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| Project Type:       | Results of Archaeological Watching Brief |
| Planning Reference: | N/A                                      |
| Excavation Number:  | AE/23/131                                |
| Commissioned by:    | The Diocese of Down and Connor           |
| Author:             | Stephen Gilmore                          |
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| Rev | Date       | Details  | Reason                    | Prepared by     | Checked by       | Approved by      | Doc No. |
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| 1   | 08.02.2024 | Milltown Cemetery, Belfast; Results of Archaeological Watching Brief | Results of Test Trenching | Stephen Gilmore | Jonathan Barkley | Jonathan Barkley | 190224b |

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## **Stephen Gilmore**

Stephen Gilmore graduated with a BSc. in Archaeology from Queens University, Belfast in 1990; and a Certificate in Museum Studies in 1996. He is a Member of the professional archaeological bodies CIFA and IAI. Since 1990 he has worked as a field archaeologist at all levels of responsibility to Project Manager and on all types of site from the Mesolithic to the Twentieth Century. In 1998 he was a co-founder of Northern Archaeological Consultancy Ltd, and is one of NAC's Project Managers which involves developer liaison, and scheduling, organising and overseeing all fieldwork carried out by the company. Stephen directed investigations at Milltown Cemetery in 2001 and 2012 and again in 2024. Stephen is currently undertaking an MPhil/PhD examining the development of the Belfast brickmaking industry at Queens University Belfast.

## **Executive Summary**

### **The background**

As part of the ongoing programme of maintenance and modernisation in the lower, Bog Meadows, portion of the Cemetery it was necessary for the Trustees to establish if this area of the cemetery had previously been used for burials including baby burials. In November 2023, the Trustees therefore secured the professional services of Northern Archaeological Consultancy Ltd to investigate this section of the cemetery.

Having obtained an Archaeological excavation licence (Number AE/23/131) from the Department for Communities, Historic Environment Division (DfC,HED) a series of test trenches were undertaken to establish the location and extent of unmarked and unlocated burials within this greenfield area of the cemetery.

The archaeological investigation was carried out between November 2023 and February 2024 and the results of the archaeological survey were reported on, a copy of which was submitted to the Diocese and to the (DfC,HED). It involved the archaeologically monitored mechanical excavation of a series of trenches (Plan 1).

### **Previous work**

Previous to the current phase of investigation, archaeological testing via hand-excavated test trenches was undertaken in late 2011 to ground truth the results of a geophysical survey carried out in summer 2011 to attempt to provide clarity on the location and extents of unmarked/unlocated burials within the greenfield areas at the eastern end of the cemetery and beyond. This trenching was targeted entirely on geophysical anomalies across the expected boundary of the cemetery and the Bog Meadows and identified only two areas of previously unlocated burials. These lie to the immediate west, and

northwest, of the initial investigation area, Trenches 1 to 20 and south and west of the additional investigation areas, Trenches A1 to A7 and B1 and B2 (Figure 1). Whilst there were no indications within the geophysical survey for any probable burials within the current area under investigation and the 2011 testing suggests burials stopped just outside of this area, as a matter of due diligence it was considered that the area should be subjected to archaeological investigation to provide surety on the matter.

### **Results of Investigation**

From the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 28 trenches, totalling 1144m in length, were excavated. We excavated to evidence the boundary of burials and, as we expected, a small number of baby burials were located in three of the test trenches, Trench 3, 9 and A1, and an unarticulated, un-coffined adult femur from Trench 5 (Figure 1). Nine unmarked burials were recorded within three of the test trenches. All were 'modern-historic'; probably within the last century for the coffined inhumations and within the last half century or less for those without coffins. Two burials were uncovered in close proximity to each other in Trench 3, four in close proximity to each other in Trench 9, and three in close proximity to each other in Trench A1. As well as these deliberate burials, a disarticulated, un-coffined, femur was recovered from Trench 5. This was redeposited from elsewhere as a result of previous renovations in the graveyard carried out in the late 1970s or early 1980s. It was not possible to date the femur, but the material it was deposited within was of the aforementioned dates.

Four of the nine burials were coffined, two in Trench 3 and two of those in Trench 9, the rest were un-coffined. All burials were undisturbed and were GPS located then covered back over without re-locating the remains.

