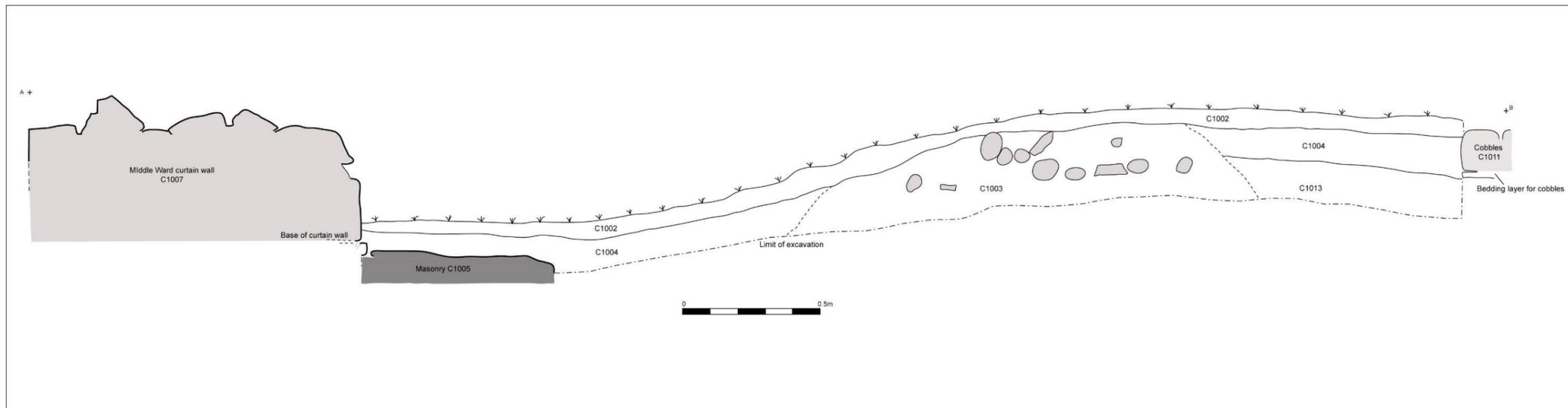


Fig 5. Trench 10. East-facing section of trench before the south-west corner of the trench was extended.

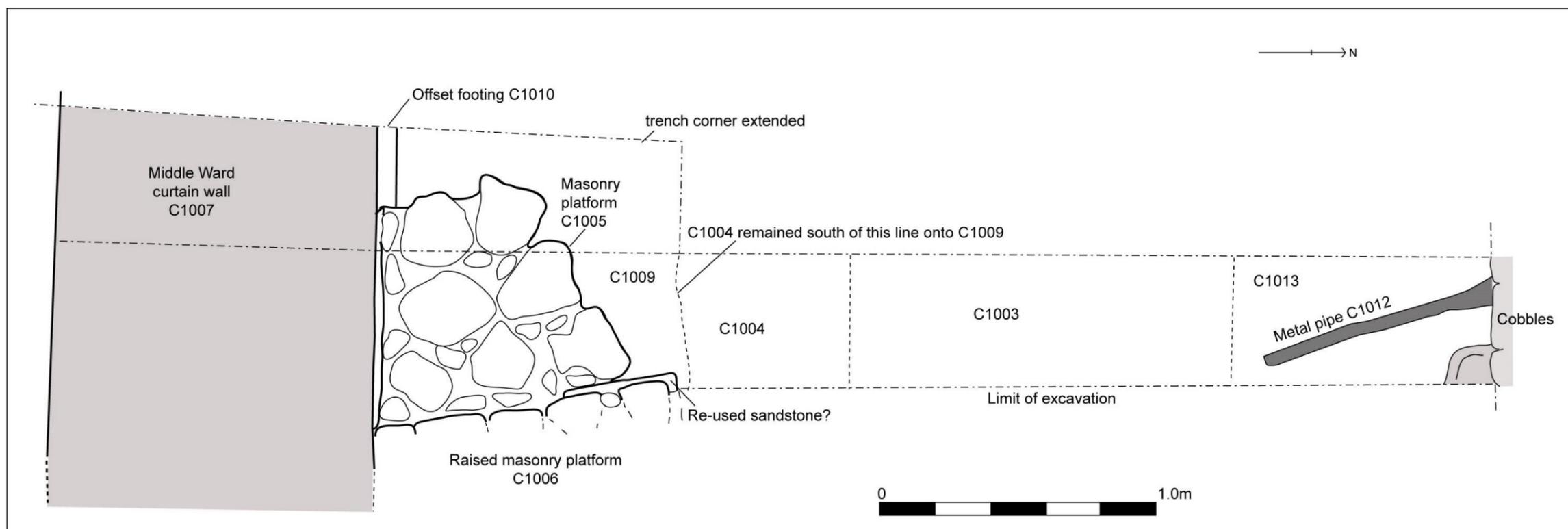


Fig 6. Trench 10. Plan showing all the principal features uncovered during the excavation.



Plate 11. Trench 10. Shot of the southern end of the trench showing the newly exposed masonry surface (C. 1005), the section previously exposed (C. 1006) and the junction of the Middle Tower and the Middle Ward curtain wall (C. 1007) that sits on an off-set plinth (C. 1010). Looking south.

The Middle Ward curtain wall

The earliest feature in the Trench 10 was the remains of the Middle Ward curtain wall (C. 1007), built in the first quarter of the 13th century. By the 18th century some of the Middle Ward curtain wall appears to have either collapsed or had been at some point partially removed, presumably to facilitate easier movement around the castle. The wall is thus illustrated on the 1760 map of Carrickfergus (*British Magazine*, May 1760) and is shown completely missing from the 1811 plan of the castle (PRO WO 78/1158). So the structure was completely gone above ground, apart from a stump north-west of the castle, by the second half of the 18th century, perhaps in the years immediately after 1793 when keep/ Great Tower was converted into a barracks and other works were carried out within the castle (Mc Neill 1981, 49). The full line of the curtain wall was 're-found' during the archaeological excavations of 1955 and 1962. The probable reason that the ground level in the Outer Ward now slopes down steeply close to the outside face of the Middle Ward curtain wall is that this landscaping took place after the 1955 and 1962 excavations to display the newly-exposed foundations of the wall. A certain amount of restoration/ conservation of the wall has been carried out in the decades since then and without deeper excavation it is uncertain how much of the visible wall is original 13th century masonry or 20th century rebuild.

