



ULSTER  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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# Survey Report

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Reference: **Survey Report No. 42**

Author: **Harry Welsh**

Location:

**Survey of Gardens  
Dundrum Castle  
County Down**

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In association with:



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Ulster Archaeological Society  
c/o School of Natural and Built Environment  
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Belfast BT7 1NN

Cover illustration: UAS Survey Group in action at Dundrum Castle

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## 1. Summary

### 1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken at the gardens of Dundrum Castle, Townland of Dundrum, Parish of Kilmegan and Barony of Lecale Upper, National Grid reference J 4048 3700. The survey was the third in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society during 2013.

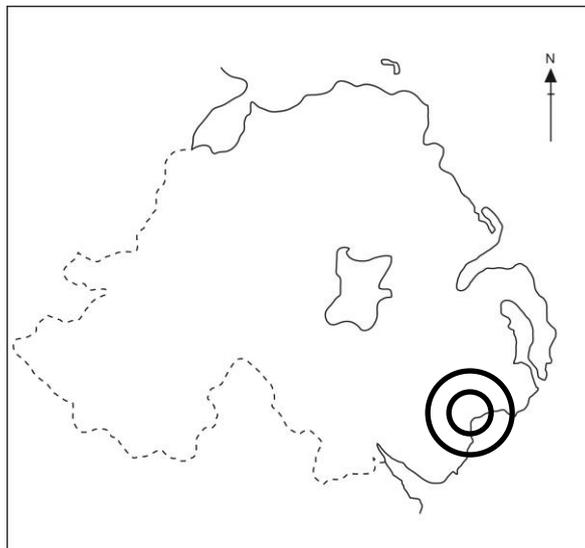


Figure 01: Location map

### 1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce accurate plan drawings of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and copies submitted to the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University, Belfast and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.



Figure 02: UAS members surveying, with castle in background

## 1 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background

The survey of the gardens at Dundrum Castle was undertaken on Saturday 29 June 2013. It was carried out by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society (UAS), in response to a decision taken by the committee of the society to extend an opportunity to members to participate in practical surveys of archaeological monuments that had not previously been recorded. This followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. The UAS were invited to survey the gardens of Dundrum Castle following a series of excavations during 2012 and 2013.

### 2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

Dundrum Castle is in state care and is one of the most historically significant castles in Northern Ireland, being originally constructed by John de Courcy soon after his conquest of Ulster. The castle has been the subject of much debate and literature for many years, but scientific archaeological investigations were first undertaken in 1950 by Dudley Waterman. The most recent investigations there were carried out between 2011 and 2013 by Dr Philip Macdonald and these have added significantly to our understanding of the castle. Less attention has been paid to the arrangements of banks that lie to the south of the castle and these have recently been interpreted as being evidence of landscaping to provide gardens, dating to the 'first half of the seventeenth century (Macdonald 2013, 3). The 2013 UAS survey sought to carry out a plan survey of these features.

