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Tower houses and the maritime economy *c.* 1400-1641: a County Down case study

Victoria Louise McAlister

Submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

University of Dublin

2012

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Victoria Louise McAlister

Summary

This thesis investigates how the population interacted with, and contributed to, the maritime economy by looking at three baronies in coastal County Down. It utilises tower houses and associated settlements as a medium through which to examine these interactions. Therefore the tower houses are not viewed in isolation, the research is instead a study of settlement, and the role of buildings within settlements. The primary motivation of this thesis is to identify the extent of a commercial orientation within the tower houses of coastal County Down, in terms of their function and location. Both archaeological and historical sources are used to reconstruct these commercial interactions and to examine how the maritime economy changed over time. In this latter area attention has more specifically been focussed on whether economic change was cause for the cessation of construction of the building type in the seventeenth century.

How a tower house could facilitate this commercial environment is discussed. Trade has not been the sole basis for determining participation in commerce. Architectural features and the utilisation of natural resources, such as landing places and harbours, have also been investigated. A commercial network is proposed, whereby the tower houses moved excess agricultural produce from their associated landing places/anchorages to a collecting point, a port settlement, for export. We have considerably more evidence for trade at coastal port settlements than at specific tower houses, which illustrates the importance of examining how tower houses and settlements interacted with one another.

A number of specific roles at the tower houses are discussed, including: their role in navigation; in controlling ferries and causeways; in facilitating the taxing of vessels using the anchorages for shelter and in controlling offshore fishing grounds, fishtraps and riverine fish weirs. A number of sites are determined to be commercial port buildings rather than true tower houses. Throughout the thesis how tower houses commanded and controlled the maritime landscape through their siting and features is emphasised.

Evidence from throughout the thesis is collated to discuss and identify the functions of the County Down tower houses. The need to view tower houses as a multi-functional building is stressed and is suggested as being the reason for its survival into the early

modern period. The commercial function is present to varying extent, but this was a function that could be accommodated by the tower house. A criteria for distinguishing maritime and commercially oriented tower houses is proposed, with the aim of aiding identification of this function at tower houses and castles elsewhere in Ireland and Europe.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my supervisor Professor Terry Barry. His advice, encouragement and assistance throughout my Ph.D. has been greatly appreciated.

Thanks are due also to Dr. Emma Arbuthnot, Dr. Linda Shine and Dr. Rebecca Wall Forrestal for their assistance with fieldwork, sources and for their patience in answering my many questions.

I would like to thank, too, the numerous people who have provided advice and suggestions throughout the course of this thesis and for access to their research material: Dr. Niall Brady; Mr. Brian Donovan; Ms. Fiona Fitzsimons and Ms. Sharon Weadick. In Trinity College Dublin, Dr. David Ditchburn, Dr. Katharine Simms and Dr. Mark Hennessy. In Queen's University Belfast, Dr. Gillian Eadie, Dr. Mark Gardiner and Dr. Tom McNeill. In the National University of Ireland, Galway, Dr. Paul Naessens, Dr. Rory Sherlock and Dr. Kieran O'Conor and in the University of Cambridge, Dr. Catherine Hills and Ms. Carenza Lewis. Thanks also to the staff of the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record, Hill Street Belfast and to Rory McNeary in the University of Ulster, Coleraine for his help with GIS and mapping.

My thanks to all at Eneclann and to Dr. Bruce Arnold for their help, particularly in the realm of the technological.

Special thanks go to my family: my father, Aidan, and my grandfather, John Jones, for help with fieldwork and for the benefits of having surveyors and Welsh speakers on hand. Many thanks indeed go to my grandmother, Jenny McAlister, for her unswerving support and enthusiasm.

As always, this work is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Varian.

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Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Research Questions

A number of research questions directed this thesis, all motivated by interest in the role of the tower house in the Irish economy. There have been a number of historical investigations of the late medieval and early modern Irish economy, however, these have tended (understandably) to focus on those parts of the country that we have the most surviving evidence for. In this group of literature, the major ports (primarily Dublin) have been examined, alongside those parts of Ireland with the most extensive trade with England, where record survival is considerably better. From an archaeological perspective, interest in the maritime landscape has almost exclusively examined Gaelic-Irish lordships. This thesis therefore asks what the maritime economy was in a different region, in terms of ethnicity, politics and topography. It further enquires how the maritime economy changed between the beginning of the fifteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth, and seeks to identify how this impacted on society.

This thesis questions how the population interacted with, and contributed to, the maritime economy by looking at three baronies in coastal County Down. Since this study utilises tower houses and associated settlements as a medium through which to examine these interactions, a major question is whether such an approach can be profitable within the constraints of the available evidence. In addition, what is gained by using such a historical archaeology methodology in socio-economic studies?

There are a number of research questions pertinent to castle studies, and tower houses more specifically. In particular, can we further develop the definition of a tower house, and castles in general, in light of the economic evidence? The thesis also raises questions regarding the interaction of castles with the landscape, and the maritime landscape especially.

1.2 Aims

Many of the aims of this thesis concern furthering our understanding of the role of tower houses within society and the landscape. It is not just a study of tower houses, however, since it also examines the settlements in, or near to, the location of tower houses. Therefore the tower houses are not viewed in isolation, with the research

instead aiming to be a study of settlement, and the role of buildings within settlement. It similarly aims to identify the interactions between tower houses and these settlements, in terms of the maritime economy. With regards to the monument type itself, the primary motivation of this thesis is to identify the extent of a commercial orientation within the sample. Following on from this, a further aim is to develop criteria that can be used to aid identification of commercial tower houses elsewhere in Ireland.

This thesis examines the entire period of tower house construction, from the late medieval through to the early modern periods. This is intended to open academic debate on the topic of the use of perceived 'medieval' monuments in the modern era. The aim of this approach is to gain a more rounded understanding of the tower house by examining its commercial and economic functions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its ultimate fall from popularity. It is argued that there is an imbalance in that much work has been done on the origins and development of the tower house, yet there has been very little published on its decline. By aiming to determine what extent economics affected the decline of the tower house, it is hoped that this study will encourage further debate on the matter. It is likewise hoped that by investigating the function of tower houses in the early modern period, new patterns and interpretations will be produced that can lead to a re-assessment of their position within the late medieval landscape. This section of the thesis also discusses the decay of prosperous medieval port towns and further suggests that the abandonment of the tower house could be accompanied by settlement desertion. As a whole, the aim of the thesis is to develop from other recent regional studies of tower house distribution and to convincingly argue for a diverse range of functions catered for by this comparatively small structure. The intention is that new areas of interest to castellologists will be explored and new functions proposed.

The role of the tower house within the maritime landscape will be discussed, with an emphasis on their interactions with the maritime economy. Overall, the aim of this is to gain more in-depth knowledge of the extent and characteristics of maritime commerce within a regional context, the results of which could be applied to other regions of Ireland. At its highest level, the research aims to revive academic interest in economic history, illustrating how an interdisciplinary approach can shed new light on the topic.

Finally, this research aims to be a theoretically informed study of medieval and early modern Irish archaeology. The thesis may not have archaeological theory as its primary motivation, but it does seek to show what can be accomplished by utilising this framework where appropriate. The theoretical framework employed is discussed in more detail below, but it particularly draws benefit from agency, landscape archaeology (mainly phenomenology) and historical archaeology. By using this combination in the approach, a new interpretation is suggested with the aim of further discussion of the role of theory in the context of castle studies.

1.3 Hypotheses

Several hypotheses have been generated that this thesis seeks to prove. The first hypothesis is that tower houses in this region of Ireland have a maritime orientation. It is hypothesised that both the siting and the function of tower houses were determined by commercial concerns. Further to this, that the tower houses of this region of County Down had an extensive role in, and involvement with, the economy. Lastly, it is proposed that the port towns of County Down had a greater status within the Irish economy than previously recognised.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Theoretical Framework

As mentioned above, this thesis has adopted a theoretical framework. While a theoretical application has not been the motivation or main subject of this research, it has provided a basis for questioning and interpretation and thus is present throughout. At its broadest level landscape archaeological theory has played a significant part. In particular, phenomenology as extolled in Tilley's *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, has been instrumental in shaping the topic studied. Prior research into the siting within the landscape of these tower houses was developed into a study of the maritime and commercial roles of the tower house. This was mainly due to a phenomenological interpretation – in the early stages of fieldwork while assessing access to and movement between the sites. The difficulties of land-based communication became apparent and unavoidable. Consequently a phenomenological interpretation determined the nature of this Ph.D. Movement through the maritime landscape has similarly been researched through the examination of commercial networks that connect the tower houses with each other and trade routes. Landscape archaeology as applied to castles has also been a major influence on this work. It has, however, attempted to extend the current

knowledge of castles and landscapes by moving away from an investigation into designed landscapes by determining how castles employed the natural landscape and features to their advantage.

This thesis has also utilised agency as a means of understanding human actions and motivations within their social, economic and political contexts. The research proposes that tower house site, function and design was a choice by each site's builder reflecting his status in society insofar as constraining factors (such as availability of construction materials, master builders and especially the need to be close to water) allowed. Agency has also been used as a way to examine economic aspirations, by using tower houses as evidence of this. With regards to the application of agency to castle studies, it is suggested that it is still quite in its infancy. Use of agency has been hinted at by recent studies into internal arrangements in tower houses, finding that despite outward uniform appearance this masks a diverse range of lordly functions (e.g. Sherlock 2006 & 2010; Eadie 2009; Forthcoming). Johnson's work on agency is possibly the starting point for studies of agency in a medieval context, but it is argued that this work focuses too much on the actions of men of high status (Johnson 2000 & 2002). It is proposed here instead that the real value in adopting agency in a medieval and early modern context is that the framework provided allows us to uncover the actions of those lesser in stature. Although by no means low status, the tower house at least provides a useful starting point for this application of the theory.

Historical archaeology has in addition provided a framework for investigation. First, it has promoted the use of both historical and archaeological sources, combining the two record sources as evidence for examination and analysis. Second, it has influenced the decision to look at tower houses across the period of construction, regardless of historic temporal boundaries.

By utilising these disparate archaeological theories in interpreting the evidence, a new way to view the 'transition period' between the late medieval and early modern is proposed. This maintains a strong emphasis on the identification of human action within the socio-economic environment.

1.4.2 Fieldwork

This study has also employed fieldwork to provide evidence for discussion of the tower house sites within the study area (twenty-nine in total), as well as the extant settlements within the region (nine) and a selection of other sites (such as Dundrum castle, occupied into the seventeenth century, and defended houses located within close proximity of tower houses). The same fieldwork methodology was applied to all the sites. See the appendix, from p. 289, for a full listing of sites and a summary of major features.

1.4.2.1 Description of fieldwork

The sites were selected for investigation based on those tower houses, both recognised and suggested/possible sites, listed in the *Archaeological Survey of County Down* (*ASCD*). Contemporary mapping was also consulted, but a strong correlation between those depicted on such maps and the listing in the *ASCD* was observed. Indeed, the accuracy of these maps is questioned, since a number of tower houses appear on some and not on others of approximately the same date. Consequently the maps were ascertained to have been selective in their depictions of tower house sites. All of the sites outlined above were then visited. This began with a survey of the exterior of the tower houses, again with reference to the *ASCD*, with checks of these descriptions against my own observations. Sites were extensively photographed (and in some cases video footage was compiled for future reference), as were visible features. The views from ground level were also recorded and the command of the landscape was assessed from all angles of the tower house. There was no access to roof level at most of these sites, so visibility from the base of the tower house was taken as a minimum view of the landscape. The surrounding landscape was then surveyed with several issues in mind – the distance from the tower house to navigable water, the ease of access to this water, and the identification of the landing places, anchorages and maritime roads located in proximity to the tower house. Insofar as possible field walking was undertaken along the adjacent coast/river bank. The tower house was assessed from this location and again photographed and video recorded. Where a tower house was located within an extant settlement, survey and field walking was carried out so as to ascertain the possible position of the tower house within the settlement at the time of tower house occupation. In some cases the historic street plan has been preserved which allowed for more accurate identification of the tower house situation within the settlement.

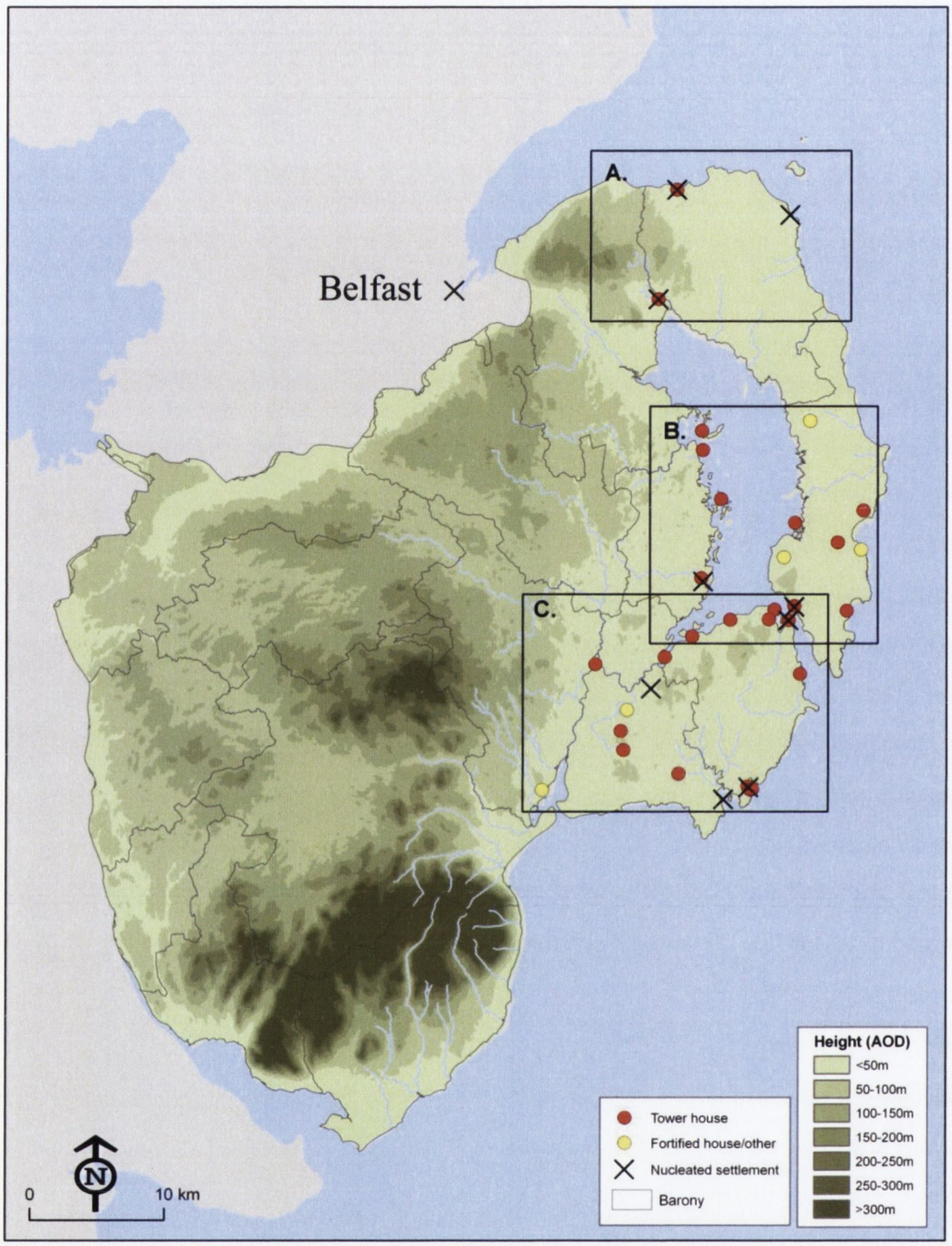


Figure 1

Distribution map of tower houses and other late medieval fortified buildings in County Down

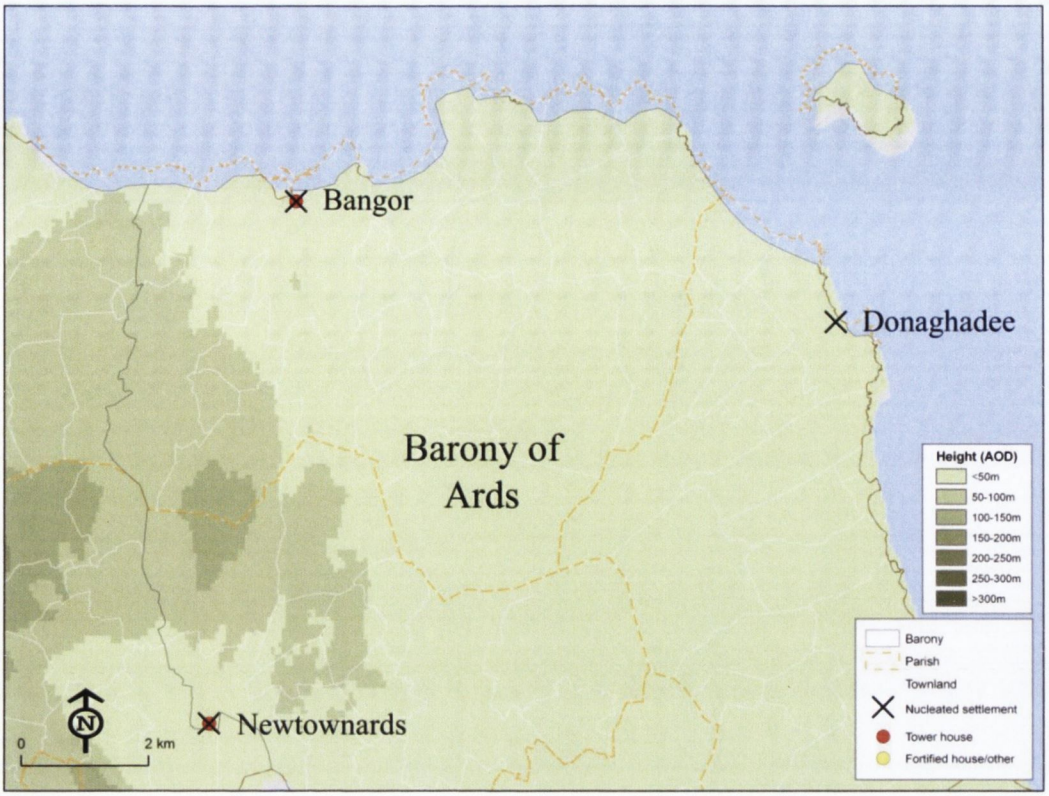


Figure 2

Map A distribution map of tower houses and other late medieval fortified buildings in the north of the County Down study area



Figure 3

Map B distribution map of tower houses and other late medieval fortified buildings in the middle of the study area

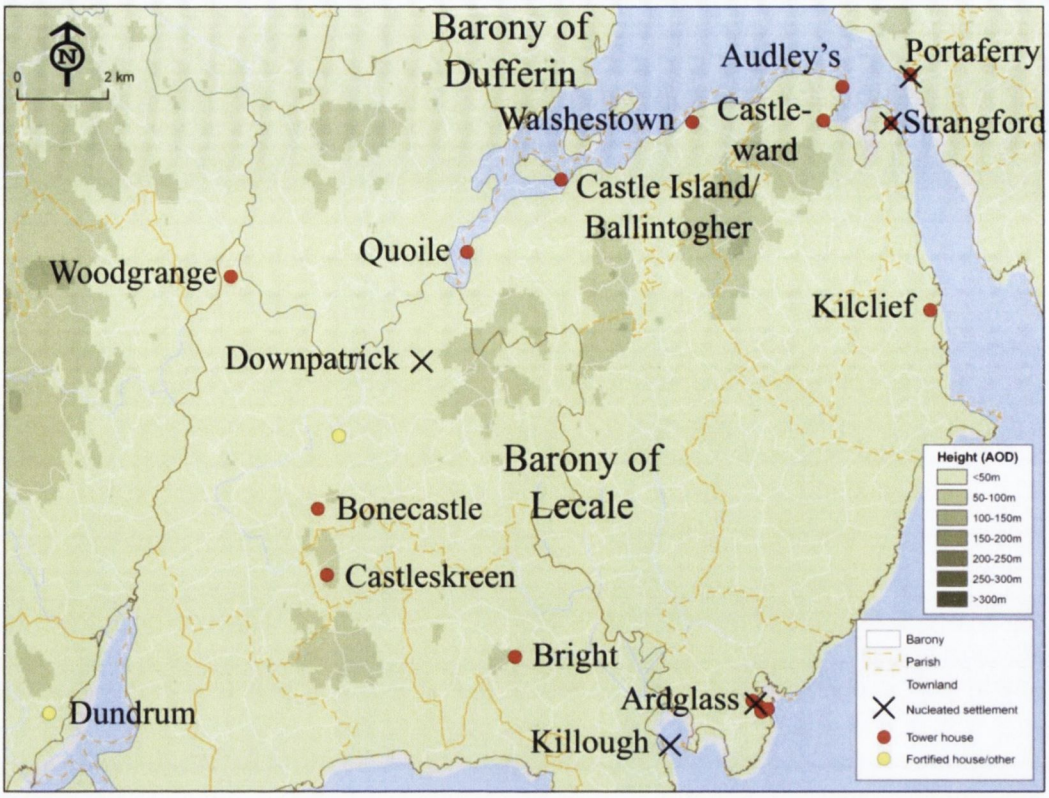


Figure 4

Map C distribution map of tower houses and other late medieval fortified buildings in the south of the study area

1.4.2.2 Fieldwork issues

There were two issues that arose during the course of fieldwork that are worth describing at the outset. All but one of the tower house sites were visited as part of the fieldwork exercise. The exception to this was Ringhaddy castle, where there were issues regarding accessing the tower house since it involved traversing private land. Water-borne access to this site was also unable to be obtained. In addition, the precise location of Woodgrange castle on the ground was not able to be determined. Since an approximate location was identifiable, a landscape survey was instead undertaken, which was able to ascertain its location in relation to the Quoile River.

It was not possible to arrange visits to the sites from the water, which would have allowed further understanding of water-based access. Instead fieldwork was supplemented by discussion with mariners familiar with sailing in the area and who had used the anchorages etc. located adjacent to some of the tower houses. In addition to

this, the published *Sailing Directions* for the region and the *Admiralty Charts* allowed for the recreation of sailing routes to the tower houses.

1.5 Reasons for choice of study area

In short, a study area for this research was chosen so as to provide detailed analysis on the topic of tower house involvement in commerce. It was felt that a wider geographic study would have left less scope for such an in-depth examination. The success of other regional studies of tower houses in Ireland also highlighted what could be achieved and how such studies can be used for comparison with one another.

There were a number of reasons for choosing coastal County Down as the study area for this research. Worth mentioning at the outset is the publication of two excellent archaeological surveys on the region. The *Archaeological Survey of County Down* (*ASCD*), published in 1966, remains one of the most comprehensive and detailed archaeological surveys for an Irish county. The tower houses of the county are detailed in this volume and the list provided here formed the basis of the investigation for this study. Unlike the second archaeological survey, *Strangford Lough: an archaeological survey of the maritime cultural landscape*, information on the landscape context of the tower houses is not provided in *ASCD*. This latter survey provides far more information on the maritime landscape setting of the tower house and identifies many of the sources required for successful study of the area. However, it only covers the shore area of Strangford Lough. As such it is outside the remit of that survey to investigate those tower houses south of the Narrows and on the western side of the Ards peninsula. It does, despite this, provide an excellent basis for a landscape study of tower houses.

The region was also chosen for further study as it formed the basis of my Master's degree dissertation. This considered the siting of the Strangford Lough tower houses. It was decided to continue to utilise this expanded study area due to its success as a basis for a dissertation. Research as part of this dissertation also allowed identification of the main historic primary sources, especially those held in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

Another reason for choosing the study area was its occupation by Anglo-Irish and Gaelic-Irish alike in the later middle ages and the influx of colonisers from Scotland (primarily) and England in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The choice of

the three baronies, chosen because a contemporary land unit was necessary to aid comparison as well as to provide a discrete geographic area that meant something to its occupants, largely reflects these ethnicities. This ethnic background was desired because it allowed for a variety of local economies and would allow the identification of differing motivations. In this way County Down was selected too because it underwent significant colonisation, yet was never officially Planted. Thanks to this, investigation of the economic effects of colonisation was facilitated, without government directives obscuring the picture. The diverse ethnic background and experiences encountered in the study area is in essence a microcosm of Ireland as a whole over this time period. Thus detailed examination of Ireland's regional economy was seen through the lens of a study area. In addition, previous studies of the maritime orientation of tower houses have focussed largely or exclusively on Gaelic-Irish areas. It was felt that research on a contact zone between Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish would contribute much knowledge to the discipline.

Regarding the tower houses themselves, they also played a significant factor in the choice of the study area. Combined they form the densest distribution of tower houses within the province of Ulster, despite their comparatively small number to other regions in Ireland. They likewise illustrate the entire chronology of tower houses in Ireland. They are, therefore, a convenient and succinct tower house grouping for study.

Finally, County Down is a good area for such an investigation of mid-level regional economic activity as this one. It is geographically well located for coastal trade with east coast Ireland as well as sea trade with western Scotland and England. We would then expect to see a wide range of local, regional, national and international routes interacting within the region. The smaller size port towns found in the study area allowed for a new study into the structure of the Irish maritime economy.

1.6 Literature Review

1.6.1 Castles in the landscape

Recent years have seen a reassessment of the role of castles within medieval society. Much of this reinterpretation is landscape based, recognising that castles were raised for a variety of social and economic functions rather than as a response to a singular threat with 'the castle site represent(ing) some level of compromise between the needs to protect property, administer estates and generate revenue' (Liddiard 2005, 24). A

pattern has been observed with regards to castle distribution with densities occurring in river valleys near road and river junctions and other important communication routes. It has further been suggested that the true motivation behind castle location was the control and ownership of territory, with the topography selected in order to make the castle more prominent and thus emphasise it as a symbol of power (Creighton 2002, 35). Also noted was that large numbers of freeholding tenants discouraged the construction of castles, as did the proximity of large ecclesiastical estates (Creighton 2002, 52; Liddiard 2005, 25-6). It becomes apparent therefore that, in England at least, the choice of location was determined by lordly status and how this could be transmitted. A tower in particular is interpreted as presenting a certain kind of lordship that is concurrent with an accepted symbolic vocabulary (Johnson 2000, 220; O'Keeffe 2001, 53). As a highly visible manifestation of authority this would have impacted on, and perhaps re-shaped, the surrounding landscape. For example, enclosure of fields may have signified a lord's seigneurial power over the peasant population's bonds with the land (Creighton 2002, 65; O'Keeffe 2001, 66). Recent work has urged a move away from interpreting castles as military structures, instead viewing defensive features as a continuation of lordly symbolism (Coulson 2003, 17; Johnson 2002, 173).

Much of this examination into landscapes has concentrated upon the arrangement of designed space around high status castles, but some basic points can be garnered that are applicable to any castle form. Central to this is the fact that the resources required to support a lord and his castle came ultimately from his landed wealth, thus the immediate landscape should reflect his pursuit in maintaining or advancing his social rank (Liddiard 2005, 100). It is a common occurrence whereby castles were constructed at interfaces between different landscapes so as to maximise the profits available, although it is also noted that there is little correlation between castle density and pastoral land (Aalen 1978, 8, 128, 133; Creighton 2002, 51). Landscape and settlement features frequently associated with castle sites include mills, parish churches, deserted or continuing villages and deer parks. The deer park in particular is believed to be emblematic of lordship with the larger the area reflecting the greater nobility of the owner. This is based on the simple economic assumption that emparking required land to be taken out of more profitable agricultural production (Creighton 2002, 191; Liddiard 2005, 106). Hunting was also a key aristocratic pursuit, as a leisure version of war it signifies a control over nature. There is also the issue of a more symbolic control over the surrounding landscape; a castle should be a prominent landmark within its

hinterland with the view from the castle linked to concepts of power and territoriality (Liddiard 2005, 112, 123). These two considerations in turn combine to create the idea of an approach to the castle. As is also pointed out, English or family names for castles and their estates reshaped the landscape in contemporary minds (Creighton 2002, 69).

Many of the same conclusions have been drawn through studies of castles and landscapes in Ireland, which are discussed in more detail regarding tower houses, below. Tower houses differ from the earlier earthwork and stone castles in that they are not viewed as symbolising invasion and the subduing of the native population. These high medieval castles are largely associated with the Anglo-Normans too. It has been interpreted that these castles marked the administrative centre of a lord's estate, although it may not necessarily have been a centre of population or agricultural production (O'Conor 1998, 28). O'Conor argues that the, largely ethnically Gaelic-Irish, tenants lived away from these Anglo-Norman centres in townlands within the estate boundaries, travelling to the castle to pay their rents, grind corn, etc. (O'Conor 1998, 45). O'Keeffe disagees to some extent, thinking that in Anglo-Norman areas, particularly the south-east, settlements would have clustered around the castle (O'Keeffe 2001, 71).

1.6.2 Tower houses

The term, tower house, is a very apt one in terms of the castle form it describes, although the word was not coined until the mid nineteenth century to distinguish them from the earthwork and great stone castles of the previous centuries (McNeill 1997, 201). Instead in documentation contemporary to their construction we find them described as castles, most often referred to as 'castellum' or 'fortalicium'. Consequently despite their small size, it is apparent that late medieval society viewed them as a continuation of the castle building tradition and this is one reason why they are addressed in castle studies (McNeill 1997, 210).

Leask concludes that the fourteenth century was a period of very low building activity. He suggests that earlier castles were renovated and repaired during this period, with building carried out by lay people (he identifies a resurgence in ecclesiastical building at an earlier date) starting to increase again in the years after *c.* 1450. Leask's argument is based upon the 1429 subsidy allowing a grant of £10 for tower house builders within the confines of the Pale (Leask 1951, 75-6). This interpretation is now viewed as being

somewhat dated, however, and since his volume on Irish castles was published in 1941 there have been several attempts to date tower houses to before the mid fifteenth century.

Sweetman argues for tower houses being constructed earlier than the mid fifteenth century. Although we do have the occasional early fifteenth century date for a tower house Sweetman is careful not to date them back any further stating that 'there is no reason to assume that tower houses were built before the beginning of the fifteenth century' (Sweetman 1999, 174). In contrast, other academics, such as Barry and McNeill have provided evidence for an earlier date than the start of the fifteenth century (Barry 1993, 212; Barry 1987, 186; McNeill 1997, 203). This is mostly based on documentary evidence and includes, for example, the grant to build towers along Dublin city wall. Cairns' thesis and subsequent book on the tower houses of County Tipperary similarly attempts to date tower houses to before 1400. Although Cairns could only date 20% of the tower houses in Tipperary, he argues that the presence of the word 'fortalice' in contemporary documentation suggests that tower houses were constructed as early as 1300 (Barry 1987, 186; Cairns 1987, 8-9). The term 'fortalicium' is interpreted as meaning a small fortified site and is debated in opposition to the term 'castellum' which is taken as having social and administrative connotations, more indicative of a great stone fortress (McNeill 1997, 203). The absence of later architectural features has also been taken as indicative of an earlier date of construction. Despite this debate it is still highly probable that those tower houses dating from before 1400 were small in number. The dangers of ascribing earlier dates based solely on historical documentation has been illustrated by Sweetman in his examination of Leighlinbridge, County Carlow. The tower house standing here was mostly constructed in the sixteenth century although records describe a castle being built at this location in 1320 to defend a bridge over the River Barrow. Upon examination of the structure, Sweetman identified the earlier building seen in the tower house fabric as part of the Carmelite friary located there (Sweetman 1999, 137).

Regardless of how early the tower houses of Ireland can be dated it does seem likely that they were first constructed by the Anglo-Irish. However, the number of tower houses in Ireland didn't really explode until their adoption by the Gaelic-Irish (Barry 1987, 188). The greatest boom in the construction of tower houses is undoubtedly the fifteenth century, with a large number built in the early part of the sixteenth century.

After this initial burst in popularity we see a decline. There are very few examples identified as being constructed during the Nine Years War. Another peak in building activity accompanied the Plantation and conquest of the early seventeenth century (McNeill 1997, 203).

Tower houses are not restricted only to Ireland, indeed a sizeable concentration exists on the modern border between England and Scotland. These have been observed to be located exclusively on good agricultural land, especially on coastal plains, with more evident in Scotland than England (Dixon 1979, 242). It was also suggested that the opportunity for the construction of these tower houses arose after the cessation of raiding across this border, which, combined with the continuance of low rental costs, provided a significant increase in personal wealth (Dixon 1979, 250; Dixon 1992, 101). The idea that tower houses were constructed, sited and operated for political ends is a popular and long-standing one. Past investigations have focussed on their role in an unstable climate characterised by frequent raiding. In this interpretation tower houses provided a secure residence for the local lord, his family and his livestock although it is agreed that tower houses are rarely defensive in their function beyond presenting a defensive face to deter thieves (McNeill 1997, 217). Pivotal to such arguments is the fragmentation of lordships with each tower house placed at the centre of a manorial complex (Mallory and McNeill 1991, 289-91; McNeill 1997, 206-9; O'Conor 1998, 28).

In the late middle ages an advancement in the status of tenants led to increased prosperity, witnessed in the sheer number of tower houses. Donnelly has further suggested that partible inheritance also contributed to the density of tower houses in some areas (Donnelly 2001, 323). Tower houses were also frequently built by wealthy town inhabitants (such as merchants) and ecclesiastics. They are also associated with the fragmentation of larger lordly estates. Prior to the later middle ages castles were most commonly constructed by the king and by great magnates. The construction of tower houses in Ireland does not appear to be linked to the effects of war, leading to the proposition that defence was not their major concern with them instead being located in a situation convenient for the lordly occupant (McNeill 1997, 206, 209, 219-20; O'Keeffe 2001, 34).

More recent regional studies, discussed below in more detail, have focussed on tower house distribution, seeking to explain these patterns. In general the siting of tower houses is closely linked to fertile land and the potential for good communications. O'Keeffe has suggested that 'one idea which might be explored in future research is that the enclosure of the landscape and the emergence of the tower house were simultaneous and related phenomena', this he proposes because closed fields required a level of seigneurial power (O'Keeffe 2001, 66). It is rare to find tower houses at an altitude of more than a couple of hundred feet (Donnelly 2001, 318). They are also particularly concentrated in areas of great lordships, for example in the lands of the Butler, Kildare and O'Brien lordships, yet are largely absent within the boundaries of O'Neill territory. Indeed, a common attribution for the proliferation of tower houses is the decline of central authority from Dublin that allowed for local power bases (Barry 1993, 211). However, a strong wide-reaching lordship does not seem to have been a prerequisite for tower house construction, McNeill has observed that tower houses flourished in new lordships and in those areas under military pressure (McNeill 1997, 208).

1.6.3 Regional studies of tower houses

Regional study has been a popular way of examining the tower house in Ireland, particularly as a format for doctoral research. The benefit of a regional study of tower house densities is that it allows for in-depth analysis which can then be compared and contrasted with another area. Since Cairns' thesis, and the subsequent publication of his findings, a number of regional studies have also examined tower houses.

Malcolm notes in his study that castles were sited with reference to good farmland, which leads him to conclude that these sites must have been estate centres in the first instance. He argues for settlements associated with rural sites, as this was a demonstration of lordly power as well as a convenient habitation for tenants. He also observed a number of points that are pertinent to studies of tower houses in the landscape. The symbolic use of the landscape he views as being as important to a lord as the economic and political manifestation of a castle. A designed landscape therefore shows a lord's power and wealth as well as being appreciated for aesthetic reasons (Malcolm 2007, 208). Unusually perhaps, he further notes a site that appears to have been deliberately located away from fertile land on desolate land, this he thinks was so it looked more striking. Many 'English' settlers would have been familiar with the designed landscapes associated with castles in England but once in Ireland they seem to

have sometimes deliberately ignored these possibilities. Instead they were built with reference to a pre-existing settlement matrix and existing churches or routeways. This is interpreted as: 'the seizure of the residence of a Gaelic lordly residence represented the appropriation of that individual's prestige and power' this symbolism becoming especially important for colonists (Malcolm 2007, 214-5).

