



Monitoring Report No. 270

**6 Saul Street
Downpatrick
Co. Down**

AE/13/142

R/2007/0947/F

BRIAN SLOAN

Site Specific Information

Site Name: 6 Saul Street, Downpatrick, Co. Down

Townland: Demesne of Down

SMR No. : DOW 037:101

State Care Scheduled Other ✓ [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref.: J4870044700

County: Down

Excavation Licence No. : AE/13/142E

Planning Ref / No. : R/2007/0947/F

Dates of Monitoring: 29th-30th August 2013

Archaeologist Present: Brian Sloan

Brief Summary: An archaeological investigation was carried out at the site of a proposed development of residential dwellings for the Simon Community NI at 6 Saul Street Downpatrick, Co. Down. The development site is within an area of increased archaeological potential (historic town of Downpatrick DOW 037:091) as well as being in the vicinity as the as yet unlocated Priory of 'St. Thomas the Martyr' (DOW 037:101). The investigation was undertaken using a mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth edged 'sheugh' bucket under archaeological supervision. The investigation proved that the area had been severely truncated by modern activity, with nothing of archaeological significance being encountered. It is recommended that no further archaeological mitigation is necessary in relation to this development.

Type of monitoring: Mechanical excavation of overlying strata onto geological subsoil.

Size of area opened: Roughly triangular area, maximum measurements 20m north/south by 14m east/west.

Current Land Use: Waste ground.

Intended Land Use: Residential dwellings for the Simon Community NI.

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

An archaeological investigation was carried out at the site of a proposed development for the Simon Community NI (Planning Ref: R/2007/0947/F) on behalf of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). The site is located at 6 Saul Street, Downpatrick, Co. Down (Figure One), on the west facing slope of a small drumlin. The site exists as a roughly triangular piece of waste ground (Figure Two) approximately 20m (north/south) by 14m (maximum length east/west). It is bounded on the west and south by a retaining wall and on the north and east by a wooden fence. The archaeological investigation was prompted by the location of the proposed development, being in proximity to the historic centre of Downpatrick (DOW 037:091) as well as the likely location of an Augustinian Priory (St. Thomas the Martyr DOW 037:101). Prior to the investigation the site existed as waste ground, with thick shrubbery present particularly in the southern area. The site had been used in the recent past for dumping, with a lot of rubbish being cleared along with the shrubbery to allow the investigation to proceed (Plate 1).

The investigation was requested by Ken Neill (NIEA), and involved the mechanical removal of overlying strata onto the natural subsoil to assess the presence and survival of archaeological features and/or deposits.

Account of the investigation

The area was excavated with a mechanical digger fitted with a smooth edged 'sheugh' bucket. The natural subsoil (Context No. 105) was encountered in the southernmost portion of the site, although the investigation proved the site has been heavily truncated by modern activity. A retaining wall (Context No. 101) bound the site on the west and south, and a man-hole (Context No. 102) is present in the north-western corner of the area.

The uppermost deposit consisted of a series of discreet lenses of hardcore gravel and a light to mid brown sandy loam (Context No. 104) with frequent inclusions of medium to large angular stones throughout (average size 0.2m x 0.4m x 0.4m). Due to the obviously modern nature of the deposit (Context No. 104) it was excavated as a single stratigraphic unit. Numerous machine made bricks were noted throughout the deposit (Context No. 104) as well as plastic pipe fragments and plastic sheeting. The deposit extended across the entirety of the development site and varied in thickness from 0.8m in the south to over 2.7m in the north part of the site. Excavation in this area did not reveal the base of this deposit due to health and safety concerns about depth and stability (Plate 2).

In the north-east corner of the site, the sandy loam (Context No. 104) was 1.9m thick and overlay a dark brown gritty loam (Context No.103). This deposit is also determined to be modern in nature due to the recovery of a plastic toilet seat from the top of this deposit (Context No. 103).

Excavation ceased at this depth due to health and safety concerns of the depth and stability of the overlying deposit (Context No. 104).

Subsoil was encountered only in the southernmost portion of the site and consisted of a yellowish orange clay with numerous stone inclusions (Context No. 105). A single negative feature (Plate 3) was observed cutting the natural subsoil (Context No. 105). This feature (Cut Context No. 106; Fill Context No. 107) ran in a roughly east/west direction for 3.2m and varied in width from 0.6m at its widest (eastern) end to 0.3m (western end). A small cutting across the feature (Context No. 107) showed it to be shallow (0.2m deep) and filled with a mid grey brown sandy loam (Context No. 106). Numerous fragments of plastic as well as sherds from a milk bottle were recovered, testifying to the modern date of this feature. It is assumed that this feature (Context No 106/107) represents a modern property boundary or garden feature.