### 2.3 Cartographic Evidence

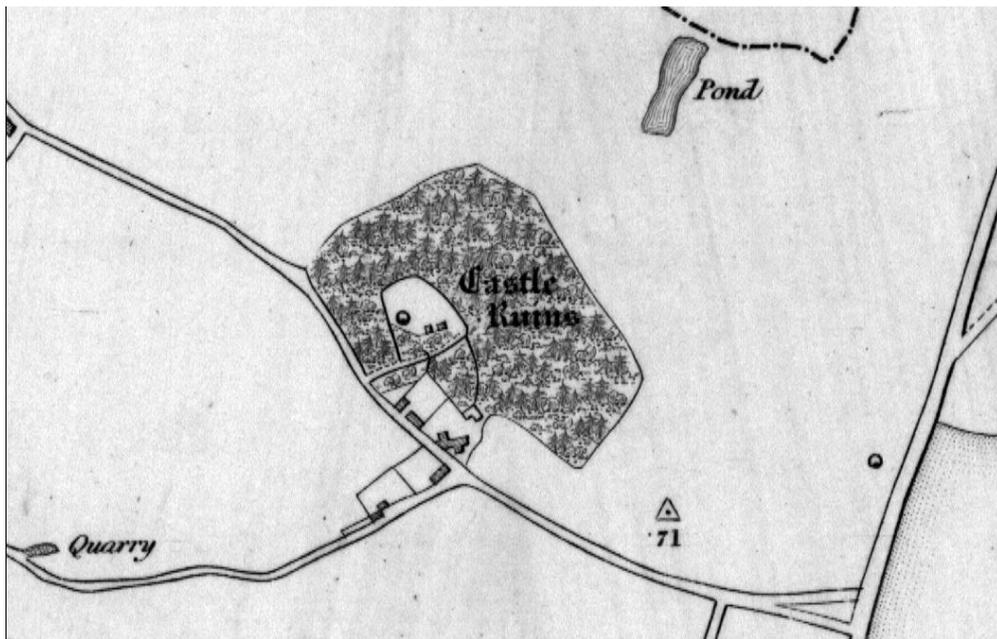


Figure 03: OS County Series, Down, Sheet 44, First Edition (part of) 1835

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1835 shows the area surrounding the castle ruins heavily wooded.



Figure 04: OS County Series Down Sheet 44, Second Edition (part of) 1859

By 1859, the area surrounding the castle ruins is less heavily wooded and paths into the site are clearly marked.