More recently academic attention has focused on the diversity of internal arrangements in tower houses. Both Sherlock and Eadie have applied access analysis and diagrams to tower houses to identify the use of space and function of features (Sherlock 2006 & 2010; Eadie 2009 & forthcoming). Both of these authors have utilised comparisons between different counties in Ireland, encompassing both Anglo-Irish and Gaelic-Irish ethnicities, different social backgrounds and eastern and western 'types' of tower houses. In Eadie's case, she has extensively examined the functions of some County Down tower houses, which has proven both beneficial and complementary to this study. McCarthy examined the perceived public and private spaces in two tower houses in County Kilkenny. Based on movement through the tower houses and the location of stairs and the presence of drawbars, he found evidence for the implementation of privacy in terms of controlling access to the wall walk via the lord's bedroom (McCarthy 2008, 20, 22).

A number of regional studies have observed evidence for an economic role at tower houses. Birthistle's study of tower houses in Kilkenny identified many tower houses (no precise figure is given) that were situated near rivers. In these cases there were often mills within the immediate vicinity of the tower house, or the tower house was later converted into one. Along the River Nore a correlation was determined between tower houses, bridges (that played a significant role within the local economy) and mills. This includes Castle Ellis, located by what is now known as Bloody Bridge, whose owner held the rights to duties from three neighbouring mills (Birthistle 1997, 32-40).



Figure 5

Estimated tower house distribution in Ireland

After Ó Danachair 1977-9, 159

Jordan noticed a distribution of tower houses in County Wexford that closely corresponded with the best soil for agriculture and with rivers. The location by rivers decreased the cost of transporting building materials and allowed control of routes providing an income from tolls. In this regional study more than one in three tower houses are located directly on freshwater sources, 94% are situated within half of mile of fresh water (Jordan 1990, 174-7). MacCurtain studied the Geraldine tower houses of the Shannon estuary noting that some acted as beacons, while the town of Carrigafoyle acted as a clearing place for customs and for the levying of duties on goods sailing up the river. 'Dingle was the main Geraldine port of Kerry, and from there foreign ships

docked and then sailed to Carrigafoyle, by-passing Tralee. Upon presentation of goods they were allowed to proceed to Tarbert and land their goods there, or go further up the river to Limerick' (MacCurtain 1988, 442). Nearby in County Kerry, McAuliffe identified some of the tower houses here as controlling communications, trade and travel routes. More specifically, those on rivers controlled river trade and fishing although she argues that while 'there are some tower houses built beside all the major rivers in Kerry, so control of the river trade and fishing seems to have played a minor role in the distribution pattern' (McAuliffe 1991, 120). Barry also observed that many rural tower houses were located within travelling distance of towns, allowing the occupants and tenants to make use of markets and fairs held in the settlement (Barry 2004, 124).

1.6.4 Maritime studies of tower houses

There has been especial interest in the role of water in relation to castles in an English context. While this examination has historically investigated moats at the great stone castles, the general analysis can still be applied to those tower houses located by the sea or a river. Water is interpreted as symbolic as it decides the movements of observers in very definite ways - it can either act as a barrier or as a means of drawing attention. The use of water in conjunction with castles is therefore symbolic (Johnson 2002, 47-8). What is less discussed but of potentially vital importance to the interpretation of the tower houses in question is that water can also act as a conductor of people to the castle. If the landscape was inhospitable to travel then water could be the best way to approach, although the route taken to each tower house would be determined as well as who could approach. While such a relationship seems less important in England, it is accepted that in Ireland many castles were associated with the maritime hinterland with particular reference to the control of ports and communication routes (Creighton 2002, 44).

Several regional studies of tower houses have made part or all of their focus the relationship between these sites and the maritime landscape. In County Kerry McAuliffe observed that 'the tower houses are to be found mostly in the coastal area stretching from Tarbert to Ballyheigue (*c.* twenty-five to thirty miles) there were 9 or possibly 10 tower houses – an average of almost 1 tower house every 2 miles'. She further noted clusters around Tralee town, 'around the Killarney lakes, along the river Maine, along the river Roughty in the south, a small cluster along the river Feale in the north, around the coast of the Dingle peninsula and around Ballinskelligs Bay. It would

seem that these clusters developed mainly because these areas are all below *c.* 400m O.D. and were the richest farmland in the county' (McAuliffe 1991, 110). In interpreting this distribution, McAuliffe explains it as a water supply in times of siege for drinking and for both defensive and practical reasons. She also interprets the rivers as borders. However, she is confused by the proximity of many tower houses to the sea since this cannot not provide a freshwater supply. She concludes that 'water although an integral part of daily life does not seem to have affected the distribution pattern of tower houses in Kerry to any great extent. For every tower house built beside or near a river, stream or lake there are 1-2 more sites which have no immediate or obvious access to a fresh water supply', no indication is given if these one to two are near the sea instead (McAuliffe 1991, 117, 119).

This region of Ireland is probably the best known for examination of tower houses and the maritime landscape. Using Baltimore County Cork as an example, Kelleher argues that tower houses were sited to control the maritime landscape. The good harbour at Baltimore and its location on international trade routes meant that tower houses here were ideally located to capitalise from the maritime economy. The location of more tower houses along the River Ilen allowed control of the town's hinterland (Kelleher 2007, 130-2). In addition, they could act as watchtowers and define territory borders (Kelleher 2007, 151). In his studies, Breen has argued that the maritime location of tower houses allowed for control of both sea and land, with an overwhelming correspondence between tower houses and control of the economy, particularly fisheries and communication routes (Breen 2005, 74, 84). He observed that tower houses were located to control anchorages, specifically controlling landings and victualling and to tax fishing grounds (Breen 2001, 422-3).

A study made of the density of tower houses in north Donegal by Ní Loingsigh set out to explain their concentration in relation to landowning considerations. In contrast to this original aim, the author had to concede that landscape did have a major influence. Although the role of landscape is not fully explained in the text, it is noted that 'the most distinctive feature of the castles is the overwhelming incidence of siting with access to the sea or to a navigable river' (Ní Loingsigh 1994, 148). These castles were also located on the most fertile land in the lordship and commanded extensive views over maritime routes and were on many occasions placed next to harbours and other landing places. The conclusion is reached that economics in the form of trade, rather

than political considerations, was the motivating factor behind such a distribution (Ní Loingsigh 1994, 155).

Naessens has made a comprehensive study of the coastal tower houses of south Connemara. Here he identified a strong link between the building of tower houses and an increase in trade (Naessens 2007, 221). As in County Cork, a motivation to control fishing grounds was also observed, in addition to a number of other functions, such as: as a status symbol and marker of power; as a watchtower and to increase lordly income (Naessens 2007, 224-5, 233-5; Naessens 2009, 185, 212).

1.6.5 Trade, fishing and networks

Probably the most influential work on the maritime economy of medieval Ireland is O'Neill's *Merchants and Mariners in Medieval Ireland*, which examines the main aspects of exports and imports in Ireland (1987). This ranges from consideration of the fluctuating grain trade, to identification of what fish was exported and from where, to the import of wine from Continental Europe. It is of particular benefit to this study since there are few contemporary historical sources for trade and the study area is mentioned several times throughout the text. Trade is also presented within its maritime context, since medieval shipping and technology is discussed, as is the knowledge of navigation and the accuracy of maps.

This study has also hugely benefited from the publication of the archaeological survey of the maritime landscape of Strangford Lough (McErlean *et al.* 2002). This is a very comprehensive body of work, examining the maritime history of the lough from prehistory to the modern day and covering a wide range of topics. Although it does not cover the entire study area, it has proved an invaluable starting point for more detailed examination of the late medieval and seventeenth century maritime economy thanks to sections on settlements, landing places and tower houses. The volume also covers the topics of shipbuilding, navigation, shipwreck, fishing and the kelp industry amongst others. It provides a framework for an investigation of the maritime economy as well as an excellent summary of the resources available to students.

Elsewhere in Ireland studies of the maritime economy have been undertaken, either on their own or as part of a larger work. Murphy and Potterton's *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages: settlement, land-use and economy* has evolved from research by the

Discovery Programme's Medieval Rural Settlement Project (2010). It seeks to identify the hinterland of medieval Dublin, what settlement was in this region and how it interacted with the city. As part of this publication, trade and fishing are discussed and their respective contributions to the largest economy within Ireland are discussed.

Again broad studies, O'Sullivan's *Foragers, Farmers and Fishers in a Coastal Landscape* (2001) and O'Sullivan and Breen's *Maritime Ireland* included, although diverse in their coverage have proved useful for this study. The former has provided a useful parallel for fishtrapping in the late middle ages. The latter contains chapters on medieval and early modern coastal communities, including how tower houses interacted with these (O'Sullivan & Breen 2007, 164-7). It also summarises the main late medieval port in Ireland, including Ardglass and traces the development of ports in the medieval and early modern periods (O'Sullivan & Breen 2007, 188-92, 207-9).

Much use has been made in this thesis of three works on coastal communities in England (Fox 2001; Gardiner 2007; Kowaleski 1995). Although there are no comparative castle densities in the areas covered by these publications, they have been invaluable in helping to aid the identification of local economic networks. The clear identification of small settlements engaged in fishing and in feeding into the trading activities of larger ports in these areas has assisted comparisons with County Down.

1.6.6 Study area

As previously mentioned, this study benefits from a maritime survey that covers a significant proportion of the study area (McErlean *et al.* 2002). The *Archaeological Survey of County Down* (*ASCD*) is a detailed survey of archaeological sites in County Down. In the section on tower houses a description of the physical appearance is given, including visible features both external and internal, as well as a description of any surviving bawn or ancillary buildings. This description includes accurate dimensions and each listing is accompanied by at least one plan. Wherever possible to ascertain, the history of each site is also given. What this survey does not provide, however, is much of a landscape context. Consequently fieldwork was needed to obtain information on the siting within the landscape and association with natural features in addition to location with regards to settlement.

Most of the existing body of work on the County Down sites has focussed on individual tower houses, Eadie's thesis excepted. In this manner, we have work to build on from Jordan's castle in Ardglass (Gardiner 2005), the Newark also in Ardglass (McNeill 2005), Ringhaddy castle (Breen 1995), Strangford castle (Waterman 1967), Mahee castle (Ó Baoill 2001; MacDonald 2002a) and Killyleagh castle (Lawlor 1939). Some of these investigations are architectural in nature and have been published in academic journals, others are excavation reports either kindly made available for this study or accessed through the copy lodged with the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record (NISMR) in Belfast. Due to development in the region in the 2000s there are also a number of brief excavation reports available through online resources, notably www.excavations.ie. In some cases these provided illuminating details for this study, including documentation of finds.

As recounted in further detail throughout the text, a number of key contemporary sources have been used. This includes mapping, notably: Raven's 1625 survey of Dufferin and the other lands held by Hamilton; the Ordnance Survey first edition maps; Norden's 1610 map of Ireland that depicts the study area; what are attributed as being Lythe's maps from *c.* 1580; the Down Survey maps (only carried out in Ards and Lecale as Dufferin was excluded from the scheme being entirely in Protestant hands) and the *Admiralty Charts* showing water depths and hazards. Aerial photography was also employed to gain a different visual perspective on tower house location within the landscape. The Crawford Aerial Photography Archive held at the University of Cambridge was consulted as was the map viewer function within the online NISMR.

A number of primary historical documents were utilised. Most notable within this category are the early seventeenth century Port Books for the Lecale ports under Strangford and the *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland* (*Cal. S. P. Ire.*). Also extensively consulted were the documents pertaining to the Hamilton family's Dufferin estate reproduced in the *Hamilton Manuscripts*, the Irish annals (particularly the *Annals of the Four Masters* (*AFM*) which records sieges at Sketrick castle). The *Sailing Directions* for the region were also employed so as to gain an understanding of how vessels could approach the tower houses and the port towns. A full listing of all the primary sources utilised through the course of the research can be found under 'Primary Sources' in the bibliography.

Needless to say the use of both historical and archaeological sources has been with the intention of furthering the aim recounted above of implementing an historical archaeology methodology to maximise the results available for interpretation. Where the archaeological and historical evidence contradict one another, this is discussed in detail where appropriate within the text. As is discussed in the introduction and throughout the thesis, there is no uniform coverage provided by either of the two record types, this means that greater emphasis is placed on each source (historical or archaeological) where applicable.

1.7 Historical Background

Forming part of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, in 1177 John de Courcy was invited into the Kingdom of Ulaidh (eastern Ulster). His subsequent political takeover of this region led to the formation of the Earldom of Ulster. The two results from this most pertinent to this study are a population comprised of English and Gaelic-Irish ethnicities and the construction of castles. Of these castles, de Courcy constructed great stone castles to aid in the public representation of his power and lordly authority, including that at Dundrum, while Carrickfergus is viewed as being de Courcy's caput (Mallory & McNeill 1991, 253). In addition, de Courcy's barons constructed a number of mottes. Prior to Anglo-Norman consolidation, the monasteries had formed the focus of Irish nucleated settlement. These settlements, Downpatrick and Newtownards amongst them, were further developed by the Anglo-Normans with the aim of forming commercial centres within the earldom (Mallory & McNeill 1991, 264). A number of new religious houses were established in the study area, including the two Cistercian abbeys of Inch and Greyabbey in the 1180s and 1190s respectively, with a friary founded at Newtownards in the thirteenth century. Accompanying these changes was the emergence of a number of dominant lordly families as a consequence of a new feudal society (Mallory & McNeill 1991, 273).

Through the course of the fourteenth century the influence of royal government in Dublin waned. Edward Bruce landed at Larne, south County Antrim in 1315, the ensuing Bruce Wars lasting until his death in 1318. In 1333, William de Burgh the 'Brown Earl' the last resident Earl of Ulster, was murdered near the ford at Belfast. This event is often cited as marking the beginning of the end of the Earldom of Ulster (McNeill 1980, 32). The Black Death in 1348-9 probably killed at least one third of the

population if not more, causing further untold numbers to relocate to other more hospitable parts of Ireland (Gwynn 1935, 25-42).

The effects of these occurrences were magnified further by a period of reassertion of Irish culture, referred to as the 'Gaelic Resurgence'. During this time a faction of the O'Neill royal family was driven eastwards from Tyrone, founding the dynasty of the Clandeboye (Clann Aedh Buidhe) O'Neills. Their territorial acquisition in the fifteenth century came at the expense of Anglo-Irish families, notably the Savages, who were driven southwards into the Ards peninsula: 'by the second half of the fifteenth century, practically all the land from Ardmillan, on the west [just south of Sketrick castle], round to the Blackstaff River [just north of Ardkeen castle], on the east, was under the control of the Gaelic Clandeboye O'Neills'. Dufferin too was politically unstable throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the de Mandeville family disappeared in the fifteenth century being replaced by the McQuillans. It is possible that this was the same family, having Gaelicised their surname. In the later fifteenth century the lands were acquired by the Whyte family, 'who held a weak and often nominal lordship for the next 100 years' (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 98). Despite the Gaelic-Irish expansion, much of Lecale remained nominally English in nature (Mallory & McNeill 1991, 283). Therefore, the study area was in effect a contact zone. Economic changes resulted from these socio-political events, including a shift to specialised commerce based on pastoral, rather than arable, agriculture. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Strangford (whether the region or the town itself is unclear) maintained its position as the chief port for the region (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 94-5). This also marked the beginning of the period of tower house construction. By the late medieval period the major landowners in the region were the Clandeboye O'Neills, the Savages, the Bishop of Down and the religious houses.

In this period Downpatrick continued to develop while the town of Ardglass developed from a place of little note in the thirteenth century to a prosperous port by the fifteenth century, the 'main success story' of the region (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 98). Tower houses were built by all ethnicities in the study area, although there are notably fewer amongst the Clandeboye O'Neills who built three tower houses within their lordship – Belfast, Shane's and Castlereagh castles, although they are believed to have occupied more, including Sketrick castle and, for a brief period, Ringhaddy castle.

After the death of William de Burgh in 1333, the title of Earl of Ulster eventually became part of the hereditary titles held by the Crown. Reassertion of power over these lands contributed to the motivation for the Tudor Conquest. Escalation of Crown attempts to control Ireland are witnessed throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, in Down this included the attempted colonisation by Sir Thomas Smith and Captain Browne. The zenith was reached with the Nine Years War, which lasted from 1594 to 1603 (although the outcome was determined in 1601 at the Battle of Kinsale). Attention was drawn to coastal County Down during the Nine Years War, as by 1599 much of it was under the control of the O'Neill Earl of Tyrone. In this year Essex was dispatched to protect the area by sea since Tyrone's domination of the region was 'clearly playing a vital role in the supply of ammunition for his war', Essex used Kilclief as his base (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 107). The occupation of the area by English soldiers highlighted its strategic importance and proposals for colonisation were again raised, witnessed in Sir Ralph Lane's plans for Ringhaddy castle (Gillespie 1985, 44).

In 1608 O'Neill and his followers fled to Spain, which effectively allowed the seizure of six of the nine Ulster counties by King James I of England. In the Plantation that followed, these lands were granted to a new group of Scottish and English colonists who embarked on a period of building construction and brought over tenants from Scotland and England. The economic hardship that was a direct consequence of the Tudor Conquest left landholders in Down with little option but to sell all or much of their land. In this way Hamilton acquired his lands, purchasing them from the Whyte family and the Clandeboye O'Neills. Montgomery bought his lands from the impoverished Clandeboye O'Neills, while the Echlin family purchased land in the Ards from the Savages. In the first half of the seventeenth century the area was dominated by the vast landholdings of Hamilton and Montgomery. Thus County Down did not form part of the formal scheme of Plantation, but despite this it witnessed a massive influx of settlers, leading to such comments as 'they [Hamilton and Montgomery] succeeded in creating the most complete colonisation perhaps achieved in Ulster' (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 117). In this Down (and Antrim) remained distinctive. It was also an attractive prospect to settlers: the potential wealth of the county was recognised during the Tudor Conquest while an administrative organisation remained from the time of the Earldom of Ulster. Crucially, the Crown held the title to the lands and the region was close sailing distance to Scotland. With these colonists came the introduction of a market economy and a wide social spread of migrants to take advantage of economic

possibilities (Gillespie 1985, 31). It was also a period of settlement development – Downpatrick was again redeveloped and a number of boroughs were created or reaffirmed, including Killyleagh in 1612 and Newtownards in 1613. New ports grew up, Killyleagh, Greyabbey and Donaghadee were granted port status (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 118). The push to Ireland was as socio-economic as the pull – the growth of the Scottish economy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries alongside an increase in population meant adventurous men were actively seeking new places to expand into and trade with (Gillespie 1985, 36).

A boom period in the opening decades of the seventeenth century was followed by economic crises in the 1630s mirrored in tower house patterns. Repeated harvest failures and attempts at increased control by central government served to increase tensions (Gillespie 1985, 223). In 1641 rebellion broke out, rapidly becoming a series of massacres and attacks on settlers. Downpatrick probably suffered the most during this time, with Killyleagh also being pillaged (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 119). In the aftermath of the 1641 Rebellion and the Confederate Wars, society was rather different. New colonists arrived by the 1660s and local government was overhauled by the Cromwellian administration. Increased taxes meant that many landlords were in a weak financial position once again, causing many to sell their Irish lands. This included the new magnate families of Hamilton and Montgomery, whose estates started to fragment. Others profited at their expense, amongst them the Ward family of Castle Ward who began a rise to prominence in the later seventeenth century. By this date the period of tower house construction was truly over.

1.8 Physical description of study area

The study area is located in the north-east of Ireland in the modern county of Down. Three baronies have been chosen: Ards, comprised of the Ards peninsula to the east of Strangford Lough, and north of the lough as far as Belfast as delineated by Belfast Lough; Dufferin, on the east shore of Strangford Lough; and Lecale, a peninsula demarcated from Dufferin to the north by the Quoile River, by the Narrows and the Irish Sea to the east and Dundrum Bay and the Blackstaff River to the south. It is defined by Strangford Lough at its centre, which begins approximately sixteen kilometres south of the city of Belfast and continues for roughly a further fifty kilometres in this same direction. It is a tidal lough, connected to the sea at its southernmost extreme by a narrow passage known locally and appropriately as 'The

Narrows', on either side of which lie the towns of Portaferry and Strangford. This is the lough's narrowest point at only a kilometre as it widens to some eight kilometres further north so separating the mainland to the west from the Ards peninsula to the east. The interior of the lough is filled with several hundred islands ranging in size from large isolated rocks to those of a few kilometres in area. The main county town of Downpatrick is connected to the lough by means of the Quoile River.

The landscape is dominated by drumlins. These rise to a lesser height than may be found further west in the county but still pose a drainage problem for the modern day farmer. Water run-off from the drumlins has led to fertile soil on the often steep sides of the hills while the land between each is usually boggy. Consequently the most prevalent form of agriculture in the locale is pastoral, focussed on cattle with small enclosed fields. Intermittent flat lands are used both for cattle and for hay and silage crops. Along the coast on the peninsula of Lecale the land is less undulating. Here the fields are larger, commonly of over five acres in size, and it is more usual to find crops being grown on this fertile plain, although the cultivation of grass for silage is still most common. There is little woodland in the region today, save for the eighteenth century planned woods associated with the Castle Ward estate, on the outskirts of Strangford town, and Mount Stewart estate on the north-west of the Ards peninsula. It is this lack of indigenous woodland that has led to questions as to the extent of transformation undergone in the region since the medieval period.

In the late medieval period a significant concentration of woodland likely existed, especially on the western shores of the lough. This would have been largely comprised of oak due to the prevalent boulder clay soil conditions (McCracken 1971, 40). This density probably rapidly decreased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as it did throughout Ireland, as wood was exploited for export and shipbuilding (McCracken 1971, 57). Such woodland (before deforestation) would have supported a variety of activities such as the grazing of pigs, cattle and sheep, hunting and provision of timber and firewood (Jäger 1983, 57). The land itself was organised (and still is to this day) into townlands, many of which are believed to date to before the Anglo-Norman conquest (McErlean 1983, 315). The mild and wet climate would have further encouraged pastoral activities although the Lecale peninsula micro-climate, caused by it being in the rain shadow of the Mourne Mountains, meant less rainfall that would have provided conditions suitable for arable farming. Despite the area's aptitude for arable

agriculture there is very little evidence, as in the rest of Ireland, for ridge and furrow ploughing. The average width of ridge and furrow in England at the time was over eight metres while in Down the width is just over two, leading to the view that these are instead the remnants of 'lazybeds' for potato cultivation from the eighteenth century. Possibly the period of crop cultivation was short enough or carried out in a different way to leave no impression on today's landscape (O'Sullivan & Downey 2007, 34-6). The many accounts of enclosure dating from the eighteenth century would suggest that the land was open, except in areas where mixed agriculture was practiced, where arable fields would have been enclosed to prevent trampling of crops by animals (McErlean 1983, 331). Pollen records would imply that in Antrim (the neighbouring county to the north) pastoralism was the most common form of land use, with woodland expanding throughout the late medieval period, only suddenly declining after 1600 (Aalen 1978, 133-4). It is possible that the same pattern should be anticipated in Down.

The items derived from pastoral agriculture, listed in the early seventeenth century Port Books combined with the grain deposits recovered from excavation at Jordan's castle attest to mixed agriculture being practiced in Lecale if not elsewhere. The lack of timber amongst the exports at this time implies that any oak growing in Lecale had been felled by this time. Without comparative evidence from Ards and Dufferin baronies, we cannot conclusively say that this was the situation here also. Raven's 1625 survey of Hamilton's Dufferin lands indicates that by this time agricultural field systems existed around settlements, and these look to have been under arable cultivation. The extent to which Raven's depictions of woodland is accurate is unclear, but it does suggest that woodland of some description, possibly scrub, still existed by this time. It is probable that arable cultivation existed around settlements in the study area alongside areas for pastoral activities. Those parts inhospitable for crop growing or too distant from settlements were probably left wild and featured woodland of an indiscernible level.

In terms of the aquatic landscape, there is most notably Strangford Lough as well as the Irish Sea to the south. To the east of the Ards peninsula is the Northern Channel between Ireland and Scotland. Flowing between Strangford Lough and Downpatrick is the navigable stretch of the Quoile River. This combination of river estuary, tidal lough and sea provided a diverse species base for fishing.

1.9 Summary of sites

Twenty-nine tower house sites were visited as part of the course of research. They are discussed, when relevant, throughout this thesis and a more complete listing of their siting and features can be found in the Gazetteer of Sites in the Appendix (from p. 289). Also included in the Appendix are tables showing the basic information for each site (from p. 359). This section of the introduction is to introduce the sites and provide some context.

By far the largest number of tower houses are located within the barony of Lecale – seventeen in total. Seven in the barony of Ards and two in Dufferin are similarly discussed. In addition, two tower houses (Mahee and Sketrick castles) are considered in this thesis that do not fall within the boundaries of these three baronies. They have been included since they are located within the lordship of the Clandeboye O'Neills. They are the only two tower houses within this familial territory that were probably occupied during the period of O'Neill domination. As such, the two tower houses of Mahee and Sketrick have an interesting history and contribute much to this study.

The distribution of tower houses across the three baronies studied can be mostly explained by the respective size of the baronies and by landholding patterns. Dufferin, the barony with the lowest number of tower houses (two) is by far the smallest barony of the three. It largely remained in the hands of a single (albeit changing) family throughout the time period considered. The lesser number of landholders would have meant fewer people to build tower houses. Topography probably also played a part in determining the number of tower houses in Dufferin. Land maintained as woodland in the later medieval period would very likely have mitigated against tower house construction as here, as well as elsewhere in Ireland, tower houses are associated with agriculturally profitable land. Landholding possibly influenced the seven examples of tower houses recorded for Ards barony. In the later middle ages it was controlled by the Clandeboye O'Neills in the north and the Savages in the south. More tower houses are associated with the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries here, as the number of landholders increased with colonisation. Lecale has the greatest number of tower houses (seventeen). A multiplicity of families held land in this barony, and the landowners changed over the period of study. It was possibly also historically the wealthiest and most agriculturally diverse barony, providing sufficient wealth to support the construction of numerous tower houses.

The twenty-nine tower houses used in this study reflect the entire period of tower house construction. Kilclief castle is the earliest securely dateable example, being built during John Sely's holding of the Bishopric of Down beginning in 1413. By 1441 we know of a tower house here since Sely is recorded as inhabiting it alongside a married woman (*ASCD*, 234; McErlean *et al.* 2002, 110). Consequently the tower house was probably built between these two dates (1413 and 1441). Bangor is the last site for which we have a dated reference, it was noted as being under construction in 1637 (*ASCD*, 227). Analysis of the possible chronology of the case study tower houses shows that a significant proportion were likely constructed in the fifteenth century. A lesser number were built in the first half of the sixteenth century, more being constructed in the middle of this century before tailing off again only for a brief boom period to return in the opening decades of the seventeenth century (dating from *ASCD*, 220-55).

Although tower houses are often described as small simple towers, there is quite a lot of architectural diversity within the County Down examples. They are three or four storeys in height and, in keeping with tower houses in general found on the east coast of Ireland, are quite small in stature compared to the western ones. The best known architectural style is the 'gatehouse type', sometimes referred to as the 'County Down type' (*ASCD*, 120). These have two projecting turrets with a machicolation arch rising between the turrets. Instances of the 'gatehouse type' are Audley's, Jordan's, Margaret's and Kilclief, which are so similar as to suggest a common architect or master builder. Ardkeen is very probably a further example, as is possibly Castleboy. All that remains of Ardkeen is what appears to be a turret containing a spiral stair at foundation level. The four examples listed above though all have a spiral stair in one turret, which suggests that Ardkeen is part of this tradition.

Many more tower houses are quite simple in external appearance, albeit with a variety of internal features such as boathouses (Mahee and Sketrick castles), mural stairs and chambers and prisons. Some are isolated examples of style: Bangor is constructed in a Scottish architectural style with decorative corbelling; while Portaferry castle has one projecting turret to the side to name two examples. A further number are in too ruinous a condition to determine much about their past appearance.

Possibly six of the tower houses have extant bawns. Of these, three are very probably late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in date based on the provision of gun loops that do not appear to have been later insertions (Killyleagh, Kirkistown and Walshestown castles). It is unclear whether the bawns were later additions to the other three examples (Audley's, Mahee and Sketrick castles) as they do not survive in a condition where a date can be attributed. It is likely that a further number of tower houses had stone bawns that either do not survive into the present day, or were constructed from wood and earth.

With regards to tower house location, the vast majority are sited on flat land. The notable exceptions to this rule are Audley's, Ardkeen and Castle Bright castles. Audley's castle is located on top of a rocky prominence, Ardkeen on an earlier motte atop a drumlin and Castle Bright on a natural rise. Furthermore, the tower houses are overwhelmingly situated by water. The greatest number are located by the sea, but significant numbers are on the shores of Strangford Lough or the Quoile River. Only four of the twenty-nine tower houses are not located by any water source. These are: Bonecastle, Castleboy, Castle Bright and Castleskreen tower houses. A number of the tower houses are located within settlements, many of which survive into the present day. Most of the other examples are located within a few miles of a settlement and it is proposed here that a further number were located by settlements that were deserted sometime after the tower house was constructed.

At this point it should also be explained by the frequent use of 'tower house' as opposed to tower house. This is used to distinguish those sites that through the course of study have been determined not to have been tower houses at all. These sites do not fulfil a full-time residential function and so do not comply with the definition of a tower house. These buildings instead can be best described as port buildings - some were probably used for the receipt of customs dues, others as harbour watchtowers and navigation aids or as retail units. These sites are: Bangor (a customs house and accommodation for visiting mariners); Cowd (probably a watchtower and navigation aid); Horn (possibly used as accommodation for visiting mariners, storage and cooking) and the Newark (retail units).

1.10 Thesis structure

So as to best consider the aims, research questions and hypotheses discussed in further detail earlier in this introduction, this thesis is comprised of six chapters where the data compiled through the course of research is examined, followed by two longer discussion chapters before conclusions are drawn. Chapter two, following a first introductory chapter (pp 35-52) defines commerce as it is understood and used in this thesis. It is proposed here that an environment to stimulate commerce should be studied as much as evidence for commercial activity. This is then discussed in light of the internal and external features at tower houses that aided the development of commerce. What business activities may have been conducted within the tower houses is likewise considered before describing the case study of Strangford castle, suggested as being a dual function tower house.

The third chapter (pp 53-78) identifies what trade took place at tower houses and at the settlements in which they were located. Trade is the most overt manifestation of commerce hence its being dealt with at an early stage of the thesis. This chapter examines what historical records and archaeological evidence we have for trade at the sites in the late medieval period and in the seventeenth century.

In light of the evidence we have for trade in the study area, the fourth data chapter (pp 79-88) discusses medieval and early modern boats and boatbuilding technology. The findings from this are then applied to the tower houses, highlighting how the type of vessel used could influence the tower houses. Chapter five (pp 89-98) continues with this theme, examining navigational technology and sailing routes. These are considered in light of several tower houses that appear to have had involvement in facilitating commerce through providing navigation.

In chapter six fishing activity is discussed (pp 99-120). Since fishing leaves little trace in either the historical or archaeological record, the evidence that we do have from the study area is examined with regards to findings from elsewhere in Ireland and from south-west England. Chapter seven (pp 121-150), the final data chapter, attempts to identify the hinterlands as they might have existed at each of the settlements in the region. The position of the tower house within hinterlands is central to this topic.

Two discussion chapters follow these six data chapters. The first of these (pp 151-200) focuses on the period of tower house abandonment, both in terms of the cessation of construction and occupation. It seeks to identify to what extent the maritime economy caused the decline of the tower house. It also considers what other forces may have affected the abandonment of the monument type and how these could have interacted with the maritime economy. The chapter considers potential causes for tower house decline in popularity dating from the Tudor Conquest through to the middle of the seventeenth century. It also briefly considers how tower houses were used well into the modern period.

The second and last discussion chapter (pp 201-244) attempts to define what a tower house is in light of the research findings from the data chapters. Potential functions of tower houses are individually discussed with attention focused on how each aided tower house position within the maritime economy. Finally, the chapter identifies the key features of a commercially-orientated tower house as ascertained through the course of study. The conclusion to this thesis re-examines the research aims, questions and hypotheses, as set out in the introduction and summarises the main findings from the research. A number of common themes run throughout these chapters. Foremost is that each data chapter deals with a different aspect of maritime commerce, as is defined at the opening of chapter two.

The bibliography is separated into primary sources and secondary sources consulted and used. This is then followed by the appendix with a glossary of technical terms used in the thesis. Its main inclusion is the gazetteer of sites, which details each of the twenty-nine tower houses studied. The gazetteer is complemented by tables of site features and photographs of the sites. Unless otherwise acknowledged in the text, all maps, illustrations and photographs are my own.

Chapter Two – Commerce and the tower house

2.1 Introduction - Defining Commerce

Before we attempt to identify the tower house features that imply a commercial function, it is first important to define precisely what is meant by 'commerce'. At its most basic meaning, commerce is the exchange of goods from producer to consumer, yet it is also the environment affecting business. Trade is often equated to commerce, but this study attempts to examine the nuances of commerce outside of trade. Trade is, of course, investigated in this thesis and forms a major component of any study of commercial activity. In this study trade is regarded as the formalised method of exchange, while commerce is used to describe all activities that allow for participation in the economy. As a consequence not only concrete proof of exchange is sought, but evidence that there was a suitable environment for business activities also. For this reason, not only has trade been identified at tower houses and associated settlements as a definite indicator of commerce, but the features that indicate the facilitation of trade and exchange have been examined.

The latter is markedly easier to identify, using landscape and archaeological evidence. In determining the extent and details of trade we are reliant on mentions in the historic documentation and the results of excavation. A commercial environment involves the identification of any feature that would aid, promote or attract trade. Thus we are looking for signs that trade could take place, rather than was taking place. There is often a fine line between the two: Strangford castle, the main case study within this chapter, is viewed as a dual functionality tower house with an identifiable function in trade based on its design. However, we do not have proof of this from the records and there are others who disagree with this interpretation. Strangford castle therefore serves as the perfect example of a commercial function within a tower house since it shows features that highlight how trade could have occurred at the site, but without uncontestable supporting evidence.

This interpretation of 'commerce' has influenced the choice of elements investigated in this thesis. It discusses the historical and archaeological evidence for trade at specific tower house sites as well as at settlements that are considered 'associated' with the monuments. Attempts to identify the role tower houses had in creating and maintaining a commercial environment have centred on three main topics: the suitability of tower

houses as locations for late medieval and early modern boats to shelter or anchor at; their role as navigation aids and markers of safe passage; and their involvement with fishing activity, a liminal occupation but with significant commercial gain.

These chapters focus on the external manifestations of commerce at tower houses and their associated settlements. In this chapter, therefore, attention is turned to the features at and within tower houses that indicate commerce. The aim of this chapter is not to summarise the evidence we have for trade at tower houses, but rather an attempt to provide context to it, that is of relevance throughout the rest of the thesis. The main motivating question is: what did tower houses themselves do to create and maintain an appropriate environment for commerce?

2.2 Internal evidence

2.2.1 Boathouses

A strong indication for commerce comes from the presence of an internal boathouse. An internal boathouse was first identified in the *ASCD* at Sketrick and Mahee castles based on the alignment of their barrel vaulted ceilings at ground floor level (plate 1; figures 6a & 6b). In these two cases entry to the long, narrow, barrel vaulted chamber was through an entranceway several times larger than those commonly found at tower houses. The location of these tower houses directly on the water (both are on islands) further suggests that these chambers were boathouses since it would have been possible to drag a boat up from the water. Vessels could have been stored in the boat house, repairs could have been carried out, or secure unloading could have been accommodated. The boats that could have been housed in either of the two cannot have been very large, however, the dimensions of Sketrick's being *c.* nine metres long and two and a half metres wide (*ASCD*, 250).

