

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

**Monitoring Report No. 02**  
St John's Point Church,  
May 2004.



On behalf of



**Monitoring Report: St John's Point Church, Co. Down**

**SMR: DOW 045:013**

**18<sup>th</sup> May 2004**

**Nicholas Beer**

**CAF MR 02**

## 1 *Background*

- 1.1 Archaeological monitoring of the excavation of the footprint of an information board at St John's Point Churchyard, Co. Down (Plate 1), took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2004. The monitoring was undertaken by Nicholas Beer of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast. The monitoring was conducted on behalf of the Protecting Historic Monuments branch of the Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage, who funded the work.
- 1.2 The ecclesiastical site at St John's Point Church (SMR: DOW 045:013) is located in the Lecale district on the southern County Down coast, approximately three miles south of Killough. The monument is in State Care. The church's construction dates to the tenth century AD, although it is thought to have been built upon the foundations of an earlier wooden structure (Hamlin 1987, 96). The church was granted to the abbey of St Patrick in the year 1183 AD by Malachi, Bishop of Down (Reeves 1847, 33). The church is a small rectangular gabled building, with antae on the east and west, and is approximately 4.0 m by 6.0 m in dimension with walls 0.7 m thick. The structure stands on rough projecting footings and is built of split stone with quoins and granite dressings. The west gable wall survives to a height of 5.5 m and the side walls survive to a height of 3.0 m, but only the footing remains of the east gable wall (Jope 1966, 295-296).
- 1.3 Trial excavations were conducted at the site in autumn 1977 by Nick Brannon (1980). An inward bulge in the northern wall required archaeological investigation to ascertain the nature of the deposits below and the possible causes of the walls subsidence (*ibid*, 59). A long cist was found lying underneath the north wall, a minimum of sixteen inhumations were found within the church interior, and the exterior trench uncovered two cist burials. The orientation of the burials was markedly different to the church and suggests that a graveyard existed prior to the construction of the stone church. However, many of the interior inhumations do appear to conform to the interior dimensions, lying in an east to west alignment respecting the north wall (*ibid*, 62).

## 2 *Archiving*

- 2.1 A copy of this report has been deposited with the Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage. The records generated during the monitoring and the single find recovered during the course of the excavation are temporarily archived within the School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