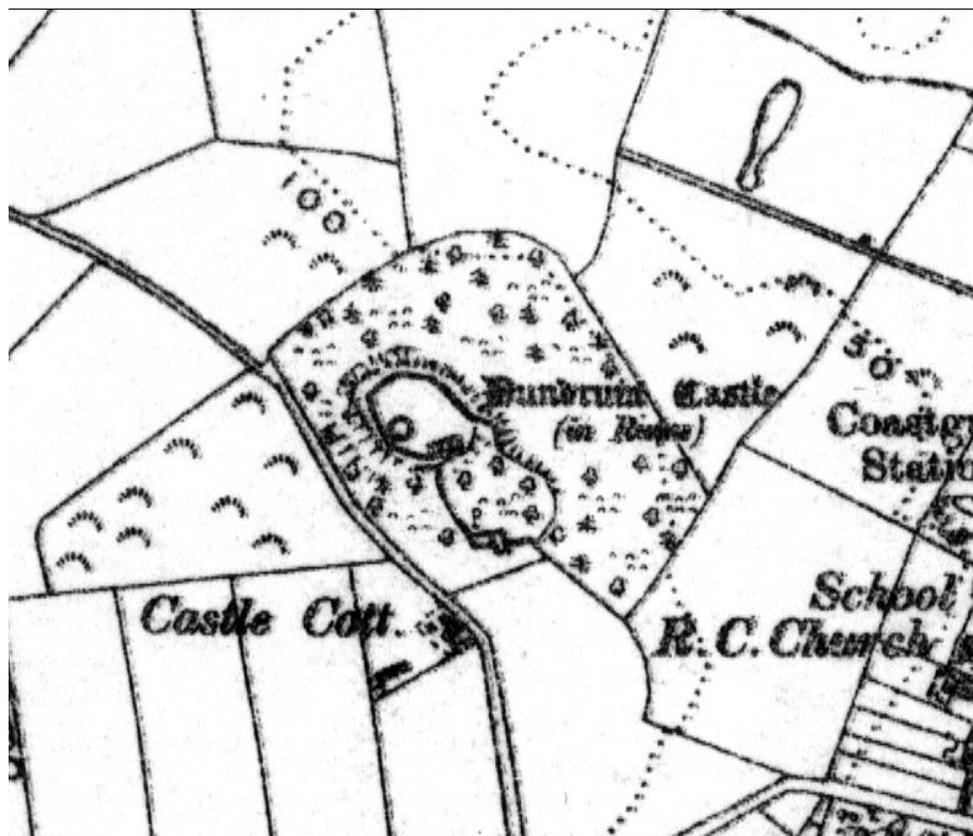


Figure 05: OS County Series Down Sheet 44, Third Edition (part of) 1925

By 1925, the site remains sparsely wooded, but paths have not been noted. It might be speculated that either the cartographers merely added the essential features of the site, omitting the paths, or instead, the paths were not in use by this time and were not visible. In any event, there is no indication that the gardens were visible in any of the Ordnance Survey maps and clearly predated them, supporting an earlier date for this feature (suggested by Macdonald above).

#### 2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Ulster Archaeological Society. All site records have been archived by the National Trust at Rowallane, Saintfield, County Down.

#### 2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and included Gill Almond, Chris Ayers, Michael Catney, Malachy Conway, Alexander Cupples, June Welsh, Ian Gillespie, Lee Gordon, Liz McShane, Colin Boyd, Hilary Boyd, Anne MacDermott, Janna McDonald, George Rutherford, Janey Sproule, Grace McAlister, Randal Scott and Olive Campbell. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Philip Mac Donald and staff of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast for the invitation to survey the site and to the staff of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage for facilitating access.

### 3. The 2013 UAS Survey

#### 3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of plan drawings and elevations, accompanied by a photographic survey. This report was compiled using the information obtained from these sources, in addition to background documentary material.

#### 3.2 Production of plan drawings

Plan drawings and elevations were completed, using data obtained from the field survey. Measurements were obtained by using the society's *Leica Sprinter 100* electronic measuring device. Sketch plans at 1:200 scale were completed on site by recording these measurements on drafting film secured to a plane table and backing up the data on a field notebook for subsequent reference. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.