At the southern end of Trench 10 the curtain wall was 1.20m wide and sat a maximum of 0.60m above modern ground level. Above ground the wall consists of one course of large rectangular stones of varying shapes with a coping of smaller rounded stones that give the impression of a

second course but seem to have been added post 1955/62 so that visitors to the castle will not hurt themselves if they stand on them. The curtain wall sits on a slightly offset plinth (C. 1010). Only a very small section of one course of this plinth, to a depth of 0.12m, was uncovered during the 2014 excavation before digging ceased. The plinth only extends out a few centimetres from the face of outer face of the curtain wall. Again, without deeper excavation, it is uncertain whether or not the offset plinth is a 20th century construct. However, most of the section drawings reproduced in McNeill (1981) of trenches excavated across or against the Middle Ward curtain wall in 1955 and 1962 show at least one, sometimes more, offset footings below the wall proper.

Within Trench 10 the earliest deposit found was a mound of rubble and soil (C. 1003) which was located roughly in the middle of the trench. The deposit consisted of a mixture of red brick, slate, small and medium-sized stones, fragments of cement and mortar, light brown clay, lumps of pinky salmon clay, and a number of small and medium sized cobbles. The base of the deposit was not uncovered and it also extended both east and west beyond the limits of excavation. Within the Trench 10 the deposit was a maximum of 1.75m long, north-south, and 0.28m deep and had the appearance of possible building demolition rubble.

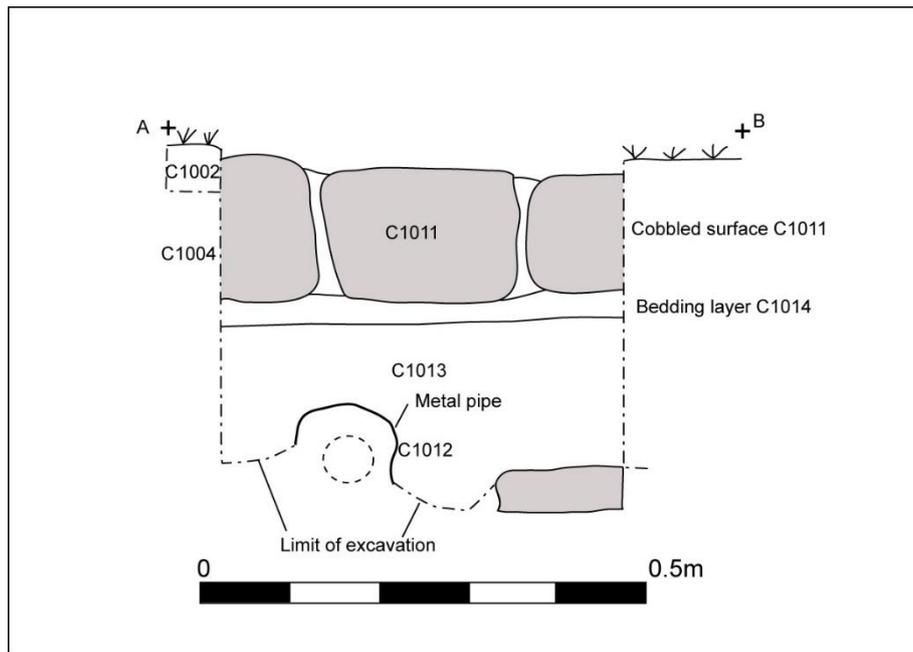


Fig 7. Trench 10. South-facing section of trench showing 20th century cobbles C. 1011 (= C. 113 in Trench 11).

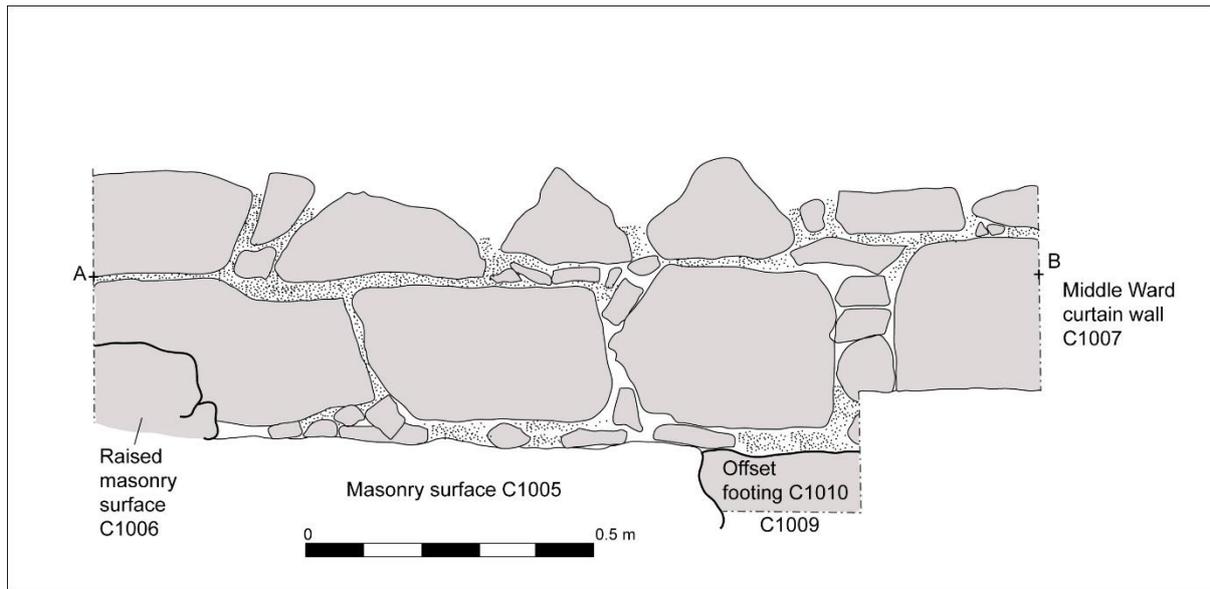


Fig 8. Trench 10. North-facing elevation showing the various masonry surfaces (C.1005 and C. 1006), the offset plinth (C. 1010) and the above ground section of the Middle Ward curtain wall (C. 1007). How much of this masonry dates to before the second half of the 20th century is open to question.