The presence of an internal boathouse implies a number of issues pertinent to this study. Paramount is that the ability to shelter a boat was of particular importance to the tower houses' builders. The boat stored within the tower house may have been the lord's own, signifying that communication was a concern. Alternatively, if the boat served the manor and was controlled by the lord, then it shows the central position of



Plate 1

Internal boathouse at Mahee castle

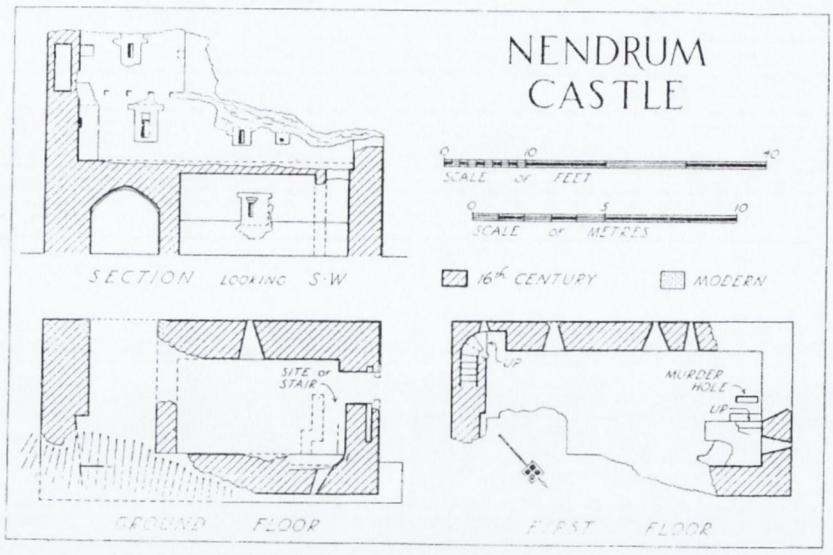


Figure 6a

Plan of Mahee castle (also known as Nendrum castle). The potential boathouse is shown in the ground floor plan on the left

After *ASCD*, 244.

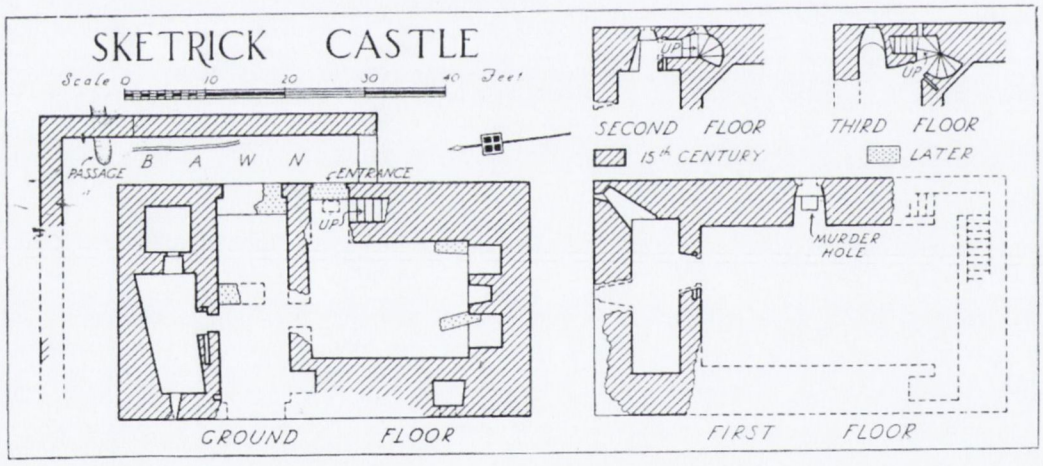


Figure 6b

Plan of Sketrick castle, showing the possible boathouse at the centre of the ground floor level (note that divisions within this chamber are later additions to the building fabric)

After *ASCD*, 250.

commerce to these two sites. Regardless of the explicit use of the vessel housed, an internal boathouse testifies to the creation of a commercial environment.

2.2.2 Ability for ground floor storage

Securely identifying the use of the ground floor chamber as a storage room is problematic. It has long been presumed by castellologists that this room was reserved for this purpose because it is badly lighted and therefore not suitable for lordly occupation, nor would it have been convenient to carry heavy goods up narrow stairs (Leask 1951, 79; Eadie 2009, 174). Recent investigation by Eadie, however, has shown how this chamber could be used by servants for cooking and by a porter, who would have controlled access to the tower house and the upper rooms (Eadie 2009, 174). A further complication is that not all tower house ground floor chambers had the access required to store large and bulky items. This became apparent during the excavations of Jordan's castle in Ardglass between 1998 and 2000 when the archaeologists attempted to store wood planks in this room. The tight turn to enter this chamber meant that it was difficult to steer the wood planks into the room (Gardiner, pers. comm.). Consequently it can be deduced that it would have been similarly difficult to store items such as barrels and packs of hides during the occupation period.

For the purpose of this study therefore, the ability for ground floor storage became a concern. This ability was based on the access to the ground floor, with direct and unimpeded access taken as a sign that large items could be moved into the chamber. Using this criteria it was found that half of the tower houses in the study area had the capability of providing ground floor storage. This is a significant proportion of the sites, made more significant by the fact that there are two identifiable external storehouses attached to tower houses (see below), which in turn suggests that many more tower houses provided storage external to the main tower. It is also worth remembering that a further number of the tower houses do not survive in a condition where access to the ground floor chamber can be determined. Tentatively extending the results of this examination to all the sites, it can be suggested that the majority of the tower houses accommodated a storage function.

Whether these storage areas were for agricultural produce collected from the manor, or to store items for trade, is largely irrelevant to this chapter. The significance here is that a commercial function is apparent in a majority of sites, the storage rooms clearly

providing an aid facilitating commerce. It has been questioned by Eadie whether tower house occupants would have been prepared to spend a third of available internal space in storage (Eadie 2009, 174). This argument presumes that the ground floor chamber would have been exclusively used for storage whereas it is suggested here that items could have been stored in conjunction with another function, such as servant sleeping areas. The chamber may only have been used at certain times of the year too, such as after harvest if it was used to store grain or in the run-up to Lent if barrels of fish were housed, leaving other periods for another function. It is also suggested that since commerce would have formed a significant component of lordly income that this use of a third of the tower house would not have been viewed as 'waste' but rather a critical investment.

2.3 External evidence

2.3.1 Storehouses

As discussed in the previous section, there is evidence for the ability to store goods within the tower house. There is also evidence for stone built external storehouses at two of the sites: Jordan's castle and Audley's castle.

There is no evidence above ground for the stone storehouse at Jordan's castle, it was only discovered through the course of excavation by Gardiner. He suggests that the storehouse was constructed at the same time as the tower house since a window in the tower house's east face was located so that the attached building would not obstruct it. Gardiner also proposed the building's use as a storehouse on the basis of a drainage channel in the floor of the structure. This drain would have allowed water to run out of the building down the slope the site is constructed on meaning that items within would not get wet and to alleviate the problem of damp (Gardiner 2005, 28-9). The efforts made to keep the storehouse dry further suggests that the goods stored here were agricultural in nature, that would spoil easily, such as grain and hides. This contention is supported by grain analysis undertaken as part of the excavation, which found evidence of a number of crops on site – oats, barley and wheat (Hinton in Gardiner 2005, 38-45).

Jordan's is one of the few sites where a merchant occupant seems probable. The external storehouse here then is most likely a sign of definite commercial activity used to facilitate trade. It is a different situation when considering the possible storehouse at

Audley's castle. The occupants of this tower house, the Audley family, are not known to have been merchants, although this does not mean that it was not first constructed by a merchant and subsequently occupied by the Audleys. It was presumed by this author that the building surviving to foundation level in front of the tower house within the bawn was a hall until obtaining a copy of Eadie's forthcoming article in the first volume of *Space and Settlement in the Middle Ages* (plate 2). Her examination of seating arrangements in halls at tower houses found that the dimensions of the building at Audley's castle were too small to accommodate dining and feasting, instead she suggested that the building was a storehouse (Eadie forthcoming).

In light of this suggestion the site was reassessed. The tower house is located on a high rock outcrop so as to command 'Audley's Roads' a deep water anchorage at the base of the site as well as approaches up Strangford Lough from the Narrows. The positioning of the stone storehouse at the fore of the front of the tower house (based on architectural features and entrance) would have meant that it was the building first seen from the water. This is significant since it possibly hints at the status accorded to this commercial building since it would have formed a prominent symbolic component to the overall tower house site. Since this is not a merchant's residence it further illustrates the importance of commerce to tower house occupants since it would have reinforced the concept of a wealthy and well-connected lord.

2.3.2 Ancillary buildings

These are the only two identified external storehouses within the study area. However, the storehouse at Jordan's castle was only uncovered through the course of excavation, suggesting that there are likely more storehouses and other ancillary buildings at tower house sites that have not yet been discovered. These two storehouses are also constructed of stone and thus would have incurred some expense in their building. It is very probable that other ancillary buildings to tower houses were constructed from less durable materials than stone, the post holes of which may be the only remnants that could be detected through excavation.



Plate 2

Bawn and possible storehouse foundations at Audley's castle

Since it is proposed that a number of these maritime oriented tower houses formed the centre of manors, it is likewise very likely that other ancillary buildings pertinent to the effective running of the manor were located in proximity to the tower houses. These ancillary buildings would have included barns and granaries, and it is probable that these too would have been built from less durable materials than stone. Not only this, but the proposition that there were settlements, now deserted, associated with many of the tower houses could mean that there were residents with commercial employment, be they merchants, pilots or traders, as well as those who contributed to the commercial environment of the manor through agriculture and fishing.

2.4 Siting

Examination of the siting of tower houses has found a strong correlation between these and places suitable either for the shelter, anchoring or pulling up of boats. It is very probable that these sites were chosen because they aided the transportation of building materials when the tower house was first constructed, then continued in use because of their appropriateness as a base for the export of estate produce and import of items required by the lord (e.g. wine) and his tenants [e.g. salt for fish and meat preservation] (Gardiner 2007, 94). It has been further suggested in the chapter on hinterlands that

these havens and anchoring places allowed the tower houses to engage in a wide commercial network, the tower houses forming points along the network either for shelter and stopping off or feeding into a farther reaching trade route (see chapter seven). The association of tower houses with both anchoring places and settlements shows how they at least had the capability to engage with trade routes and other maritime networks. Consequently, using the definition provided in the introduction to this chapter, it can be said that the choice of tower house site was commercially motivated since it allowed them the potential to engage in exchange and trade.

The location by anchorages and landing places would have allowed additional lordly income, since visiting vessels sheltering there could be taxed. A number of tower houses are also located by ferry points and causeways. In these circumstances, a toll could be exacted on those wishing to use the crossing point. If goods were the items being moved then the lord could have acquired a proportion of them. This would also have applied if the anchorage or landing place was used by a tenant to move his surplus. Although this is not trade, it is a commercial activity since payment was made for services provided.

2.5 Business activities

At the lowest level informal business activities could have been accommodated within a tower house. The tower house would have provided a more amenable environment in which to conduct business than the shorefront, for example. 'If we locate an area suitable for feasting, we can imagine more public business matters taking place in the same location' is how Eadie describes this, although there would be business matters that required more privacy (Eadie 2009, 144). In this instance, this could be a chamber specifically for this purpose, or it could double up as the lord's bedchamber. In the case of identifying a suitable place for public business matters, this room would need to have been spacious enough to seat numerous people and it would have to have been heated. Eadie believes that the business room wouldn't necessarily need to have been decorated, since those doing business would not require the same symbolism as

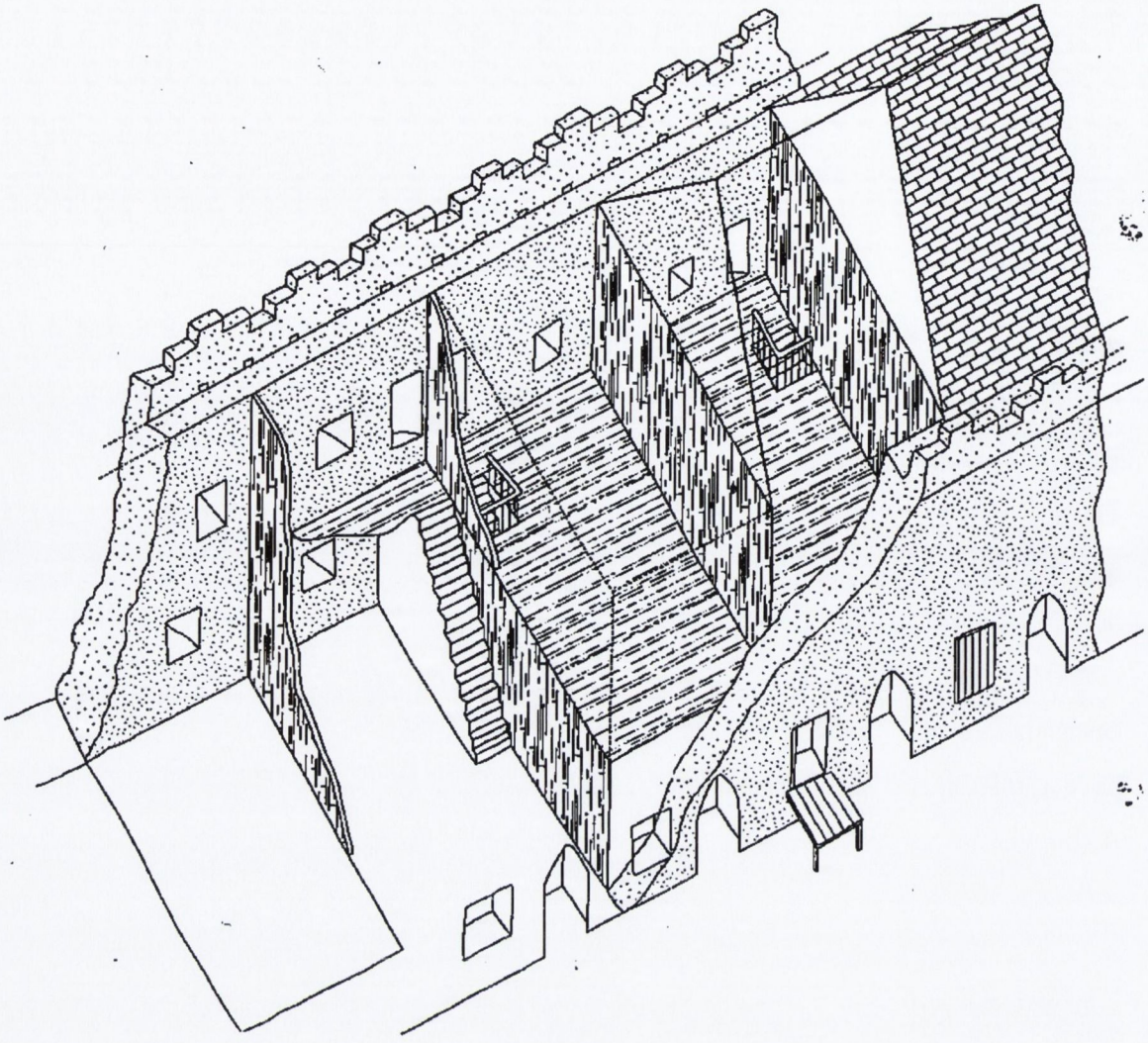


Figure 7

Reconstruction of part of the row of retail units excavated at the Newark, viewed from the south-east.

After McNeill 2005, 12

other guests because they would be of the same status as the occupier (Eadie 2009, 144). This latter point may be questioned though, as much of business relies upon pretence and ostentation. For example, a lord seeking to do business with a merchant to sell his produce (or vice versa) would have wanted to show his wealth as a psychological impact when coming to an agreement. Through his ostentatious display he would have shown that he was not relying on the success of this deal and could wait to sell the produce while he finds a better bidder. Social aggrandisement would surely have also have played a part, since even men of the same social status would be inclined

to form partnerships with men they consider 'on the make' or at least be reassured that they were charting the same social course.

More blatant commercial activity is apparent at the Newark, identified as a row of shops by McNeill through excavation (Figure 7; McNeill 2005). Most of the comparative evidence for such shops comes from England. For example, Kowaleski discusses in Exeter how butchers were provided with specially constructed stalls to sell their ware, this was not just limited to meat but included hides and leather which had a variety of uses and buyers within a town with a diverse occupation (Kowaleski 1995, 300-01). However, the Newark is not a tower house at all since it did not provide either a residential or administrative function. It does illustrate the overlap between tower houses and commercial buildings though, particularly in terms of appearance.

2.6 Case study: Strangford castle

Strangford castle has been chosen as a case study within this chapter because it is the most overtly commercial tower house without there being proof of this function in the historical record. It thus perfectly illustrates the commercial tower house – that it created an environment that promoted and facilitated commerce.

Both this author and Eadie (2007) are in accord in interpreting Strangford castle as fulfilling a dual commercial and residential function. The assumption was first made here on the basis of a complete lack of identifiable port buildings in Strangford. This stood in contrast with the situation at Ardglass, where there are several buildings with this function (Cowd, Horn and Jordan's castles and the Newark). Historic documentation reinforces the position of Strangford, rather than Ardglass, as head port for the region throughout the time period under consideration (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 212, 231, 243; *Port Books...1614-5*). Consequently it seemed odd that the historic significance of Strangford was not echoed in the archaeological record.

Strangford castle has two entrances. One of the entrances, enlarged from its previous state and then restored, is at the ground floor in the north-east wall. The second entrance is in the same (north-east) wall towards the north angle at first floor level and roughly equates on the exterior to the small splayed opening. As can be seen from plate 3, identifying the latter entrance from the exterior is hard to do as alterations have obscured the original stone. In the interior of the castle, however, the existence of this

entrance is attested by the presence of a draw-bar socket. From this evidence Jope concluded that 'this entrance is the sole feature obviously to survive reconstruction of the tower in the later sixteenth century; dating possibly to the fifteenth century, it is the only instance of a first-floor entrance to a tower-house surviving in County Down and, indeed, in the north of Ireland' (*ASCD*, 253).

Strangford exhibits several features indicative of a dual entrance tower house in the stricter sense of the term, i.e. two entrances used at the same time, as identified by Sherlock. As implied above, the two entrances at Strangford are set within the same wall. While Sherlock observed in his study that most commonly dual entrance tower houses had entrances directly above one another, presumably so that both could be covered by a machicolation, in some cases one entrance was set to one side, as is the case at Strangford. He further notes that in dual entrance tower houses the principal



Plate 3

Location of Strangford castle's first floor entrance, now blocked up. It was to the right of the double window with sandstone dressing

internal stair does not begin at the ground floor, rather at the floors above. It was also suggested that where there was wooden flooring, so access between the ground and first floors must have been by a ladder through an ope cut through the floor (Sherlock 2006, 75). Of course, there is no surviving wooden flooring to attest to this, but where the ground floor was covered by a vault it was observed that a similar hole was cut through the vaulting to provide access between the storeys. Strangford castle contains no stone internal stairs, with communication instead conducted via wooden stairways. Likewise it had no stone flooring so the flooring was also timber, as indicated by the presence of beam holes.

The overwhelming majority of such dual entrance tower houses occur in counties Cork and Kerry. Sherlock in his 2006 article has focussed on the identifying features of such a tower house type. He notes two considerations in this article that are of direct relevance to this particular study. First, the dual entrance tower houses in these counties have a largely coastal distribution. Sherlock thinks this distribution may be of particular importance with the coastal consideration leading to a different defensive reaction than that witnessed in more inland tower houses (Sherlock 2006, 75). Second, in his identification of a further five tower houses exhibiting these features not located in these two counties, he noted a certain reluctance to recognise such a tower house type outside of Cork and Kerry (Sherlock 2006, 74). County Down lies at the opposite end of the country so it is understandable that both Jope and Waterman were loath to concede that perhaps Strangford castle used its two entrances at the same time.

In the absence of being able to identify a link between Strangford and the south-west in terms of ownership, building specialisation, or a regular communication route, this site seems to stand in isolation. It is a possibility that there was contact between the two areas, with the concept derived from observing the south-western examples, but it was not a type subsequently replicated in the other tower houses of the County Down coastal region. Although there is a recognisably 'County Down type' (also known as the 'gatehouse type') of tower house architecture, with two projecting turrets connected by a machicolation arch, this is not a universal design and, indeed, there is significant variety within this very small area. Since the construction period of tower houses in this region stretches from at least the early fifteenth century to the mid seventeenth century, the changing demands of what was expected of a fortified residence may have had much to play in this [in fact, we cannot securely date Strangford castle beyond noting that it

was in disrepair by 1540 and subsequently re-built] (*ASCD*, 252). Another explanation may be the prevalence of personal taste.

Carlingford, to the south of the study area, may provide the best explanation for Strangford's discrepancy in type since the Mint is also a dual entrance tower house. As at Strangford, the Mint had two entrances in the rear wall if we take the wall facing on to the medieval street as the front. It has been suggested that the first floor entrance was accessed by a wooden extension (Gosling 1992, 60). While it might be taking it too far to propose that Strangford castle's unusual design was directly influenced by the tower houses of Cork and Kerry, it is far more plausible that the design was in common with Carlingford. While this could be a 'chicken and egg' situation as to determining which of the two tower houses was constructed first, it should be noted that Carlingford was a more developed port town than Strangford in this period and consequently would have been subject to increased outside influence. It is probable that by the time of Strangford castle's construction there was frequent interaction between the two locations, as illustrated in 1408 when Janico Dartas, who probably constructed the Newark in Ardglass and had business interests there, was made constable of the castles of Greencastle (County Down) and Carlingford (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 99). His *inquisition post mortem* indicates further land-owning interests in Lecale (Curtis 1933, 198; *Inquisition post mortem of Janico Dartas*, The National Archives, Kew, SC/8/331/15678).

Sherlock believes that the decision to build a dual entrance tower house was based on defensive, domestic or pragmatic reasons, or a combination of all three. It may have been for damage limitation against raiding where the ground floor could be comparatively easily raided and thus providing a 'firewall' for the upper floors. He also suggests that the dual entrances were for social reasons so as to separate a service ground floor from the domestic upper floors (Sherlock 2006, 75). Consequently, Sherlock rejects the notion that dual entrance tower houses are in fact dual functionality tower houses, that provided a public and commercial function at ground floor level and a residence in the storeys rising above. His interpretation is that the first floor entrance at Strangford is connected to a now destroyed bawn wall; although not stated it is possible that he refers to the remnants that survive in the form of a small tower located about 230 metres to the north of the tower house (plate 4). He proposes that in the mid sixteenth century the bawn wall was realigned, causing the first floor entrance to be

blocked up. As a result of this, Sherlock does not consider Strangford castle to have been a dual-entrance tower house in function (Sherlock, pers. comm.).

It seems unlikely that Strangford castle would have had a bawn enclosing an area this size, as *c.* 230 metres is quite some distance for a tower house bawn in this region. Comparison to the other bawns in County Down highlights this further: the longest side of Audley's castle's bawn is thirty metres; Kirkistown castle's is forty-four metres and Killyleagh castle's eighty-nine metres, all these are the furthest possible a tower house could be from the bawn wall in a County Down context (*ASCD*). Killyleagh castle is by far the most ostentatious castle within the region, having undergone major reconstructive work in the nineteenth century to make it appear as a Bavarian castle. The modern town of Killyleagh is also a planned town and subject to the lordship of the Hamiltons, thus we can safely assume that the dimensions of Killyleagh castle bawn were by far the biggest of any possible tower house bawn in the region at approximately eighty-nine by forty-four metres in dimension (*ASCD*, 237).



Plate 4

Strangford tower, located *c.* 230 metres to the north of Strangford castle and possibly forming part of a now destroyed bawn wall, or town defences.

In addition, we know that Strangford was head port, the pre-eminent position as a settlement within the maritime region of County Down. Based on the limited space

available in the port of Ardglass, reflected in the size and lay-out of the tower houses, it is highly improbable that the occupier of Strangford castle had the space available for an enclosing bawn, let alone one potentially reaching 230 metres at a minimum from the tower house walls. It is far more likely that the now isolated small tower formed part of the non-extant and unidentified town walls, or was connected to the port as a signalling tower or lighthouse. This latter function is possibly present at Ardglass, although in a bigger structure than this tower in Strangford (Cowd castle), the ruinous connecting wall attached to the Strangford tower implies rather that it functioned as a town wall.

Based on the interpretation of Strangford castle as a dual function tower house, it is a possibility that the tower house was the residence of a customs official that would have been lodged in the town. Under Elizabethan customs duties legislation this official would have operated from the town, and it stands to reason that the Earls of Kildare had a representative in the town before this date to collect their income. This situation (a place at which to collect the customs) would have existed until 1629 when a specified custom's house was constructed (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 233). If Strangford castle was the residence of a customs official, it would support the contention that it is the most defensive tower house in the area (Eadie 2009, 378). This is suggested since Crown income would have required protection, and it explains the tower house's ornamental simplicity. It would also explain the lack of a previously identified port building within the town. It is unlikely that the Earls of Kildare or the monarchy would purchase a sufficiently large plot of land on which to construct a bawn to enclose the tower house, considering that property and land values must have been high in this regionally important town. Had the original land grant been for an area as large as the average bawn might indicate (let alone that suggested at Strangford), it is almost certain that this land would have been sold later for profit to a town inhabitant or investor.

As previously mentioned, Eadie supports the proposal that Strangford is a dual entrance tower house, the ground floor and upper floors being quite separate with no permanent stair for communicating between the different floors. This she argues implies an increased defensive role, or use as of the ground floor as a warehouse. She suggests that Strangford castle did not have a residential function at all, but states: 'it works best when viewed as a service tower or garrison' (Eadie 2009, 244, 284). This thesis's interpretation in light of the discussed evidence is that it is a commercially-orientated tower house. This explanation corresponds with why Strangford, in Eadie's rankings,

scores low in terms of food provision (i.e. small scale, large scale, dining, feasting and entertaining) because it was a commercially-orientated residence.

Access to the ground floor chamber in Strangford's tower house was straightforward. There was no lobby area to negotiate, nor any turns to make. Therefore, it would have been very appropriate for use as a storage area with direct access from the harbour (the distance from the harbour calculated by McErlean *et al.* 2002, 231). The idea that Strangford was inhabited by a Crown or magnate appointed official is supported by the split-level architecturally manifested display of dual functionality that is commonly seen in English commercial structures [to give just two examples, the shop-residences of Lavenham and other commercial towns in Suffolk and Billingsgate] (Mark Gardiner pers. comm.; McNeill 2005, 13, 17). Indeed, it has a precedent in the study area in the form of the Newark (see p. 45), which conforms to this two level (shop on the ground floor, accommodation above) appearance.

Regardless of whether the proposed inhabitant was a custom's official, the tower house's location by the medieval harbour (later infill has distanced the harbour slightly from the tower house's location) in the centre of the town implies that the occupier saw himself as having an important role in the town's business activity. It may even be that the site formed the physical centre of the town, as at Portaferry castle, where it was commented in the seventeenth century that it formed the focal point for a small settlement of fishermen's cabins (Lewis 1837, 463). A tower house would therefore have been an appropriate residence for one profiting from trading activity as well as acting as a visual assertion of authority within the town. The tower house is also prominent visually when approaching the town from water. A dual entrance tower house would therefore meet both the demands of commercial activity as well as providing a suitable residence.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how a commercial environment could be created and maintained by a tower house. Commerce could have been overt, in the form of identifiable trade at a tower house or a merchant occupant, or much more subtle, utilising natural water features for economic gain. The case study example of Strangford castle briefly highlights the debate regarding a commercial orientation at tower houses. Across the discipline, however, recent academic developments tend to support the concept of a

tower house as a multi-functional building that responded to, and was suited to, a changing social context.

The more nuanced aspects of commerce could have also contributed to also the manorial function of a tower house. Not only are the majority of tower houses located by an anchorage or landing place (or even had an internal boathouse) opening up the possibility of trading manorial surplus and taxing visiting vessels, but they are strongly associated with settlement. Many of these settlements survive into the modern day, but fieldwork has suggested that there has been a high level of either medieval or post-medieval settlement desertion in the region. Thus what we are looking at in today's landscape is the remnant of a once vibrant interconnected network of settlements. As the centre of a manor there would have been an accompanying economic role, even if that was just the place for collecting rents. More likely though is that agricultural surplus was shipped from the tower houses, or very close to the tower house, to a collecting port.

The size of potential storehouses at tower houses, be they ancillary buildings or the internal use of the ground floor chamber, implies that these were not used solely for the storage of lordly goods. The prominent physical position accorded storerooms and storehouses likewise suggests that economic gain was important to a lord. Commerce could have also been facilitated by use of the tower house for business meetings, a scenario that would have made good use of the ornamentation found outside the tower house and within the main chambers.

The fact that there are so many 'tower houses' in the study area (in other words: port buildings; retail units; watchtowers and navigation aids) testifies to the significance of accepted tower house architecture. That the two classes of building share a common architecture must be important. That several of the 'tower houses' were previously classed as tower houses proper in the *ASCD* illustrates the grey area between the two. This grey area is commerce, and it is proposed here that commercial functions at tower houses follow a 'sliding scale' rather than a straightforward typology, with some facets more obviously present at some sites than others.

Chapter Three – Trade in Ireland and the study area

3.1 Introduction

The main source of secondary material, for the medieval period at least, is still O'Neill's *Merchants and Mariners in Medieval Ireland* (1987). There are more surviving contemporary references to trade with the study area by the seventeenth century, although mentions in historic documentation are still low compared to busier ports in the country. Indeed, record survival relating to trade is low for Ireland in general, compared to the situation in Britain. The only surviving Port Books for Ireland are the years 1614-15, which are in the Temple Newsham collection held at the West Yorkshire Archive Service. The temptation therefore is to examine the secondary material dating to the seventeenth century, the later period of tower house construction, and apply it to the previous centuries. There are numerous dangers in doing so, however, most notably the apparent disparity between exports from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, as well as the change in port primacy. Both these considerations are deliberated in this chapter and in the context of tower house construction patterns in chapter eight (section 4).

A general overview of the level of trade taking place between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries in Ireland is first discussed. More specifically the dominant exports and imports from and to Ireland are identified. The level of trading interaction between these ports and those of England, specifically: Bristol; Chester; Gloucester and Exeter, those of Continental Europe (France, Spain and Flanders) and, at a later date, the Americas will then be considered. The chapter will then consider the specific commodities being traded at analogous ports, such as: Belfast; Carlingford; Carrickfergus and the ports of the north coast of Ulster. The evidence for trade within the study area will be examined using the evidence from these topics.

3.2 Trade in Ireland

Gardiner noted that higher cost and luxury items were most commonly sold at major ports, leaving the lower cost items for sale at the local markets (Gardiner 2007, 89). Of course, this interpretation may owe much to the fact that higher cost items were inevitably the highest taxed and the major ports the best documented. Similarly, it can be difficult to identify the full range of goods traded since customs accounts detail taxable commodities. The exact numbers of Irish ships appearing in English customs

accounts is also hard to ascertain, largely because of the frequent use of the same ship names (Flavin 2004, 24). From the published material from the English customs accounts, it is possible to identify the some of the major exports to Britain and imports into Ireland in the late medieval period.

3.2.1 Imports

Wine, salt and iron comprised a significant proportion of Irish imports. Wine and iron and most of the salt were imported from the Continent. These commodities could either be imported directly from European ports or they could be re-exported via the larger English ports. Although a large volume of these goods came by re-export, they are discussed further in the section dedicated to Irish trade with Continental Europe (pp 59-61).

Many luxury goods were imported from Britain, including cloth. Ireland manufactured woollen cloth both meeting national demands and for export, so this cloth recorded as coming from England was probably of a fine woollen variety. Other imports coming into Ireland by way of the English ports included silk, soap, honey, spices, sweets (such as almonds and dates) and high quality wax [for seals and candles] (O'Neill 1987, 70).

3.2.2 Exports – grain and fish

Until the fifteenth century one of Ireland's main exports was grain. Grain was in demand as food for campaigning English armies, for supplying marcher castles, for when English supplies were running short and at the English abbeys (O'Neill 1987, 21-2, 28-9). In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries herring shoals were concentrated in the western Baltic and off the coast of eastern England. By the mid fifteenth century herring began to migrate into the North Sea, the Irish sea and off the coasts of west and south Ireland. This movement continued throughout the sixteenth century. As a result of the migratory patterns of these shoals, their appearance in any place was rigorously exploited. Added to this was the need, for religious reasons, to eat fish on approximately one third of the days of the year. These combined to make herring one of Ireland's chief exports in the later middle ages (O'Neill 1987, 30). Cod was plentiful in the north Atlantic, while hake was concentrated off the south coast of Ireland (O'Neill 1987, 36-7). Eels and salmon were present in many rivers in Ireland, and riverine and estuarine fish weirs were a valuable source of income (see p. 115, for discussion of river fishing in the study area). It is not surprising then that the Crown,

monasteries and lords were especially keen to exploit such resources, particularly since salmon was regarded as a high status food (O'Neill 1987, 38). Eels seem to have been eaten by all levels of society and, unlike most other fish, eels could be kept alive in special wooden boxes for a considerable amount of time (O'Neill 1987, 41).

3.2.3 Exports – wool and cloth

Sheep farming became popular through the high middle ages with the result that Ireland produced large quantities of wool. Much of this was woven into a coarse woollen cloth for export, probably both as a cottage industry (for largely local or personal use, or they were collected by 'grey merchants' and brought to the towns for sale) and in the cloth industries in the towns. Irish made mantles (heavy woollen cloaks) in particular (also known as 'falling' or 'falding') were well known and desired throughout Europe. The linen trade had started to develop in the fifteenth century, although little is known about linen cloth and yarn production since it was a very low status occupation and thus not commonly recorded (O'Neill 1987, 67). By the sixteenth century, however, large quantities of linen yarn were being exported and these volumes only increased in the following centuries (O'Neill 1987, 68).

3.2.4 Exports - hides

Hides also formed a large proportion of Ireland's exports. These were exported from all over the country (O'Neill 1987, 77). Similarly, quantities of other animal skins were exported. It has been suggested that these skins were shipped 'undressed', with processing being carried out upon arrival (O'Neill 1987, 98). This is perhaps reflected in the commonly encountered use of 'fell' to describe these skins and fleeces in the customs accounts.

3.2.5 Exports - timber

The extensive Irish woods also facilitated the export of timber. Irish oak in particular was highly prized, especially with the increased deforestation of England from the thirteenth century. This timber was mainly exported as planks or boards, although it would have been used in the manufacture of barrels and casks for containing other goods for trade (O'Neill 1987, 100-02).

3.2.6 Trade with Britain

There is an issue with the primary sources in England that affects any study of trading patterns. While Ireland has very little surviving primary documentation relating to trade in the late medieval period, Irish merchants and ships were legally denizens when recorded in the English custom's accounts and Port Books. This effectively meant that customs officials had no obligation to identify Irish ships separately, as they did not incur the same taxes as goods originating in Europe. It is difficult to identify the precise number of Irish ships trading with England as a consequence, but Childs has estimated that at least seventy, but probably closer to ninety, different Irish ships were active in Bristol, with a further thirty serving the Chester route in the 1480s (Childs 1982, 30). Flavin makes a conservative estimate of at least forty-two vessels serving the Ireland-Bristol route in 1516 (Flavin 2004, 24). The port of Chester, a regular trading point for Irish ships including those from the study area, was legally a palatinate. This means that it did not have the same obligation to keep trade accounts as other English ports.

