



Monitoring Report No. 213

**St. Mary's Parish Church
John Mitchell Place
Newry
Co. Down**

AE/10/185E

Brian Sloan

P/2010/0569/F

Site Specific Information

Site Address: St. Mary's Parish Church, John Mitchell Place, Newry, Co. Down

Townland: Newry

SMR No.: DOW

State Care *Scheduled* *Other* ✓

Grid Ref: IJ 0855126104

County: Down

Excavation Licence No: AE/10/185E

Planning Ref / No.: P/2010/0569/F

Date of Monitoring: Tuesday 14th December 2010

Archaeologist Present: Brian Sloan

Brief Summary:

Four test trenches were excavated to evaluate the potential impact of a proposed development of a car park on any hidden archaeological remains. The proposed development site is located near to Bagnell's Castle (DOW 046:042) and is located within the Newry Area of Archaeological Potential. The trenches were excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil with nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in either of the trenches.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of four test trenches by mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth-edged 'sheugh' bucket under archaeological supervision.

Size of area opened:

Three trenches each measuring approximately 10m in length by 1.5m in width.

Current Land Use: Grassy area to side of current church.

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was requested to assist NIEA make an informed response to the Planning Service regarding proposals to construct a car park adjacent to St. Mary's Parish Church, John Mitchell Place, Newry, Co. Down (P/2010/0569/F). The proposed car park is within the same plot of ground as the church, bounded on all sides by a mortared stone wall, with a gate providing access to John Mitchell Place at the east end of the site. The trenches were located on a well manicured lawn which runs around the church.

The evaluation was requested due to the proximity of the proposed car park and church to Bagnell's Castle, which is located approximately 145m east of the site. The proposed development is also within the Newry Area of Archaeological Potential. The evaluation was requested by Gail Howell (Casework Officer; NIEA) due to the possibility that previously unrecorded archaeological remains might be disturbed during the development.

Excavation

A total of four test trenches (each measuring 10m x 1.5m) were excavated on the grassy areas within the proposed development area. The trenches were all aligned roughly east/west and were mechanically excavated with the aid of a digger equipped with a smooth edged 'sheugh' bucket. They were excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil, which was encountered at an average depth in the trenches of approximately 0.8-1m.

Trench 1 was positioned parallel to the southern boundary of the application site and measured approximately 10m by 1.5m. The trench was aligned roughly east/west and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 104) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.7m. A simple stratigraphic sequence was encountered in this trench.

The sod and topsoil in Trench 1 (Context No. 101) consisted of a mid to dark brown clay loam. This deposit had infrequent inclusions of rounded and angular stones (average size: 30 x 30 x 40mm) and active plant roots were observed within it. Numerous fragments of brick and glass were observed within this deposit and it is postulated that it represents modern make-up of the ground surrounding the church following its construction in the 19th century. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 101) had an average depth of 0.4m and directly overlay a thin spread of loose mortar and brick fragments (Context No. 102).

The spread of loose mortar and brick fragments (Context No. 102) was on average 0.2m thick and extended the length of the trench. It is assumed that this deposit represents activity associated with the construction of the current church. The spread of mortar and brick overlay a friable mid to light brown clay

(Context No. 103) which had an average thickness of 0.1m. Three sherds of transfer printed ceramics were recovered from this clay (Context No. 103) which is interpreted as being the original topsoil that had become buried due to the construction of the church. The natural subsoil in Trench 1 (Context No. 104) consisted of a pale buff sandy clay with frequent inclusions of small rounded stones. There were no finds or features of an archaeological nature encountered in this trench.

Trench 2 was positioned approximately 4m to the west of Trench 1. The trench was aligned roughly east/west and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 204) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.8m. A simple stratigraphic sequence was encountered in this trench.