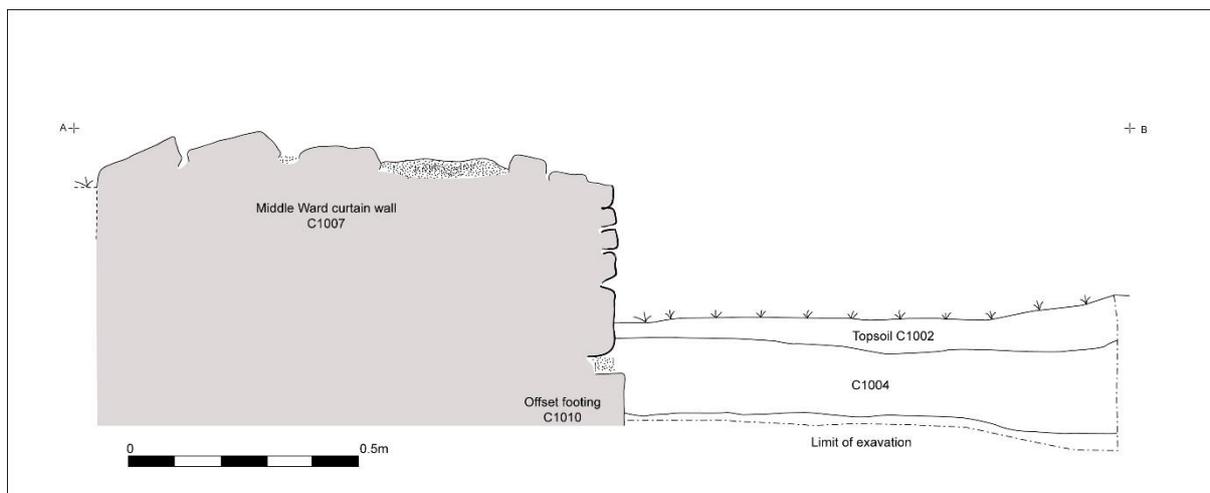


Fig 9. Trench 10. East-facing section of the western extension to the trench.

Butting against the northern edge of dump C.1003 and filling the northern end of the trench was a deposit of brown soil (C.1013) that contained small to medium-sized stones and fragments of red brick. The deposit was a maximum recorded length of 0.85m and depth of 0.15m. It ran below a large cobbled surface (C. 1011,) and its bedding layer (C.1014), which constitute the northern limit of the trench and the southern limit of modern cobbled surface which covers much of the Outer Ward. It also covered an iron pipe (C. 1012) and other metalwork which may be evidence of Victorian services in the Outer Ward. The deposit (C. 1013), like all of the horizons uncovered within Trench 10, appears to be a dumped layer used to level up this part of the Outer Ward.

A more substantial dumped layer was C.1004 which was composed of dark brown soil with a high shell content, small stones, gravel, fragments of brick and gravel and occasional flint. It was a maximum recorded depth of 0.150m. It was laid down either side of the rubble mound (C.1003). To the north of this mound it was directly above deposit C. 1013 and at the northern extent of the trench it butted against the modern cobbled surface of the Outer Ward. In the south of the trench it covered a both a layer of soft brown clay (C. 1009), that had the appearance of being redeposited sod material, perhaps laid down as part of the post-excavation backfilling in 1955 and a mortared stone surface (C.1005). Excavation of strata within the trench stopped at the surface of this sod horizon which also butted against the northern and western edges of the stone surface.

Layer C. 1004 appears to represent a dumped layer used to level the ground surface in this part of the Outer Ward, probably after the excavations of 1955 were backfilled. Versions of the layer were found in all of the three trenches excavated in November 2014.

The masonry surface

At the south of Trench 10, layer C. 1004 was over a small stone surface adjacent to the external face of the Middle Ward curtain wall (C. 1005). This surface was sub-square in shape, a maximum of 0.90m wide in both directions, and composed of flat middle-sized and large stones bound with mortar. To the south it was mortared over the footings of the curtain wall, to the west under a second, larger, tier of mortared flat stones (C. 1006) which itself was butted against the junction of the western side of the Middle Tower and the curtain wall.

Neither of the masonry surfaces are illustrated on any of the maps of the Castle nor on the general plan of the trenches excavated and the Middle Ward curtain wall in 1955 reproduced in McNeill (McNeill 1981, 62, Fig 19). It is difficult not to interpret the stone surface as post-1955 conservation work/ rebuild as the stones sit on a section of ground that would appear to be the backfilled Medieval extra-mural rock-cut ditch. Only the top of the newly exposed masonry was uncovered during the 2014 excavation and is uncertain how many courses of stone the masonry actually comprises.

In the main trench topsoil and sod (C. 1002 and C.1001) were directly over dumped layers C. 1003 and C.1004 ground level (C.1001).

3.4.3 Trench 11 (Figs 10-12; Plate 12)

Introduction

Trench 11 was the middle of the three trenches excavated in November 2014. The trench was 3.50m long, north-south, and 0.50m wide, east-west. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.38m deep before investigations were halted under instruction from NIEA. As in Trench 10, the southern limit of Trench 11 was the outside face of the Middle Ward curtain wall (C. 1114 = C. 1007 in Trench 10) and

the northern limit was the edge of large cobbles that framed the cobbled surface in the Outer Ward (C. 1113 = C. 1011 in Trench 10).

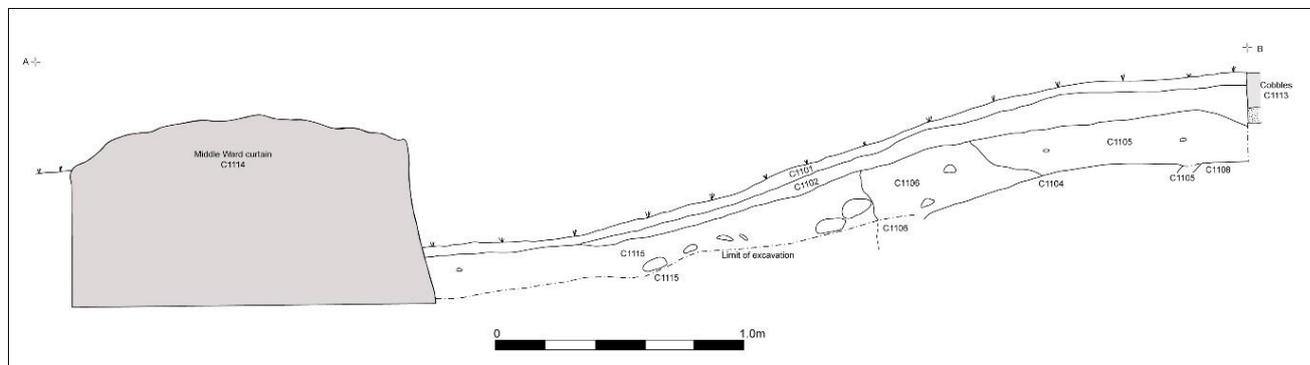


Fig 10. Trench 11. South facing section of trench.



Plate 12. Trench 11. Shot of southern end of the trench showing the modern plastic pipes (C1103/ C. 1108 and C. 1104/ C. 1007) within their foundation trench (C. 1109) running through the Middle Ward curtain wall (C. 1114). Looking south.

The earliest layer encountered within Trench 11 was a dark brown silty loam containing small-medium sized stones (C. 1111/ C. 1112) and appeared to have originally covered the whole trench and may represent the ground surface in this area of the Outer Ward at the time of the 1955 excavation. The layer was given two different numbers as it was cut by an east-west linear cut (C. 1110). This cut was aligned roughly east- west and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.25m before investigations were curtailed. The cut was filled with a grey brown silty loam containing stones, fragments of brick and lens of orange keuper marl clay (C. 1106). The cut feature may be the relict remains of Trench A excavated in 1955 and illustrated in McNeill (1981, 62, Fig 19) and the fill certainly had the appearance of backfilled material.