There appears to have been separation between Anglo-Irish trade and Irish-Continental trade routes, possibly out of choice (Childs 2000, 28). Although this same author did note that Irish ships sometimes sheltered in English ports en route to Brittany and Flanders (Childs 2000, 26). The former interpretation is hard to reconcile with the technology of medieval ship-building, however. Most vessels preferred to keep close to shore on journeys in case of inclement weather (Greenhill 1995, 229). The low speed of knots at which these vessels could travel (estimated at averaging between three and six knots 'speed made good', in other words after limiting factors such as wind direction are taken out of the equation) also meant frequent stops were necessary (Hutchinson 1997, 169). It would therefore be logical to presume that these ships, when in port, would trade and pick up more goods before moving on to the next port of call (see p. 149, for further discussion). It would also appear from the surviving records that a number of items originating in the Continent came to Ireland by way of re-export from Britain.

3.2.6.1 Chester

Chester was the head port for north-west England, with Liverpool, Beaumaris and Conwy grouped under it, and a palatinate jurisdiction. Wilson has published the Chester custom's accounts dating from 1301 to 1566 (1969). These accounts cover only hides, wine and iron, however, as these were the only taxable goods until Chester

was incorporated into the English customs system in 1566. Wine customs had been in place since the late thirteenth century, iron since 1464-5 and hides from 1537-8 (Driver 1971, 98).

The customs accounts show that the vast bulk of trade was conducted with Dublin and Drogheda, with a smaller number of merchants registered as being from Ardee and Athboy. Indeed, it has been estimated that two thirds of Chester's trade was conducted with Ireland (Driver 1971, 99). The most numerous exports (and re-exports) to Ireland, according to Wilson, were: kersey cloth, hops, saffron, Flemish and Castile soap, coal, trenchers, cups, aniseed, alum, sweet foodstuffs (such as almonds, currants and prunes), sugar, knives, broadcloth, fustian (a heavy woven cloth), paper, Yorkshire dozens and straits (cloth) and silk (Wilson 1969, 74-84). In short then, most of the goods being imported into Ireland were luxury and manufactured items. Imports at Chester were rather different: hides; 'fells' (skins); cloth and mantles are the most numerous. Driver adds that corn, fish (especially herring), woad and flax were also imported from Ireland (Driver 1971, 100).

Wilson's account also contains the imports and exports to the ascendant port of Liverpool. The tonnage of ships to Liverpool seem to have been slightly larger than those at Chester, probably reflective of the effects of the silting of the River Dee at Chester (Beck 1969, 8). Overall, the goods exported from Liverpool are very similar to those exported from Chester, with one notable exception. This exception is the variety of cloth exported. The accounts from Liverpool note that Yorkshire kerseys, Yorkshire straits, Northern dozen, Northern kerseys, Western kerseys, Kendal cottons, Manchester cottons, Northern straits, Yorkshire dozens and Coventry cloths were all exported (Wilson 1969, 84-96). This range of cloth exports is a product of the location of Liverpool. It was situated in an advantageous position for England's cloth industries. Liverpool overtook Chester in popularity by 1540, and this has been largely attributed to its dominance over the cloth industry (Driver 1971, 106). Chester did not have strong links to these manufacturing centres north of Liverpool, instead its trade was focussed on north Wales (Driver 1971, 100). Despite this, O'Neill commented that an overland trade route appears to have existed between Chester and London, via Coventry and Oxford, based on a mid fifteenth-century petition. This would suggest that prior to the rise of Liverpool, and possibly allowing a brief period of competition, a certain

amount of Coventry produced cloth came via Chester (O'Neill 1987, 60). Imports from Ireland remained the same to Liverpool as they had been to Chester.

3.2.6.2 Bristol

While Chester's main Irish trading partners seem to have been Dublin and Drogheda, Bristol's links appear to have been overwhelmingly with the south-east of Ireland. Although technically outside of the remit of this chapter as a consequence, it is worth discussing Bristol briefly due to its pre-eminence amongst the English ports.

Bristol's trading links were focussed on Waterford, Wexford, Cork, Dungarvan, Limerick, Ross, Youghal, Galway, Kinsale and to a lesser extent, the ports in the vicinity of Dublin (Vanes 1979, 169). Trade from this region to Bristol increased during the late fifteenth century - in 1503-5 Irish trade accounted for 50% of Bristol's total trade while by the 1540s it was 75% (Flavin 2004, 9). Bristol appears to have had a central role in re-exported non-sweet wine from Continental Europe, annually exporting between approximately 1,500 to 2,000 tonnes a year to Ireland (Sherborne 1965, 22).

Flavin states that the most significant export from Ireland to Bristol was fish (in the early sixteenth century at least), particularly hake, although salmon and herrings were also shipped as well as those popular species outlined above (Flavin 2004, 36, 50). She noted that these fish exports seemed to coincide with major fairs, particularly in the month of July, and in 1516-7, the year she concentrates on in her thesis, on 9 March, when 17% of the shipping recorded for the year landed in one day (Flavin 2004, 36). This Flavin suggests was due to Lent, the time of year when fish was most in demand (which began the week previously in 1517 according to the *Handbook of Dates*) or, alternatively, as a reaction to an upsurge in piracy, with ships travelling en masse to deter potential attacks (Flavin 2004, 37).

The cloth industry in Bristol also boomed during this period, as did its exports of finished cloth. Flavin attributes this to a corresponding decline in the Irish textile industry, although she has no evidence to support this claim (Flavin 2004, 55). O'Neill provides an alternative reason: he states that wool clippings and flock were included in cargoes to Bristol. Indeed, south-east Ireland was renowned for its wool production, to some extent largely due to Waterford and Ross's location, ideally placed on river

estuaries convenient for transporting bulky commodities such as wool from hinterlands (O'Neill 1987, 61). It seems likely in light of this that at least part of Bristol's 'boom' in cloth production was fuelled by the import of Irish wool.

It has also been noted from the Bristol custom's accounts that Irish exports to Bristol were 30% higher than Ireland's imports from Bristol. It was suggested that this discrepancy was due to Ireland receiving imports from ports in the region under Bristol's jurisdiction, particularly Bridgwater. This was further investigated, however, and the records did not suggest that the imbalance was rectified by trade with Bridgwater (Flavin 2004, 23).

3.2.6.3 Gloucester

There are not many references in the secondary sources to Gloucester. It has been noted that Gloucester commanded the principal routes into Wales in the high middle ages (Heighway and Garrod, 1981, 13). Gloucester's influence consequently likely declined due to a combination of the end of the Welsh wars and silting, which hindered shipping and directed trade to Bristol. It is also probable (based on the accounts published by Lewis) that the Welsh ports increased their direct trade with Ireland.

3.2.7 Trade with Continental Europe - France and Spain

Ireland's trade with Continental Europe hinged on three imports- wine, salt and iron (O'Neill 1987, 84). Salt and iron production was negligible in Ireland but both were vital commodities for the Irish economy. Salt was necessary in large volumes for salting fish for preservation for transport and storage, while iron was needed for a wide variety of manufacturing purposes (McNeill 1987, 90). England was known to have produced considerable volumes of salt from salt-pans along its low-lying coasts, but this activity was concentrated along the east coast, a region with little maritime interaction with Ireland.

All three commodities could be found on the shores of the Bay of Biscay. Consequently it is unsurprising that 20% of Ireland's total wine imports came from Bordeaux. Wine also came from Calais (38.5% of the total), St. Malo (16.5%), Spain (6.5%), Middelburg (5%), Scotland (3%) and England (2%). The percentage from Spain is very low, leading to suggestions that Spanish wine was re-exported from the French ports, which in total commanded 75% of Ireland's wine trade. This situation

changed in the late fourteenth century, however, when England lost its French territorial possessions and so came to rely more heavily on Spanish and Portuguese produce. It is probable that wine coming from these countries would have been landed on the west coast of Ireland (in particular at Galway), as it would have been the easiest to reach by sea (O'Neill 1987, 48).

In contrast, the amount of salt brought in from La Rochelle would further support that Ireland's Continental trade was mostly conducted with France (Kearney 1955, 404-5). The Bristol custom's accounts show that Ireland re-exported wine to Bristol, those imports from Bristol being very poor-quality wine suitable for use in pickling. This raises the possibility, in the absence of detailed documentary material, that Ireland had its own trade routes with the Continent and did not solely rely on the English ports for this connection (Flavin 2004, 60-2). Indeed, the south-east of Ireland was easier to reach than the west of England from the Bay of Biscay (O'Neill 1987, 44). We know from the custom's accounts at Bordeaux that Irish ships sailed this route, but unfortunately their precise port of origin are not stated (O'Neill 1987, 45).

Iron seems to have been a very valuable commodity based upon the iron goods specified in medieval wills. Iron may have also come directly from Brittany and Spain in the form of bars, or 'peyces', from which the desired product could be fashioned. In 1355 the export of iron from England was banned, but an exception was made for Ireland, so some iron would have come from re-export after this date (O'Neill 1987, 90-1).

Ireland's exports to France and Spain are not easily identifiable, although Kearney claims that St. Malo was the main port for receiving cargoes of Irish hides (Kearney 1955, 405). This statement has been disputed, however, as can be seen below.

3.2.8 Trade with Continental Europe - Flanders

Childs has argued that Flanders was Ireland's main market for hides. O'Neill agrees, although he states that a large amount also went to Gascony in exchange for wine, with further quantities being shipped to Pisa. He estimates the total annual volume exported to the Continent between 1300 and 1500 as between 1,300 and 1,500 hides, collected from all over the country (Childs 2000, 23; O'Neill 1987, 77-8). The most likely import from the Low Countries to Ireland was finished cloth, the demand for which led Childs

to the conclusion that 'it is quite possible that at this date [i.e. the late fourteenth century] Flemish trade ran close to English in its value to Ireland' (Childs 1982, 33).

3.2.9 Trade with the Americas

Until the mid eighteenth century Irish exports to America were the necessities for colonisation, i.e. provisions, people, horses and linen. The major export from the North American colonies was flaxseed, a commodity demanded in the production of linen. Trade with the Caribbean focussed on the export of salted goods, particularly butter, beef, pork and herrings, and the importation of sugar (Truxes 1988, 1-4). Most of this trade went via London and the larger English ports, although Truxes argues that despite this the demand for provisioning the Caribbean was a major stimulant in the growth of Irish port and market towns in the seventeenth century. The importation of linen allowed in turn allowed the colonies to focus on agriculture (Truxes 1988, 5-6).

Initially the ports of the western coast of Ireland, particularly Galway, were those most affected by trans-Atlantic trade. In time Cork, Dublin and Belfast increasingly came to dominate. Belfast in particular was ideally placed to harness northern Ireland's linen industry (Truxes 1988, 79). Kelleher, in her study of Baltimore County Cork, noted that a number of vessels would stop at ports on the south coast of Ireland for provisioning before crossing the Atlantic (Kelleher 2007, 131).

3.2.10 Concluding note

The overview given above is a generalisation. The precise volume of each commodity exported varied throughout the period studied. As Flavin illustrated in her work on Anglo-Irish trade in the sixteenth century, between 1479 and 1504, for example, 10% of Irish exports were cloth and clothing. By 1541 this figure had increased to over 56%. Over the same time period the volume of fish exported declined, previously a mainstay of the Irish economy (Flavin 2004, 10). These economic fluctuations, sometimes over comparatively short periods of time, must be remembered when making broad statements regarding trade.

3.3 Trade in County Down and neighbouring medieval and early modern period ports (Belfast, Carlingford, Carrickfergus, the Ulster north coast)

This section discusses the evidence we have for trade conducted with the study area. It includes the evidence for trade at neighbouring ports, the reason for this being the problems with historical documentation of trade (see above). By including these nearby ports, the intention is to provide a broad regional picture for the north-east of Ireland that includes the study area. This premise operates on the basis that goods traded would have been similar, and links would have been maintained with the same geographic regions. In this way more evidence can be discussed in light of its influence on the study area.

3.3.1 Carlingford

Carlingford, the most important medieval port to the immediate south of the study area, suffers from the same problems encountered when examining the study area. Most references to the port date from the sixteenth century and after, with the majority of these dating from the second half of the sixteenth century. These indicate that a wide range of goods were being exported and imported from the town. Longfield notes that in this period the towns of south-west Ireland were in decline, whereas those ports north of Dublin steadily increased in productivity (Longfield 1929, 33). This may explain the tower house chronology in the region of Carlingford, which may have been mostly constructed in this century.

Carlingford exported cloth products during the sixteenth century: in 1559 wool was exported to England 'and elsewhere' for making tapestries and hats, while in 1592-3 a large amount of linen was shipped out of the port (Longfield 1929, 81, 91). Timber and timber derived products were also exported from Carlingford, although no dates or destinations are given for these cargoes (Longfield 1929, 171). An entry in the Chester accounts illustrates the typical goods imported at the close of the century: on 20 October 1585 the fourteen tonne *Peter* of 'Wallezey' [Wales?] shipped a cargo of spices (aniseed and currants), presumably for the brewing of usquebaugh or aquavitae (alcohol); household utensils (cups, knives, hampers, stone bottles and pots); soap; what appears to be salt from the Continent ['one fardell bayes continents'], crucial for the fishing industry; and several items required for cloth manufacture, namely alum (a dye fixing agent), madder and saffron [dyes] (Longfield 1929, 194). These entries suggest two things. First, the combination of exports and imports indicates that there was a relatively developed cloth industry in Carlingford since, unlike many other areas of Ireland, ready-made fabrics were not imported, rather the raw materials for

manufacturing. Second, the total value of this cargo is listed as £16, a significant sum of money at this time. The composition and cost of importing these items reveals that there was a wealthy section of the populace using Carlingford as an entry port. Such wealth is reflected in Carlingford's tower houses, many of these reputedly built by merchants.

Aside from these references within Longfield's work, within the rest of the body of historical literature Carlingford has few mentions. These instances usually refer to fishing. For example, O'Neill (quoting from the *Cal. S. P. Ire.*) states that an English fishing fleet of 600 vessels was operating in the vicinity of Carlingford in 1535 (no mention of whereabouts in England this fleet came from is made). The fishermen of this fleet reportedly offered to make 3000 men available for the Lord Treasurer's campaign in the area for two or three days (Childs & O'Neill 1987, 504; O'Neill 1987, 32-3). Although these numbers seem far-fetched by sixteenth-century military standards, it does indicate that Carlingford had extensive involvement in the Irish Sea fishing industry. This situation was probably replicated further north at Ardglass in the study area based on its proximity to the herring shoals.

Fish was one of Ireland's main (if not the most important) exports, particularly to England. Fishing took place across the country, however, it is hard to tell from the English customs accounts whether these catches were brought to England by Irish fishermen or whether the fishing fleets were English operating in Irish waters (Down 1987, 488). Nicholls believes that the shoals were fished by English fishermen with taxes and profits exerted them bringing in a significant income for local lords (Breen 2005, 115; Nicholls 1987, 417).

Herring was probably the dominant fish caught off the east coast. The wealth that could be accumulated from harnessing the herring shoals is witnessed at the Dublin outport of Dalkey where there are a number of tower houses linked to people involved with collecting fishing revenues (Smith 1996, 43, 48). A similar situation has been suggested for Ardglass, which appears to have been well-known for its herring fisheries (see pp 104-05).

Large quantities of salt were required to preserve fish. Neither Ireland nor Britain had salt production to an extent to satisfy even local demand so it had to come either

directly or by re-export from the Continent, in particular from the Bay of Biscay (see above). The salting, or alternatively the drying, of fish could not be done on board but instead required quite a lot of space on shore. This could be done within a port town, or at 'cellar settlements' where a small collection of huts at a good landing place was used as a base for treating fish catches (Fox 2001, 12). It has been proposed here that this pattern, observed in Devon, also existed in the study area (p. 111). It has furthermore been suggested that the focal point of such 'cellar settlements' were rural tower houses.

3.3.2 Carrickfergus

The study area is geographically placed between the better-known later medieval ports of Carlingford, discussed above, and Carrickfergus. Carrickfergus is widely recognised as the dominant Ulster port throughout the medieval period until it was succeeded by Belfast in the seventeenth century. Until the comparative availability of historical primary material from the seventeenth century, late medieval references to the town are, again, few in number. These references are discussed below.

O'Neill notes that in 1319, the earliest reference found in the secondary sources, a cargo of coal was shipped to Carrickfergus, although no mention of where this came from is made (O'Neill 1987, 100). This is quite an early reference to coal. It became a popular fuel during the sixteenth century, when it was used by the wealthy (as implied by the volumes imported to Carrickfergus in the early 1600s. Sweetnam 1986, 13). Before this date fuel needs were served by the local woods (even scrub wood could provide fuel).

Ó Baoill has used *Cal. S. P. Ire.* entries from the fourteenth century to illustrate the 'intermittently prosperous' trade in hides, wool and sheepskins. Other goods mentioned in these examples are imported wheat, malt and oats and the export of corn, flour, salted meat and beer to Scotland with an illicit wine trade also taking place (Ó Baoill 2008, 28-9). The wheat, corn and flour imports indicate the unstable political conditions of the time that necessitated the importation of grain from Dublin and Drogheda. Childs noted in her work that there are eight references to a vessel's homeport being Carrickfergus in the Chester Record Office Sheriff's Books (Childs 2000, 24). Wilson also notes the presence of goods from Carrickfergus-based merchants in vessels arriving in Chester from Dublin and Drogheda. No distinction here is made as to what, if any, specific goods were exported by the Carrickfergus merchants but the cargoes on arrival

tended to comprise: sheepskins (listed as 'fells'); 'brockfell'(skins from sheep killed by accident or from disease); calf skins; cloth (very likely the typical Irish coarse woollen cloth); mantles; flocks; tallow; checkers (another variety of cloth); salted hides; yarn; sack; coney skins; lambskins; alum (a dye fixer, especially used in wool cloth). There was no alum source at this time in England so it had to be imported from the Continent. It is probable that this alum was re-imported back into Chester, or at least re-exported from Ireland having come via the ports of Spain or France. The presence of alum in any cargo does suggest that there was some level of cloth manufacture taking place within the hinterland of the port. Old brass, wool, fox skins and marten skins make up the rest of the diverse cargo (Wilson 1969, 74-84). These commodities are representative of the general exports of the eastern seaboard of Ireland during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as discussed above. Excavations at a tower house site on High Street in Carrickfergus uncovered high status goods such as wine glass fragments but, more significantly, a lead weight box and an official copper-alloy weight (Ó Baoill 2008, 34). This indicates that tower houses in Carrickfergus had a commercial function.

The published material specifically for Carrickfergus is overwhelmingly seventeenth century in focus. Sweetnam has published material from the Carrickfergus Port Book from 1614 to 1615. A comparison between the goods exported from Carrickfergus and the study area takes place below. What is particularly interesting is Sweetnam's comment that 'in general, the merchants, listed at Carrickfergus are not recorded at the other Ulster ports' and this is partially reflected in the goods exported (Sweetnam 1986, 9). The goods listed by Sweetnam correspond closely with a shift in exports taking place in the Tudor period. Carrickfergus' exports can be summarised as being bacon, beef, butter, cows, hides, horses, yarn, pork, staves and tallow. Surprisingly sheep products are notably absent, despite their apparent dominance in the previous centuries and this may also be indicative of a bigger economic shift between the late medieval and post-medieval periods. Imports include aquavitae (alcohol of an indiscriminate nature), beer, coal, deal boards (wood planks of either fir or pine), hops, prunes, salt, sugar, vinegar and wine (Sweetnam 1986, 13). It is evident that the pastoral agriculture of the later medieval period had not been abandoned with colonisation. What are missing from this account, however, are shipments of oats to Scotland despite the high rates of duty imposed on this. The yarn listed is possibly linen yarn, which was shipped to Chester and Liverpool for the production of fustian by combining it with cotton in Manchester (Clarke 1976, 176). By 1637 Carrickfergus combined with the returns from

the increasingly dominant Belfast, was ranked second port in Ulster after Derry in terms of customs dues (Ó Baoill 2007, 98)

In terms of instances of ships' home ports recorded at Carrickfergus in these years Liverpool is the prime port of location, followed by Chester, Carrickfergus, Glasgow, Parton in Cumbria, Ayr, Norton [Cheshire?], London, Sallcot [Cheshire?] and Amsterdam. There are a number more homeports of only a couple of instances, ranging in location from Cheshire, north Wales, south-west England, Scotland to the Isle of Man (Sweetnam 1986, 10-13). These homeports reflect seventeenth-century trading connections and highlights why it is impossible to apply such records to the late medieval period since the goods exported and ports they were shipped to had changed. Carrickfergus also has more frequent connections with the Continent than may be at first expected (based on distance from mainland Europe and the port's status).

Significant for the discussions within this particular study are the few mentions to Ardglass as a homeport. In the summer of 1615 two vessels are recorded as having come from Ardglass. One of these, the *Sunday* of Ardglass, is recorded as having had as its merchant, a Michael White of Carrickfergus. This encourages the idea that a significant amount of trade was regional (also referred to as coastal), an idea that is further discussed on p. 144 (Sweetnam 1986, 10-13).

3.3.3 Belfast

Through the course of the seventeenth century Carrickfergus was gradually overshadowed by the port of Belfast, culminating in 1637 with Belfast being awarded equality of trading rights with Carrickfergus. Sited at the mouth of the River Lagan amidst tidal mud flats, Belfast was ideally located for access to the agricultural produce of the fertile Lagan valley which it commanded in much the same way as Carrickfergus did Belfast Lough (Agnew 1996, 4).

Belfast was granted to Essex in 1573. Essex explained as his motivations for an attempted establishment of a town at Belfast as the natural harbour, the ready supply of wood and its location upon a border (Ó Baoill 2007, 101). Belfast received a market charter in 1605, a corporation charter with the right to elect Members of Parliament to sit in the Irish parliament was issued in 1613. Very little about the town, besides the issuing of these charters and annal references to the castle being attacked, is known until

the 1630s (Agnew 1996, 1; Ó Baoill 2007, 100). Excavation has discovered occasional medieval pot sherds so it is probable that there was some Gaelic-Irish settlement there, probably to control the ford and since it was located in the centre of Clandeboye O'Neill territory. Thus far no evidence, in terms of vernacular buildings, for this settlement has been identified (Ó Baoill 2007, 102).

By 1683-6, the first years of the port with detailed trade records, the town was exporting beef, hides, tallow, corn, butter and linen to Britain, Europe and the colonies. The dominant imports were cloth, wine, spirits, spices, timber and tobacco (Agnew 1996, 105-8). Evidently by this time the plenteous wood described by Essex had been destroyed. The 1638 fire regulations imposed on the town has been taken as indicating the presence of ironworks, breweries and tanneries 'suggesting that Belfast served as a centre for manufacturing' (Ó Baoill 2007, 103). Belfast is a good study to illustrate the ever-changing dominance of ports, not only in Ireland, but in the wider mercantile community, since only a matter of years before, all of Belfast's produce, both exported and imported, had to come via Carrickfergus, as the head port, which meant a delay of two to three days (Agnew 1996, 17). This topic is discussed in further detail in chapter eight.

3.3.4 North coast of Ulster

It is worth mentioning briefly the activities of those ports on the north coast of Ulster. Coleraine appears to be the head port of the region, at least in the early seventeenth century when it formed a central custom's collection point, although Derry seems to have risen in prominence later that century. There is also a reference to timber being diverted to Coleraine for ship-building in this same period (Clarke 1976, 180). There are few mentions of these ports in the earlier customs accounts. None of them are noted in the published Chester material, which is unusual since it would have been one of the nearest large ports in England. In 1553 though, Bristol merchants using the ship *Jesus* sailing from the Isle of Man to Lough Foyle were attacked by pirates from Brittany. The cargo was stolen before the ship was taken into an unnamed Scottish port. This cargo apparently contained wine from Gascony, salt, kersey (a type of cloth), grey cloth, raw silk, saffron, beer, biscuits, beef, wheat flour, old money, grocery wares and salmon (Vanes 1979, 64-5). This was a valuable set of commodities by contemporary standards. This is reflected in the inclusion of salmon in the cargo. This is an unusual import to this area since it was within close proximity to the renowned salmon fisheries

of the River Bann. This cargo could be reflective of political circumstances, however, and possibly access to the River Bann had been curtailed.

3.3.5 Study area

Down has interpreted the 1275 wool customs of Edward I, where the Ulster ports come near the end of the list in terms of customs produced, as 'these towns were intended by their founders to be centres of trade in their lordships, outlets for the surpluses of the manors they were then organising'. He further states 'internal trade in the lordship was largely based on the many towns that developed around the castles of the new nobility; the ones that became commercially important were those that stood on navigable rivers or main roads and in easy communication with coastal trade' (Down 1987, 482). Although referring to a time predating the tower houses, this quote does summarise the state of the economy of the study area prior to, and to a certain extent during, the period of tower house construction.

In the later middle ages Ardglass was probably at least a regional port; Lewis even goes so far as to state that it was superior to any other port in Ulster (Lewis 1837, 51). This is a possibility, although impossible to prove with the historical evidence available. Lewis also states that by the reign of Henry VI Ardglass had received a charter of incorporation and housed a port-admiral and revenue officers, although no reference is provided for this (Lewis 1837, 51).

Fishing was probably an important activity, especially herring fishing. The earliest references to fishing date from 1337 when the abbot of Inch Abbey, near Downpatrick, had a court at 'Munkhill' (unidentifiable) for herring fishing, while by 1515 'the fisheries around Ardglass were particularly valuable and the income from the customs of these fisheries went to the Earl of Kildare' (For Gerald Fitz Gerald Earl of Kildare 7 Oct.1515, *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic 7 Henry VIII*, 268; O'Neill 1987, 31-2). The fisheries of Ardglass were evidently held in high esteem as suggested by such comments as 'Ardglass occupied many Irish fishermen and attracted both English and French fishermen and English merchants' and 'the fishing grounds around Ardglass being particularly valuable' (Childs & O'Neill 1987, 504; Quinn & Nicholls 1976, 37). A reference from the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* says that the fish was 'so plentiful all the year round with cod and ling that a whole army might be victualled from the fishings there' (Butlin 1976, 164). The Welsh Port Books record the *Jesus* of Ardglass arriving at Beaumaris

with a cargo including a hogshead of salmon (Lewis 1927, 253). It has been suggested here that this salmon came from the Quoile River salmon fisheries. Fishing in the study area is discussed further in chapter six.

The later middle ages was also a time when Ireland's grain exports were at their highest. However, 'the perilous position of the declining colony in eastern Ulster increased its dependence on supplies arriving by sea from the farmlands of Louth, Meath and Dublin' (O'Neill 1987, 21). Those grain supplies being transported to Carrickfergus, Carlingford and Greencastle came from Drogheda's hinterland (Licence, for two years, for James Boys..., August 5 [1376], *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1392-6*, 303). Although it seems likely that mixed agriculture was practiced in Lecale, it is unknown whether this was sufficient for local consumption.

A reference that can be tentatively attributed to the port of Ardglass dates from 1395 when a consignment of 316 cauldrons was seized for non-payment of customs and given to Janico Dartas (June 10 1395, *Cal. Close Rolls, 1392-6*, 353). Janico Dartas was a prominent figure in fourteenth-century Ireland so it is possible that these cauldrons were not bound for Ardglass, although he is credited with the development of the port. Also unknown is the port of origination for these cauldrons. The majority of manufactured iron goods were imported from Chester, and 'battery' (i.e. pots and pans) was a numerous sub-section within this. This link is tenuous but may suggest that Ardglass was trading with Chester and was, like the rest of the eastern seaboard of Ireland, importing luxury goods.

More identifiable in the published material, although mentions are very rare, are the region's imports. The earliest reference found dates from 1306 when the *Nicholas* of Downpatrick was wrecked off Portmarnock. This vessel was carrying a cargo of wine, wax, pots, jewels and spices (Pleas of the Crown at Swerdes, *Cal. Justic. Rolls 1305-07*, 507-08). The composition of the cargo indicates that these were imports, either purchased in Dublin or transported directly from the Continent.

Ellis provides a brief, but useful, summary of customs revenue in the fifteenth and sixteenth century for Ireland as a whole, and includes some references to the study area within this. The earliest of these dates from the reign of Edward IV (1461-83) when assignments of between twenty and forty marks on the customs of Dundalk, Ardglass

and Carrickfergus were made to the Constable of Carrickfergus (Ellis 1989, 72). Such revenues as this reached their peak at the end of the fifteenth century, before declining in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Ellis argues that this may have been caused by foreign merchants 'forsaking' the ports of the Pale for other ports due to the cost of customs there. The study area was possibly remote enough from centralised government to have an appeal to merchants disillusioned with the increasing costs of operating out of the Pale. Although dating from 1618, the agents of the farmers of the Irish customs claimed that the Countess of Kildare was deliberately lowering the duties at Strangford and Ardglass to draw shipping away from other ports (National Archives, Kew, TN/PO7/III/36). The intention to do this may account for the Earl of Kildare acquiring, shortly before 1518, of the customs of Ardglass and Strangford for £4. This can be compared with the £12 achieved for Carlingford in 1530 and Limerick for £20 in 1518. The total for Ireland being estimated at approximately £350 a year (Ellis 1989, 74). It is possible that with the intervention of Kildare came an increase in fortune for the study area before it was curbed one hundred years later.

The Welsh Port Books published by Lewis cover the years 1550-1603 and contains some references to the study area, Ardglass in particular although Strangford is named twice. These vessels appear to have traded exclusively with Beaumaris, as no mention is made of a master, merchant or vessel from the study area at any other Welsh port. The goods exported from the study area are overwhelmingly agricultural in nature, but yet are also diverse reflecting mixed agriculture in Lecale at least. Goods include: barley; beef; salted pork; hides; blankets; tallow; horses; cows; fish and, probably re-exported slates (Lewis 1927, 253-75). Lewis states that the main export to Ireland was Welsh slate (Lewis 1927, xxvi). One entry is interesting as the vessel is recorded as *The Bride* of Rogerstown (County Meath) coming from Ardglass with a cargo of slate and horses, which provides additional evidence for the practice of coastal trading. The mentions of slate raises the question whether trade was conducted with Beaumaris so as to obtain slate, which may have been sought to roof tower houses with. In 1585 two ships left Beaumaris carrying slate, one ship was attached to Strangford and the other Ardglass (Lewis 1927, 254). A frequently occurring name within these accounts is John Savage (Lewis 1927, 262, 241). It is possible that he was connected to the Savages, lords of the Ards who constructed a number of tower houses in the study area, indeed he may have been a younger son. Such statements suggest that tower houses could indirectly engage in trade.

Josias Bodley's account of his visit to Lecale in 1601-03 hints at the goods that were imported at wealthy households, such as at tower houses, towards the end of the Nine Years War. He visits a Master Morrison at Downpatrick and there partakes of such foodstuffs as Spanish wine, French wine, spices and tobacco (Bodley 1601-03, 332). In addition, Bodley and his friends partake of high status foods from the region, such as venison, goose, veal, game and other more common meats (Bodley 1601-03, 340). Of roughly the same date, the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* mentions barques anchoring at Ringhaddy castle with supplies for the rebels, including munitions, cloth, wine and aqua vitae (The Lord Deputy and Council to Secretary Cecil, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 502-05). The historical evidence is corroborated by underwater excavation at the site, which found items such as North Devon ware pottery, bottle fragments, musket balls and corroded iron (Breen 1997, 63). Excavations at Mahee castle (occupied during the period of the Tudor Conquest) by MacDonald and Ó Baoill found quantities of pottery, mostly of late medieval date with no suggestion made as to their origin, and slag that might indicate the import of metal for working (Ó Baoill 2001; MacDonald 2002). The *Cal. S. P. Ire.* records increasing interest in trade in Ireland as attentions at the end of the wars started to turn to colonisation. Most of the references aside from this are concerned with supplies for the army. It is difficult to identify specific trading activities from the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* as references are generally quite oblique and contain a strong bias to promote the idea of colonisation in Ireland while suggesting that the Irish did not maximise their lands and natural resources.

The effects of Scottish and English colonisation in the early seventeenth century have been suggested as marking a period of growth in the Ulster ports. This interpretation argues that trade in sixteenth-century Ulster was not a major commercial force due to underpopulation. Also, 'as immigration from Scotland and England increased both the labour force and the proportion of productive land in Ulster, a rapid rise in the number of inland fairs and markets, coupled with gradual improvements in communications, made this produce easier to market' (Agnew 1996, 2). The level of population change between the early sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is, of course, impossible to precisely verify. Similarly the thrust of this argument seems to focus on the situation in inland towns, and not the coastal and riverine settlements dealt with in this study, where population may have been concentrated due to a comparatively developed maritime economy. What is unavoidable is that the activities of the ports of the County Down

seaboard would have been curtailed by the rapid expansion of both Belfast and Newry in the seventeenth century, as is discussed from p. 187. We have seen above how Belfast diverted Carrickfergus' trade at this time, and the study region, sandwiched as it is between Belfast and Newry, logically would have been affected even more.

Ardglass and Strangford were regularly grouped together for official custom's purposes, as is the case in the Port Books (plate 5). These are the single most complete historical indication we have of mercantile activity at the start of the seventeenth century. For the Lecale ports the 'Port books for Strangford, Arglasse [Ardglass], Killough and

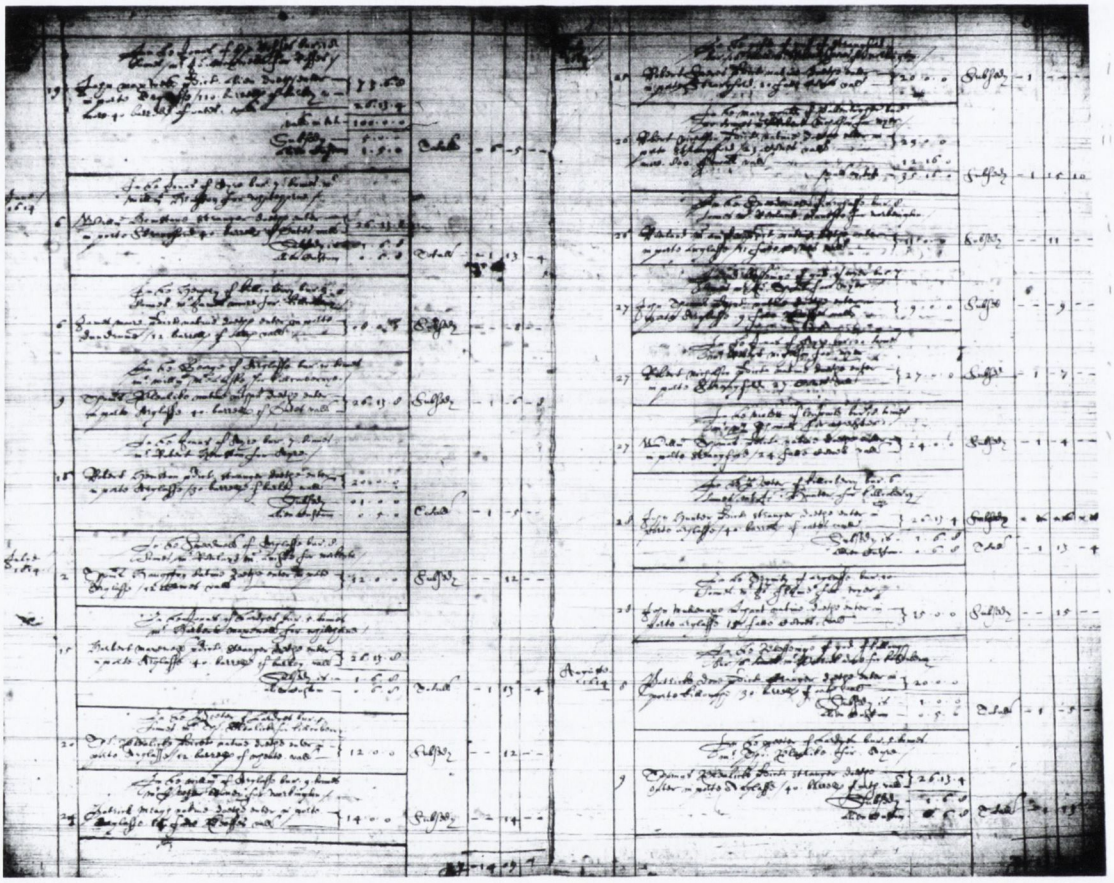


Plate 5

Two page extract from the 'Port books for Strangford, Arglasse, Killough and Dundrum'. The left hand column contains the date of arrival in port, the middle column details of the vessel, cargo and value of goods and the four right hand columns the total value of the goods being transported.