The investigation indicated nothing of archaeological significance is present within the confines of the development site. A great deal of disturbance and truncation has occurred due to modern activity associated with previous structures on the site. The depth (at least 2.7m) of the overlying strata (Context No. 104) is surprising and probably reflects the underlying topography of the drumlin, with Context No. 104 representing a land filling/leveling deposit following the demolition of the structure that stood onsite.

Conclusions

The investigation proved that the proposed development area has been heavily truncated by modern activity. A single negative feature cutting the natural subsoil was encountered in the south of the area, although the presence of fragments of plastic testifies to the modern nature of the feature. As such, it is not recommended that further archaeological mitigation is necessary at the site prior to the development proceeding. Publication of the results of the investigation is not merited apart from a short summary to be included in the annual *Excavations Bulletin*.

Archive:

Finds: No finds were recovered during the investigation.

Photographs: The photographs taken during the investigation are temporarily archived at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast BT7 1NN.

Plans / Drawings: No plans or drawings were generated during the investigation.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

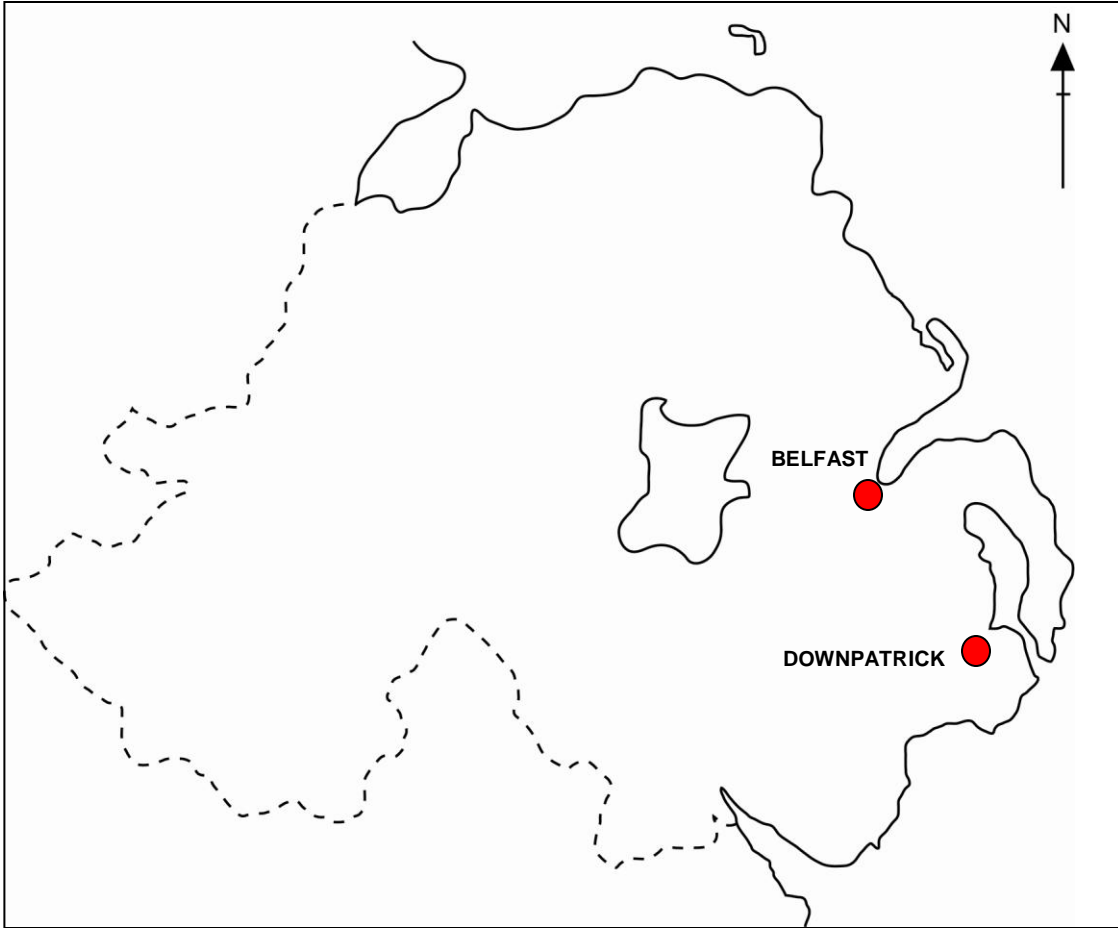


Figure One: General location map

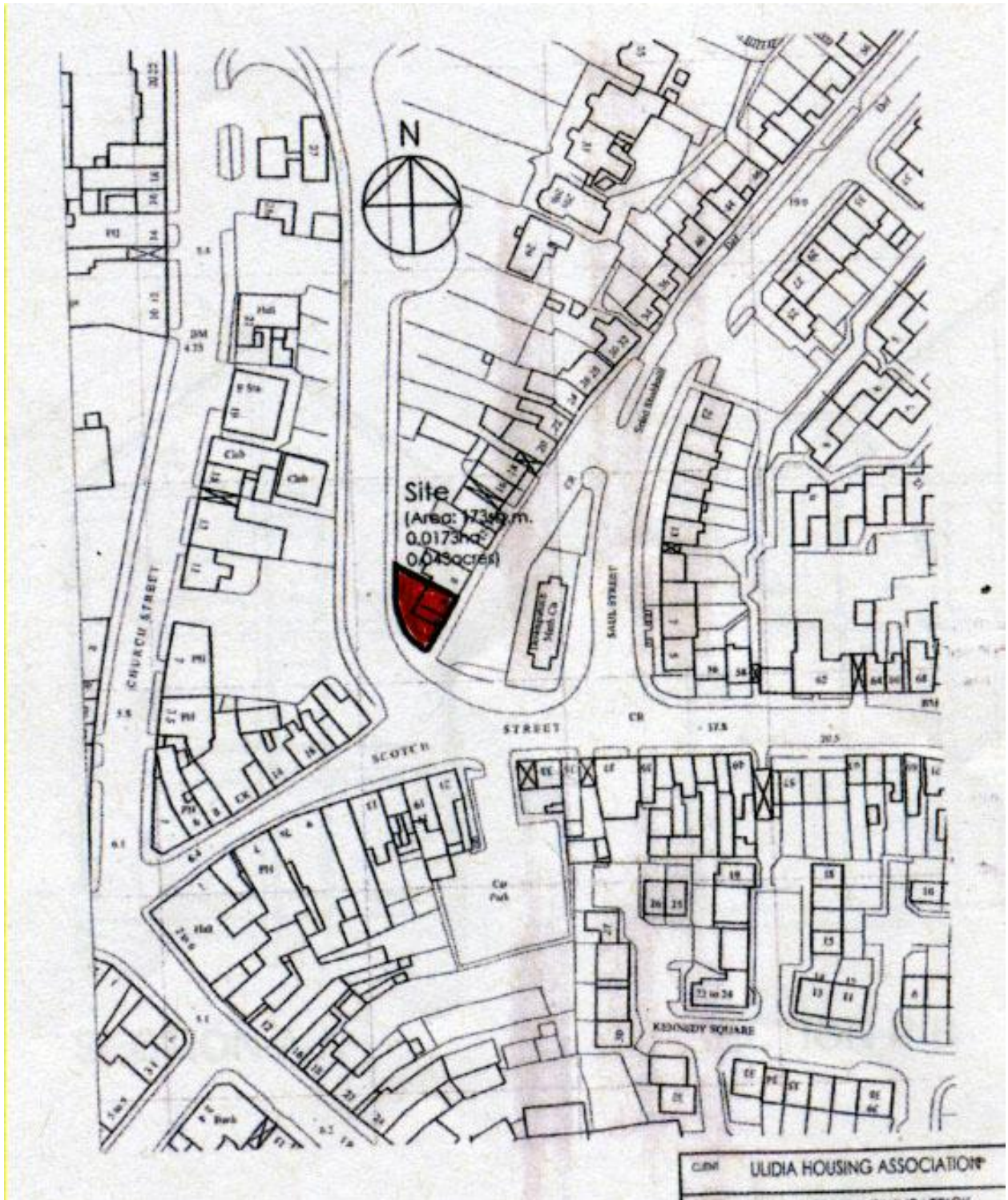


Figure Two: Proposed development (shown in red). (image provided by Nuala Dalcz Simon Community NI)



Plate 1: Development site R/2007/0947/F during the clearance of rubbish and shrubbery, looking south.