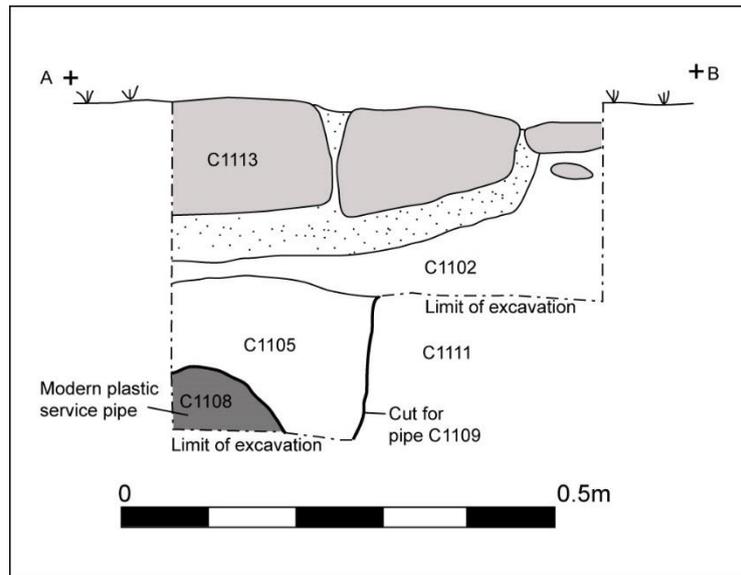


Fig 11. Trench 11. South-facing section of the trench showing the 1980s plastic service pipes below the cobbled surface of the Outer Ward, C. 1113.

All of the above-mentioned features were cut by the main features uncovered in Trench 11 which was two modern plastic service trenches, sited directly beside one another, and both in two sections. The most westerly pipe (C. 1104/ C. 1107) ran into the western section face 0.40m from the northern limit of the trench. The eastern plastic service pipe (C. 1103/ C. 1108) ran the full length of the trench and beyond below the cobbles of the Outer Ward. It had *Marley. 100mm. Sewer. BS 4660E* stamped on it. Beyond the trench to the north the pipes lined up with the visible marking of a linear service trench in the cobbles of the Outer Ward and ultimately to a manhole located close to the south-east corner of the castle Visitor Centre. At the southern end of the trench the pipes ran through and under the courses of the Middle Ward curtain wall. This draws into question the antiquity of the masonry that currently constitutes the most visible, upper courses, of the Middle Ward curtain wall. It is uncertain how much mid-20th century rebuilding took place over the line of the wall once the Medieval masonry was exposed during the 1955 excavation. This is a question for further research. The service pipes in Trench 11 may be related to the insertion of the toilet block in the Inner Ward in recent decades.

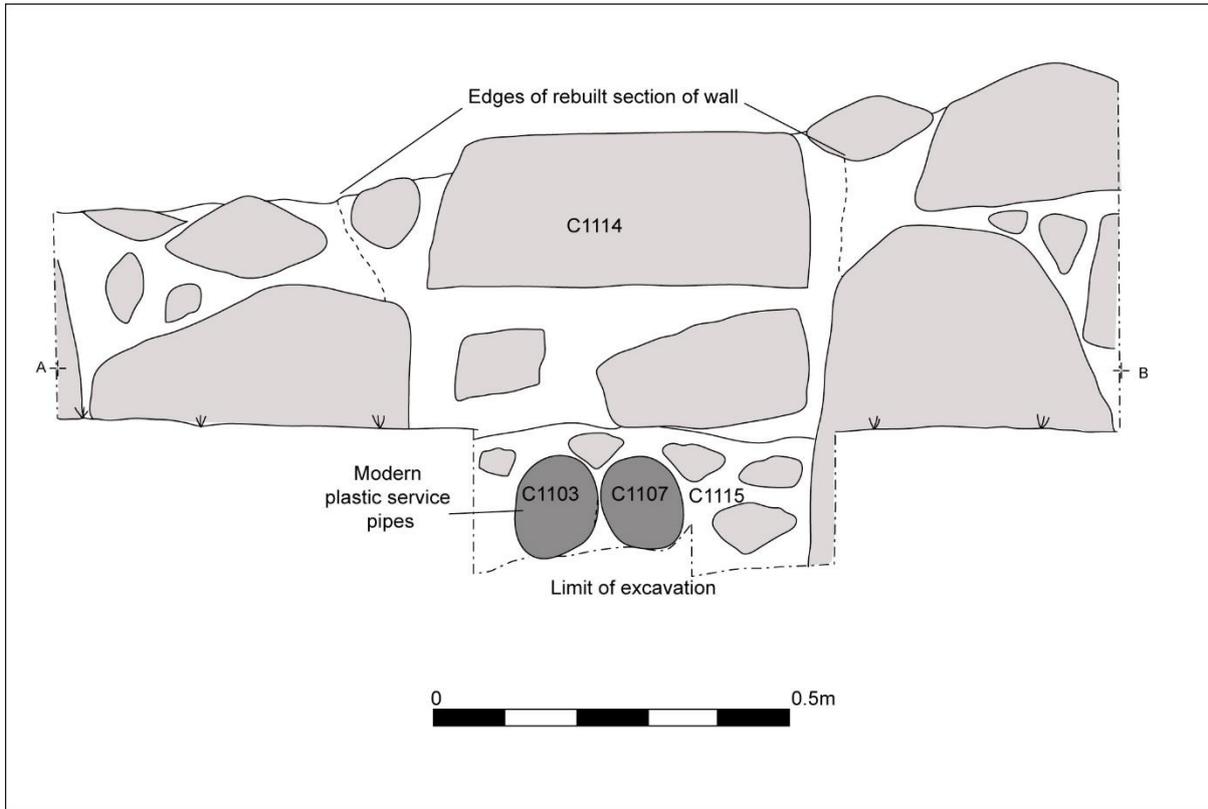


Fig 12. Trench 11. North-facing elevation across the end of the trench showing a rebuilt section of the Middle Ward curtain wall and the 1980s plastic service pipes cut through the curtain wall.

3.4.4 Trench 12 (Figs 13-14; Plates 13-15)

Introduction

Trench 12 was the most westerly positioned of the three trenches investigated in November 2014. It was located west of the kink in the line of the Middle Ward curtain wall and was the trench in which the most significant archaeological features were uncovered during the 2014 excavation. The trench was initially 3.60m long, north-south, by 0.50 wide east west. However, the northern two-thirds of the trench was later extended another 0.50m to both east and west, so that this excavated section was 1.50m wide.