After PRONI MIC 199/1

Dundrum' 1614 to 1615 survive (PRONI MIC 199/1). Three books make up this series and they only detail the exports from the region. This shows that on the whole the vessels deployed in trade at the Lecale ports were small, varying between five tonnes and forty tonnes, although most of the boats fall between ten and twenty-five tonnes burthen, in other words, their cargo capacity. The port in which the vessel traded is in the vast majority of the cases noted. Although Strangford is normally seen as the head port of the region in the late medieval period, the sheer number of tower houses present at Ardglass suggests that it had a prominence equal to, if not more, than Strangford's. Ardglass contains six 'tower houses', of which only three can be accurately described as such by fulfilling a permanent residential function. The remaining three could be loosely described as port buildings – shops, warehouses and potential navigation aids. The number of tower houses and what this suggests about the relative prominence of the ports is reflected in the Port Books in the number of instances each port is cited, with Ardglass mentioned at least forty-six times to Strangford's marginally less forty times. These ports are followed by Ballintogher (the port on the Quoile River that could have served the county town of Downpatrick) with sixteen mentions, Dundrum with twelve, Portaferry with six and finally Killough with four. The vessels anchoring at Dundrum and Killough are notably much smaller than those sailing to Strangford and Ardglass. Boats are from Ardglass and Strangford, with one mentioned as being from Killough, as well as a variety of Scottish and English ports, while north-east England, Bristol, London, Scotland, and to a lesser extent, Wales and the Isle of Man, are the destinations. Trade within Ireland is hinted at with the arrival of a boat from Carlingford, lying to the south of Lecale. Exports were mainly grain - oats and barley, beef, live cattle, horses. In a few instances re-exports such as salt, sugar, wine and brass are noted.

An interesting conundrum is the lack of mention of exports of barrels of fish, which stands in direct contrast to the fish bone finds from Mark Gardiner's excavations at Jordan's castle, Ardglass. Analysis of fish bones at the site found that all the species present were likely to be saltwater varieties. These fish bones were recovered from a seventeenth-century deposit and their small number has led to suggestions that this indicates that the warehouse was used for storage of barrels rather than as a processing centre (Gardiner 2005). However, the small number may also be explained by the possibility that fish was not exported and this sample represents what was consumed directly on site. In fact the previously plenteous herring shoals seem to have been on

the move by the early seventeenth century, not returning until the eighteenth century with Ardglass undergoing a resurgence in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Lewis 1837, 51-2).

In contrast, the rise in prominence of grain by the seventeenth century is attested by analysis of charred plant remains. As indicated in the Port Books, oats are the most common cereal type found at the site, followed by barley. These grains are present throughout the period of the port's activity; from the fifteenth through to the eighteenth century. However, most of the samples recovered date from post-1750, followed by the period 1650-1750. There are no contexts dating from the early seventeenth or sixteenth centuries with which to make a comparison but it is sufficient to say that the deposits dating from the fifteenth century contain fewer grains (Hinton in Gardiner 2005). Thus it is probably fair to say that grain exports remained a staple export throughout the period, particularly since it is likely that Lecale at least practiced to some extent a policy of mixed agriculture since its flatter and more fertile lands would have provided a good basis for arable farming. The large volumes of timber leaving Belfast and Carrickfergus ports, lying to the north of Lecale, in the seventeenth century are also not replicated in the Port Books. Further evidence regarding the export of timber from the study area may come to light with the publication of the findings from the Drogheda Boat excavation. It would appear that the timber used in constructing the Elizabethan era boat came from the shores of Strangford Lough (Chiara Buldorini, pers. comm.). Probably this wood for ship-building more specifically came from the Dufferin woods. The currently known results of this excavation are discussed again on p. 88.

Donaghadee is one settlement within the study area that would appear to have profited from the shift in trading activity in the early seventeenth century. Worthy of comment is that there is no tower house present within the town, rather there is an earlier motte. The town began to rise in prominence due to its proximity to the Scottish town of Portpatrick, only twenty-two miles distant, and financial investment by Montgomery. By the middle of the seventeenth century Donaghadee, and Strangford, appear to have been functioning as some kind of outports for Belfast, since it was easier to load cattle (apparently the towns' dominant export) from the Lagan valley onto boats here than at Belfast (Agnew 1996, 118). It is probable that Donaghadee's role in this would have been greater than Strangford's, since the overland movement of cattle down to Lecale would have negated any advantages over Belfast. By the late seventeenth century

Donaghadee's population of sea-faring people (i.e. sailors and fishermen) out-numbered those at Belfast and Carrickfergus combined (Agnew 1996, 131-2). 'Belfast's transatlantic commerce predated that of any other port in the north of Ireland', this was primarily based upon the export of linen, the trade of which largely bypassed Dublin, and this pattern appears also reflected in Donaghadee (Truxes 1988, 20, 79). Although at a later date than covered by the remit of this study, it is worth mentioning that there is documentary evidence in the Maryland shipping returns that vessels from Donaghadee were shipping tobacco from the Chesapeake to the English ports (Truxes 1988, 22).

For the later period under investigation, the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, we are fortunate that Kearney has published the wine accounts from 29 September (i.e. Michaelmas) 1614 to 29 September 1615. Wine shipments were dealt with separately from other taxable goods (accounted for in the Port Books, above) and unlike the accounts for these other commodities the wine customs for the Lecale ports are grouped in with those for Carrickfergus. It is impossible to separate the wine being imported into Lecale and Carrickfergus, which is unfortunate. Regarding the late medieval period, O'Neill stated that 'some wine was reshipped along the coast from Dublin and Drogheda to Ulster...the amounts were small and it is unlikely that the Ulster Irish were depending much on wine from Drogheda and Dublin' (O'Neill 1987, 56). This refers specifically to the Ulster-Irish, however, who comprised only part of the ethnic make-up of the study area and it is likely that the Anglo-Irish had stronger links with Dublin and Drogheda.

Kearney's findings are summarised as follows:

Place of vessel registration	Number of recorded entries
Ayr	4
Carrickfergus	4
Glasgow	4
London	2
Ardglass	1
Beaumaris	1
Chester	1
Leith	1

Liverpool	1
Northam [Devon]	1
Weymouth [Dorset]	1
Total	21

As can be seen, the majority (nine) of vessels recorded carrying wine are from Scotland, with a further six from England, five from the north of Ireland and one from Wales. These figures indicate that the wine received (legally at least) into the east Ulster ports were probably all re-exports. It is not certain whether the vessels from Carrickfergus and Ardglass came direct from the Continent, but in light of the other entries, were probably re-exports as well. It could be suggested that the one entry from Ardglass might indicate the comparative level of trade compared to Carrickfergus's four. What can also be determined from this account is that the ports of registration are clearly of their time. In other words, the inclusion of Liverpool, as previously discussed a relatively new port, mitigates the transposing of the patterns recorded here to the centuries and decades prior to 1614-15.

A different pattern can be determined from the records of ships' masters, summarised below.

Master's place of origin	Number of recorded entries
Ayr	7
Glasgow	3
Barstable [Essex]	1
Bordeaux	1
Chester	1
Liverpool	1
London	1
Middlesborough [Yorkshire]	1
Plymouth [Devon]	1
Rochell [La Rochelle]	1
Weymouth [Dorset]	1
Total	19

The total here from Scotland (ten) combined with the evidence outlined above indicates that there were strong links at this time between east Ulster and Scotland. This is very probably a result of the process of colonisation of eastern Ulster by Scottish settlers. Furthermore, it is reflective of the connections with trade maintained by these settlers. For example, Sir James Hamilton's younger brother Gavin was a merchant, illustrating that trade between Ireland and Scotland was largely a family affair by this time. Here also we find the expected mention of Continental trading interests (La Rochelle), implying that the export of wine was very much still in the hands of the French but transported in whatever ships were readily available.

Sheehan records no mentions of Carrickfergus and Strangford in the wine trade until 1614-15, giving the wine trade of this year a figure of sixty-nine [presumably tuns imported], hugely increasing to 401 by 1639-40. Donaghadee is not mentioned until 1639-40 when it is recorded as importing sixteen units. It is interpreted that there was no wine trade to these places prior to this date (Sheehan 1986, 117). In light of the paucity of historical evidence for this region this conclusion is unsurprising. It may mean that there was no wine trade to the study area, or, more probably, that there are no surviving records of it taking place. What these figures do show, however, that in 1614-15 Carrickfergus and Strangford were importing more wine than such previously prominent ports as New Ross (two), Dundalk (eleven), Kinsale (seventeen) and Youghal (thirty-two). They were importing less than Wexford, Dublin, Drogheda, Derry and Coleraine, Limerick, Cork and Waterford though. By 1639-40 only Dublin, Galway and Cork surpassed Carrickfergus and Strangford. These accounts further illustrate that the north-east ports were of a middling size and importance.

Smuggling to avoid the payment of duties may also account for both a lack of documentary evidence and also the generation of wealth. Both Jones and Sherborne noted in the Bristol and Bridgwater shipping accounts that the total number of Irish ships leaving these ports far exceeded the number of those arriving, by a ratio of 2:1. This, they suggested, may have been due in part to extensive smuggling (Jones 1998, 72; Sherborne 1965, 24). Kearney observed similarly in the seventeenth-century wine accounts that the total amount of wine imported into London was twelve times higher than that for the whole of Ireland. He views this as an unrealistic situation and so suggests that a large proportion of Irish wine imports were smuggled in through the numerous Irish creeks and landing places (Kearney 1955, 404). Lying outside of the

Pale as the study area does, yet still maintaining an Anglo-Irish influence, County Down was probably an attractive prospect for these purposes. There are numerous local traditions of smugglers, mostly relating to the eighteenth century, but this may be indicative of earlier events too (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 231, 235). Certainly the numerous anchorages and landing places corresponding with tower houses would have given smugglers many options away from the attention of the port towns, while providing an income for tower house occupants who could impose their own tax. Even aside from this, the incident where the Archbishop of Dublin, Michael Tregury, was captured in Dublin Bay in 1454 by pirates and taken to Ardglass suggests that piracy may have been widespread in the study area.

It has been identified that Carlingford and Carrickfergus had some level of industrial activity taking place within the confines of the town. This assertion is based on the composition of the cargoes arriving at these locations and also because such activity required a certain population level to render it viable. Sadly we cannot ascertain the same activity in the study area based on the surviving evidence.

The above summary shows that, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at least, fish, linen, beef/cattle and salt formed the backbone of trading activity in the area. Such patterns have led to comments that 'the counties of the north-east stood to some extent apart from the general pattern of Irish agriculture. There was relatively little grazing of sheep or cattle but tillage and dairying were carried out mainly for local requirements, though leaving a surplus of butter for export' (Cullen 1968, 9). Significantly, this chapter has shown that trade was very much a fluctuating entity, both in terms of the evident shift in goods exported and imported in the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries, and also in port status. Most of the historical evidence comes from the Tudor period and after. This may not be representative of the real situation, since it is possible that documentary evidence has not survived or it was never recorded. Consequently archaeological evidence becomes an even greater necessity to this study, although the excavations outlined above did not return many finds to indicate trading routes, particularly at specific tower house sites.

Chapter Four – Boats and the study area

4.1 Introduction

An overview of the vessels used in trade in the late medieval and early modern periods provides context to a study of the maritime economy. This summary identifies the vessels that may have been present in the study area and the specific vessels that may have traded with the tower houses.

Our knowledge of medieval vessels is based upon three sources: historical documentation, most frequently customs accounts and port books which often state at a minimum the tonnage of the ship if not a detailed description of its appearance; contemporary cartographic sources, which can portray depictions of vessels (albeit imprecise ones); and archaeological excavation. There have been no discoveries of medieval or seventeenth-century vessels in the study area, meaning that we must rely on evidence from excavations elsewhere in Ireland and the historical record.

Maritime historians have proposed that ship design for those used in trading and fishing was determined by the cargoes carried, the routes sailed and the available arrangements for loading and unloading (Hutchinson 1997, 88). A shared regional tradition may have also influenced the type of ship construction practiced in specific locations (Parker 2006, 140).

4.2 Medieval boats

Until technological advances were witnessed in the fifteenth century, ships were commonly clinker built. The two most popular designs were the cog and the hulk.

The cog developed from the flat-bottomed, plank-built river traditions of north-west Europe – they had a flat bottom with high, clinker constructed sides. The cog had a tubby appearance, its dimensions at length to breadth being estimated at a ratio of 3:1, but there was still great variation in size (O'Neill 1987, 108). Cogs of sixty to 160 tons are recorded at Southampton, although it is estimated that the majority of cogs engaged in Irish trade routes would have been less than thirty tons (O'Neill 1987, 108). The aforementioned dimensions of the cog meant that it was capable of carrying more cargo than a round hulled vessel of the same length. Its low draught meant that it was well suited to shallow and tidal waters such as those found in the Severn estuary at Bristol.

The major downside to the cog, however, was its difficulty in handling at sea. This meant that the cog stayed close to shore (Greenhill 1995, 225). The consequence of this was that an in-depth knowledge of all routes was required; essentially a local pilot needed to be on board who could identify hazards and could direct the vessel to havens in the event of adverse sailing conditions. Despite this limitation, the cog has been attributed as having a pivotal role in the expansion of trade and the development of towns in the medieval period (Greenhill 1995, 226-7). Although the cog was phased out of use in the fifteenth century, Greenhill finds it 'a reasonable hypothesis that the cog type served on in local places where it was particularly suitable long after its general abandonment' (Greenhill 1995, 231).

Ambiguity in the historical sources has also led to suggestions that the term 'cog' could be simply referring to any large, sea-going vessel. Similarly, large three masted vessels were often described as 'hulks', another type of sea-faring vessel, even after the time when they became obsolete in the fifteenth century (O'Neill 1987, 107). The hulk was probably as popular as the cog, it was curved both longitudinally and transversely leading to a characteristic dish-like shape (Greenhill 1995, 250).

It has been suggested that an interim period existed in the fifteenth century in terms of ship-building technology, witnessed in the prevalence of two masted vessels. From the middle of this century, however, a number of depictions of three masted ships start to appear. It is estimated that, sometime between 1460 and 1480, the three masted vessel became fully established. These were the first ships capable of ocean, rather than sea, voyages and the implications of this technological advancement were immense (Greenhill 1995, 259; Villain-Gandossi 1985, 101). The ability to sail away from shore and across oceans opened up the world to expansionist European nations, resulting in extensive exploration and ultimately, colonisation.

Despite technological development, hull size did not increase immediately. What the three masted system did allow for was a more complex form of rigging which permitted increased control over the sails, unlike that encountered in cogs and hulks (Villain-Gandossi 1985, 102). By 1545 there are apparently references in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* to clinker built vessels as feeble, old and out of fashion, although this was unable to be verified based on the brevity of the calendar entries (Greenhill 1995, 260).

4.3 Early modern period boats

Clinker-type construction still prevailed for small, localised boats used for fishing and in the form of galleys used by the Gaelic-Irish (Breen & Forsythe 2004, 82, 92; Breen 2007, 100; Gardiner 1994, 116-7). In Highland Scotland use of these galleys persisted into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They could also be very large, requiring up to thirty-two rowers. Despite new technology, galleys were still an attractive choice as they could travel at up to six or seven knots in speed over short distances. Their shallow draughts allowed galleys to move into estuaries and to land on beaches (Breen & Forsythe 2004, 87-8).

Vessel size declined throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Explanations for this include: a trend to spread cargoes across multiple smaller ships as a measure against piracy; to allow entry into more harbours so allowing an increased hinterland; and for economic reasons as a smaller vessel was less expensive to crew and maintain (Gardiner 1994, 86; Sherborne 1965, 14). The advent of the 'carvel' style of ship allowed for a rounder hull which in turn increased storage space and stability that probably also reduced the need for large vessels (Breen & Forsythe 2004, 83). By the early seventeenth century vessel size increased again, corresponding with the demands of bulk commodity transport and increasingly regular ocean voyages (Breen 2007, 202).

Further examples of the new ship design dating from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries include:

- Balingers. Balingers superseded galleys in an English context in the fifteenth century. It originated as an oared fishing vessel that evolved into a two masted sailing boat of twenty to fifty tons. The balinger appears to have been used in trade, military transport and as warships.
- Carracks. A large and heavy ship, it later had three masted sails. Due to its size the carrack was restricted to ports that were of sufficient anchoring depth. They were perfect for long distance voyages, however, as their size allowed storage of large volumes of goods so reducing the need for re-supply stops (Gardiner 1994, 85). O'Neill sees the carrack as 'represent[ing] the full development of the medieval ship', yet he argues that the carrack was unlikely to have called at any Irish port (O'Neill 1987, 108-110).

- Galleons. The galleon emerged in the early sixteenth century and was adept at ramming. The strongly braced hull was perfect for Atlantic sailing conditions, although it could also be adapted to local demands. Galleons were most frequently found in a naval role although there are examples of them being used in mercantile and fishing activities (Breen & Forsythe 2004, 84).
- Barges. Less is known about the medieval and early modern period barge, but it would appear that they were used from the early fifteenth century as convoy escorts. It is likely that they would also have been used in commerce. The barge carried both oars and sails (O'Neill 1987, 109).
- Caravels. A long vessel lying low in the water which was originally lateen rigged, allowing it to sail very close to the wind. This attribute made it a very fast ship and it has come to be associated with piracy as a result (O'Neill 1987, 111).
- Crayers and Pickards. Both the pickard and the crayer appear to have been smaller versions of the balinger. They were mainly employed in fishing, with the pickard acting as a 'lighter' for a fishing fleet and those over twelve tons described as crayers. O'Neill believes that crayers and pickards were the most commonly sighted vessels in and around Irish waters (Breen & Forsythe 2004, 84; O'Neill 1987, 112).

4.4 Impact on the study

There is little historic documentation attesting to the types of ship employed in the study region beyond the tonnage recorded in the Port Books. Instead we must rely on pictorial representations. Betelius's map of 1560 shows a ship sailing off Ardglass. Breen and Forsythe have interpreted its simplistic design as indicative of a continuation of Scandinavian boat-building styles and suggest that this ship is most probably a hulk (Breen & Forsythe 2004, 91). The fifteenth-century seal of the borough of Kilclief similarly depicts a clinker built vessel (plate 8). Raven drew four ships in the harbour at Killyleagh in his 1625 maps of the barony of Dufferin (plate 6a). These are also simple illustrations but it is possible that these ships too were of clinker construction, indeed it has been suggested that these may have been fishing vessels (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 406-7). These depictions of clinker built vessels could suggest that an older style of ship construction persisted in the study area at least until the mid seventeenth century. Other maps of approximately the same date, including Lythe's of *c.* 1570

(plate 6b) and Jobson's of *c.* 1598 (plate 7a) show three masted carvel constructed ships. These ships are depicted off the coast of the study area though, which suggests that they might be present for artistic purposes rather than accurate portrayals of the vessels trading with the region. An anonymous map *c.* 1602 shows three barges sailing off the study area (plate 7b). Two of these are shown with single masts and a further smaller one has multiple masts, all three of these vessels have oars depicted, which is why they have been attributed as being barges. Since two of these barges are drawn sailing inside Strangford Lough this indicates that this map might be more accurate in its depictions of vessels operating in the study area.

As mentioned above, it was common to find regional boat-building traditions across Europe. Unfortunately there is no direct evidence for boat building in any of the ports in the study area during the period of interest, the earliest discovered mention being a survey dating from 1695 that lists twelve boatmen at Strangford (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 411). It is possible that these twelve men were engaged in boat-building, which suggests that there were more boat-builders in other port towns in the region. Large scale ship-building required open space near the foreshore although it is highly improbable that construction of large vessels took place in the study area. Instead, if ship-building took place, it was more likely to have been of small vessels used for fishing. Furthermore, an ordinance of 1477-8 indicates that ship-building yards may have been temporary places, utilising any free space on or near a waterfront and moving on when the site was then required by another occupation (Sherborne 1965, 17). This means that evidence is unlikely to survive even in the archaeological record.

Comparative studies from other areas in Ireland further supports the idea that locally built ships remained hybrids of clinker type vessels. It has been suggested that in Gaelic-Irish areas the new style of ship-building described above was never adopted, attributed simply to a lack of demand or need for them. Instead it has been suggested that Gaelic-Irish lords may not have directly engaged in trade, preferring to charter foreign vessels for occasional trade (Breen 2001, 429-30). In areas with a low level of outside interaction cogs seem to have continued as the vessel of choice, being used as coastal fishing vessels alongside logboats and small cots for fishing and ferrying (Breen 2001, 435; O'Sullivan 2005, 235).



Plate 6a

Raven's 1625 map of Killyleagh, with four clinker-built vessels depicted bottom centre

The Dufferin Estate, 1625-6 [Raven's Survey], PRONI, T/870/1

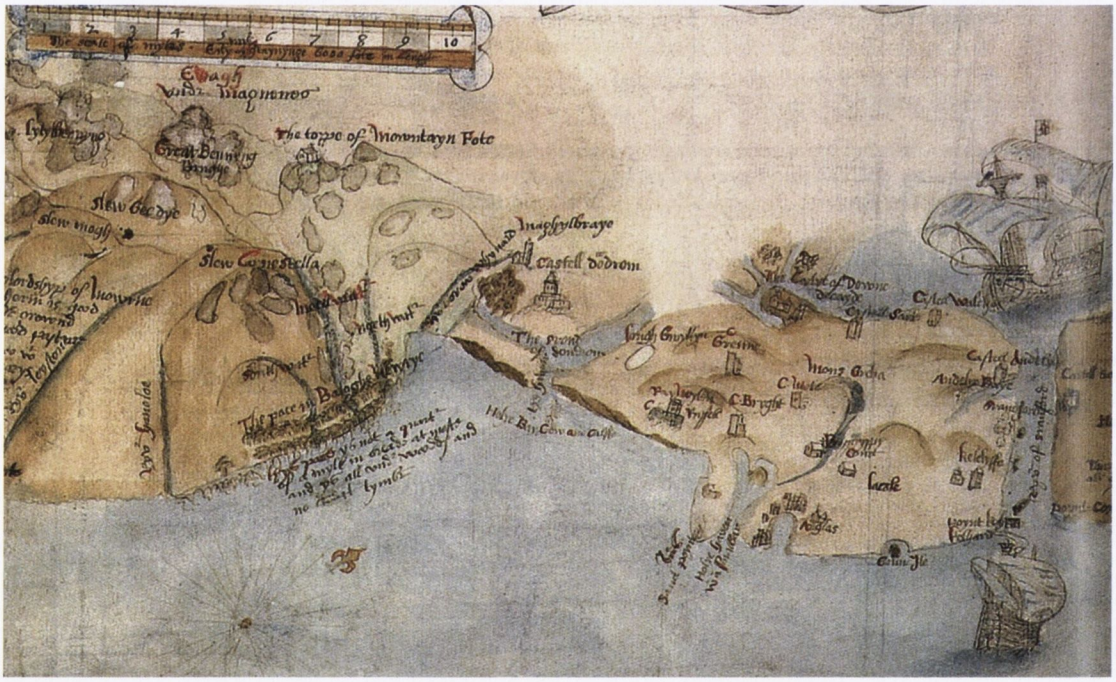


Plate 6b

Lythe's *c.* 1570 map showing the study area and carvel constructed vessels sailing off the coast (right)

The National Archives, Kew, PRO MPF1/89



Plate 7a

Jobson's *c.* 1598 map, depicting a carvel constructed ship sailing off the Lecale coast

Trinity College Library, TCD Ms 1209/16



Plate 7b

C. 1602 map depicting barques sailing in Strangford Lough

National Maritime Museum, Dartmouth Maps 25

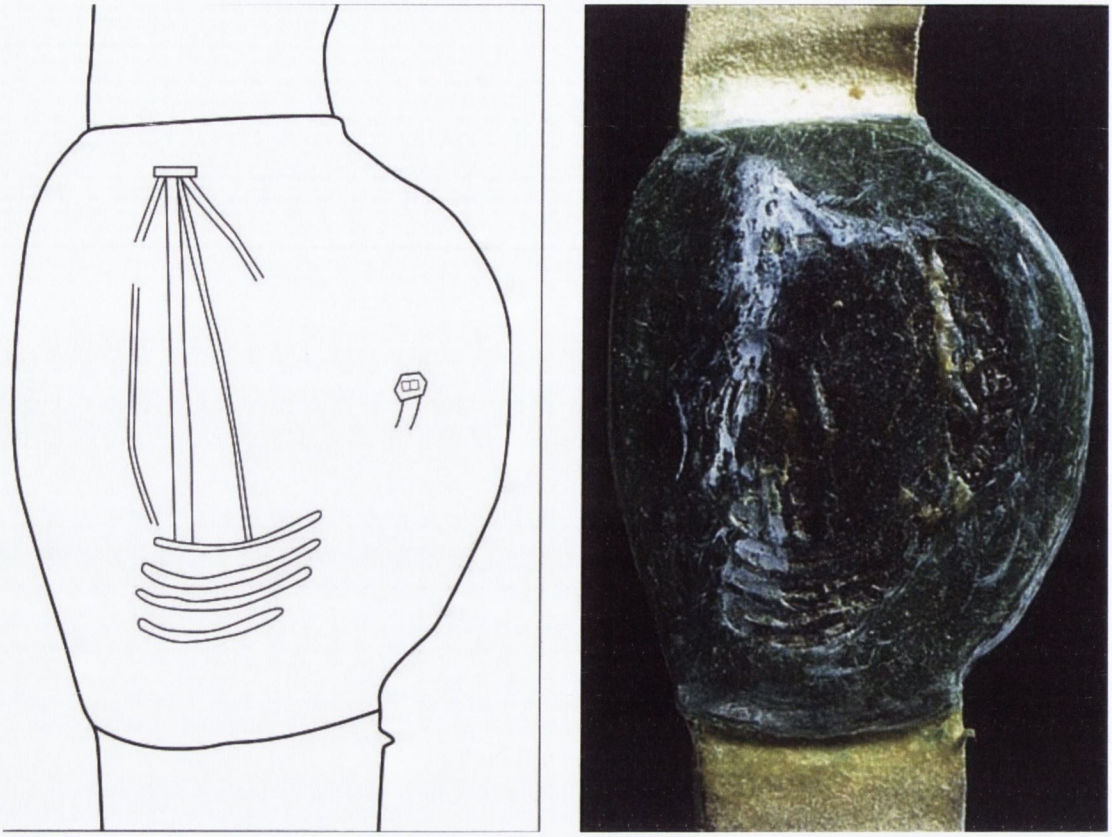


Plate 8

Borough seal of Kilclief, depicting a clinker-built ship

After McErlean *et al.* 2002, 100; The National Archives, Kew, PRO E30/1744 'Down Petition'

Within the area we know of two ferry-routes – one crossing the Quoile River between Dufferin and Lecale and the other running between Strangford (barony of Lecale) and Portaferry (barony of Ards). Depending on demand, it seems probable that these ferry services either employed logboats or cots, possibly cogs. Indeed the cog would have been the most suitable vessel for transporting quantities of goods and people while navigating both the Quoile River and Strangford Lough thanks to its flatter bottom that made it perfect for use in tidal estuaries. References to Mountjoy's fleet being stationed at Kilclief castle in 1611 indicate that Mountjoy's ships may have had flatter hulls than was normal for seventeenth-century warships, since the sailing conditions in this area would have required the use of vessels with a shallow draught (Report by Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1599–1600*, 69-76). If this was the case then it indicates that barges and cogs continued in use in an Irish maritime campaigning context much later than previously thought.

We do not know what types of vessel were engaged in the trade identified at the study area ports, or where they were built. Driver believes that those vessels engaged in Irish trade were usually pickards, the same ships as were used as fishing vessels. This would then mean that the majority of ships plying the Chester-Ireland trade route were less than twenty five tons, although Driver proposes that those ships engaged in the Bristol-Ireland route would have been larger (Driver 1971, 103). Flavin's study of Bristol-Ireland trade does not identify either a type or average tonnage of vessels on this route. Instead she comments that the ships used were likely to vary greatly in line with the diverse nature of Irish trade (Flavin 2004, 24). Since the study area's networks seem to have been predominantly with the north-west of Britain rather than the south, it is very possible that the ships most frequently sighted were pickards and cogs, probably larger versions of local fishing vessels. If this is an accurate interpretation then late medieval vessels would have been able to approach and anchor at all the tower houses in the study area.

As previously ascertained, the technological limitations of clinker built ships meant that they had to stay close to shore. This is the main reason why havens are accorded such importance by medieval mariners. Pilots would have needed to have known where havens were located along a coastline in which to shelter in poor weather. There are numerous such havens in the study area, these having a strong correlation with tower house sites. It is a possibility that tower houses were consequently sited to profit from cogs and hulks forced to seek respite.

The decline in vessel size through the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, mentioned previously, is probably reflected in the small ships recorded in the Port Books. These vary from five to forty tons, with little difference in the goods being transported aside from the one forty ton vessel which was London based and carrying a diversity of goods. It is not stated in the Port Books what type of vessel each of these were, but we know that they were able to access Killough, which had silting problems in its harbour, as well as Ballintogher and Downpatrick, both located on the Quoile estuary. Consequently the suggestion that the decrease in ship size following these centuries allowed entry into more harbours seems to be quite accurate. Whether or not it allowed an increase in hinterlands is debateable, as the sources would indicate that cogs and hulks (clinker-built vessels) were commonly used, these ships having low

draughts that would have allowed access to these shallow harbours as well as pickards and other small carvel constructed boats (Gardiner 1994, 86; Sherborne 1965, 14).

Finally, further information on the possibility of boat-building in the study area may come to light upon the publication of findings from the 'Drogheda Boat'. Dendrochronology suggests that timbers used in the construction of this clinker built late medieval boat came from the Strangford Lough region, probably the Dufferin woods (Forthcoming; Chiara Buldorini, pers. comm.). The Dufferin woods were thought to have been dense woodlands, described again in 1602, as the 'fairest timber trees in Ireland' (McCracken 1971, 40). This is evidence for commercial links between the study area and Drogheda, a major port in this period of the east coast. Drogheda was suspected as being a trading partner but no confirmation for this link came from the historical record. Should the team find evidence for construction outside of the study area it still shows what goods were being exported from there.

Chapter Five - Tower houses and navigation

5.1 Navigational techniques

Medieval navigational techniques were imprecise and relied on detailed local knowledge to a large extent. Compasses were known from the early middle ages but they provided little use for precise navigation around potential hazards. The earliest maritime charts (also known as rutters and portolan maps) were equally of limited use when navigating Ireland's sea coasts, as despite long-standing trading connections the country's geography is either over-simplified or incorrect in depictions. Two explanations have been forwarded to explain this. Firstly, such maps may have existed to indicate how to sail far offshore from the Irish coast. Secondly, they may have functioned as a memory prompt for those mariners who only had occasional cause to approach the Irish coast (Hutchinson 1997, 165; O'Neill 1987, 116).

Another navigational tool was the sounding lead. This allowed water depth to be gauged while also drawing up from the seabed a sample of the soil found there. A mariner acquainted with the area could thus identify an approximate location based on soil composition (Hutchinson 1997, 175). These basic navigational techniques were compounded by the need for medieval vessels to remain within sight of the coast so that they could quickly access sheltered bays in case of inclement weather (Greenhill 1995, 229). Technically in this latter scenario we are discussing pilotage rather than navigation. The combination of these factors meant that a local pilot was necessary. These pilots would need to have been familiar with all the hazards along the stretch of coastline, the location of havens as well as both dominant tidal and wind directions (Hutchinson 1997, 165).

The average speed of a medieval vessel has been estimated at between three and six knots. Wind would have affected both the actual speed and the directness of the sailing route. A zig-zag course was necessary at times so as to refrain from sailing into the wind, similarly leeway would have affected the vessel being pushed sideways. A strong tide would have also forced a medieval vessel in a direction as a 'conveyor belt rather than a road' (Hutchinson 1997, 169). Added to these hazards were the many rocks lining the Irish coast. A means of identifying such natural hazards was to mark them out, often by using two object that would be 'in transit'. In other words, a safe channel would be indicated when one marker was directly in line with the other. Consequently

the 'back marker' had to be large and prominent while the 'leading mark' could be something more negligible, such as a wooden stake (Hutchinson 1997, 170). The upshot of this arrangement being that the 'leading mark' can be difficult to identify in the archaeological record.

5.2 Sailing the study area

The coastline in the study area is treacherous, even for local mariners. This much is stated throughout in the main source consulted in order to recreate sailing conditions, the *Sailing Directions for the East and North Coasts of Ireland*. Moving from south to north through the study area, Killough is the first coastal settlement considered. The harbour at Killough is a large and sheltered bay with mud flats exposed, even in high tide. In more recent times two piers were constructed in the outer part of the bay, each projecting from opposite ends of the bay in an attempt to provide some depth of anchorage, even at a distance from the present settlement. Despite such building efforts the *Sailing Directions* state that the depth of water is insufficient, made worse by a rocky sea bottom (Anon. 1995, 59). Presumably the same conditions existed in the period of tower house construction, albeit without the attempted amendment of the two piers. There is no surviving documentary or archaeological evidence for a tower house, or any other type of castle, at the settlement. Despite this, it would appear that boats used Killough as a port at least in the seventeenth century, as the Port Books record vessels there. However, these boats are quite small which perhaps alleviated the problems outlined above.

North of Killough is Ardglass. Ardglass is characterised by a rocky shore, although its harbour is completely sheltered save for being 'uncomfortable' in certain winds. In calm conditions the harbour facilities are advanced by offshore anchorages. Ardglass is also the settlement with the highest identifiable density of tower houses in the region. The town therefore poses an interesting point of investigation with regards to navigation and pilotage, particularly since the modern *Sailing Directions* emphasise the use of natural topography and dominant man made structures in sailing this coast and accessing this harbour. Although this is a modern source, it seems likely that the same features could have been employed by earlier mariners.

Ardglass is located on Lecale's sea coast, to the north lies the approach to Strangford Lough, entered through the Narrows. The Narrows is the most hazardous location

within the region to navigate. This is largely due to the fast flowing tidal streams passing through it - water rushes into and out of the lough at between four and eight knots in speed. Angus Rock lies in the middle of the southern approach to the Narrows, which divides the route into a western and an eastern channel (plate 9a). The western channel passes over an area that is four metres at its shallowest point and fringed by submerged rocks (Forsythe 2002, 359). As a consequence, the eastern channel is preferred as it has depths of at least 12.8m and is straightforward to sail both by day and night. A medieval vessel with an estimated speed of three to six knots would have needed to wait for favourable tides to pass through the Narrows or face being forced backwards. The necessity of waiting for the appropriate tidal conditions is furthered upon leaving Strangford Lough (sailing from north to south) where an onshore wind can cause a very dangerous environment. The tidal stream here runs towards the north-east for a duration of three hours and then switches to a south westerly direction for nearly eight hours. In the Narrows each stream flows for about six hours. In normal circumstances mariners plan to leave Strangford town quay an hour before high water for a safe passage southwards out of the Narrows. Sailing northwards into the lough is somewhat easier as the water in the vicinity of Angus Rock is not dangerous. In addition, Angus Rock provides an excellent transit point when lined up with either a modern beacon lighted on the northern point of the rock, or, more pertinently for this study, with Kilclief castle. It is also recommended to use Kilclief church (located to the rear of the castle) in transit with 'a clump of trees' when leaving the lough in a southerly direction (Admiralty Chart of Ireland 1988; Anon. 1995, 64).