Plate 2: Mid excavation shot of Context No. 104 showing the depth and unstable nature of the deposit, looking south.

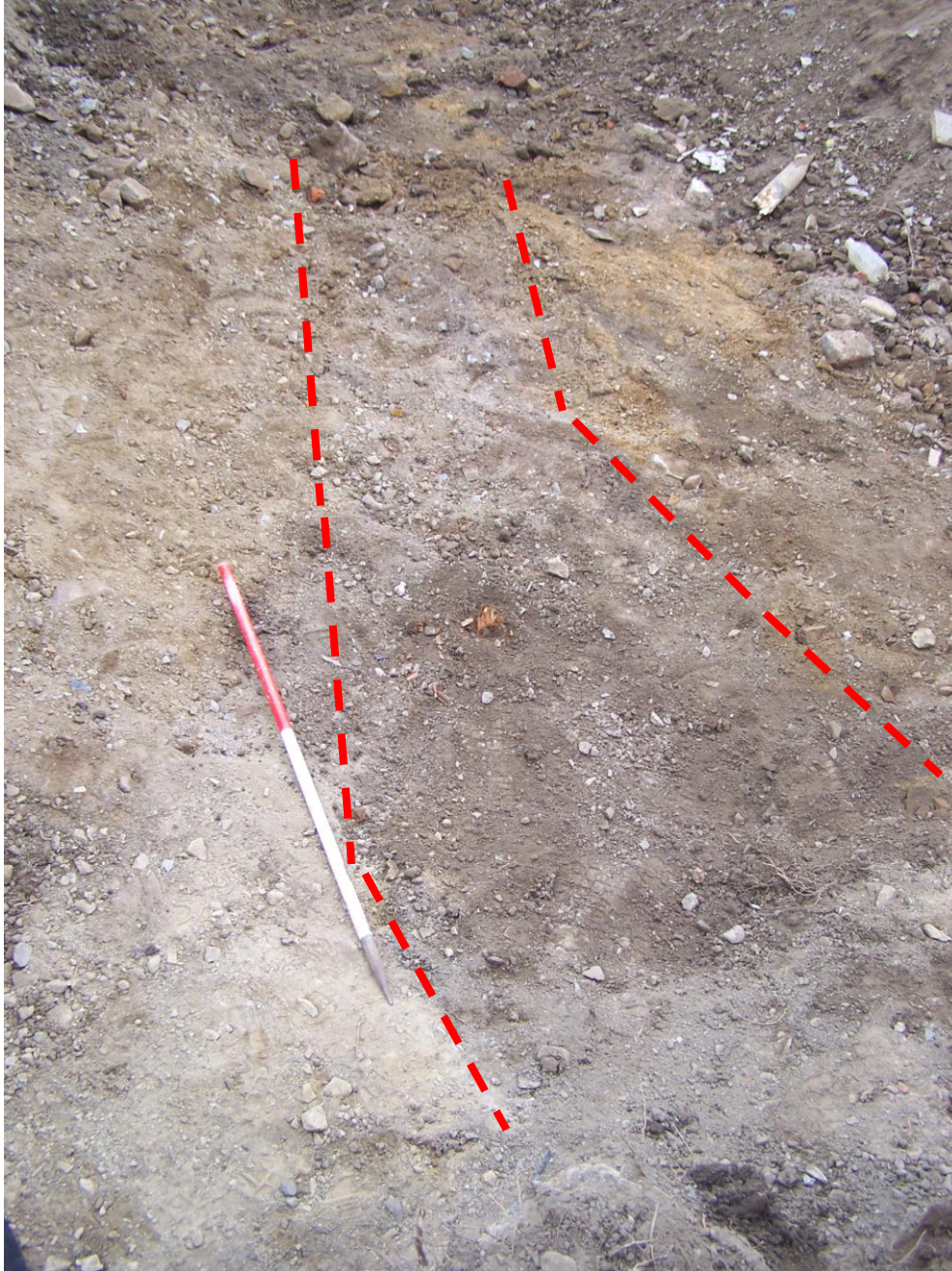


Plate 3: East/west aligned linear feature (Context Nos. 106/107) looking west.