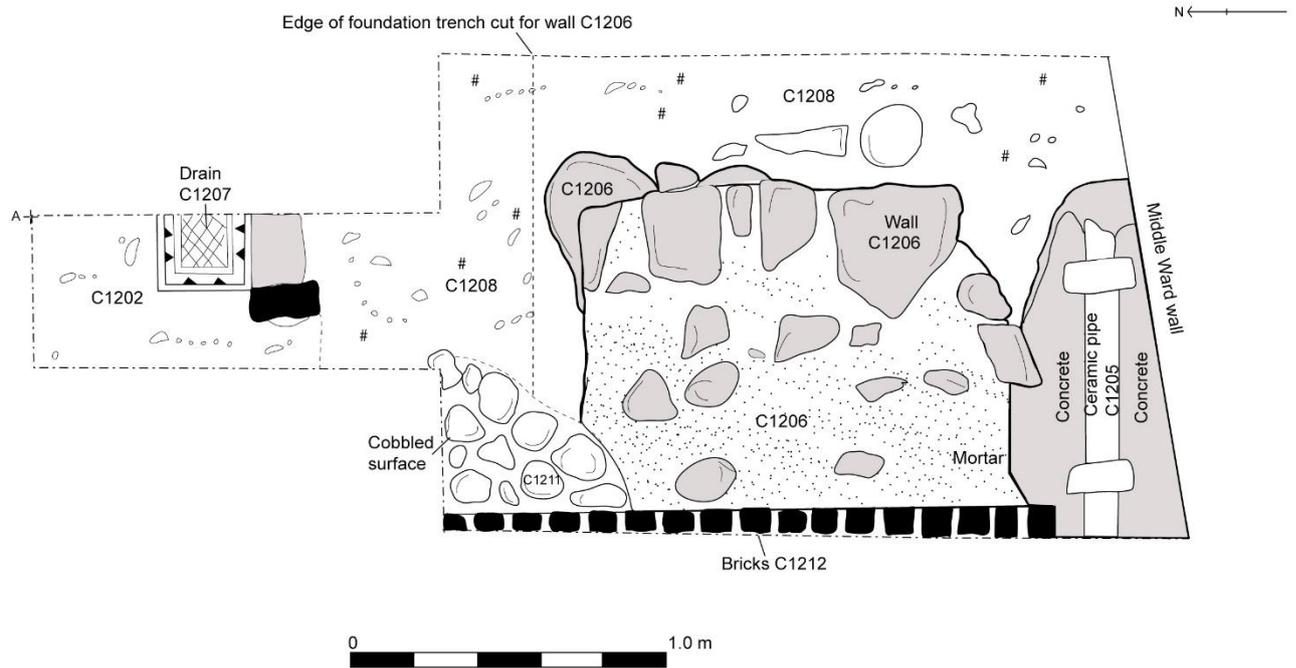


Fig 13. Plan of Trench 12 showing all the principle features uncovered during the excavation.



Plate 13. Trench 12. Shot of the southern end of the trench showing the Middle Ward curtain wall (C. 1213), the newly exposed masonry with stone facing (C. 1206), the later red brick surface (C. 1212), cobbled surface (C. 1211) and ceramic service pipe (C. 1205). Looking south.



Plate 14. Trench 12. Shot of the stone facing of the early masonry (C. 1206), the later red brick surface (C. 1212), cobbled surface (C. 1211) and ceramic service pipe (C. 1205). Looking west.

The earliest strata encountered within the trench was a grey clay loam containing small stones and charcoal flecks (C. 1208). This surface was cut by a steep-sided foundation trench (C. 1209) within which a portion of masonry (C. 1206) sat. The foundation trench was a maximum recorded width of 0.50m east-west, depth of 0.47m and length of 0.13m, north-south, within Trench 12. Due to later disturbance only the northern edge of the foundation cut was uncovered during the excavation.

Within the foundation trench was the base of a heavily damaged section of masonry that was located 0.25m below modern ground level and 0.40m north of the outer face of the Middle Ward curtain wall.

The structure was a maximum recorded length of 1.5m long, north-south, by 1.10m wide, east-west. The wall survived to a height of 0.51m on its northern side and 0.42m along the eastern side. The masonry was made up of large basalt stones heavily mortared together. The eastern end was faced with large stones, one of which appeared to be (?re-used) Cultra sandstone. Closer to the western limits of the trench the stones were smaller and the mortar content was higher suggesting that the wall was constructed with a rubble core.

Also within the foundation trench was a loose grey clay loam, with large voids, and containing cobbles, charcoal and mortar flecking (c. 1210).

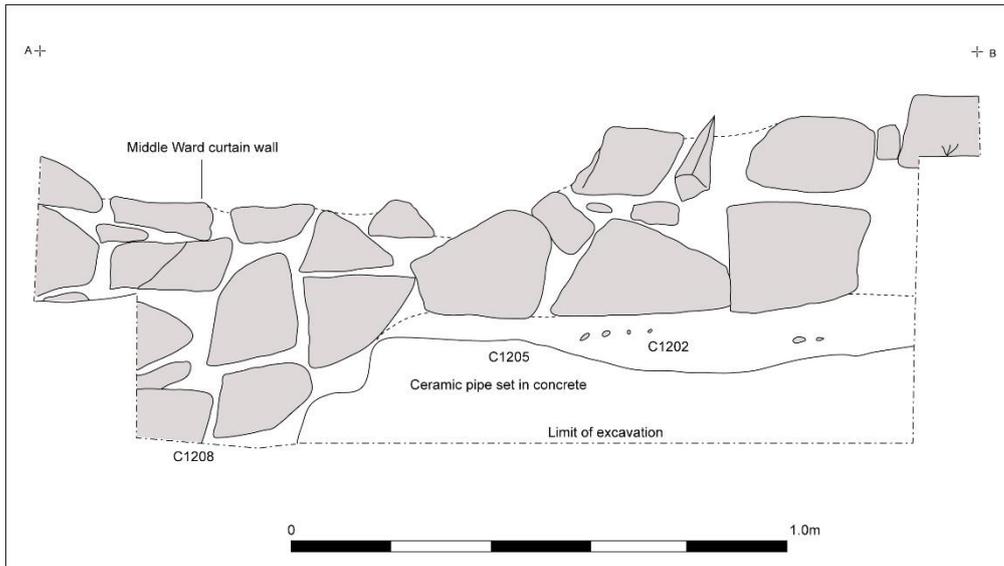


Fig 14. North-facing elevation across the southern end of Trench 12 showing external face of the Middle Ward curtain wall and 19th century ceramic service pipe C. 1205.