Once within Strangford Lough the tidal threat decreases. The multiplicity of islands within the lough provide excellent anchorages, but also potential hazards in the form of shallow sandy and rockyareas (pladdies) and larger submerged rocks. As a consequence local tradition has led to features being named according to characteristics of colour, size and shape. These names would have been both an aid to strangers as well as an effective memory prompt for those more familiar with the lough. Bearing in mind the limitations of medieval vessels, Strangford Lough and the study area coastline were attractive prospects, largely because there are numerous



Plate 9a

Kilclief beach looking towards the Narrows. Angus Rock is to the right, marked by a modern beacon.



Plate 9b

Audley's Roads, as viewed from the base of the tower house

havens and anchorages. Outside of the lough in normal conditions the coasts of both Ireland and Scotland are visible, reassuring for historic mariners (Forsythe 2002, 361).

Audley's Roads is located on the western side of Strangford Lough to the north of Strangford town (plate 9b). This is a deep-water anchorage situated directly to the east of Audley's castle, round the bay from the tower house at Castleward (see figure 9). Audley's Roads possibly provides the best anchorage within the lough while the bay at Castleward is sheltered but very shallow, drying out at low tide.

The Quoile River, to the north, is well sheltered and estimating the river's topography prior to damming (using the first edition Ordnance Survey maps), it seems likely that there was a channel suitable for vessels in the northern side of the river. Access would have probably been possible to Quoile castle and Walshestown castle by water. The *Sailing Directions* comments that today the best anchorage is found off Castle Island (Anon. 1995, 69).

Killyleagh has a sheltered harbour, although submerged rocks had to be navigated to gain entrance to it. Ringhaddy, an island to the north of Killyleagh, is regarded today as being 'splendidly sheltered and most attractive' with very deep anchorages (Anon. 1995, 70). Sketrick castle, located near the present day settlement of Whiterock, has a number of excellent anchorages within its vicinity. However, the castle does not overlook any of these since it is oriented to command the passage and causeway between the island and mainland.

Greyabbey, site of a Cistercian abbey, is lacking in deep water moorings that would not have allowed a vessel greater than a dinghy or log boat to dock there. This is not surprising since Greyabbey bay has the highest number of fish traps discovered during intertidal survey (see p. 106-07 & p. 117). It is not recommended by the *Sailing Directions* to anchor at Portaferry, instead the anchorages at Ballyhenry are recommended even though it is apparently badly affected by tides (Anon. 1995, 74). Ballyhenry is three quarters of a mile to the north of Portaferry, between it and Ardkeen.

At the southern tip of the Ards peninsula is Quintin castle. Advice in the *Sailing Directions* regarding this location is condemnatory with regards to the natural harbour despite what appears to be a small sandy beach marked on the first edition Ordnance

Survey, usually an attractive choice for a tower house site since boats could be dragged up out of the water (Anon. 1995, 75). Indeed it is commented in the *Sailing Directions*: 'at present the only sheltered port in onshore winds on the rockstrewn shore between Strangford and the neighbourhood of Belfast Lough is Portavogie' (Anon. 1995, 59). This raises the question as to whether modern sailing instructions are immediately applicable to an historic context, since there is a long sandy beach at Kirkistown that has been equated to a landing place for small boats. It is suggested that modern sailors view the maritime landscape potentially rather differently to historic mariners since most modern boats would not be dragged onshore but this was an attractive feature historically, extrapolating the evidence from comparative regional studies.

Based on both the *Sailing Directions* and the *Admiralty Charts*, it appears that sailing along the seaward side of the Ards peninsula could be potentially dangerous. Indeed, it would seem that a route between Strangford Lough and ports to the south, such as Drogheda and Dublin was the easiest, rather than north and onwards to Scotland which is geographically closer. Despite this, it would seem that links with Scotland were well-established by the start of the seventeenth century since many settlers arrived at Donaghadee, located directly opposite from Portpatrick (on the Scottish coast). This is even in spite of the poor conditions at Donaghadee, which has a rocky harbour further complicated by the Copeland Islands that must be navigated if sailing from the south (Admiralty Charts 1988 & 2012 eds; Anon. 1995, 79-80).

The northern-most extent of the barony of Ards is along the south shore of Belfast Lough. The lough itself is very safe but there are no natural anchorages or harbours along the southern coastline. In fact, even if there were suitable small havens, it is probable that boats would have been gone directly to the medieval port town of Carrickfergus, directly opposite on the north shore of the lough (Anon. 1995, 82).

The tidal difficulties at the entrance to Strangford Lough (the Narrows) have been recounted above. It would appear though, based on analogous studies, that this was not a disincentive for the medieval mariner. The port with the most extensive trading connections with Ireland in the late medieval period, Bristol, has conditions very similar to Strangford Lough. The port of Bristol is located on the River Severn estuary, which is subject to strong tides and great tidal ranges much like the study area. Yet these same tides could be used to great advantage in that they propelled vessels long distances in an

action similar to that of a conveyor belt. Indeed, there are references to ships lowering their sails upon entering the Severn estuary, which indicates that there was a fear of the wind running boats aground, but also that the strength of the tide rendered them inconsequential. Considering the low speeds at which medieval ships could have travelled, this must have been an attractive prospect. As at Strangford Lough, the many rocks and twisting course of the Severn and Avon Rivers necessitated the use of local pilots (Parker 2006, 137; Sherborne 1965, 16). Based on this comparative evidence, it may have been that the tides in Strangford Lough were strong enough to allow for vessels to be propelled through the Narrows and into the lough. It is suggested that the tower houses along the lough shores represent stop off points, where vessels could wait for the tide to change before continuing onwards with their journey. In light of this discussion, it is now possible to elaborate as to what role tower houses might have played in facilitating the movement of sailing vessels in the study area.

5.3 Tower houses in Strangford Lough

Hutchinson states that 'shore features, such as church towers, are commonly regarded as part of the landscape but the way they figured in the seascape also needs to be appreciated. The siting of prominent structures may have been influenced by navigational considerations.' Moreover she notes that 'the siting of churches in positions where they could be useful for navigation perhaps suggests a maritime economic factor in ecclesiastical foundations.' Indeed, there is documentary evidence to suggest that in Britain at least the setting of lights for seafarers was an ecclesiastical duty (Hutchinson 1997, 164, 171). It is therefore feasible to consider that some of the tower houses may have been located with similar considerations in mind.

As noted above, Kilclief castle and church are used to this day as transit points for navigating the eastern channel of the Narrows. It may not be coincidence that the tower house can be used as a navigational aid considering that its original occupier was very probably John Sely, Bishop of Down. It is likely that pilots would have rowed out from either Portaferry or Strangford to meet ships intending to pass through the Narrows to guide them safely in. Since vessels may have had to wait up to eight hours for a favourable tide it follows that vessels wishing to enter Strangford Lough would have anchored at a nearby location to await the turning of the tides. Likewise those vessels desiring to leave the lough would have had to wait at a similar location to the north of the Narrows. This is supported by Harris who mentions that Audley's Roads was used

as a waiting point for vessels going northwards while Ballyhenry Bay, near Portaferry, was used for vessels going southwards (Harris 1744, 137; McConkey 2002, 373).

Although Kilclief lies on the western side of the approach to the Narrows, recounted as being the more treacherous approach, and the bay here has numerous submerged rocks it would seem that it was used by vessels. The *Cal. S. P. Ire.* notes Essex sheltering his fleet in Kilclief Bay and the bay's fishing grounds are discussed later in this thesis on pp 116-7 (Report by Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex, [June] 1599, *Cal. S. P. Ire. 1599-1600*, 70). Ships anchoring at Kilclief Bay could have been taxed, providing additional income for the bishop.

Harris states that Audley's Roads was used by vessels as an anchoring point. This anchorage is commanded by Audley's castle, the tower house being also used for navigating the approach to the anchorage (Cormac McMullan, pers. comm.). This may in part explain the tower house's unusual siting at a height (compared to the low land on which the majority of tower houses in the study area are located). Similarly worth noting is the land approach to the tower house, which is from the flatter land to the rear of the site and easily accessible by small boat from Audley's Roads.

Nowadays the approach through the Narrows from the south is gauged using Kilclief, Angus Rock and Portaferry Pier. Portaferry Pier is also used to navigate the approach to the Quoile River. Portaferry Pier is a modern structure but it is located at the base of Portaferry castle. It seems possible therefore that the tower house was used for navigation before the pier was constructed. Although Strangford is located across the water from Portaferry the tower house here does not seem to have had a function in navigation. Instead the aptly named 'Compass Hill' is used, this lying directly behind Strangford castle.

5.4 The Ardglass 'tower houses'

None of the sites in Ardglass are mentioned in the *Sailing Directions*. Despite this McNeill raises questions regarding the function of Cowd castle (plate 10). He questions whether Cowd castle could have provided a residential function. It was therefore initially suggested that Cowd castle was used either as a lighthouse or as a marker for entrance to the harbour. Since access to the roof was difficult it seems improbable that Cowd castle was used as a lighthouse. According to conversations held with local

sailors they do not use it in entering the port, so McNeill concludes that it 'is not sufficiently prominent to argue that it was built for the purpose, as opposed to being incidentally useful in the role' (McNeill 2005, 17).

Cowd castle appears to have had a triangular shaped roof, which is reminiscent of the appearance of maritime beacons. These beacons are not necessarily prominent or impressive, despite their use as navigation markers, much like Cowd castle. The skyline of Ardglass has changed greatly in the last few hundred years and so Cowd castle may have been used for navigation then, if being only 'incidentally useful' today. The contention that Cowd castle had a special function in monitoring Ardglass harbour is further supported by the field of fire diagram developed by McNeill. This shows that most of the firing power is directed towards the southern approaches to the harbour, with a lesser amount covering the harbour itself. No firing cover is provided at the angles facing the Newark and the town (McNeill 2005, 16). It therefore seems probable that it functioned in one capacity as a watchtower.

5.5 Conclusion

Only a small number of tower houses in the study area may have had a role in maritime navigation. This is despite a general proximity to anchorages and natural harbours and the prominent and commanding siting of most. McConkey believes that in addition to the natural landing places, 'many of the large number of shore tower houses of 15th and 16th century date would probably have had artificial landing places' (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 310). One such known structure is at Mahee castle, which had a man-made quay adjacent to the tower house probably to obviate the tidal effects at the front of the site that would have made anchoring difficult. This would have supplemented the internal boat house. A further example is Ringhaddy castle, which had a man-made landing place attached to it, known as a 'hard'. Many other artificial quays will not have survived in the archaeological record due to degradation and their subsequent incorporation into later structures although excavations at the river front at Inch, County Down, found evidence of a wooden jetty there (Foley 1992).

Some sites may solely have relied upon natural features, 'the model natural landing place for simple and even large craft is a sandy beach, particularly a sandy backshore. These are rare in Strangford Lough, but it is interesting to observe instances when they



Plate 10

Cowd castle, Ardglass viewed from the west

do occur, most notably at Kilclief, where there are two sandy areas very likely to have been used as landing places in the Medieval period' (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 310). It is often impossible to tell the period of use of landing places, although the strength of the correlation between tower houses and these does strongly suggest that they were used contemporaneously with one another. Natural features, such as sandy shores, would be well-suited for smaller vessels with a shallower draught to use in those locations were shallow water was common. In these situations there would have been no need to construct a quay for larger ships. Other tower houses may have rowed cargoes ashore on small boats from their anchorages, as probably occurred at Audley's castle.

Chapter Six – Tower houses and fishing

6.1 Introduction and initial discussion

Fishing is a difficult topic to tackle, but an interpretation of the maritime roles of the late medieval and early modern period tower house cannot be complete without its consideration. The biggest limitation to an examination of fishing is that it has left little trace behind, both in terms of a landscape consideration and in the documentary evidence. As when considering trading activity, the temptation to extend patterns from the small amount of evidence from the later period of tower house construction to the earlier period must be resisted. As with other commercial activities, the extent of fishing would probably have varied in intensity and diversity with market demands, the availability of produce and the economic and political contexts.

Most of what follows here is developed from successful studies elsewhere in Ireland and in eastern England and applied to the study area. Although this pursuit has its own pitfalls, it is suggested that some of the results of these regional studies are comparable to County Down. In the first instance, however, the surviving evidence specifically for coastal and riverine County Down will be considered, before this evidence is compared and contrasted with the situation elsewhere to draw some conclusions as to the fishing industry in the study area.

The greatest obstacle here is the paucity of evidence. From a landscape perspective the comparatively informal late medieval fishing industry leaves little trace, in terms of material remains and alterations of the natural landscape. This situation is well summarised by Gardiner's investigations into fishing settlements in England. He found that such fishing settlements often had no waterfront structures that could survive in the archaeological record. Similarly a lack of financial investment aided this deficiency of permanent facilities and contributed to the dearth of written evidence. Instead, boats were drawn up at the mud at the edge of a river or dragged up onto the shore. He concludes that it 'was simply a location with access to a road or track at which goods could be transferred to and from the land' (Gardiner 2007, 85, 109). Unlike in England too, where there is evidence for fishing activity in the form of artificial fishponds, there are no extant contemporary fishponds in the study area. The low number of archaeologically identified fishponds is an issue across Ireland, and is not just limited to the study area, a situation that has led Murphy and O'Conor to suggest that this is due to

a more extensive utilisation of lacustrine, riverine and maritime fish resources than in England (Murphy & O'Conor 2006, 56). This they think is probably due to the prohibitive cost of stocking, maintaining and cleaning fishponds, where maintenance of a weir or fishtrap was a far lesser drain on lordly resources (Murphy & O'Conor 2006, 55).

Unlike the situation with trade, where some attempt to identify goods and networks can be made through the evidence left by official merchants, fishing appears to have been a marginalised social activity. Turning again to the English evidence, it was found in Exeter that fish was predominantly marketed by artisans and retailers rather than by merchants. It was found also that those who traded fish also sold other goods, suggesting that they were small town traders with a diverse range of interests. This is not to underestimate their importance to the local economy though, as the sale of fish provided ties between Exeter and the settlements comprising its hinterland (Kowaleski 1995, 315). The situation in south-west England is important to consider when dealing with fishing in Ireland, since it appears from the surviving historical evidence that a considerable amount of Irish fish was exported to this region. It likewise appears, though difficult to provide figures for, that a significant volume of Irish fish was not caught by local fishermen, but rather by visiting fleets from England and even further afield. This has led some historians to conclude that the export of fish was, when considered overall, so significant in the late medieval period that exports to locations such as Flanders were large enough as to overtake hides in popularity (Childs & O'Neill 1987, 500). This must have been a considerable amount of fish since we immediately associate the commercial network between Ireland and Flanders with the export of hides. These possibly vast numbers of barrels of fish are further obscured by re-exporting. Childs uses the example of English documentary references to the herring of Sligo, yet there were very low numbers of ships from western Ireland arriving, indicating that local catches were assembled and then re-exported from a separate location (Childs 2000, 26).

In the later period of tower house construction particularly, it is impossible to tell what damage to the fishing industry might have been done by political events. In the sixteenth century, the destruction of crops may have encouraged fishing as an alternative local food source. As with the appeal of creaghting as a moveable consumable, sea fishing carried less of an investment in uncertain times. Fishtraps

would have been more sensitive to such deliberate destruction, being permanent structures. Similarly, if population levels were as low as some (e.g. Gillespie 1985, 47) maintain then fishing would have required less manpower than arable agriculture. The fact that fishing by natives is not mentioned in official sources by colonisers could have its origins in English interpretations of what it meant to occupy a place. The transitory nature of fishing, requiring no alteration of the landscape, possibly means that it was considered in a similar manner to pastoral agriculture and therefore was subject to political interpretation and design. In saying this, English colonists in the sixteenth century were keen to propose fishing as a feature of any land grants in Ireland, and may have seen the possibility of profit from this activity in the native use of fishing resources. For example, Walter Devereux, the earl of Essex when proposing his colonisation, has the 'pressing' establishment of fishermen and a fishing industry as the second item on his list of instructions for his executors in Ireland, after the sending of soldiers (Instructions for John Norris and Edward Waterhouse by Walter Devereux, earl of Essex, 2 December 1573, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1571-5*, 432-3). As a consequence it is difficult to make any concrete conclusions based on the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century writings on the fishing industry, since the sources have a notable bias influence by the desire for personal gain.

Another issue is who consumed the fish caught offshore in the study area. Certainly there logically would have been local consumption, but elsewhere in Ireland a large proportion of the catch was exported. Coastal Down's most probable export market for fish in the late medieval and early modern periods was north-west England, focussed on Chester. This is presumed because Chester was the closest major English port to County Down, and the port to which the study area was trading most, based on examination of sixteenth and seventeenth-century trade accounts. It is highly probable that this connection was in existence, albeit on a lesser scale, in the previous centuries. Until 1559 Chester was a palatinate, thus outside of crown government intervention, and this meant a lower rate of record for trade activities since detailed accounts are associated with a centralised administration. Duties had been imposed on wine imports into Chester from the late thirteenth century, yet customs on hides had only begun in 1537-8 (Driver 1971, 98).

Fishing was also a seasonal activity, and it was undertaken along with other commercial ventures and agriculture to provide a year-round income (Gillespie 1985, 67). Flavin

noted from the Bristol accounts that sailings from Ireland of fish tended to coincide with fairs and to exploit the Lenten market. She noted that in one year 31% of the annual trade with Ireland took place in the month of March, and 17% in just one day [9 March] (Flavin 2004, 36-7). Such irregular patterns of fishing and export also contribute to a lack of representation in the historical records.

In the instance of Down therefore, other gauges for fishing activity must be used rather than the conventional combination of archaeological remains and documentary evidence. Examples of this, discussed below, are Breen's identification of tower houses in sites that allow for 'control' and Fox's criteria for identifying fishing within a port settlement.

6.2 History and background

Based on the results from investigations of ice cores, the years between 1330 and 1600 had the highest bottom water temperatures in the last 5000 years. This is known as the 'Medieval Warm Period', and it probably heralded the beginnings of a commercial fishing industry in Ireland (Breen 2005, 114). O'Neill's *Merchants and Mariners in Medieval Ireland* is the most comprehensive work on fishing in medieval Ireland and the main points pertinent to this study are mentioned here. O'Neill believes that herring began to appear in the Irish Sea and off the south and west coasts of Ireland *c.* 1450, although he includes references to Irish herring earlier than this. Herring had to be treated within twenty-four hours, so that they didn't lose their flavour, which meant that shore facilities were required (O'Neill 1987, 30-31). Hake was another important Irish fish, being a significant commodity before 1400, the sea fisheries for this being further developed after this date (O'Neill 1987, 37). Salmon and eels were central to the riverine fishing industry and were caught through weirs. Weirs were primarily owned by monasteries who often leased them, though large landowners also possessed them, while Crown weirs were in demand for rental (O'Neill 1987, 38). Salmon was a fish reserved for the wealthy, while eel was more generally popular. Eels could be kept alive for longer by keeping them live in a box with water, but seem to have been sold on the home market rather than exported abroad (O'Neill 1987, 42).

By the sixteenth century the level of fish exports was attracting Crown attention. In 1515 Henry VIII proposed that a third of fish should be left to the Irish home market, ostensibly to prevent a shortage but in reality this was probably to increase the price and

thus provide a greater customs return. Around this time too there were unsuccessful attempts to tax the foreign fishing vessels that visited Ireland, who would have ordinarily informally paid duties to the local lord of the area in which they fished. In 1601 a further Crown attempt to profit from the Irish fishing industry was made, with every barrel of herring or salmon requiring inspection and on being found satisfactory, being stamped with the queen's seal upon payment of 3d. This was in addition to a tax of one night's fishing on every boat each fishing season. These attempts to gain control did not work, however, and the most efficient method for the monarchy to profit remained the farming of the customs (Longfield 1929, 42-3). Under increased English Crown intervention exports changed, with traditional produce such as fish declining in importance (Breen & Forsythe 2004, 109; Flavin 2004, 10). Despite this overall trend, and regardless of its comparative rarity to other fish breeds, large quantities of salmon were still exported (Longfield 1929, 47). At this time local lords also found their revenue from fishing in decline, as it came under the control of government appointees (Gillespie 1985 13; Kelleher 2007, 137). Despite this, on a small scale fishing remained important because 'in return for a small capital investment in boats and nets, the catch, once marketed, provided much needed cash in the rural economy' (Gillespie 1985, 67).

Throughout this period, and regardless of the scale of practice, fishing remained closely linked to wider trade networks due to the need for large amounts of salt to preserve the catch. This had to be imported since Ireland's small-scale salt pans would not have provided enough to support the fishing industry (Childs & O'Neill 1987, 508). Had there been records of imports to the study area in the late medieval period, we could possibly ascertain the level of fishing that took place based on the amounts of salt imported, but this strategy evades us too. Timber exports to be used for barrels can also be indirectly used, but as the seventeenth-century Port Books illustrate, timber was a finite resource and commercial export rapidly depleted woods.

6.3 Evidence from the study area

A rather pessimistic picture has been painted above with regards to finding anything conclusive about the fishing industry associated with the tower houses in the study area. In this section what evidence we have will be considered, before it is expounded upon based on the findings from comparative studies.

Earlier than the first identifiable date of construction of a tower house in the region is Down's statement that in 1217 an Irish fishing fleet stretching from Derry to Waterford was fishing the Manx herring shoals (Down 1987, 487). Since the Isle of Man was not a far sailing distance from coastal Down (compared to the difficulties crossing the North Channel, for example) it can be presumed that some local vessels participated in fishing here. There are mentions of fishing at Carlingford, including a (probably hyperbolic) reference in 1535 to 600 fishing vessels operating out of this port, with fishermen enough to raise 3,000 fighting men (Childs & O'Neill 1987, 504).

An encouraging start for proving any link between fishing and the function of tower houses in County Down is a quote from O'Neill. He found that Chester did not trade with its ordinarily main trading partners, Dublin and Drogheda, for salmon, so concludes that Chester received its salmon imports from elsewhere further west and north. This led him to comment: 'when the herring became plentiful in the same areas, the local ruling families prospered and were in a position to endow religious houses, build bridges and improve their castles' (O'Neill 1987, 41). We know that herring was plentiful off the County Down coast and that there was a multiplicity of well-maintained tower houses, implying some correlation between the two.

We know that the herring fisheries off Ardglass were particularly valuable and well known as the customs from these fisheries were granted to the earl of Kildare in 1515 (For Gerald FitzGerald Earl of Kildare, 7 October 1515, Westminster, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, entry 999). Others have stated that the fisheries at Ardglass both provided occupations for local fishermen as well as attracting both English and French fishermen and English merchants (Quinn & Nicholls 1976, 36). The fish trade from Ardglass is apparent in the entry on 21 March 1585 at Beaumaris describing the contents of the *Jesus* of Ardglass in the published extant English and Welsh customs accounts, which included one hogshead of salmon and one fish 'cadowe' (Lewis 1927, 253). Sadly, this is the only mention of fish in these records, indeed there are few vessels from County Down mentioned in these accounts.

In 1600/1601 it was commented that 'all the coast from Strangford to Howth is so plentiful all the year round with cod and ling that a whole army might be victualled from the fishings there' (quoted in Butlin 1976, 164, but unverified due to an incorrect

Cal. S. P. Ire. reference). That fish declined in importance in terms of exports in Ardglass as well as Ireland as a whole is testified to by the total lack of mention of fish in the Port Books. This stands in marked contrast to the numbers and variety of marine fish bone found through the course of excavation of Jordan's castle in Ardglass by Gardiner, which implies that fish was still a significant component of the local diet (Hamilton-Dyer in Gardiner 2005). At this site limited evidence of fish bones was found in the mainly later sixteenth and seventeenth-century deposits. Based on this it was concluded that the warehouse attached to Jordan's castle was used for storage of barrels rather than for fish processing. We also know that the herring shoals moved on to the Newfoundland grounds in the seventeenth century. This is supported by Lewis who attributes this event to the decline of the port. Contrasting evidence comes from Eachard who, writing in 1691, states that Down was producing 'vast quantities' of fish, particularly salmon and herring. In time the return of the herring shoals in the eighteenth century contributed to the resurgence of Ardglass, with Lewis writing at the time of his visit that (plate 11a):

> During the fishing season the view of the sea from this place is rendered peculiarly striking and animated by the daily arrival and departure of vessels, and the numerous shoals of mackarel, pollock, and other fish visible on the surface of the water for miles. There are no manufactures; the labouring classes being wholly employed in the fisheries off the north-east coast, of which this place is the common centre. During the season there are frequently in the harbour, at one time, from 300 to 400 vessels from Donaghadee, Carlingford, Skerries, Dublin, Arklow, and the Isle of Man, but principally from Penzance, on the coast of Cornwall. The boats come regularly into the harbour to dispose of their fish, which is quickly purchased by carriers, who take it into the interior of the country, and by merchants who cure it; but chiefly by masters of sloops and small craft, who wait in the harbour for the arrival of the fishing boats, and proceed directly to Dublin or Liverpool to dispose of the herrings fresh. These sloops usually perform two trips in the week, and the masters frequently make from £20 to £50 by each cargo.

Bearing in mind the dangers of extrapolating later evidence to an earlier period Lewis's description probably does hint at the activity that took place at the port in the later middle ages.

Breen found archaeological evidence to identify the origination of visiting fishing fleets in the ceramic deposits recovered as part of excavation (Breen 2007b, 207). In Breen's underwater excavation of Ringhaddy castle, he found sherds of north Devon ware, suggesting that some level of exchange occurred between Down and south-west England that perhaps does not survive in the historic record (Breen 1997, 63). Further evidence comes from the finds from Gardiner's excavation of Jordan's castle in Ardglass. Analysis of the pottery remains here found ceramics from Dublin, Brittany (though unlikely from near Rennes), the Iberian peninsula (unlikely from Lisbon), Staffordshire and possibly Saintonge ware from south-west France. A lack of comparative material on which to base a more concrete attribution of ceramic origins means that none of these locations can be stated conclusively (Vince in Gardiner, 2005). Due to the level of trade in other goods taking place at Ardglass, it cannot be stated that these ceramic remains imply the origins of visiting fishermen in the way that Breen could deduce this link because of the absence of any other trade in his study area. Although these are all locations from which visiting fishermen could have been drawn, it is equally possible that these ceramics made their way to Down through re-export since there is little documentary evidence for trade links with continental Europe. This is not to say that in the late medieval period such links did not exist, but that it is impossible to state so conclusively.

As part of their archaeological survey of Strangford Lough, McErlean *et al.* identified the extant fishtraps in the maritime landscape. McErlean states that a wide variety of fish was found seasonally in the lough, much depleted since the late seventeenth century, and that the lough fisheries were especially exploited because of the sheltered conditions there (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 133). The herring fisheries offshore are already known, but the location of fishtraps in sandy bays leads McErlean to infer that a major catch was plaice, while seventeenth-century references by Montgomery to eels implies that they were also trapped (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 134-5). The largest of these lough fishtrap based fisheries was at Greyabbey, adjacent to the monastic house there (plate 11b). Also discovered during surveys that are relevant to the discussion of tower houses, were traps at Kilclief and Reagh Island (close to Mahee castle and on the lands



Plate 11a

Fish curing at Ardglass harbour, late nineteenth century.

After French photographic collection, National Library of Ireland, L_ROY_11297



Plate 11b

Location of fishtraps in Greyabbey Bay. The fishtraps are marked with arrows.

After McErlean *et al.* 2002, 14



Plate 12

Ardkeen Bay

of the Bishop of Down) as well as outside of their study area, at Dundrum and Newcastle [plate 13] (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 164). They estimate that a large number of fishtraps have been destroyed by erosion, and so their distribution would have been wider than the survey suggests. Historical evidence, such as the early seventeenth-century inquisition into the Dufferin landholdings of Rowland Whyte that mentions twelve weirs and fishing places, supports this reasoning (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 149).

South of Greyabbey, between it and Portaferry, is Ardkeen. It seems probable that there were fishtraps in the small bay to the south of the tower house here (plate 12). Fieldwork at the site deduced an arrangement that may have been the ruins of a fishtrap, but at high tide it was impossible to tell for certain. The tidal effects at this bay would make it a logical choice for the location of fishtraps, which would have been amplified by water being forced through the narrow channels running through offshore islands. Even a crude structure here would have probably been successful. It is suggested that Ardkeen is the site of a medieval or post-medieval deserted settlement, the proposed orientation of this based on the terrain, location of a church and castle (motte and bailey superseded by a tower house) and a trackway marked on the first edition Ordnance

Survey maps. This settlement could have been located on the flat land by the bay, implying that it could have been at least in part supported by fishing.

As the documentary evidence suggests, the Quoile River was known for its salmon fisheries, albeit not on the same scale as those on the River Bann. It is probable that salmon numbers supported the local population, with excess being exported as the entry from Beaumaris implies (McErlean 2002, 139). The salmon fisheries were controlled by Inch Abbey (the Quoile River) and St. Patrick's Abbey in Downpatrick (Lough Down, once the stretch of the Quoile River before Downpatrick and now reclaimed land) before they were claimed by the Crown in 1607. They subsequently became the property of the Cromwell family who later leased the fishing rights (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 140). The narrowness and shallow channel of the Quoile River meant that migrating salmon were easily captured in traps, while the shallow depth of Lough Down allowed them to be caught by net from boats (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 140). There is no archaeological evidence for these riverine fishtraps, however, as Lough Down has been drained and alterations to the water level on the Quoile River caused by damming is likely to have destroyed any evidence of fishing (McErlean & O'Sullivan 2002, 146). With both the Quoile River and Greyabbey fisheries controlled by the Cistercian order, a monastic order with strong links to agriculture and trade in the high and late medieval periods, it is very probable that fish surplus to the abbey population was sold at market (McErlean & O'Sullivan 2002, 185).

Elsewhere in the study area, albeit at a much later date, in 1675 Donaghadee had a fleet of about eighteen ships, ranging in size from twenty to sixty tons. In 1697 the total number of seamen and fishermen living in the town out-numbered those at the far more populous Belfast and Carrickfergus combined (Agnew 1996, 131-2). As discussed on pp 141-3, Donaghadee's rise to prominence came at a much later date than Ardglass and Strangford. It was also the location of large-scale immigration from Scotland in the early decades of the seventeenth century. As a consequence, no evidence for earlier activity than this can be gleaned from these figures.

To the west of the study area lay the famous salmon fishing of the River Bann. Again, a comparative abundance of evidence comes from the sixteenth century – the Bann fisheries are the subject of numerous entries in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.*, for example. Gillespie cites a tract (British Library Royal Manuscripts, 18A L111 f.12) that

emphasised the importance of the River Bann salmon fisheries and the cod and ling stocks in Lough Neagh. Attempts to lease the fishing rights here he believes were mostly unproductive, however, since the River Bann ran through the lands of the O'Neills, which meant that access to them was far from guaranteed. Conveyancing issues regarding the fisheries led to a series of inquisitions into royal fishing rights in east Ulster in 1619 (Gillespie 1985, 13). Ultimately the rights to the Bann fisheries were granted to the earl of Antrim and Sir Arthur Chichester (National Archives of Ireland, RC9/1 James I no. 5, cited in Gillespie 1985, 14).

Of course, while there are few mentions of the study area's involvement with the export of fish, this does not necessarily mean that there was very little fishing being undertaken. Aside from the problems of recording fishing activity, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, a significant part of fishing must have been to provide for local consumption, much of which would have escaped all official notice.



Plate 13

Modern location of Kilclief castle relative to the sandy beach at the front of the site

6.4 Comparative evidence – England

Evidence from studies into south-west England's fishing activities and fishing settlements can be tentatively applied to Ireland for three reasons: south-west England was one of Ireland's main export markets for fish; fishermen from south-west England extensively fished in Irish waters and very probably used Irish onshore facilities; and the informal and rural settlements in this region of England were probably no more developed than those in Ireland. Three studies in particular have been identified as being the most useful to this study: Fox's study of south Devon fishing villages (2001); Kowaleski's investigation of local trade networks in Exeter's hinterland (1995); and Gardiner's examination of hythes and landing places (2007).

Fox developed a criteria for identifying fishing activity within a larger port settlement. He ascertained in Devon that many larger ports contained people who were either wholly or partly involved in fishing. He noted that such ports had a sheltered harbour; inhabitants with a familiarity of 'maritime ways'; the presence of smaller vessels associated with larger ships; a demand for dried fish, to be used in victualling longer sea journeys; and easy access to a hinterland to satisfy further demands (Fox 2001, 10). This could apply to any of the identified late medieval ports in the study area, so based on Fox's criteria it can be deduced that some amount of fishing activity could have been undertaken at these ports.

Notably also for the study area, Fox observed in Devon that owners of properties located by the sea constructed crenellations 'from which intruders from the sea, especially pirates, could be deterred' (Fox 2001, 12). A major function of the County Down tower houses was not necessarily defence in its truest meaning, but rather the presentation of defence to outsiders. For example, the double machicolations at Jordan's castle, angled so that one at least was visible from all aspects of the harbour. More indirectly too, Fox was able to identify 'cellar settlements' - storage huts on beaches that were used as bases for fishing and were not occupied except for this purpose. More formal, permanent and specialised fishing villages in these locations were not found before the late fifteenth century, which means that if Ireland's development was slower than England's then these 'cellar settlements' could have been in existence throughout the period until a much later date (Gardiner 2007, 99). The prevalence of sea beaches supports the idea that such 'cellar settlements' existed in the study area. So too does the fact that some of these beaches have tower houses

associated with them, in particular Kirkistown castle, Kilclief castle and Dundrum castle (not a tower house, but an Anglo-Norman stone castle occupied throughout the tower house period). Since Fox identified that the beach was where most of the catch was sold, it is logical that these tower houses were in part located to take advantage of this income (Fox 2001, 89). He found also that fishing was actively encouraged on manors along with a variety of associated trades, such as coopers and smiths, because of the economic advantages to the lord (Fox 2001, 93). This supports the contention that tower houses elsewhere in the study area undertook economic activities that allowed them to feed into the larger trading networks and form part of the region's port hinterlands. In terms of these tower houses, sometimes found at less accessible sites (i.e. with no beaches and instead an associated anchorage) Gardiner found that fishing vessels could be launched from less hospitable parts of the coast (Gardiner 2007, 99). All of the situations described by these authors are readily applicable to the situation in coastal County Down.

6.5 Comparative evidence – Ireland

Research has been done into the role of fishing at sites associated with tower houses in south-west, west and south-east Ireland. Considering the evidence from these Irish regional studies, it is proposed that the situation as it stood in County Down had similarities with each of these regions.

Observed in all these areas was the siting of tower houses so as to allow the monitoring of shipping and control fishing fleet movements and fisheries (Breen 2005, 72-4; Loeber 2001, 311; McAuliffe 1991, 121; Naessens 2007, 224; Naessens 2009). It was also observed in some regions that tower houses were sited by major rivers, partly to control river trade and fishing, presumably that of salmon and eels (McAuliffe 1991, 120). Breen states that control of fisheries was particularly important to Gaelic-Irish lords, although fishing was mostly undertaken by visiting fleets with little input from the local population, who would have instead fished to satisfy a local market. He also believes that most fish processing would have been done on board, rather than at onshore facilities (Breen 2001, 429; Breen 2005, 84). Although Breen found little evidence for the landing of catches, it seems to have been common elsewhere in Ireland (Naessens 2007, 223; Nicholls 1987, 417). Rather than directly engaging with the local economy, fishermen instead paid dues to the O'Driscoll lords. The O'Driscolls charged 4d. for sheltered anchorage to any vessel, while fishing boats were taxed an additional

19s., a barrel of flour and salt, a hogshead of beer and a dish of fish three times a week for use of the fishing grounds and sheltered anchorage. Although he thinks that most fish processing was done on board, Breen states that a further 8s. and 6d. were charged for drying the catch onshore (Breen 2005, 115). The purpose of the tower house therefore was as a place to receive these dues, a location from which to monitor fishing and as a visual reminder of lordly interests in the pursuit (Breen 2005, 116; Breen 2001, 423). Due to this, Breen sees control as being the paramount motivation for tower houses in south-west Ireland.