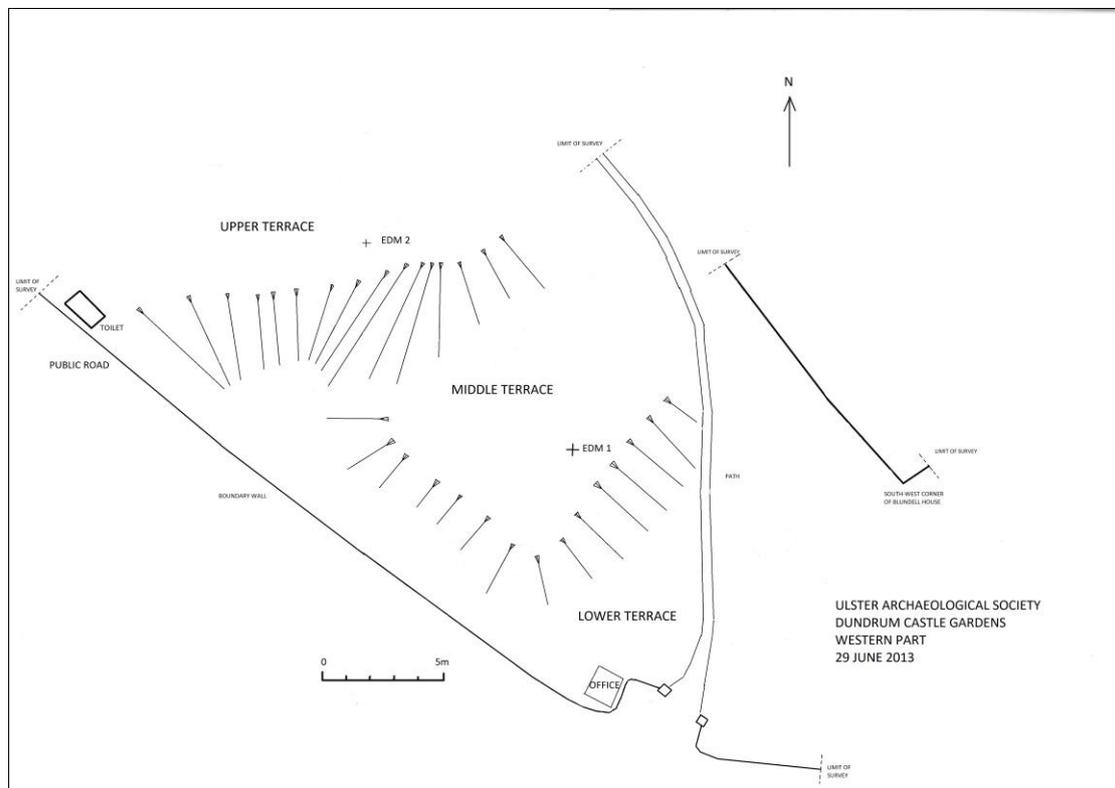


Figure 06: Plan of gardens (western part)

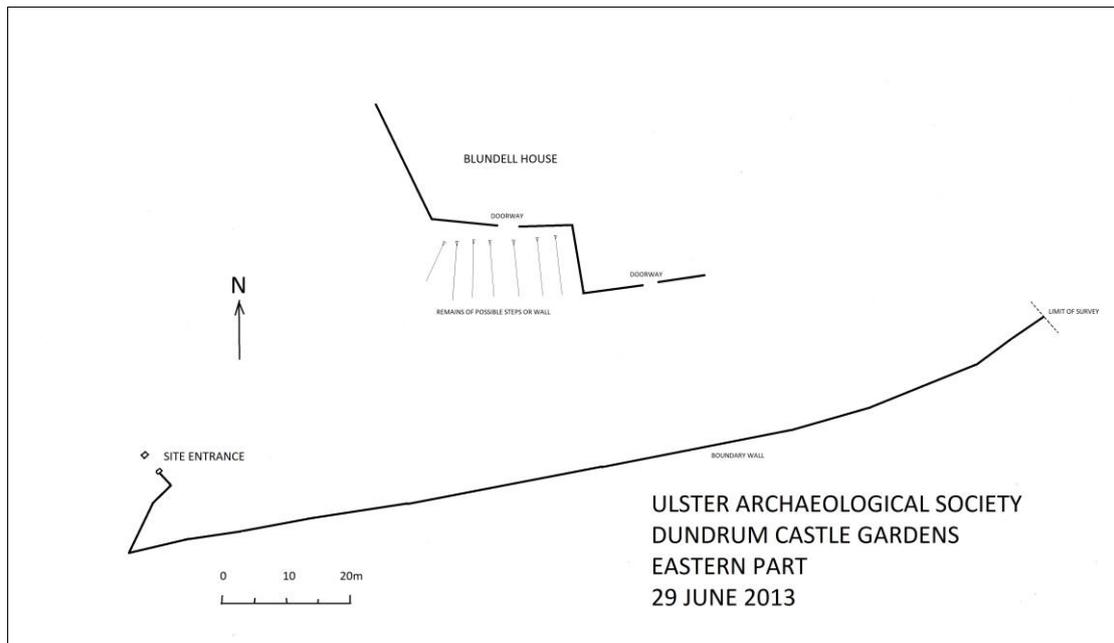


Figure 07: Plan of Gardens (eastern part)

### 3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Ricoh G600* 8 megapixel digital camera and a photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 29 June 2013. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc (see Appendix below).