The sod and topsoil in this trench (Context No. 201) consisted of a mid to dark brown clay loam. This deposit had infrequent inclusions of rounded and angular stones (average size: 30 x 30 x 40mm) and active plant roots were observed within it. Numerous fragments of brick and glass were observed within this deposit. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 201) had an average depth of 0.4m and directly overlay a thin spread of loose mortar and brick fragments (Context No. 202).

The spread of loose mortar and brick fragments (Context No. 202) was on average 0.2m thick and extended the length of the trench. It is assumed that this deposit represents activity associated with the construction of the current church. The spread of mortar and brick overlay a friable mid to light brown clay (Context No. 203) which had an average thickness of 0.2m. A single clay pipe stem, as well as fragments of ceramics dating to the 18th-19th centuries were recovered from this deposit, as well as infrequent fragments of brick. This deposit directly overlay organic silt (Context No. 204). A small cutting into the silt (Context No. 204) confirmed the depth of this deposit to be in excess of 0.5m and so excavation ceased at this level. Nothing of archaeological significance was observed in this deposit (Context No. 204) and it is thought that the deposit is naturally occurring. The agent for the site, Seamus Collins, informed the author that the land in the vicinity is quite boggy, which along with the movement of water from the Newry River may account for the accumulation of this deposit.

Trench 3 was positioned 25m to the north of Trench 2, parallel to the northern boundary of the application site and measured approximately 10m by 1.5m. The trench was aligned roughly east/west and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 303) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.6m. A simple stratigraphic sequence was encountered in this trench.

The sod and topsoil in Trench 3 (Context No. 301) consisted of a mid to dark brown clay loam. This deposit had infrequent inclusions of rounded and angular stones (average size: 30 x 30 x 40mm) and active plant roots were observed within it. Numerous fragments of brick and glass were observed within this deposit and it is postulated that it represents modern make-up of the ground surrounding the church following its construction in the 19th century. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 301) had an average depth of 0.2m and directly overlay a thickish deposit of building rubble (Context No. 202).

The spread of building rubble (Context No. 202) was on average 0.4m thick and extended the length of the trench. It is assumed that this deposit represents activity associated with the construction of

the current church. The spread of building rubble (Context No. 202) overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 303) which consisted of a pale buff sandy clay with frequent inclusions of small rounded stones. There were no finds or features of an archaeological nature encountered in this trench.

Trench 4 was positioned approximately 6m to the east of Trench 3, and measured approximately 10m by 1.5m. The trench was aligned roughly east/west and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 403) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.4m. A simple stratigraphic sequence was encountered in this trench.

The sod and topsoil in Trench 4 (Context No. 401) consisted of a mid to dark brown clay loam. This deposit had infrequent inclusions of rounded and angular stones (average size: 30 x 30 x 40mm) and active plant roots were observed within it. Numerous fragments of brick and glass were observed within this deposit. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 401) had an average depth of 0.4m and directly overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 402).

The natural subsoil in Trench 4 (Context No. 404) consisted of a pale buff sandy clay with frequent inclusions of small rounded stones. At the eastern end of the trench a drain (Context No. 403) was observed cutting the natural subsoil (Context No. 402) this feature (Context No. 403) was observed as loose angular stones within a vertical sided cut. Fragments of broken ceramic drainage pipe of probable 20th century date were recovered from this feature (Context No. 403). There were no finds or features of an archaeological nature encountered in this trench.

Nothing of archaeological significance was noted during the evaluation. It is recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out at the development site. No publication is required, apart from a short summary in the annual *Excavations Bulletin*.

Archive:

Finds: n/a

Photographs: 8 digital images, held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: n/a

Signed: _____ Date: _____



Figure 1: general map showing location of development site (in red).