Plate 15. Trench 12. Shot showing the exposed masonry with stone facing (C. 1206), the later red brick surface (C. 1212), cobbled surface (C. 1211) and ceramic service pipe (C. 1205) and drain (C. 1203/ C. 1207). Looking north.

Directly above the section of damaged masonry was a red brick surface (C. 1212), one course of brick thick and located at the western extremity of the trench. Possibly contemporary was the patchy remains of a cobbled surface (C. 1211) in the north and west of the Trench. Both these surfaces may relate to the construction of the barracks buildings in the Outer Ward in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, sections of which were investigated in the spring 2014 excavation very close by to Trench 12.

Later features included two smashed ceramic service pipes or drains, both of probable Victorian date. The first (C. 1205), a ceramic pipe, ran parallel and 0.08m north of the outside face of the Middle Ward curtain wall. It was bedded in concrete. The second (C. 1207) was a square ceramic drain and small linear section of pipe (C. 1203; silt content C. 1204), located in the north of the trench. The drain had been deliberately infilled with cobbles and large pieces of metal and so appeared to have been put out of use rather than silted up.

Above all of these features within Trench 12 was a thick layer, up to 0.30m deep, of heavily mortar-flecked grey brown loam that contained lots of brick fragments and some loose cobbles (C. 1202). It had the appearance of demolition rubble and was very similar to the dumped deposit C.1003 uncovered in Trench 10. It was probably laid down as a deliberate levelling layer to landscape this part of the Outer Ward (and was the main infill of drain C. 1207). Above this major horizon was the sod layer/ modern ground surface within the trench (C. 1201).

4. Discussion

There have been at least five episodes of ground disturbance in the Middle and Outer Wards of Carrickfergus Castle in the last hundred years. These include

1. The levelling of 18th and 19th century barracks buildings in the early 20th century after the Castle ceased having a military function and became a State Care monument.
2. The accompanying re-surfacing of the open areas of the Outer Ward in the 20th century as part of the ongoing works to improve visitor access.
3. The excavation and backfilling of trenches either side of the Middle Ward curtain wall in 1955 and 1962
4. The rebuilding of at least some of the Middle Ward curtain wall after the 1955 and 1962 excavations to make this section of Castle fortification more visible
5. The insertion of improved services, in the form of water and sewage pipes and electricity cables, to improve visitor facilities in the Castle in the decades after it became a State Care monument.

Given the limited scope of the November 2014 excavation it was not unexpected that some of these episodes of ground disturbance would be encountered during the investigation. In Trench 10 evidence of backfilling, possibly relating to the mid-20th century excavations, and deposits laid down to level up the area around it were encountered as well as evidence of the probable rebuild of the

Middle Ward curtain wall and stone surfaces immediately in front was uncovered. In the future, limited re-excavation along of the curtain wall is probably necessary to clearly define what is original and what is 20th century rebuild.

In Trench 11 the discovery of plastic service pipes dating to the 1980s that were recorded running through the Medieval Middle Ward curtain wall, to the south, and under the cobbles that make up the surface of a large area of the Outer Ward, to the north, also appear to show the recent nature of these features and again calls into question the date of at least some of the visible curtain wall.

Because of the small area available for investigation it is uncertain what the masonry in Trench 12 represented, how old it is and how much of the masonry survives below ground. It is possible that it constituted one side of the structure but it is impossible at this stage to say if it is the remains of a wall or tower. There was no obvious red brick in the build. Thus the masonry could be either Medieval- given the proximity of the Middle Ward curtain wall- or, perhaps, a 17th century building erected over the infilled, extra-mural rock- cut Medieval ditch. Only further excavation will resolve this question.

The red brick and cobbled surfaces in the west of the trench may relate to the 18th or 19th century barracks buildings recorded in the nearby Trenches 5-8, investigated in spring 2014 (Ó Baoill 2014).

5. References

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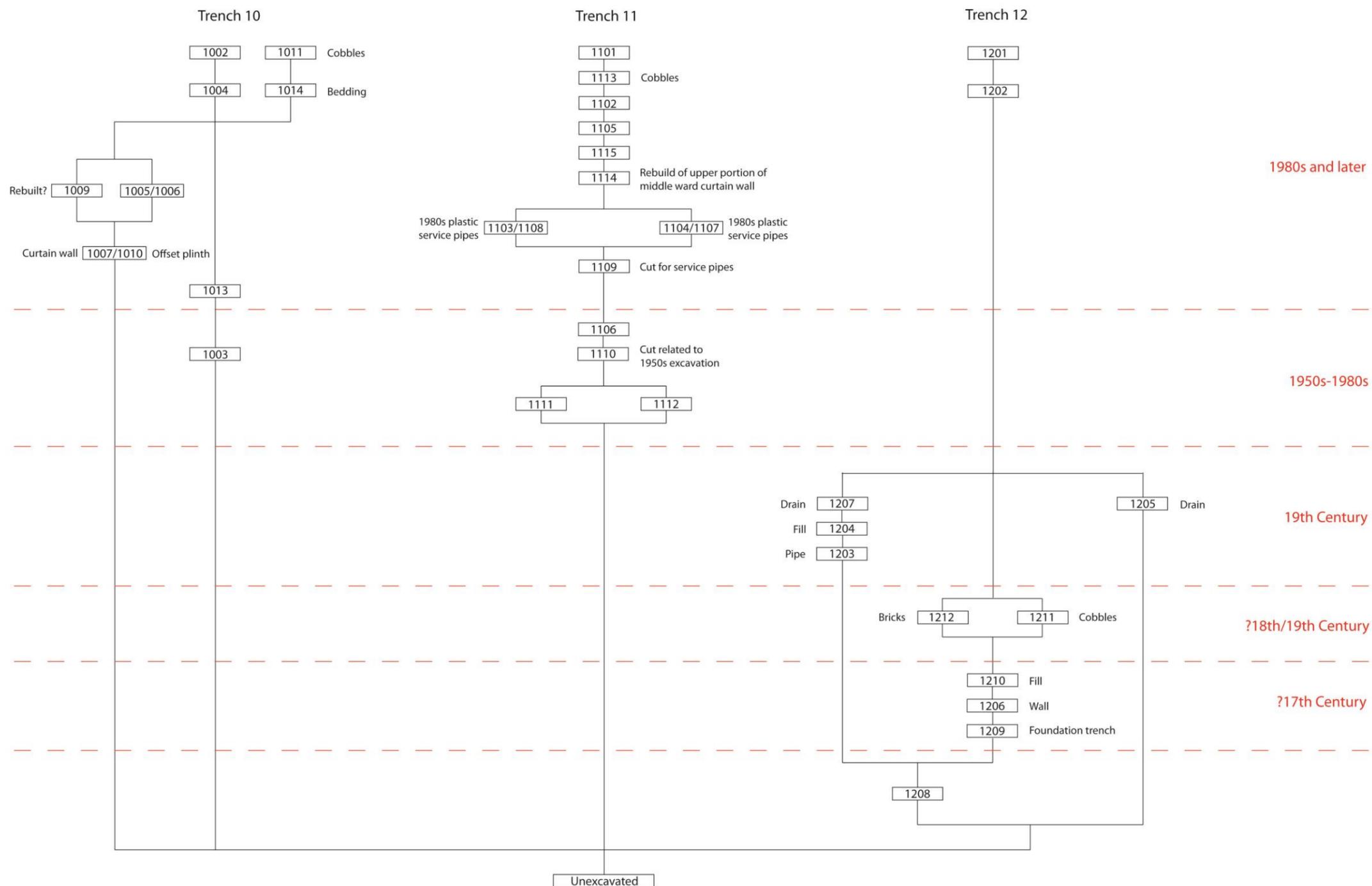
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6. Appendices

Appendix 1. Harris Matrix.