### **Conclusions**

These burials were geospatially located and can be excluded from any future plans to redevelop this portion of the cemetery. These were at the edge of the known burials, and it is clear from the evidence that burials did not take place beyond these trenches, therefore defining a clear boundary. It is clearly evident from the licenced monitoring of works that whilst unmarked, modern historical, unrecorded burials have taken place within the area, these were small-scale localised burials at sporadic points, and were low in number. As per best practice it is the recommendation of the monitoring archaeologist that these located burials, which were undisturbed and remain at their original locations, were preserved in-situ. It is the conclusion of the licenced archaeologist that the areas tested, other than those locations with identified baby burials along the expected boundary, are suitable for use, now that a clear boundary has been defined.

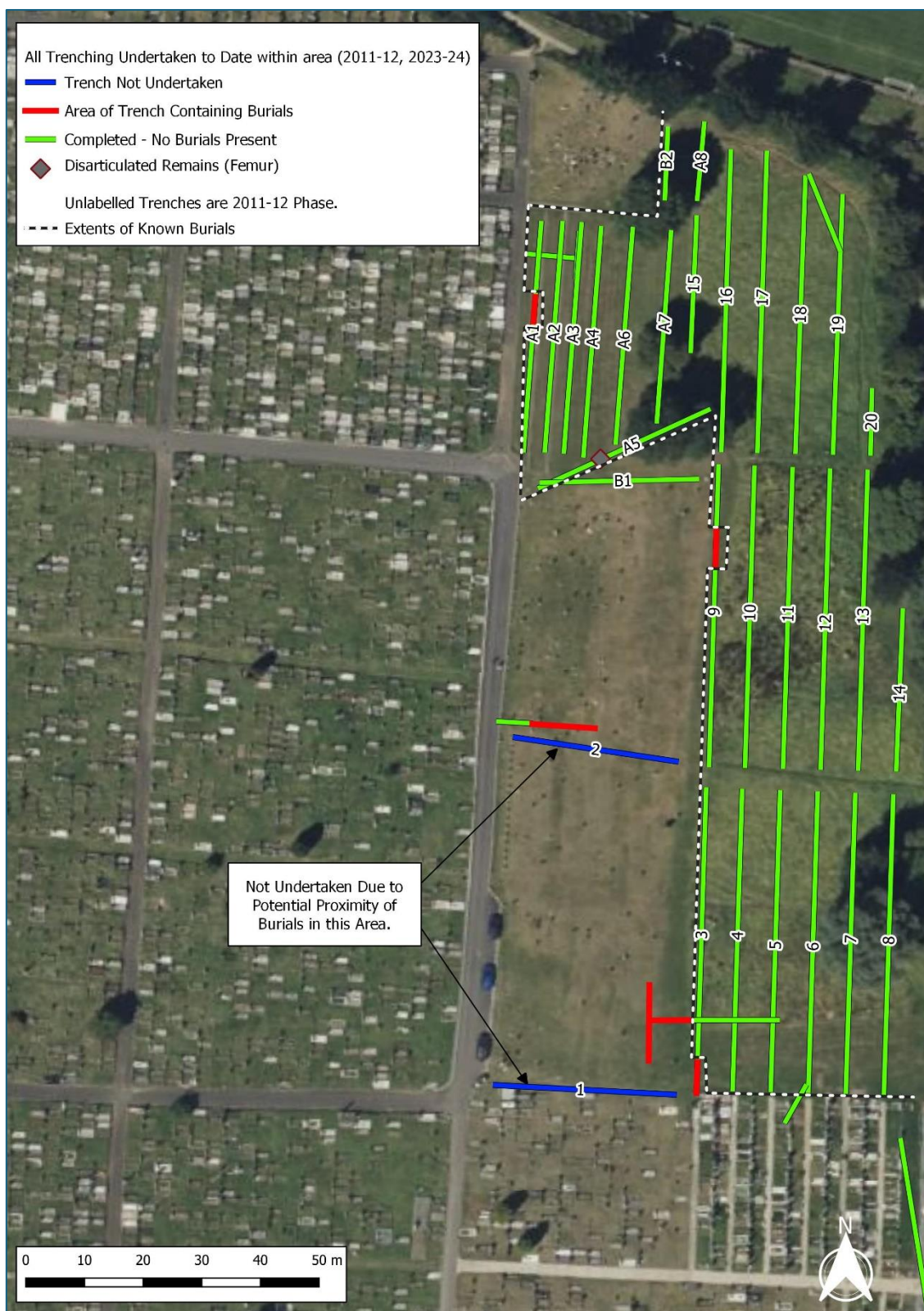


Figure 1: Location of trenches. Burials described were found only at the locations marked in the trenches.