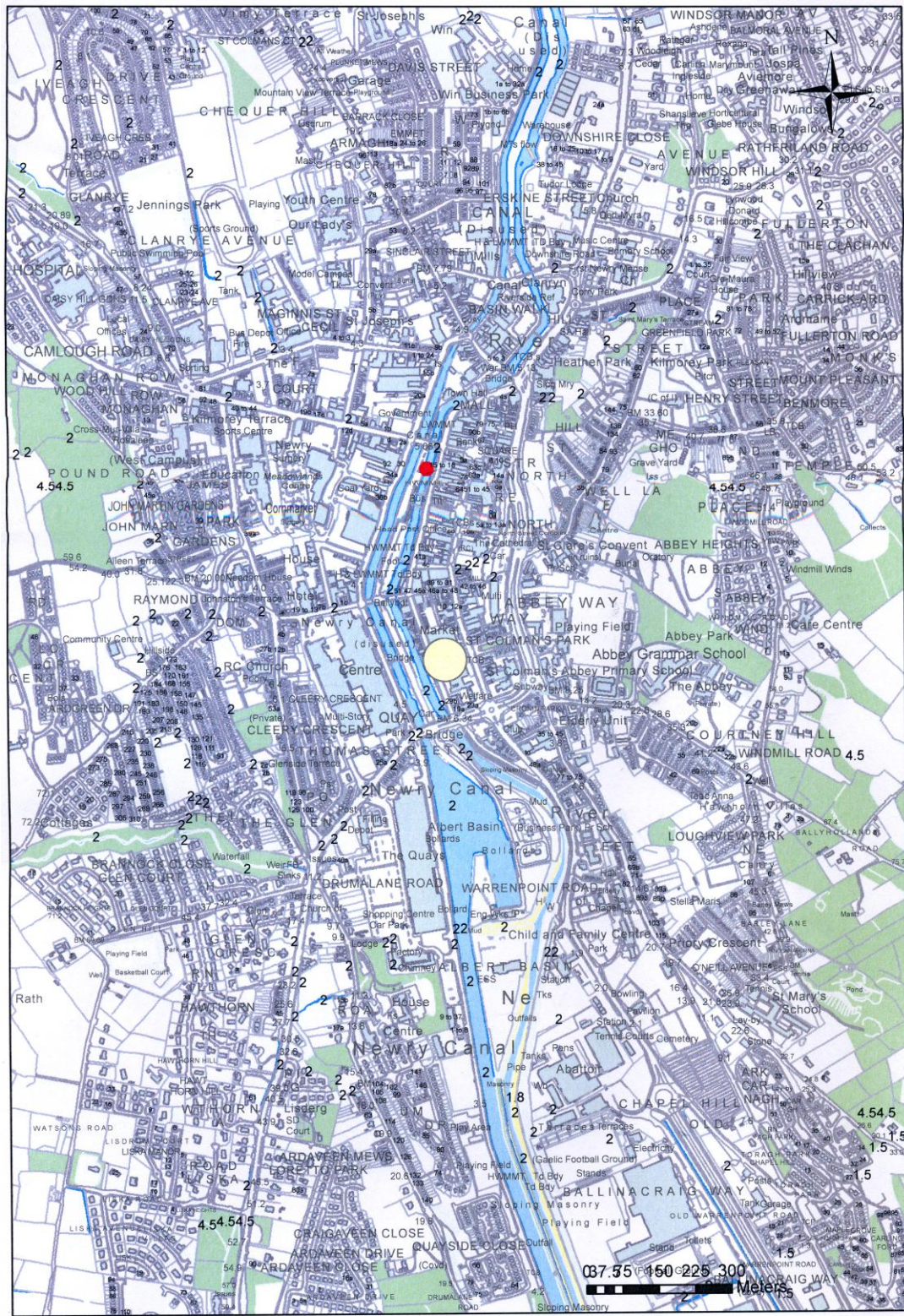


Figure 2: Detailed map of the application site (yellow circle).