Appendix 2. Context Register.

Trench	Context No.	Type	Description
10	1001	Sod layer/ Modern ground level	Grass sod. Same as C. 1101 and C. 1201.
10	1002	Layer	Dark brown soil.
10	1003	Deposit	Brick, slate, stone, mortar, clay- dump of building rubble.
10	1004	Layer	Dark brown soil.
10	1005	Masonry	Masonry surface consisting of flat stones. Built post-1950s excavations.
10	1006	Masonry	Masonry surface consisting of flat stones. Built post-1950s excavations
10	1007	Masonry	Surviving upper section on curtain wall of Middle Ward. Uncertain if this is a 20th century rebuild on line of original Medieval curtain wall. Same as C. 1114.
10	1008	Masonry	Middle Tower of curtain wall of Middle Ward.
10	1009	Layer	?Redeposited sod material from 1950s excavations.
10	1010	Masonry	Offset plinth/ footing connected to surviving upper section on curtain wall of Middle Ward. Uncertain if this is a 20th century rebuild.
10	1011	Surface	Main cobbled surface of Outer ward. Large cobbles. 20th century. Same as C. 1113.
10	1012	Iron pipe	Fragment of old service pipe. ?19th century.
10	1013		
10	1014	Layer	Bedding layer for cobbles C. 1012.
11	1101	Sod layer/ Modern ground level	Grass Sod. Same as C. 1001 and C. 1201.
11	1102	Layer	Dark brown silty loam.
11	1103	Plastic service pipe	1980s plastic service pipe running from the direction of the Inner Ward out to the Outer Ward. Same as C. 1108.
11	1104	Plastic service pipe	1980s plastic service pipe running from the direction of the Inner Ward out to the Outer Ward. Same as C. 1107.
11	1105	Fill	Grey brown sandy loam. Fill of cut C. 1109.
11	1106	Fill	Grey brown silty loam. Fill of cut C. 1110.

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11	1107	Plastic service pipe	1980s plastic service pipe running from the direction of the Inner Ward out to the Outer Ward. Same as C. 1104.
11	1108	Plastic service pipe	1980s plastic service pipe running from the direction of the Inner Ward out to the Outer Ward. Same as C. 1103.
11	1109	Cut	Cut for modern plastic service pipes C. 1103/ 1108 and C. 1104/ 1107.
11	1110	Cut	Possibly related to 1950s excavations. Filled by C. 1106
11	1111	Layer	Dark brown silty loam.
11	1112	Layer	Dark brown silty loam.
11	1113	Surface	Main cobbled surface of Outer ward. Large cobbles. 20th century. Same as C. 1011.
11	1114	Masonry	Surviving upper section on curtain wall of Middle Ward. Uncertain if this is a 20th century rebuild on line of original Medieval curtain wall. Same as C. 1107.
11	1115	Fill	Dark brown clay loam. Fill of cut C. 1109.
12	1201	Sod layer/ Modern ground level	Grass sod. Same as C. 1001 and C. 1101.
12	1202	Layer	Grey brown loam.
12	1203	Ceramic pipe	?Victorian service pipe at northern end of trench. Same as C. 1207.
12	1204	Fill	Yellow-grey silty sand. Fill of ceramic pipe C. 1203.
12	1205	Ceramic pipe	?Victorian service pipe, running parallel to Middle Ward curtain wall, at southern end of trench. Heavily encased in concrete.
12	1206	Masonry.	Mortar rich wall. ? 17th century.
12	1207	Ceramic Drain	? Victorian drain. Same as C. 1203.
12	1208	Layer	Grey clay loam.
12	1209	Cut	Foundation trench for early wall C. 1206.
12	1210	Fill	Grey clay loam. Fill of C. 1209.
12	1211	Surface	Cobbled surface. ?18/ 19th century.
12	1212	Masonry	Line of red bricks. ?18/ 19th century.

Appendix 3. Drawing Register.

Drawing No.	Trench	Section/ Plan	Scale	Description	Drawn by	Date
87	10	Section	1:10	South-facing section	RO'B	20/11/2014
88	10	Section	1:10	East-facing section	RO'B	20/11/2014
89	10	Elevation	1:10	North-facing elevation of Trench 10/ Middle Ward curtain wall	RO'B	24/11/2014
90	10	Section	1:10	East facing, after the south-west corner of the trench was extended to the west.	RO'B	24/11/2014
91	10	Plan	1:20	Post-ex plan of Trench 10	RO'B	25/11/2014
92	11	Plan	1:20	Post-ex plan of Trench 11	DR	19/11/2014
93	11	Section	1:10	East-facing section.	DR	19/11/2014
94	11	Section	1:10	South-facing section	DR	19/11/2014
95	11	Elevation	1:10	North-facing elevation of Trench 11/ Middle Ward curtain wall	DR	20/11/2014
96	12	Plan	1:20	Plan showing Contexts 1202, 1203, 1205-1207	SA	18/11/2014
97	12	Plan	1:20	Plan following removal of C.1202.	SA	19/11/2014
98	12	Section	1:10	West-facing section	SA	20/11/2014
99	12	Section	1:10	East-facing section	SA	20/11/2014
100	12	Plan	1:20	Post-ex plan of Trench 12	SA/DR	24/11/2014
101	12	Section	1:10	East-facing section following extension to trench.	SA	24/11/2014
102	12	Section	1:10	South-facing section following extension to trench.	SA	24/11/2014
103	12	Section	1:10	West-facing section following extension to trench	SA/DR	24/11/2014
104	12	Elevation	1:10	North-facing elevation of Trench 12/ Middle Ward curtain wall		

Appendix 4. Photographic Register.

Pre-excavation photographs of site, 13th November 2014

Photo No.	Trench	Description
IMG_3826		Location of excavation from north-west.
IMG_3834-3839		Location of excavation from west.
IMG_3857-3866		Location of excavation from east.