Also in south-west Ireland, O'Sullivan's study of the intertidal landscape of the Shannon estuary finds several similarities with Strangford Lough. These comparisons are aided by the fact that O'Sullivan also surveyed Strangford Lough and is co-author of the section on fishtraps in the Strangford Lough maritime archaeological survey book (McErlean & O'Sullivan in McErlean *et al.* 2002, 144-185). The fishtraps of both regions are similar in appearance, although the Down examples are generally much larger (O'Sullivan 2001, 190). In general, the larger fishtraps are associated with monasteries, who either used the increased catch to feed a large population or to export surplus. As in Down, where McErlean suggests that fish species began to decline in the later seventeenth century, O'Sullivan found that fishtraps in the Shannon estuary went out of use in the troubled decades of the 1640s and 1650s (O'Sullivan 2001, 225). Useful too for this study is that O'Sullivan found much continuity in fishing practices between the post-medieval period and earlier ones, suggesting that fishing is one topic in which we might not be so reticent to extend our discoveries to an earlier date (O'Sullivan 2001, 191). This he largely attributes to the importance of fishing to local communities, the traditions being passed down because fishing provided a comparatively secure income for all social classes in the local population (O'Sullivan 2001, 232).

In Galway, more specifically Naessen's study area of Iarconnacht, the same pattern of visiting fishing fleets existed. Of these, Naessens thinks that most came from south-west England, since one third of the population here was engaged in fishing, and also from Spain, as an adjunct to the Galway wine trade (Naessens 2007, 222). Naessens has, like Fox, identified features required for the presence of fishermen in an Irish context: political stability; safe anchorages; availability of shore facilities; and a supply network, particularly of fresh water (Naessens 2007, 223). Iarconnacht was well placed

to take advantage of the visiting fishing fleets – its greatest natural feature, according to Naessens, was its many bays, havens and anchorages (Naessens 2009, 213). These features it has in common with coastal County Down. Naessens also observed that tower houses were specifically sited in locations from which the best economic return could be made from fishing, a crucial part of their income in this region since he proposes that lords made as much from taxing fishermen and merchants as from directly engaging in trade (Naessens 2009, 76, 212). The imposition of such duties on fishermen was aided on a practical basis by tower houses, as they controlled fresh water supplies and victualling networks as well as maintaining a visual presence on the water (Naessens 2009, 189). The importance of a tower house in the control of fishing in this region is not only attested to by their siting within the landscape, but also in contemporary documentary evidence. This includes an instance where the necessity of an effective site for a tower house is stated in bardic poetry, one in particular speaks of the effort required to build a tower house before the monument was re-located elsewhere where it could form a better base for preying on vessels (Naessens 2009, 227, 233-4). This is a wonderful piece of documentary evidence for the study of tower houses and fishing, since it supports the interpretations made through investigation of tower houses in their maritime landscape setting.

In other regions of Ireland this evidence for the use of tower houses in controlling fishing resources is witnessed. The O'Donnells of Donegal were known as 'The Lords of the Fish' for their ability to control revenue from fishing and shipping (Ní Loingsigh 1994, 148). Another link between castles and fishing is found in Carlingford, where in 1425 fishing rights were granted for the mease (a quantity unit of fish, especially herring, usually numbering 500 fish) of the castle (Gosling 1992, 44). Smith's study of medieval Dalkey (an east coast port settlement with a multiplicity of tower houses) led him to state that even the town's role as out-port for Dublin did not displace the primacy of fishing in the local economy (Smith 1996, 36). Murphy and Potterton in their study of Dublin's economy found that most lords exploited the foreshore of their manors by placing customs on those who used the havens abutting their lands. The fish exacted by a lord was often the best fish, becoming known as 'the lord's fish' and lords exercised their rights to buy more fish at a reduced price. Murphy and Potterton found that the religious houses in particular, who controlled most of the County Dublin shoreline, were 'zealous in guarding their rights'. In many cases fortifications were constructed to aid in the overseeing of coastal rights, the merchant tower houses at Dalkey providing

secure storage as well as controlling the settlement (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 397, 402). The significance of fishing over agriculture Smith attributes to the landscape – the soil around Dalkey was reasonably fertile, but the cultivable area was small due to the shoreline's rocky terrain (Smith 1996, 23). This is a common feature of all the regional studies discussed - since terrestrial resources were limited in these parts of Ireland, due to the rugged landscape, involvement in fishing had paramount importance in maintaining lordly income (Breen 2005, 117; Naessens 2007, 223).

South-east Ireland is the region with the strongest representation in the documentary sources. Wexford appears to have exported fish to Bristol from the late twelfth century, and by the sixteenth century was exporting large numbers of herring, haddock, hake and cod to Chester (De Courcy Ireland 1987, 492-3). The presence of Wexford and other ports of this area in the records could possibly have less to do with the level of fishing taking place offshore (though doubtless such activity was significant) and more to do with its association with Bristol. Bristol is regarded by historians as the main port of entry in England for Irish fish, with up to 90% of Irish cargoes landed there in the late fifteenth century, so Irish ports exporting to this market are well-represented (Down 1987, 487; Sherbourne 1965, 24). Indeed, there is little evidence for fish exports to Bristol from the east coast of Ireland, although we know from other sources that fishing was extensive along this Irish Sea coast (Vanes 1979, 169). Wexford is also well known for its role in fishing because of the inhabitants' position in establishing the Newfoundland fisheries in the early modern period. The migration of the herring shoals had a big impact on the Irish fish trade, those who made their livelihoods from fishing these shoals in Wexford pre-empted decline by following the migration (Vanes 1979, 169).

6.6 Discussion

Based on this evidence the importance of fishing to the maintenance of tower houses in County Down must be ascertained. Certainly an involvement in fishing is a logical function of those tower houses in the study area located away from the main port settlements. The landscape setting of those tower houses involved in fishing as identified by Breen and Naessens is echoed in Down. Almost all of the tower houses here are sited so as to maximise control (in Breen's use of the word) of the surrounding maritime landscape. They are located by maritime routeways, by anchorages and landing places and have commanding views over the sea or along the lough. Following

Naessen's criteria, for most of the period Lecale at least was a place of relative political stability (the later sixteenth century being the notable exception), safe anchorages were abundant, shore facilities were provided by beaches and flat land suitable for drawing boats up and by the region's ports. A supply network was in place, due to existing trade activity and the role of the more dispersed tower house sites within this. Fresh water was also readily available, indeed in the case of Sketrick castle at least, the bawn wall enclosed a well, which would have ensured lordly control over this resource. In several fishing places identified by McErlean, for example at Kilclief, a supply of freshwater ran into the salinated water which acted as a nutrient source for fish, yet also would have provided a drinking supply for fishermen (McErlean & O'Sullivan 2002, 147, 175).

Many of those tower houses strung along Strangford Lough's coast, located adjacent to anchorages and both natural and man-made landing places, sometimes containing a boathouse within their walls, have been identified as having a limited involvement in trade as an adjunct to their manorial function. In these situations, excess produce would have been collected and then shipped from each tower house to the ports. Based on the regional examples from England and Ireland discussed above, fishing would probably have also been carried out, and control of this activity another role of the lord's tower house. Such fishing in Strangford Lough would probably have been on a comparatively small scale, however, since the greatest numbers would have been found in the Irish Sea and general trends in the late medieval period were for sea fishing rather than fishtrapping (O'Sullivan 2001, 190).

It is more likely that those tower houses located along the Quoile River estuary would have been located to take advantage of river fishing, specifically salmon trapping. The correlation between riverine tower houses and fishing has been identified elsewhere in Ireland, so it stands to reason that this activity was undertaken along the Quoile too, as well as the tower houses being used as a place of export of manorial excess produce and for control of the shipping routes to Downpatrick. McErlean *et al.* have indicated that salmon fishing took place along the Quoile River and on Lough Down. However, this activity remained in the hands of ecclesiastics before passing to the Cromwell family in the seventeenth century. Despite this, McErlean *et al.* observed through the course of survey that, 'the small channel between Castle Island and Gibbs Island would have been a good location for a [fish] trap'. Furthermore, the placename evidence from the

channel's name, Corry Channel, suggests that it is derived from *cora* or *coragh*, 'fish weir' (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 165). Castle Island is dominated by Castle Island tower house, indirect evidence in this case of a tower house's role in profiting from salmon fishing. There was a huge demand for river fish, particularly the elite salmon, and the export from Ardglass of salmon may be explained by this tower house distribution network.

One mitigating factor against the large-scale involvement of tower houses in sea fishing in County Down is the low numbers of tower houses located along the eastern side of the Ards peninsula and the seaward coast of Lecale. The exceptions to this are the tower houses mostly attributed to the Savage family on the east coast of the Ards peninsula, Kilclief castle, the tower houses in Ardglass, and Dundrum castle alongside the possible Magennis tower house at Newcastle, south of the study area. Had control of fishing resources played such an important part of lordly income, we would expect to see more coastal tower houses than this. McErlean noted that fishtraps were strongly associated with church land, the biggest density in the north of Strangford Lough around Greyabbey, and adjoining the Bishop of Down's lands. There is a stone fishtrap at Kilclief castle, which combined with the tower house's proximity to the Narrows and the Irish Sea suggests that the Bishop of Down actively participated in profiting from fishing. Notable also is the fact that the other tower houses mentioned above were constructed by either Gaelic-Irish lords (the Magennises) or by the Old English (the Savages). Indeed, McErlean and O'Sullivan cite a *c.* 1568 map that indicates the Greyabbey fishing grounds as evidence that fishtrapping took place here until a late date (McErlean & O'Sullivan 2002, 149). What is not commented upon is that an unidentified tower house is marked at one side of Greyabbey bay, which is annotated with 'Savages'. This is possibly a misrepresentation of Ardkeen castle, or a now destroyed site that has not been mentioned in the records. Thus, we can see evidence of some involvement by the Savage family in the fishing operations on this side of the peninsula, likely replicated in sea fishing on the seaward side. It is also possible that the Savages assumed ownership, or operation, of the Greyabbey fisheries after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the profits of which would have funded their building projects while also providing the control element noted elsewhere in the country. The identification of fishtraps at Dundrum and Newcastle (Gaelic-Irish landholdings) and mention in the historical record of fish weirs in the property of the Whyte family lends

further credence supporting the patterns observed in south-west and west Ireland, that involvement in fishing was of particular significance to Gaelicised lords.

Another observation based on the comparative Irish regional studies is that control of fishing was of paramount importance in those areas where land fertility was prohibitive of extensive agriculture. While of varying quality, the land along the coasts of Down was fertile. Indeed, the coastal strip was really the only part of the county that was suitable for mixed agriculture. The availability of land for agriculture surely reduced the need for extensive fishing to supplement diet.

It has been observed that Irish fish exports across the country seriously declined in the mid sixteenth century (Flavin 2004, 10). Noteworthy is the fact that tower house construction in the region briefly pauses during this period, before a resurgence takes place in the first decades of the seventeenth century. This has been attributed to the disruptive economic effects of colonisation attempts and resistance to this, followed by the Nine Years War. It is still believed that the social, economic and political results of this period are significant when considering tower house patterns, but it is a possibility that the removal of a source of income contributed to this building hiatus. The income from visiting vessels would also have been removed. In saying this, the evidence from the Port Books suggests that County Down's seventeenth-century exports did alter in line with the change in demand witnessed at this time. This does not rule out a period of depression while adjustment to a changed economy took place, but it does suggest that the local economy was not wholly based on fish exports and that recovery did occur quite quickly after the Nine Years War had ended. The mixed agricultural practices of the region surely would have cushioned any blow felt from the collapse of fish exports. On a local consumption level too, it would be expected that with the scorched earth policies of the aforementioned campaigns, attention would have shifted to fishing since it was a less intensive activity in terms of man-power and subject less to interference in that crops could be destroyed, as could boats, but a aquatic food source would be less influenced by destructive policies. This statement does not include fishtraps, however, which were more susceptible to destruction because of their permanence. O'Sullivan found that fishtraps in the Shannon estuary went out of use in the 1640s and 1650s, which were problematic years for this region (O'Sullivan 2001, 225). Using this comparative evidence it can be presumed that fishing declined to some extent in Down during times of trouble too.

It is likely therefore that involvement with fishing in County Down was similar in broad terms to both south-west and west Ireland, yet also different since landscape factors encouraged a dependency on fishing in these areas, and to south-east Ireland where proximity to the main English market influenced export quantities. The study area's physical closeness to Cumbria and Lancashire and the west coast of Scotland suggests that this would be where visiting fishing vessels were most likely to originate. The low level of survival of records from these areas means that the amount of fishing undertaken by visiting fishermen is impossible to quantify.

Weighing up all the evidence, it is likely that Ardglass at least exported excess fish, probably mainly to north-west England, and it is highly probable that visiting fishing fleets travelled to the region to take advantage of the shoals. It would also seem that a number of the tower houses were located in places similar to those observed elsewhere in Ireland so as to maximise control over these activities. It is also assured that local fishing supplemented the diets of the region's inhabitants due to the ready availability of fish. However, it is concluded that fishing was not the sole factor in determining tower house location and function for those reasons explored above, namely: that a diverse agricultural hinterland mitigated against a dependency on fishing; the comparatively low numbers of tower houses sited to take advantage of the offshore sea fisheries; the monopoly on lough fisheries held by ecclesiastical houses. Instead, for the majority of tower houses (particularly those located along Strangford Lough and the Quoile River) it was probably a supplement to lordly income, with the prime motivation being for local consumption, any excess feeding into the supply networks to the ports. This is not to say that for some of the tower houses fishing was a not primary concern, the landscape and archaeological evidence from Kilclief castle in particular suggests that one of its major motivations was to control fishing grounds. The Savages similarly appear to have made a significant effort to extend their involvement in fisheries. It is very probable that the removal of this source of income, followed by a period of warfare, were reasons for the suspension of tower house building in the second half of the sixteenth century. Recovery was relatively quick in the period after, with new opportunities presented by the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII with the possibility of acquiring new lands and rights. In consequence it can be seen that the motivation for construction of tower houses in this small region was multifaceted, with

in most cases a variety of economic factors contributing to site choice and functional use.

Chapter Seven – Tower houses, ports and hinterlands

7.1 Introduction

'Ports represent a dynamic interface between the foreland and hinterland and are formally and universally recognised as such by the mercantile and political establishment' (Breen 2007, 87).

This section identifies the hinterlands of the port towns, to the greatest extent possible, based on the available historical and archaeological evidence. Each identified port settlement will be discussed in turn before considering how the proposed regional maritime networks linked the tower houses with any given settlement, and how tower houses formed part of port hinterlands in the study area.

A first consideration for this study is to establish criteria for identifying a port settlement. Gardiner defines a port as a settlement whose economy was primarily based on 'river or sea traffic' (Gardiner 2007, 85). Fox has developed quite a specific criteria for ascribing port status: adequate and sheltered anchorage for ships; loading and unloading facilities; a quay; ships that returned to the port for repair and 'laying up' between voyages; residence by ship owners, masters, mariners and merchants; facilities for repair, fitting out and victualling. More often than not a port also had a market, and although a productive hinterland was an advantage, it was not a necessity (Fox 2001, 8-9). Breen defines a port as having a large sheltered inlet with associated anchorages and deep water berths, a formal waterfront with a port operation complex (including warehouses and customs), evidence for a number of medieval buildings, a large associated settlement with unhindered access to a hinterland, with the settlement situated on established primary maritime communication routes (Breen 2007, 90). Creeks were usually small settlement sites with an anchorage in excess of three metres at high tide and a shoreline capable of supporting a pier or jetty.

These authors pay particular attention to the relationships between a port and the communities and resources in their surrounding rural areas. These definitions are therefore especially appropriate for this study, which seeks to identify how tower houses can be used to identify a port's hinterland. As has been previously stated, the vast majority of tower houses within the study area were located within metres of a landing place with these capabilities. A creek did not require further port structures due to its

occasional use (Breen 2007, 90). The tower house ability to serve as a dual centre of storage and administration illustrates the tower house's suitability to control of creek activity, on both a practical and symbolic level. Aside from the notable cases of Strangford and Ardglass, where we have extant historic documentation attesting to their rank, it is difficult in many cases to identify port status. In this instance, Breen's categorisation to distinguish between ports, creeks and landing places has proven useful, particularly since it has been developed from an Irish study in a time period directly comparable to this one. This system of classification is, however, quite general, and in the case of the County Down settlements, more recent port development may have obscured earlier structures.

The extent of a hinterland is difficult to reconstruct and seems to have varied depending on the goods being sought. Kowaleski found in Devon that those buying fish travelled up to four miles, while hides, grain and cloth came from a distance less than this. She estimates that a day trip to market or port could be made if the distance between the point of origination and the point of commerce was less than six miles. These distances were very dependent on terrain, and hilly or boggy land would have resulted in an accordingly smaller hinterland. So would it have been influenced by the road system and in the case of County Down, these may not have been as developed as the maritime communication routes based on the account given by Josias Bodley (Bodley 1602-3). Ports with good land connections could command a far larger area, such as Southampton where the hinterland is estimated to have stretched for twenty-five miles (Kowaleski 1995, 276, 285-6). This pattern excludes the distances that could be covered by water borne routes though, which were far greater and more significant in Exeter's case (Kowaleski 1995, 322). This pattern was also observed in the case of rural settlements in medieval Dublin's hinterland: 'they were perhaps more fully integrated into the hinterland...and more aware of their connections with Dublin than some geographically closer inland areas' (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 398). The impacts on a hinterland's size were identified thus: distance between point of origination and port; the terrain and associated difficulties of transport; the status of the trader (in terms of wealth and occupation); the type of commodity being moved; regional specialisations (Kowaleski 1995, 321). Although it is not mentioned, competition between ports must have also affected the size of a hinterland or caused it to specialise in a particular set of goods. The size of hinterlands would also have depended on the goods being moved to port. Goods of low value but high weight (such as building stone, and hides) would

have been loaded close to the centre of production, while purchasers and traders for fish and wine would have come from farther afield (Gardiner 2007, 91-2; Kowaleski 1995, 280).

In identifying the hinterlands of the County Down ports (Killyleagh, Ardglass, Strangford, Portaferry, Newtownards, Killough, Donaghadee and Bangor), we need to consider a number of factors. Firstly, what a hinterland might have provided for the port to export and secondly, what the hinterland received in return. Based on the evidence presented in chapter three (trade in Ireland and the study area) and chapter six (fishing), we can deduce with some confidence that the efxports collected from the hinterland were largely agricultural in nature (grain, hides, fells and meat from the terrestrial hinterland, fish from the maritime hinterland). In turn, based on the results from chapter three, it would seem probable that the goods distributed to the hinterlands were luxury or manufactured items. These are broad statements, however, and each port would have had its own different relationship with its hinterland, the details of which are discussed in this chapter where this can be identified.

One method to reconstruct the extent of a hinterland is to examine straight line distance. In other words, what distance people were prepared to travel to obtain or sell goods. Two examples of this approach are Kowaleski's study of Exeter's hinterland (summarised in the above paragraph) and Murphy and Potterton's estimates of the size of medieval Dublin's hinterland (Murphy & Potterton 2010). This is a useful approach, but other considerations such as topography and the availability of transport (such as roads, ferries and maritime or riverine networks) would have impacted the exact size of these areas. This consideration has influenced the identification of associated tower houses (see below).

The central argument of this chapter is that we can use tower houses to recreate port hinterlands. It is also proposed that in many cases the extent of hinterlands, and the ease of travel to a port, explains the distribution of tower houses. It is the contention here that rural tower houses were a part of the trading settlement hierarchy, acting as creeks (as is described above by Breen). McNeill states regarding the County Down tower houses, 'Instead of trading vessels calling at each estate centre, it would be much more efficient and likely that the goods from each would be brought to a larger port' (McNeill 2005, 20). In this way goods (probably excess agricultural produce acquired from tenants through exchange or from payment of rents) from a manor or estate, or a

number of these, would be consolidated at a tower house and then shipped by river or sea to the nearest port for export. This would have allowed a port to have a relatively stable and large hinterland from which to draw goods. Transportation by water would have also kept costs down, particularly in an area such as County Down where land-based communication would have been difficult because of the topography and a possibly underdeveloped road system. In examining the tower houses (described as associated tower houses in this chapter) that could have performed the function outlined above, those located in a neighbouring townland to a port, with a view of such a settlement, or within approximately five kilometres sailing distance from a port have been determined as potentially forming part of a hinterland. This sailing distance is probably far too low, but it has been chosen so as to present the minimum size a hinterland might have been. This interpretation also explains the correlation between tower houses and anchorages and landing places, since these would have facilitated a system of trade networks feeding into a collecting port.

7.2 Killyleagh

The core of the modern castle at Killyleagh is a tower house constructed by Sir James Hamilton in the early seventeenth century, although it is highly probable that a tower house was built by the Whyte family either at this site or nearby prior to Hamilton's acquisition of the Dufferin lands. Whether there was a settlement at Killyleagh prior to the planned town that survives today is unknown, but as has been suggested elsewhere it is likely that some informal settlement at least existed in conjunction with most of the tower houses. As is depicted in Thomas Raven's 1625 maps of the Dufferin landholdings, Killyleagh town was deliberately planned following the granting of a town charter in 1612, resembling many other seventeenth-century Plantation towns in the north of Ireland (plate 6a). This plan is preserved in the modern settlement, the main streets running down from the castle to the waterfront, bisected by smaller streets or lanes. Each house is indicated on Raven's map as having a long garden stretching to the rear in a toft or burgage-like shape, likely to have been used for small-scale cultivation by the tenants, a lay-out that has survived for the most part into the present day. Again marked on Raven's map, to the south of the settlement are fields, their boundaries marked as well as the names of the tenants who farmed them and the value of each parcel of land. Efforts appear to have been made to maximise the quality of each land parcel, as the occasional wooded or boggy area seem to have been marked off from the farmed land. It is probable too that this land was used for arable cultivation,



Plate 14

Taken from the entrance to Killyleagh castle this photograph shows the view commanded by the tower house down the town's main street to the harbour and Strangford Lough beyond

suggested by the presence of two mills to the north of the settlement. The size of the fields depicted on the contemporary maps would further suggest that the fields were subdivided, and possibly sub-tenanted. The number of houses marked on the map would suggest that the population of the town in 1625 was several hundred individuals. At a later date, a 1681 valuation of the Dufferin lands in the region of 100 tenants residing in the town, notably including 'Robert Hamilton, merchant' (An estimate of the yearly value of the jointure, made the 28th of November, 1681, by Captain Mure, Captain Bayly, and Captain Fairlie in Lowry 1867, 127-9). This Robert Hamilton is possibly a relation of Viscount Clandeboye (the head of the Hamilton family). We know from the *Hamilton Manuscripts* that James Hamilton who acquired these lands

from the Whyte family had a brother, Gavin, who was a merchant, so it is very possible that this was a familial occupation.

The alignment of the tower house to the harbour with the main street running between the two, would suggest that they formed the axis of the settlement, rather than the church which was located to the north-west of the tower house, away from the planned town. Indeed the tower house is located at the only point that would permit an unimpeded view down to the lough (plate 14). This suggests a strong correlation between the tower house and the harbour which is an important consideration for this study. In the case of Killyleagh, once the town lay-out is considered it can be seen that the specific tower house site was chosen to maximise control of the harbour and its approaches although it meant being located further away. We also know that Hamilton, aside from his family connections, had a keen interest in trade: he was granted a number of rights, including to import and export goods, which likely left him with the knowledge and ambition to create his own rival to the Earl of Kildare's ports of Ardglass and Strangford at Killyleagh (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 256).

In the case of Killyleagh, identification of a hinterland to serve this port is comparatively straightforward. Raven's surveys of 1624-5 of the Barony of Dufferin indicate that Killyleagh was the only settlement of size in the entire barony, and furthermore that the settlement was bounded by a well-organised field system. Other clusters of houses depicted in Dufferin appear likely only to have been small rural settlements. This fact alongside the existence of a centralised political presence in the town in the form of Hamilton, would indicate that excess produce from the barony was brought to the town from places within his lordship. The proximity of the aforementioned fields to the settlement would imply that the majority of the inhabitants were engaged in agricultural production, at least on a supplementary basis to their occupation within the town. The borough status would imply that there was a regular market held that may have procured surplus goods and provided a place to sell imports. There is an area at the entrance to the tower house, which, combined with the wide main street would have been suitable for this purpose.

Killyleagh was probably also a useful port for exploiting the wood acquired through the cutting down of the Dufferin woods. The woods were probably of varying quality and it is likely that a large proportion of it was scrub woodland. McCracken believes that

the soil would have lent itself to the growth of oaks and refers to a description of the Dufferin in 1602 as having 'the fairest timber trees in Ireland' (McCracken 1971, 40). Whatever wood there was in the Dufferin, it would have been exploited soon after colonisation since it was located so conveniently to the sea and export routes. This would have had the effect of an increasingly large hinterland based on the export of timber.

Although we can identify Killyleagh as having been a town at least in the early seventeenth century, identifying it securely as a port is more problematic. When examining Killyleagh it is useful that we have detailed contemporary maps from which to determine the extent of a possible port. This is especially important as there are no medieval buildings in the town, or identified port buildings. Aside from the aforementioned street lay-out, the town's present appearance, including the tower house, is now a result of eighteenth century redevelopment. Killyleagh does have a large sheltered natural harbour with deep offshore anchorages, although at low tide the water level in the harbour would have been too low for anything more than the smallest boats. From Raven's survey it can be seen that there was a jetty at Killyleagh harbour, presumably to mitigate the effects of the strong lough tides (plate 6a). Although Raven's maps are the most detailed contemporary maps for the study area, we cannot ascertain from them whether any of the few buildings located at the harbour served as a commercial port building.

7.2.1 Associated tower houses

Through the course of this study and accompanying fieldwork, tower houses have been identified as being associated with a settlement. This includes those tower houses not located within a town, but those deemed to have been associated with one due to their proximity to the settlement. These tower houses are then suggested as having formed points in the network contributing to supply and demand of the port.

Following this categorisation there are no other tower houses beyond Killyleagh castle associated with the town of Killyleagh. Three tower houses are excluded from this group – Ringhaddy, Sketrick and Mahee castles – because of their distance from Killyleagh. Killyleagh is the closest town to the first two of these three tower houses. Mahee is also not associated with it, but is closer to Newtownards and Greyabbey. Navigation to Killyleagh from these sites would have required significant local

knowledge. This does not mean that these tower houses did not form points in the Killyleagh network, as this study has been deliberately negative in determining the distance that would have been sailed to reach a port so as to create a minimum view of the economic landscape, but that these sites are not clearly identifiable with a specific settlement. This could also be due to Killyleagh's late establishment as a town. While it is presumed that some sort of settlement existed at Killyleagh prior to Hamilton's acquiring of the barony of Dufferin in association with the Whyte family's tower house, we do not have firm evidence of this, and any settlement there was may have been very informal. Consequently it is a possibility that the tower house networks were established before the town. Although we know that two of these tower houses at least (Mahee and Ringhaddy castles) were occupied in the early seventeenth centuries, a network may have been established with another, more distant, port that Killyleagh was unable to displace.

We also have evidence for trade at Ringhaddy castle. The *Cal. S. P. Ire.* mentions Scottish barques anchoring at this tower house, and excavation at the landing place associated with the tower house found artefacts indicating exchange, notably pottery from south-west England (Breen 1997, 63; The Lord Deputy and Council to Secretary Cecil, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-1603*, 503-505). The church located in close proximity to Ringhaddy castle suggests that there was a settlement, of unknown stature, at Ringhaddy. As a result, Ringhaddy may have had direct connections with the outside world meaning that it did not require the intermediary of a port town. Alternatively, it may have been connected to a port of a more established position within the wider region from whence it received the foreign pottery by way of re-export, possibly via Killyleagh.

7.3 Ardglass

If we can equate the town of Killyleagh as the market centre of a quite concentrated hinterland then the same logic could be applied to other potential ports in the county. In the barony of Lecale both Strangford and Ardglass functioned as ports of varying status between the fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Both of these settlements were under the control of the Earls of Kildare, thus it is not as simple to equate one port for each lordship as it is with Killyleagh, particularly since the caput of this lordship was elsewhere in Ireland. One possibility for the proliferation of towns with an orientation towards trading in this small area is the comparative development of the region. Lecale

was a much more fertile and flat area topographically than elsewhere in Down and it is probable that this had been utilised for centuries. Lecale's mercantile experiences may have begun with the Vikings, while in the high middle ages the Cistercians had maintained a house at Inch near Downpatrick (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 92). This monastic order more than any other is well-known for their trading pursuits. The Cistercians relied upon the land for income, developing a system of exchange that promoted economic activities within a local area (Mitchell and Ryan 1998, 303). Lecale during the late medieval period was also effectively an island as its Gaelic name, Magh-Inis, attests. While today it is a peninsula, before the Quoile River tidal controls were imposed in the 19th century, this river's estuary provided a wide delta-like barrier between Dufferin and Lecale. Crossings were only possible by ferry or by bridge, the latter of which there is little evidence for in the stretch downstream of Downpatrick. On the south side of the barony the River Blackwater had a similar effect. This issue alone potentially limits the size of the hinterland of the ports of this area, a situation which could only have been rectified by the transportation of agricultural produce by water.

The establishment of Ardglass is also thought to be the result of efforts by Janico Dartas, who, it would appear, took advantage of the isolation and potential autonomy of Ardglass from both London and Dublin. Ardglass was made a borough in 1442 and a customs port in 1467-8, although it probably had its origins as a customs port long before that date (Martin 1981, 34). Janico Dartas appears to have been a man closely connected in trade – in 1395 a consignment of cauldrons was granted to him in lieu of non-payment of customs. No mention is made of where these cauldrons came from, except that it is probable that they were manufactured in either Chester or Bristol (O'Neill 1987, 90). In 1408 Janico Dartas was assigned the task of building a 'nave de guerra' [warship] at Drogheda. If O'Neill is correct in stating that fourteenth-century government intervention in the Ulster ports led to the import of essential goods, then it is possible that Dartas' involvement with the port of Ardglass stemmed from this event (O'Neill 1987, 24; Butlin 1977, 69). Ardglass castle [the Newark] is listed as one of Dartas' possessions in his *Inquisition Post Mortem*, which as has been already discussed, is an identified port building. Consequently if Ardglass owes its origins to Dartas, then it was established by a man who was experienced in maritime activities, who probably would not have wasted his time on an unprofitable venture.

On the Ordnance Survey six inch maps are to be found the townlands of 'Kildare's Crew' and 'Jordan's Crew'. The element 'crew' could imply maritime activity, unless there is an undiscovered Irish translation (there is no further information available at the Irish Placenames Database, www.logainm.ie). While it is known that the Earl of Kildare was the main landowner in the Ardglass area until the mid sixteenth century, Jordan is very probably the same (possibly merchant) family as gave their name to 'Jordan's Castle' in the town. Indeed, it is possible that the Earl of Kildare farmed out the customs deriving from Lecale to Jordan and other merchants, as he did in the Pale in 1532 (Breen 2007, 86).

We know from both the historical and the archaeological evidence that Ardglass's exports were primarily agricultural in nature, ranging from grains to animal products. The composition of the exports is proof that the port must have had an agricultural hinterland of a not inconsiderable extent to merit export to Scotland, England and Wales. Unlike Dufferin there is no similar map-based survey of Lecale that could be used to identify this area of agricultural activity, the excess of which could have been used in trading activities. But the place-name evidence would indicate a large population in the surrounding area, very probably a bigger population than in the town today.

From the perspective of surviving archaeological remains, Ardglass is probably the most identifiable of the towns in the region as a port. While the lay-out of the modern town owes much to its resurgence in the eighteenth century, as does the appearance of the harbour quays, the presence of a number of 'tower houses' testifies to the significance to the town of trade. Breen's definition of a port lists a formalised or semi-formalised waterfront with structures catering for a maritime role as an essential feature (Breen 2007, 87). Ardglass has a large and sheltered harbour with six known tower houses scattered at locations close to the waterfront. Of these three have been suggested as being port buildings, with a dual functionality (commercial and residential) at Jordan's castle. Of these three port buildings McNeill has identified the Newark as a row of shops, while it was determined here that Cowd castle functioned as a navigation aid and watchtower (McNeill 2005, 17). It is presumed that at least Jordan's castle was occupied by a merchant, while the existence of vessels 'belonging' to the town is attested to by the Port Books of both Strangford and Carrickfergus as well as the

published Welsh customs accounts (Sweetnam 1986; Lewis 1927). Consequently we can identify Ardglass as having been a port, using both Breen's and Fox's criteria.

In addition, Ardglass may have had a permanent role as a market town (other urban centres had a market or fair only on certain dates of the year or weekly) since the Newark provided a market environment year-round. For this to have been the case there would have needed to have been a large and wealthy hinterland to warrant market-based exchange as a permanent feature. Regardless of this, revenue from trade and exchange must have been significant to allow the construction of a stone building with ornate enough features to explain its misidentification as a tower house. The possibility that shops were constructed in this fashion (instead of a timber framed building as is found in England where the shop occupies the ground floor) further indicates that the medieval port would have drawn upon a wide hinterland, as possibly indicated by the placename evidence.

Breen notes in his study of south-west Ireland that morphologically, medieval ports tend to spread themselves along the harbour, expanding back from the seafront in a perpendicular manner (Breen 2007, 87). In Ardglass a number of the tower houses are located away from the sheltered harbour, showing that even those tower houses set back at some distance from water's edge could be intrinsically linked to a maritime function. Thus it is not unreasonable to suggest that the town also stretched away from the waterfront towards the aforementioned townlands.

What also must be considered is the potential for a maritime hinterland. In south-western Ireland herring fishing supported a port of reasonable stature even if its land-based hinterland was quite small (Breen 2005, 115). It is very possible that the same industry contributed to Ardglass's wealth.

7.3.1 Associated tower houses

As previously mentioned, Ardglass has the highest density of urban 'tower houses' in the study area. In contrast, there are no tower houses identified as being associated with the settlement aside from these sites. Castle Bright tower house, although not too far from Ardglass, has been identified as forming a manorial based network with Downpatrick, this assessment being primarily based on its site location. The altitude of this tower house, and the difficulty of access from the sea would have meant that land-

based communication would have been easier in this case, if not in others. Indeed, this relationship is unusual, since we see a preference for water-based communication elsewhere in the study area, presumably because it was easier, quicker and less expensive. Kilclief castle is also located between the towns of Strangford and Ardglass and could have capitalised on connections with both.

The lack of tower houses in association with Ardglass is possibly explained by the town's status. The status of the settlement would have meant that mariners would have been prepared to travel greater distances to sell their produce and conduct trade that could have caused a larger hinterland. Based on the identified exports from the port, we know that agricultural produce must have come from a large hinterland. This hinterland possibly encompasses the entire tower house maritime network.



Plate 15

Early twentieth-century view of Strangford harbour and tower house (centre left). This photograph clearly shows that Strangford castle was located directly on the water prior to land reclamation.

After McErlean *et al.* 2002, 235

7.4 Strangford

The fact that surviving evidence suggests that there was only one tower house in the town of Strangford (though it is possible that more did not survive and are not recorded), as opposed to six in Ardglass, would immediately indicate that this town's status with regards to trade was not as great as the latter port. Within this grouping, there is evidence for one definite port building, two probable port buildings and a dual function tower house in Ardglass, whereas there is only one dual function tower house in Strangford. This tower house is more closely affiliated with the harbour than Jordan's castle, it was located right on the water before further harbour construction took place [it now sits atop a slight rise directly above the modern harbour] (plate 15). Its location right on the harbour may also imply a look-out function as well as the symbolic imposition of a sense of authority on boats docking there. What is also unknown, although this is not uncommon in Down, are the owners of Strangford castle. This, coupled with the tower house's physical location, may indicate that it was the residence/storehouse of the customs collector for the port. This is only speculation, of course, but may explain the lack of other port buildings as at Ardglass.