Figure 08: View of gardens, looking north-east from main entrance



Figure 09: View of terracing, looking north-west



Figure 10: View of excavation trench across terracing, looking north



Figure 11: View of landscaping material in excavation trench, looking south



Figure 12: View of terraces, with castle to north and Blundell House to east, looking north



Figure 13: View of gardens with castle entrance and Dundrum Bay to south



Figure 14: Recording features to south of Blundell House, looking west

#### 4. Discussion

Dundrum Castle is a monument in state care and has been scheduled under the conditions of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. It has been given the designation DOW 044:006 by the Department for Communities: Historical Environment Division (HED). It is not proposed to discuss the castle and its history here, as this has been the subject of much literature elsewhere. A summary is given by the HED thus:

The place name, Dundroma, suggests an Early Christian settlement on the site & excavations at the castle did uncover some pre-Norman finds. The 1m thick wall of the oval upper ward, 56m x 40m across was probably built by John de Courcy in the 1190s; the castle was captured by King John in 1210 & granted to Hugh de Lacy in 1227. The 4-storey round keep probably dates to this period. The gate house was probably added in the 1260s & the bailey extending down the hill side at some time after that. The castle was said to be ruinous in 1333. In 1636 it was granted to Sir Frances Blundell who built the L-shaped house in the lower ward. See SM7 for detailed description, plans etc. Works to replace the kiosk at the castle entrance with a portacabin were carried out under archaeological supervision. An L-shaped area 1m x 5m around the cabin was excavated, revealing nothing of archaeological significance and also a trench for a service pipe, 44.5m x 0.4m wide. Mortared stones were encountered running across the trench, but as the trench was so narrow and shallow, it was not possible to ascertain their date or function (HED 2018).

The history of the site is covered in much greater detail by Macdonald (2013) and he makes several references to the landscaping of the southern part of the site, suggesting that it probably occurred during the tenure of the Blundell family. He also records that the landscaping was probably much more extensive than it is today and much has been lost, principally due to the construction of the modern car park. The garden area was suggested to be created in the 1630s

when the Blundell family added the architecturally pretentious east wing...the break in slope that separates the two terraces [upper and middle in figure 06 above] coincides with the break in the curtain wall of the outer ward suggests that the creation of the garden terraces may have been part of a wider project to transform Dundrum Castle from a medieval military site to a seventeenth-century country residence suitable for a gentleman landowner (Macdonald 2013, 109).

The events of the 1641 rebellion forced the permanent abandonment of the Blundell house and with it, the gardens.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations for further work**

The identification of seventeenth century garden features has confirmed the longevity of occupation at this impressive monument. It is recommended that further and more detailed survey be carried out here in order to fully understand the extent of these features and how they relate to the site as a whole.

## **6. Bibliography**

Macdonald, P. 2009. *Site Evaluation and Excavation at Blundell's House, Dundrum Castle, County Down*, Data Structure Report 071, Belfast: Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork.

Macdonald, P. 2013. *Geophysical Survey and Excavation at Dundrum Castle, County Down 2012 and 2013*, Data Structure Report 104, Belfast: Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork.

Website: <https://apps.communities-ni-gov.uk/NISMR-PUBLIC/Details.aspx?MonID=8533> [accessed 6 November 2018].

**APPENDIX: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM****Site:** Dundrum Castle Gardens**Date:** 29 June 2013**Make and model of camera:** *Ricoh G600W*

<b>Frame no</b>	<b>Viewed From</b>	<b>Details</b>
RIMG0001	South	View of Blundell House and possible steps
RIMG0002	South	View of Blundell House and possible steps
RIMG0003	South	View of Blundell House and possible steps
RIMG0004	South	View of Blundell House and possible steps
RIMG0009	South-west	South-western corner of Blundell House
RIMG0019	South	View of terraces with castle in background
RIMG0025	South-east	View of terraces with castle in background
RIMG0026	South	View of terraces with castle in background
RIMG0026A	North	View of terraces with Blundell house in background
RIMG0029	North-west	View of terraces with Blundell house in background
RIMG0002A	South	View of terraces with entrance and castle in background
RIMG0008	South-east	View of terraces with toilet block in background
RIMG0047	West	View of terraces
RIMG0001A	South-west	Survey Group in action at terraces
RIMG0011	North	View of excavation trench across terraces
RIMG0069	North-east	View of terraces with Dundrum Bay in background
RIMG0016	East	View of possible steps to south of Blundell House