Day 1. 17th November 2014

Photo No.	Trench	Description
IMG_3882	12	Drain C.1207. From north.
IMG_3883	12	As IMG_3822 but from east.
IMG_3866- IMG_3889	11	Modern plastic pipes C. 1103/ 1108 and C. 1104/ C. 1107 running through the Middle Ward curtain wall. From north.
IMG_3902-3905	10	Stone surface C.1005 as first uncovered. From north.
IMG_3906	10	As IMG_3902, but from east.
IMG_3907	10	As IMG_3902, but from west.
IMG_3908	10	As IMG_3906.
IMG_3909	10	As IMG_3907.

Day 2. 18th November 2014

Photo No.	Trench	Description
IMG-3910	12	Drains C. 1205 and C.1207 and wall C. 1206. From south.
IMG-3911	12	As IMG-3910.
IMG-3912	12	As IMG-3910, but from north.
IMG-3913	12	As IMG-3912.
IMG-3914	12	Wall C. 1206 from east
IMG-3915	12	As IMG-3914.
IMG-3916	12	Wall C. 1206 and drain C. 1205 from north.
IMG-3917	12	As IMG_3916.
IMG-3918	12	Drain C. 1207 and pipe C. 1203 from south.
IMG-3919	12	As IMG_3918.
IMG-3920	12	As IMG_3918.
IMG-3921	12	As IMG_3918 but from west.
IMG_3922	12	As IMG_3921.
IMG_3932- IMG_3935	10	Masonry surfaces C. 1005, C. 1006 and curtain wall C. 1007 from north, west and east.
IMG_3936- IMG-3949	10-12	Working shots of excavation in progress.
IMG-3952	10	Cobbles C.1011.
IMG_3953	10	As IMG_3952.
IMG_3956	11	Modern plastic pipes C. 1103/ 1108 and C. 1104/ C. 1107 from south.
IMG_3957	11	As IMG_3956.
IMG_3958	11	As IMG_3956, but from north.
IMG_3959	11	As IMG_3958.
IMG_3960	11	As IMG_3958, but detail where they run through the curtain wall.
IMG_3961	11	As IMG_3960.

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IMG_3962	11	As IMG_3956, but detail of where they run under the cobbled surface of the Outer Ward.
IMG_3963	11	As IMG_3962.
IMG_3964	12	As IMG_3910.
IMG_3965	12	As IMG_3910.
IMG_3966	12	As IMG_3910, but from north.
IMG_3967	12	As IMG_3910, but from north.

Day 3. 19th November 2014

Photo No.	Trench	Description
IMG_3970	11	Modern plastic pipes C. 1103/ 1108 and C. 1104/ C. 1107 from south.
IMG_3971	12	As IMG_3970.
IMG_3972	12	As IMG_3970, but from north.
IMG_3973	12	As IMG_3972.
IMG_3989- IMG_4029	10	Metal pipe, possibly Victorian service pipe, in north of trench. From south, north and east.
IMG_4030- IMG_4034	10	East –facing section of trench.
IMG_4035- IMG_4043	10	West-facing section of trench.
IMG_4050- IMG_4074	10	Masonry surfaces C. 1005, C. 1006 and curtain wall C. 1007 from all four cardinal points.
IMG_4075- IMG_4082	10	Metal pipe, possibly Victorian service pipe, in north of trench. From south,

Day 5. 21st November 2014

Photo No.	Trench	Description
IMG_4103- IMG_4128	10	Masonry surfaces C. 1005, C. 1006 and curtain wall C. 1007 from all four cardinal points after south-west corner of trench extended and post-excavation.
IMG_4129		Ken Pullen visiting the excavation.
IMG_4130- IMG_4160	12	Wall C.1206, drain C. 1205 and C. 1207, cobbled surface C. 1211 and red brick surface C. 1212 fully exposed. From all cardinal points.
IMG_4161		Dermot taking photograph of Trench 12.
IMG_4162- IMG_4165	12	As IMG_4130-4160. From south-west and east.
IMG_4166		Stuart, Ruairi and Dermot working in the rain.

Day 7. 25th November 2014

Photo No.	Trench	Description
IMG_4172- IMG_4226		Overhead shots of the site and the Castle from the roof of the Keep of Carrickfergus Castle.
IMG_4226- IMG_4231	10	Final post-excavation shots of masonry surfaces C. 1005, C. 1006 and Middle Ward curtain wall C. 1007 from north and west.
IMG_4232- IMG_4267	12	Final post-excavation shots of Wall C.1206, drain C. 1205 and C. 1207, cobbled surface C. 1211 and redbrick surface C. 1212 fully exposed. From all cardinal points.

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Day 8 (last day). 25th November 2014

Photo	Trench	Description
IMG_4268- IMG_4282		Photographs of the backfilled trenches and restored area of the Outer Ward after the excavation was completed.

Appendix 5. Small Finds Register

Trench	Context No.	Description	Quantity	Weight (g)
10	1003	Pottery	1	-
10	1003	Clay Pipe Stem	1	-
10	1003	Flint	7	-
10	1003	Shell	7	-
10	1003	Slate	3	-
10	1003	Stone	10	-
10	1003	Half Brick	1	-
10	1003	Metalwork	4	-
10	1003	Animal bone	-	16
10	1004	Pottery	13	-
10	1004	Glass	3	-
10	1004	Clay Pipe Stem	2	-
10	1004	Flint	26	-
10	1004	Shell	14	-
10	1004	Slate	3	-
10	1004	Stone	7	-
10	1004	Metalwork	9	-
10	1004	Animal bone	-	528
11	1102	Pottery	5	-
11	1102	Glass	4	-
11	1102	Glass Marble	1	-
11	1102	Clay Pipe Stem Fragments	9	-
11	1102	Half Brick	1	-
11	1102	Flint	4	-
11	1102	Metalwork	2	-
11	1102	Animal bone	-	140
11	1105	Pottery	8	-
11	1105	Glass	2	-
11	1105	Flint	4	-
11	1105	Slate	2	-
11	1105	Possible Slate Gaming Piece	1	-
11	1105	Metalwork	6	-
11	1105	Animal bone	-	250
12	1202	Pottery	15	-

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12	1202 (Inside Drain)	Pottery	1	-
12	1202	Clay Pipe Stem	1	-
12	1202	Flint	3	-
12	1202	Brick Fragment	1	-
12	1202	Metalwork	4	-
12	1202 (Inside Drain)	Metalwork	2	-
12	1202	Animal bone	-	194
12	1203	Sewer Pipe Fragment	1	-
12	1208	Pottery	7	-
12	1208	Flint	5	-
12	1208	Metalwork	1	-
12	1208	Animal bone	-	742