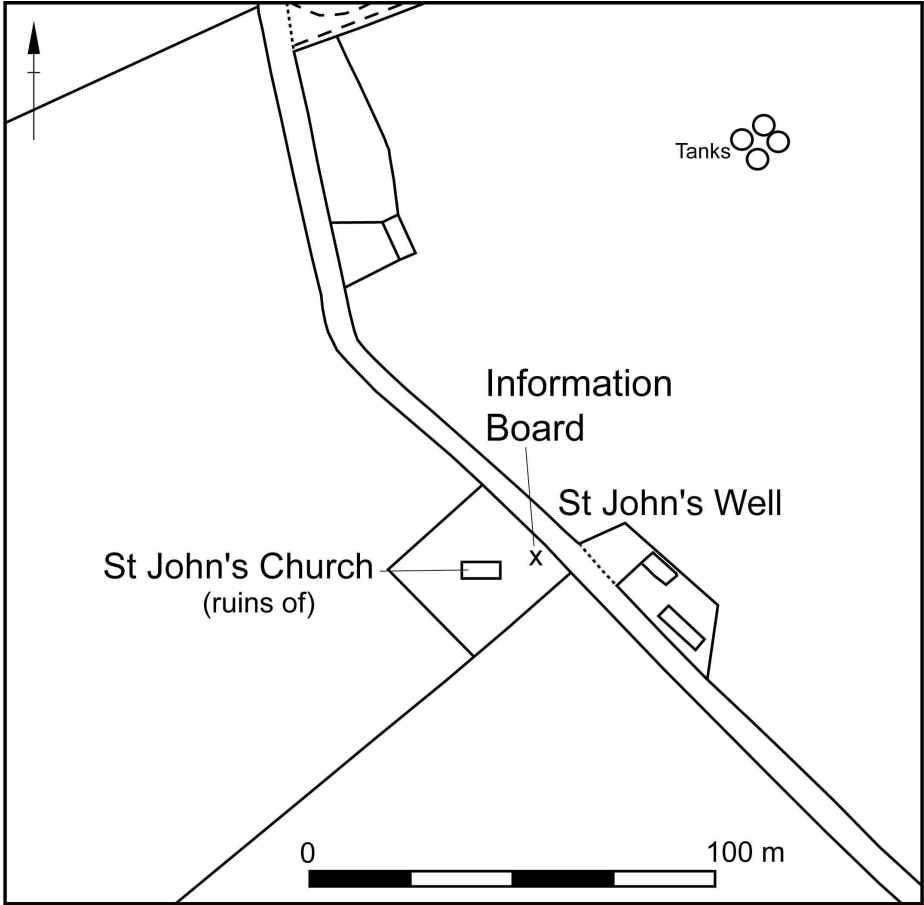


Figure 1: Location of Information Board at St John's Point Church.

### 3 *Monitoring*

- 3.1 Staff of the Environment and Heritage Service: Regional Operations requested that monitoring by an experienced archaeologist took place during the excavation of a footprint for a new information board at St John's Point Church, Co. Down. The information board was located 5.0 m to the east of the north-east corner of St John's Point Church, and 3.5 m west of the eastern field boundary (Fig. 1). The principal objective of the monitoring was to ascertain the character and date of any deposits disturbed during the installation of the information board.
- 3.2 The footprint (Trench 1) was excavated by hand. Its final dimensions were 0.5 m x 0.5 m and it extended to a depth of 0.5 m (Plate 2). The stratigraphic sequence consisted of two deposits; a dark brown humic topsoil (Context No. 101) overlying, at a depth of 0.4 m, an orange brown sandy loam subsoil (Context No. 102), which was excavated to a depth of 0.1 m. A cattle tooth was the single find recovered from Context No. 101.

### 4 *Discussion*

- 4.1 The deposits excavated in the process of installing a new information board at St John's Point Church contained no features of archaeological importance. The stratigraphic sequence demonstrated an undisturbed natural stratigraphy, which contained only a single find.

### 5 *Recommendations*

- 5.1 Despite the importance of St John's Point Church, the sequence of deposits disturbed during the installation of the information board was not of any archaeological significance. Consequently, it is recommended that publication of the results of the monitoring is not merited. No additional post-excavation research or other resources will be necessary.

### 6 *Credits and Acknowledgements*

- 6.1 The monitoring was undertaken by Nicholas Beer (Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast). For their assistance during the course of the monitoring and the preparation of this report, the author is grateful to: John Davidson (Queen's University Belfast), Dr Colm Donnelly (Queen's University Belfast), Declan Hurl (Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage), Dr Philip Macdonald (Queen's University Belfast),

James McEvoy (Environment and Heritage Service: Regional Operations) and John O'Neill (Queen's University Belfast). The illustrations were prepared by Ruth Logue of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

7 *Bibliography*

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Brannon, N. F., 1980. "A Trial Excavation at St John's Point Church, County Down," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 43, 59-64.

Hamlin, A, 1987. *Historic Monuments of Northern Ireland*, H.M.S.O., Belfast, Sixth edition, second impression (with revisions).

Reeves, W, 1847. *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down, Connor and Dromore*. Northern Whig Ltd. Belfast.

**Photographic Plates**



Plate 1: St John's Point Church facing south west.



Plate 2: Trench One, Context No. 102, excavated to a depth of 0.5 m.

**Appendix One: Context Register**

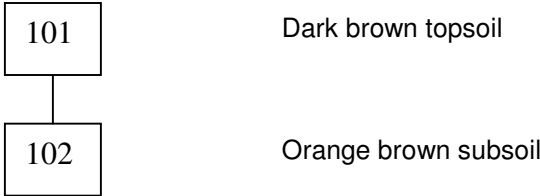
Trench One

- |        |                                   |
|--------|-----------------------------------|
| C. 101 | Dark brown loam, topsoil.         |
| C. 102 | Orange brown sandy loam, subsoil. |



**Appendix Two: Harris Matrix**

Trench One.



### Appendix Three: Photographic Register

Film One: 18 / 05 / 04

Colour Slide Film, Kodak Elite 200 ISO.

Image	Facing	Subject
1	West	St John's Point Church, prior to excavation.
2	West	Trench One, Context 102, at final excavated depth of 0.5 m.
3	West	St John's Point Church, after installation of information board.

**Appendix Four: Finds register**

Trench One:

Context	Find
101	Cattle tooth.