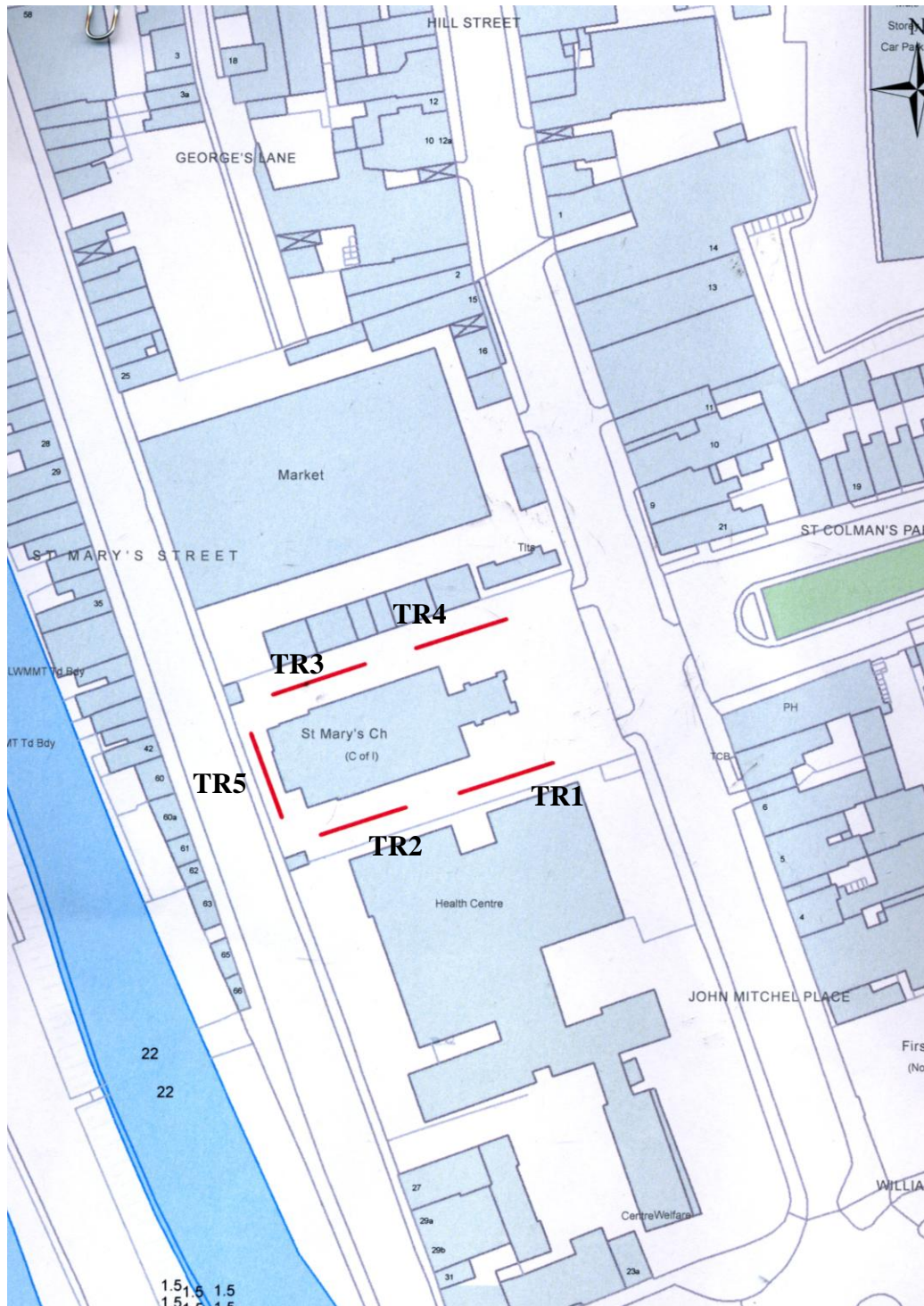


Figure 3: Map showing location of test trenches. Trench 5 was not excavated due to the presence of modern services in this area,



Plate 1: Application site prior to the evaluation, looking west.



Plate 2: Excavation of Trench 1, looking west.



Plate 3: Silech deposit in Trench 2 (Context No.204), looking east.



Plate 4: North facing section of Trench 3 showing thick deposit of building rubble/debris (Context No. 302).