We likewise know that Strangford was the designated head port for the region in the Tudor period. This designations suggest a higher hierarchical position than may have been the case. Significant economic and political status was conferred on a number of ports across Ireland that was not necessarily merited based on natural qualities and facilities. This ultimately led to the rapid decline of a multiplicity of previously quite successful regional ports across Ireland as Wexford, Cork, Galway, Dublin and Belfast received the financial benefits of an official position. However, the Port Book accounts for an equal number of vessels at Strangford as at Ardglass, at least in the early seventeenth century. This implies that the two ports were of equal status, although whether this was the case in the late medieval period is undetermined. McErlean *et al.* believe that in this era Strangford was the dominant port, but the granting of head port status does imply that the fortunes of Strangford would have increased (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 231). Consequently the position witnessed in the Port Books may indicate Strangford's 'catching up' with Ardglass, rather than inferring equality throughout the centuries under consideration, although this is a moot point.

In contrast to the situation at Ardglass, the lack of tower houses and port buildings at Strangford may be explained by the comparative number of tower houses identified as

being associated with the settlement. Castleward and Audley's castle are located close to the town, while the tower houses of the Quoile River estuary were not much farther. The tidal effects within Strangford Lough would also have reduced the impression of distance to the medieval mariner, since they appear to have taken advantage of tides wherever possible.

7.4.1 Associated tower houses

The extent of Strangford's hinterland may have been dependent on associated tower houses and their settlements, in particular, Kilclief and the Quoile River tower houses. A borough was created at Kilclief, presumably to encourage settlement on the bishop's manor here. Kilclief is also overtly a maritime tower house – it is located on a sandy beach, at fishing grounds and at a prominent site that could have been used for navigation into the Narrows (plates 9a and 13). Whether this borough ever developed though is unclear – there is no extant settlement on which to base this assumption and the estimated number of failed medieval boroughs is high (Murphy and Potterton 2010, 192). If there was a borough around the tower house, it presumably would have been a thriving little commercial settlement, taking advantage of the features noted above. It is probable that the coastal County Down region underwent a high level of post-medieval settlement desertion, as indicated by the absence of settlements at other tower house sites, and it is possible that Kilclief suffered the same fate. If there was a settlement here, it would have been a useful point in the commercial network since it could have provided both fish and agricultural produce. As Murphy and Potterton observed in County Dublin, boroughs absorbed 'much of the agricultural surpluses of their own hinterlands while they also served, for an even wider hinterland, as stepping stones to the larger ports and markets' (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 192). Kilclief's location between Strangford and Ardglass would have meant that it probably could have traded with either Strangford or Ardglass.

As Strangford is located close to the Quoile River estuary, this would have enabled ease of communication between the town and those tower houses in the vicinity of the navigable river that could have formed part of its hinterland. As Graham has observed from studies of other settlements in Ireland, those towns sited on routeways, and in particular on rivers, tended to act as regional collecting centres (Graham 1977, 39). We have evidence for this situation in the early seventeenth century. Ballintogher, a

townland on the Lecale side of the Quoile River, is one of the places mentioned in the Port Books as coming under the jurisdiction of Strangford.

Walshestown, Castle Island and Quoile tower houses were located at navigable parts of the Quoile River. Thus their inhabitants had reasonable ease of access to both Strangford and Ballintogher. Indeed, this study equates Castle Island tower house to the control of Ballintogher since it is located in the next townland, near to the boundary, and is located on the best spot on the river for the sheltered anchoring of boats. If we take the view that the occupants of each of these tower houses had wealth sufficient to construct a tower house then they must have had enough wealth to engage at some level of trade. Added to this is the discovery of a hoard of Elizabethan silver coins at Quoile castle (NISMR). This would immediately imply the presence of exchange. Ballintogher was probably a seventeenth-century creek and certainly not of the same status as Strangford, the head port. Due to these tower houses' proximity to Strangford it is not unreasonable to suggest that they traded with Strangford (either prior to the establishment of Ballintogher, or independently of it) and thus that Strangford's hinterland stretched as far as Quoile castle. It is possible that the occupants or their tenants sailed small craft to Strangford loaded with excess produce or it is equally probable that trading vessels came directly to the tower houses. It is suggested that such tower houses held a minor, yet vital, position within the port hierarchy by operating as creeks.

The tidal controls imposed on the Quoile means that it is no longer possible to identify the existence of creek structures at Quoile castle, but it has been suggested that boats could have drawn up by the tower house. Castle Island tower house is located by an anchorage in the river, while Walshestown castle is set back from the estuary but near to several places suitable for anchoring and drawing up boats. At Castleward tower house boats could also have been drawn up. At Audley's castle, despite its commanding position atop a hill, a glance at Ordnance Survey maps shows a number of points with names that could be linked to anchorages in the immediate area alongside many small jetties of unknown date, but which may be indicative of earlier maritime activity. The tower house is also sited overlooking 'Audley's Roads' to the south, a deep anchorage used frequently today by small craft as it probably was at the time of occupation (plate 9b). It has been suggested that Audley's castle was deliberately sited and designed to maximise control of these anchorages and their approaches. The possible presence of a

stone storehouse within the tower house bawn further supports the idea that the motivation behind the siting of Audley's castle was trade.

These tower houses then utilised the natural features necessary to operate as creeks within a larger port network. In the case of Ballintogher, identified with Castle Island tower house due to its location in the next townland, the level of activity recorded in the Port Books implies that economic activity here may have been more than expected at a creek. The potential presence of a stone storehouse in a prominent position at Audley's castle and its association with a popular anchoring place, similarly suggests that activity was more extensive than at the typical creek. As Breen noted, creeks and landing places did not necessarily require permanent structures to effectively operate, yet these structures may have been in place at Audley's castle (Breen 2007, 88-9). Stone being used for building the storehouse, further implying its importance, also attests to the potential for financial gain. While we know that Ballintogher in the early seventeenth century was subordinate to Strangford, it is possible therefore that all these sites operated in conjunction with, and fed into, the port administration present at Strangford. This may explain the lack of port buildings and tower houses in Strangford, but also signifies that Strangford may have had a comparatively large hinterland.

The Quoile River acts as a boundary between the baronies of Lecale and Dufferin. It lies only a few miles south of the town of Killyleagh and so access from this area would have been quite straightforward. Since there is minimal evidence for the presence of a sizeable settlement pre-dating the creation of Killyleagh in the early seventeenth century, it is not unlikely that Strangford served this area until this point. However, before the settlement of Killyleagh by the Hamiltons and their tenants, it is equally possible that population was low enough for the vicinity not to have been as intensively cultivated as appears on Raven's surveys. Settlement by Scots colonisers often took place in what were considered marginal areas in the medieval period from which a firm base for settling the surrounding countryside could be achieved (Whelan 1997, 187, Gillespie 1985, 127). The lack of tower houses on the Dufferin bank of the Quoile would imply that the barony was not as developed as its neighbouring barony.

A further implication of Strangford's location is that the main county town of Downpatrick is also located on the Quoile River. It is possible that before tidal controls of the river were undertaken in the 1950s, the Quoile was navigable by small vessels as

far as Downpatrick (McErlean *et al.* 2003, 243). Indeed, boats were known on Lough Down to take advantage of the fishing there (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 140). As a sizeable ecclesiastical town Downpatrick would have had a significant population impacting on trade. Downpatrick does not appear in the Port Books, suggesting that the town may have made use of an outport, as for example, Dublin did with Dalkey in the late middle ages. We have evidence for trade in the discovery of a jetty and weighing scales at Inch and historic documentation for trade at Ballintogher, downstream of the town (Foley 1992). Strangford's location, at the entrance to Strangford Lough and near the Quoile River estuary suggests that this location would have proven ideal for an outport.

7.5 Portaferry

Portaferry, located directly across the Narrows from Strangford, was possibly overshadowed by its successful neighbour. The settlement does contain a tower house (Portaferry castle) and the Down Survey maps imply a number of other buildings. Portaferry castle is believed to have been constructed by the Savage family, although it is possible that their caput was located at Ardkeen. The presence of the Savages, as Lords of the Ards, allowed a centralised political force that would have been conducive to the development of a trade network. As with Killyleagh a strong overlordship may have led to a situation where 'although some consideration may have been given to the broader economic picture, most towns were founded to capitalise on the trade of a particular manor and to exclude others from trading with the tenants' (Colfer 2002, 136). Portaferry may have been established as a reaction to Strangford; indeed, this may explain why Portaferry castle and Strangford castle are intervisible. The Savage lordship of the Ards would have ensured cooperation within the entire barony, unlike the potential situation in Lecale where a multiplicity of over-lordships could have led to factioning.

The clear association of one settlement, at an advantageous location at the Narrows to maximise control of both the sea and the lough, with a single lordship indicates that, at a minimum, Portaferry could have operated as a creek. In this scenario, produce from the Savage lordship could be gathered at this creek-collection centre. The historic ferry running between Strangford and Portaferry would then have formed the final stage in this proposed network. In this suggested case Portaferry's hinterland would have stretched to the boundaries of the lordship with the Clandeboye O'Neills.

Although the size of the lordship would imply a solid base from which Portaferry could draw its resources, the topography of Ards, like Dufferin, was not as favourable as Lecale. Although drumlins are lower in height in Ards and less frequent than in Dufferin, the terrain nonetheless would not have lent itself easily to agriculture beyond the products of pastoral activity, such as hides and mantles. As in Lecale, however, the presence of a Cistercian abbey at Greyabbey indicates arable cultivation and the trade of this excess produce, at least in the vicinity of this settlement. The discovery of multi-period fishtraps in Greyabbey Bay too testifies to the activities of the Cistercian house. The presence of the abbey may extend Portaferry's hinterland further north along the peninsula than previously indicated. Alternatively, the monastic house could have arranged for its own exports, or maintained connections with another port.

It is possible that trading activities were less developed on Ards than in its neighbouring Baronies to the east. This can be deduced from two factors. First is the distribution of the tower houses. These are primarily located along the east coast of the Ards peninsula, and within the Savage lordship. The location of tower houses within the Savage lordship was probably influenced by a poor relationship with the Clandeboye O'Neills, although the tower houses are not arranged in a defensive formation along the boundaries of the territory (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 214). This has been suggested as being motivated by the need to control fisheries, based on comparative analysis with other fishing oriented tower houses in Ireland. The second reason is the proximity of Strangford, from which it is assumed there was a pre-eminence in terms of trade due to its being head port for the region. Portaferry and Strangford are only separated by a kilometre of water, the Narrows, and there is evidence to support the existence of a regular ferry crossing between the two as well as the place name alone (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 229). Since we are considering greater distances than one kilometre over water between a landing place or creek at a tower house and a port, then the distance between Portaferry and Strangford becomes even more inconsequential. Based on Strangford's proposed hinterland in the barony of Lecale it is not inconceivable that this hinterland stretched across Strangford Lough as well. However, we might expect a higher density of tower houses along the west coast of the peninsula if this were the case. Since the distribution pattern favours the west coast this furthers the conviction that these tower houses were taking advantage of sea fishing.

It is very possible that Portaferry was therefore little more than a landing place or creek. The Savages do not seem to have taken much interest in the place until the late sixteenth century, a grant for a weekly market being procured in 1607. Sir James Montgomery purchased Portaferry castle from his brother-in-law Patrick Savage, in 1623. As McErlean *et al.* describe it, at the close of the sixteenth century Portaferry 'probably consisted of a small fishing settlement centred on the tower house and the ferry' (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 214). It is thus probable that the small scale settlement depicted on the Down Survey maps was the result of Montgomery's investment in the town, paralleled in his handling of Portaferry. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that three ports could co-exist within such a small area. As it is, the presence of two ports within the geographic area needs an explanation.

7.6 Newtownards

Newtownards is located at the far north of Strangford Lough, the direct consequence of this location being that it is affected by tidal mud flats. It is unlikely therefore that larger vessels could have approached the town. Indeed, McErlean *et al.* believe that the settlement founded there as part of the Earldom of Ulster had greatly declined by the time of Montgomery's land grant, largely due to it being part of Clandeboye O'Neill territory and thus a casualty of the Tudor Conquest. McErlean *et al.* suggest too that profits from the town could be easily transported by land to either Bangor or Donaghadee (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 295-7). The presence of a tower house at Newtownards is disputed too. The building is not extant, and we are instead reliant on antiquarian descriptions which are unclear as to whether they are describing a tower house or defended house.

There are no other associated tower houses with Newtownards.

7.7 Killough

Killough has formed the focal point of an unsuccessful attempt to locate a tower house. The settlement is located where we might expect a tower house, based on comparison with the locations of other tower houses in the region. Killough is located at the head of a sheltered inlet from the sea, an attractive location for medieval mariners. The harbour here is, and was, badly affected by tidal flats and silting necessitating the construction of piers at the entrance in the eighteenth century. This does not seem to have deterred trade in the seventeenth century, however, as the Port Books account for vessels

arriving at the village. This activity may have, as at Donaghadee, began at a later period, which would explain the lack of a tower house.

Jope tentatively ascribed the circular building atop a hill just south of the modern settlement as a possible tower house [plate 16] (*ASCD*, 262). Examination through the course of this study proposes that this is in fact a windmill, as its features are not comparable to circular tower houses elsewhere in Ireland, nor is there a circular tower house building tradition within the county. Unlike the other notable tower house in an elevated position within the study area, Audley's castle, no easy access from the harbour was identified during fieldwork. Indeed, there are sea cliffs to one side and it is a steep climb from either the harbour or settlement, which would have meant that it would have been very difficult to transport goods between tower house and harbour. It is possible that a tower house in such a site as this could have operated as a watchtower or to control of the landscape. There is a precedent in the locale for tower houses in an elevated site with no sea access (Castle Bright) but with a commanding view. Comparing the choice of site within the study area, where a tower house is located



Plate 16

The disputed site at Killough. The *ASCD* has it listed under 'destroyed monuments and lost sites'. Fieldwork determined this site to been a windmill rather than a circular tower house.

within a port it is universally built close to and with access to the waterfront. Based on this comparison of sites alone within the study area, Jope's suggested site at Killough is discounted.

7.7.1 Associated tower houses

Castle Bright, Castleskreen and Bonecastle tower houses are all located near to Killough. However, these sites are determined as not being maritime or commercial tower houses. Instead it is proposed that these sites are manorial in nature and maintained connections with Downpatrick. This has been determined since both Castleskreen and Bonecastle do not have views toward or access to, navigable water. Castle Bright has a commanding view of the surrounding landscape, including the sea, but access to the tower house from the sea is steep and rocky. The difficulties of approach to this site have led to the conclusion that this tower house may have had a symbolic role within the maritime landscape, in that it commanded the surrounding area or possible acted as a watchtower, but no direct interaction. On the contrary, travel towards Downpatrick is not difficult even though it is more distant than the coast. Therefore, it is suggested that Killough's hinterland was probably quite small, with no tower houses identified as being potential creeks or landing places within the network. It is equally possible that the activity presented in the early seventeenth-century documentation reflects the larger scale utilisation of natural resources and expanded areas of agricultural land use associated with this period of colonisation and so should not be used to infer late medieval trade.

7.8 Donaghadee

The existence of a motte at Donaghadee implies that there was settlement at Donaghadee of high medieval date (*ASCD*, 395-6; McNeill 1975, 38; McNeill 1980, 66). As at Killough, Donaghadee has proved an interesting case in this study of tower houses and commercial activity. The success of the port of Donaghadee in the seventeenth century is attested to in contemporary sources, yet there is no tower house associated with the port. It would be easy to write off the absence of a tower house here in the later middle ages as a consequence of the town being within Clandeboye O'Neill territory. However, this branch of the O'Neills constructed tower houses elsewhere within their lordship, including one at Castlereagh on the outskirts of modern day Belfast, and they occupied other tower houses at least, such as Sketrick castle. It is

clear therefore that a tower house tradition existed within the family. The reason for the lack of a tower house at Donaghadee must be explained by something else.

Donaghadee's economic boom in the early seventeenth century has been ascribed to its location, which allowed cattle to be walked from the Lagan Valley pastoral lands and then shipped live to Scotland (Agnew 1996, 118). It is very possible that this situation only occurred in the aftermath of the Tudor Conquest, when these fertile inland areas were colonised by settlers. In this case, there would not have been the demand for a port at Donaghadee in the late medieval period, as there were not cattle for export and probably less established contact with the Scottish ports. The harbour at Donaghadee is also difficult to enter, a situation which has had to be part remedied by construction of a large pier in modern times. Without a significant push factor in the form of large amounts of cattle for export, it is doubtful whether a port would have operated on this site.

If this partially explains the lack of settlement development in the late middle ages then it still does not explain why no tower house was constructed at Donaghadee in the early seventeenth century (or indeed, a defended house). There are other examples of early seventeenth-century building of tower houses, by all ethnicities, in the study area. Two of these sites – Bangor and Kirkistown – are two of the closest tower houses to Donaghadee regardless of the date of construction. We know too that Montgomery, proprietor of the port, like his fellow settlers at least appreciated the use of tower houses in an Irish context. It is recorded that he and his followers initially took shelter at Newtownards, at the disputed tower house site there (*ASCD*, 431). He is also accredited with the redevelopment of Portaferry, after his sister's marriage to Patrick Savage in 1623, centred at this tower house (*ASCD*, 433; Harris 1744, 46). It is a mystery why a tower house or port building was not constructed at, or near, Donaghadee. Perhaps a full survey of the historic town might find traces of an early seventeenth-century structure in the foundations of a later building.

Regardless of the presence, or lack thereof, of a tower house, contemporary documentation indicates that Donaghadee's hinterland was large. It was also based on the distance a herd of cattle could be walked, presumably the length of the journey was of less importance than the ease of moving the cattle. There would probably also have been 'fattening districts' en route (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 478). The route from the

Lagan Valley to Donaghadee would presumably have been along the north coast of County Down on the flat strip of land between Belfast Lough and the Castlereagh Hills. This example therefore shows the importance of topography in determining the extent of hinterlands, and in determining land-based transport routes.

7.9 Bangor

Bangor is another probable medieval settlement centred on an abbey. As with Donaghadee, the site was developed as a port in the early seventeenth century by a recent settler in the region, Sir James Hamilton. Unlike Donaghadee, however, there is a 'tower house' prominently sited at Bangor harbour (plate 17). This 'tower house' was constructed in a Scottish architectural style, suggested as being welcoming in



Plate 17

Bangor 'tower house'

appearance to mariners from Scotland and north-west England, and seems to have provided accommodation for visitors as well as operating as a customs house.

The relationship between Bangor and Donaghadee is a complex one. Their respective proprietors were at odds with one another as is well testified in both the Hamilton and Montgomery Manuscripts, and this probably extended to the two ports. Bangor being closer by a few miles to the Lagan Valley hinterland would suggest that cattle exporters would have preferred to export from the closest port, yet this was not the case. This either indicates that Bangor had a more diverse export base than Donaghadee, or that live cattle exports were based on preference or connections with either landlord, or a combination of the two.

This would suggest that Bangor's hinterland was potentially as wide as Donaghadee's. It is also possible that this hinterland equated to the landholdings of each lordship. This case also reinforces the importance within the historic economy of personal relationships between providers of goods and merchants to maintain a constant supply. There are no known associated tower houses with Bangor.

7.10 Conclusion

A readily accessible hinterland was important for the survival of a port. This hinterland could either be constructed from maritime networks, as would have been the case with routes based on fishing (to and from the shoals, processing centre and place of export or consumption) or land-based. The interactions between the two are potentially more complex than may be at first thought: agricultural and production areas could be connected to ports through maritime and riverine networks for example. This is why the associated tower houses for each port were considered during this study. The short distances by sea between these sites and the ports represent the likely minimum level of interaction based on maritime routes. Nowhere in the study area is more than a few hours sail from one another (based on McErlean's estimate of sailing times to Scotland, Liverpool, the Isle of Man and the east coast of Ireland 2002, 362) meaning that the suggested hinterlands here are very likely vast oversimplifications of a much more extensive network.

Gardiner observed that short distances were not covered by water based routes due to the effort of loading and unloading to complete the journey (Gardiner 2007, 94). This

situation was probably not replicated in the study area since it would appear that manors were centred on the tower house with the highest density of settlement along the shore. This utilisation of regional trade (termed 'coastal trade') is described between Devon and Exeter by Kowaleski. She found evidence for a preference for this coastal trade over international trade for reasons of lower transportation costs and a reduced threat of piracy (also a concern in the Irish Sea region). Although the bulk of goods originated from overseas, the movement along the coasts, presumably along a network of stages originating from the head port at Exeter, was found to be the best way of distributing imports and collecting exports. This situation also permitted a wide swathe of society to participate in commerce; she was able to identify local merchants and artisans in the records (Kowaleski 1995, 225-8). She did observe, however, that the status of a trader influenced the size of a port's hinterland in that a wealthier trader could attract goods from further away and was more likely to deal in luxury items (Kowaleski 1995, 321). Since we can assume that tower house occupants were of high status within their community and region (if not on a national or international scale), this supports the idea of a wide network based on the landing places and anchorages available at the tower houses.

The immediate hinterland (in the strictest sense of the term) of each port is somewhat easier to ascertain since this would have been primarily based on topography and the ease of land communication as well as other considerations, outlined in the introduction to this chapter. In terms of practicalities, if we base the grain hinterland on the areas given by Murphy and Potterton, then a town with a population of around 2,000 could be theoretically accommodated by a grain growing area of 12,000 acres, in other words, within a kilometre's radius of the settlement. A much smaller area would have been needed for fuel – *c.* 1,000 acres – well catered for by the Dufferin woods as based on Raven's 1625 maps of the Dufferin, as well as other possible woodlands not depicted on contemporary maps (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 482, 485). It is not hard to conceive that this could be accommodated in the case of all the settlements outlined above. This hinterland's precise dimensions would been affected by topography, the extent of farming, transport links (especially navigable rivers) and competition from other settlements at a minimum, but also influenced by the trader's status, the incorporation of boroughs and foundation of fairs and markets in the hinterland, and the type of commodity. Need would also have extended a hinterland, with reduced availability of

produce causing traders to seek goods from farther afield (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 483-4; Kowaleski 1995, 321).

In terms of topography Lecale is immediately more conducive to a large hinterland than either Dufferin or the Ards. The land here is lower lying than in Dufferin and the Ards, and transport was facilitated both by the coastline and by the navigable stretches of the Quoile and Blackwater Rivers. Dufferin and Ards may have been more reliant on maritime communication networks due to the density of drumlins in both baronies and this feature's associated bog and woodland patches. As is seen at Bangor and Donaghadee, routes for moving cattle probably followed the course of least resistance but the ability to walk the cattle allowed the expansion of hinterlands (Kowaleski 1995, 294-9). Despite this there is reason to believe that agriculture was practiced on a wide scale in all three baronies thus providing the basis for export, probably supplemented by fishing to a greater or lesser extent depending on other factors. This suggests that at the Lecale ports the available land for agriculture and cultivation, providing a hinterland, was large enough to accommodate the settlement's demand and surplus for export.

If each potential port is taken in isolation then a brief summary of the extent of the hinterland of each can be suggested. With regards to Killyleagh, in the early seventeenth century at least, when the town as it exists today was founded, it is probable that the town's hinterland was small with the settlement little more than a creek. Raven's surveys would indicate that the town was centred around agriculture with minimal settlement outside of Killyleagh within the Dufferin landholdings. The tower houses north of Killyleagh along the west coast of Strangford Lough could have fed into activities here, or they may have continued relations with more established ports. This probably depended on who occupied each tower house and what personal connections they enjoyed with individual merchants.

The standing remains and placename evidence from Ardglass implies that the port here was quite sizeable, very possibly larger than the modern day town. A land-based hinterland is more problematic to identify, since the town supported a density of urban tower houses but no associated tower houses, Kilclief possibly excepted. It seems more likely then that Ardglass's hinterland was maritime in nature.

The reverse is true of Strangford. There is only one identifiable tower house in the settlement and correspondingly there is little evidence to trace the extent of the late medieval town. The town's proximity to Castleward and Audley's castle and the extensive anchorages there, as well as the Quoile River tower houses, implies that Strangford could draw upon the resources of quite an extensive land area. The fact that Strangford could have potentially acted as the outport for Downpatrick too supports the contention that Strangford was head port for the region in practice as well as title even though this stands in contrast to the archaeological evidence. The two ports of Ardglass and Strangford may have vied for dominance throughout the period though: 'Each region administratively had a head-port and possibly a number of subsidiary ports. Their designation as the head or lead port is not a temporal constant and ports will take on varying levels of control in different economic and political climates' (Breen 2007, 88). Yet again this is proof of the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to monument and settlement studies.

As at Killyleagh, it seems likely that the other ports in the study area did not develop this status until the seventeenth century, specifically Newtownards, Killough, Bangor, Portaferry and Donaghadee. This is especially true of Donaghadee, where development seems to hinge on land based routes with the interior, and the acquisition of this land by colonisers. We know that the early seventeenth century witnessed an upsurge in both tower house construction and the establishment of new, or reestablishment of old, settlements. The opportunity to financially profit would have opened up new areas to agriculture and exploitation and encouraged the multiplicity of ports, creeks and landing places. Whether this impacted the hinterlands of the older Lecale ports is unclear, but a significant proportion of the produce exported from these new ports probably came from the colonised lands.

The ethnic diversity of the study area probably had little affect on the ports and their hinterlands. O'Neill believes that there was in practice only one nation in Ireland when it came to trade as people were prepared to put aside their ethnic differences for self-advancement (O'Neill 1987, 130). In addition to this there are many examples from other ports in Ireland of merchants complaining as an excuse to accumulate special privileges by appearing 'loyal'. In saying this, individual personalities and relationships probably impacted on the size and distribution of hinterlands as did the extent of lordships in relation to ports.

From this examination it is asserted that the activities of the two late medieval ports of Ardglass and Strangford were supplemented by exchange at various creeks and landing places rather than by the smaller towns proposed by Butlin (Butlin 1977, 76). These creeks may or may not have included some of the towns outlined above, but more probable is that the tower houses represented them. This is inferred from the strong association observed between the tower houses and places suitable for anchoring boats. If the tower houses formed commercial points in a network then the supply routes could have stretched down the entire County Down coast from Belfast in the north to Dundrum, about thirty miles as the crow flies, to the south. Each tower house must have had its own individual hinterland, even if this was potentially an area of few acres unless deserted settlement can be identified at a later date. There was probably a hierarchy amongst the tower houses within lordships too. It is possible that the landing places at the estate centre represented by each tower house was to facilitate the movement of goods within the lord's territory, with the tenants performing this as part of their rent (Gardiner 2007, 89-90).

More difficult to identify in the archaeological record are those landing places which Breen determines as natural areas associated with smaller settlements or single farmsteads where a boat could be dragged ashore. No formal structure would have been constructed, save for beach clearance, and they tended to serve a very localised area on occasion (Breen 2007, 89; Gardiner 2007, 85). From Raven's survey of Dufferin there would appear to be numerous single farmsteads spread about the barony and it could be expected that this number would be higher in both Lecale and the Ards. It is very probable that these also equated to the sandy beaches that are quite rare along all the coastlines, but which tend to be commanded by a tower house. Those landing places not associated with a tower house could have fed into both an individual tower house hinterland (the tower house operating as a creek) and then overall into the national, or international, trading network.

The correlation between tower houses and anchorages or landing places is so strong that it is very possible that the tower houses along the sea coasts at least operated as staging posts on longer maritime routes (Gardiner 2007, 88). As has been discussed, there were a number of technological limitations to late medieval sailing, such as the vessels having to stay close to shore, meaning havens were at a premium. By locating tower

houses at these sheltered points the occupants could tax vessels anchoring there, and could also presumably sell some of their own excess produce. Consequently it is unlikely that networks between tower house (creek or landing place) and port were exclusive and tower houses could have contributed to a number of different routes (see map). Since much trade was probably conducted along the east coast of Ireland, as is attested by boats from Ardglass arriving at Carrickfergus, it would have been straightforward for mariners to stop at a number of tower houses en route to the final destination (Sweetnam 1986, 13). This pattern has also been observed in County Galway, where a ship would anchor at small bays to compile a load of hides and in Devon where ports acted as 'bulking centres' for cloth collected in the hinterland (Naessens 2009, 187; Kowaleski 1995, 233). By halting at a number of places to acquire bulky loads, transportation costs would have been kept to a minimum. It would also have allowed the rapid disposal of agricultural produce or fish before it turned bad, ensuring a supply of fresh food to towns. This would have had the effect of a shifting hinterland for ports.

Chapter Eight – Discussion: the decline of the tower house, tower houses in the early modern period

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss what is perceived as the 'decline' of the tower house: the period from the Tudor Conquest until the mid seventeenth century. The Tudor Conquest has been identified as the 'beginning of the end' of the tower house for a variety of reasons: the effects of lengthy and devastating warfare; the return of a centralised and powerful government; the economic fall-out mostly stemming from the scorched earth policies of the later campaigns; the imposition of new landowners (Leask 1951, 143-4, 146; Sweetman 1998, 175). All these events, or any combination, could have led to the demise of the Irish tower house. However, we find tower houses being constructed until the middle decades of the seventeenth century across the country. Was the decline of the tower house thus a gradual process instigated by the Tudor Conquest? Or did special conditions arise in the 1630s and 1640s that either independently, or in tandem with the above effects, provide a more sudden motivation for the abandonment of the building type? While County Down is the case study for this examination, it is used in reference to other tower house densities across Ireland and to a larger European trend.

Castle scholars have long been interested in the origins of the tower house (see Sweetman 1999, 137, 174; Leask 1951, 76-7; O'Keeffe 2000, 51-3 and Barry 1987, 188 for just a sample of the discussions on tower house origins), yet their decline has largely been ignored. It is only in recent years that an attempt has been made to redress this, and even then the decline of tower houses has only been dealt with briefly as part of more general works on post-medieval archaeology (see Lyttleton and Rynne 2009; Klingelhofer 2010). Since castles are generally viewed as settlement forms of the high and late middle ages it is a possibility that many feel uncomfortable straying into the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly since recent academic activity has focussed on the development of the 'modern' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rather than the continuation of many medieval aspects (see Lyttleton and Rynne 2009, the attitude is particularly expressed in O'Keeffe & Quirke 2009). In contrast McNeill convincingly argues that the Irish post-medieval period should not be considered as beginning until the end of the seventeenth century. This is argued because the seventeenth century marks the end of Plantation schemes and the beginning of a period

of development of a manufacturing industry, with many lingering facets of the medieval until this time (McNeill 2007, 12). It is suggested that this is perhaps the period in which we can best isolate and examine the main functions of the tower house in the preceding centuries – if we can conclude that one event, or a combination of events, resulted in a change in demand that could not be catered for by a tower house then this directly points to the use of the sites. Using this theory it will be tested whether tower houses had a commercial maritime function by examining whether their decline was influenced by economic change. By studying the end of tower house construction, we can also gather information that leads to a wider understanding of the tower house throughout its history. While in the past the decline of the tower house might have been treated cursorily, the prevalent attitude amongst archaeologists today is that explaining changes in architecture and material culture is not as straightforward a process as was once believed. Part of this interpretation stems from increased interest in agency theory. The actions of individuals, as will be seen, did create a cultural landscape that aided the continuation of tower house occupation past the time traditionally suggested as their end date (Lyttleton & Rynne 2009, 18).

It should also be stated at this point that the cessation of construction of tower houses and the end of their use for occupation need to be considered separately. The first part of this chapter will focus on the motivations for tower houses no longer being built, with a particular emphasis on how maritime economic activity might have influenced this. The second part will deal with the issues surrounding why some sites were occupied as tower houses until modern times, and why others were incorporated into later building works.

In the first section the two more traditional explanations for the decline of the tower house will be first considered before analysing the evidence described in the previous chapters. Firstly, the argument that tower houses were no longer constructed as new building techniques and styles took preference after the early seventeenth century will be debated. Secondly, the opinion that advances in warfare led to the abandonment of tower houses will be scrutinised. Thirdly, a less traditional interpretation be suggested – that the tower house decline in Down had its origins in economic changes. Whether decline or abandonment occurred is disputed, however, as many tower houses continued to be used during and after the seventeenth century and indeed are still used today, albeit in a different context from their original intent. It is argued that to view castles as

having a rise, apogee and decline is over-simplistic. Viewing castles in this manner ignores, or at least belittles, the actions, motivations and decisions made by an individual, or a group of individuals. This chapter will therefore also explore notions of individual choice and how this might have been affected by greater economic forces at work. The discussion therefore supports McNeill and O'Conor's assertions that the shift between late medieval and post-medieval is identifiable in the seventeenth century, based on evidence from material culture in the form of tower houses (McNeill 2007, 12; O'Conor 1998, xi).

8.2 Newcomers and new building traditions

8.2.1 Early colonisation attempts and tower houses

A common explanation for the decline of the tower house is that new building traditions were imported with colonisation by Scots and English settlers - namely Plantation castles, fortified houses and, eventually, star shaped forts (see Klingelhofer 2010, 101, 105; O'Keeffe 2000, 53-6; Leask 1951, 137; Sweetman 1999, 175-7 and Sweetman 1995, 42 for brief summaries). This suggestion has at its core a perhaps outdated notion that with plantation came the need for settlers to define themselves against the native Irish, creating a visual boundary between them and the 'other'. Another part of this interpretation is that such building styles are indicative of changes in perception of what it meant to be a lord with emphasis shifting to evoking the, presumably English, aristocratic house (O'Keeffe 2000, 53, 56). As Johnson puts it 'By the beginning of the seventeenth century, masculinity was more problematic [than the concept of masculinity was in the medieval period]; it also involved values of literacy, of civility, and in particular a deepening consciousness of the 'other' and of cultural difference; as such, the self was tied in to emergent notions of empire' (Johnson 2000, 229). Despite such interpretations the practicality of tower houses in colonisation efforts can be seen in the historical record.

Although Down was never officially 'Planted' in the manner of other parts of Ireland it was extensively colonised. This was precded by a number of officially sanctioned attempts to plant the county in the Tudor period. A notable case is the failed colonisation of the Ards by Sir Thomas Smith and his son. Queen Elizabeth I granted Smith the lands of the Clandeboye O'Neills in north Down in 1571, with the Smiths arriving in Strangford on 31 August 1572 (Thomas Smith to Burghley, Down, 10 September 1572, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1571-5*, 208). However, attempts by Smith to raise

suitable families in England for his scheme did not go as well as anticipated. There are numerous letters from Smith in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* begging for horsemen and English tenants. Similarly there are obtuse references to Smith's son's poor behaviour in Ireland in the absence of his father, including his apparently unprovoked and unlawful seizure of the Whytes of Dufferin's tower house at Ringhaddy (Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam to Sir Thomas Smith, 9 November 1572, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1571-5*, 234). The then Clandeboye O'Neill chief, Brian MacFelim, still maintained a strong political presence in the area and did not take kindly to the imposition from abroad. It was his opposition that effectively ended Smith's attempts with Smith's son and heir being killed during the colonisation attempt, leading to the plans for colonisation being abandoned (Harris 1744, 45).

A petition by Thomas Brown and Thomas Burrows (this is probably the same Captain Brown[e] as petitioned for Mahee castle) at approximately the same time as Smith's plea for lands in north Ards is more conciliatory in its language towards the occupying Irish and viewed Irishmen as potential tenants: 'It shall be lawful for them to receive any Irishman and his goods and cattle that shall seek to inhabit under them' (Petition of Thomas Brown and Thomas Burrows to Queen Elizabeth, 1571, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1571-5*, 101-02). Unlike Smith's failed venture too, Brown and Burrows' stated emphasis was on trading activities, their bargaining tool being the promise of an annual customs return of £5, roughly half of Carrickfergus'. Evidently these two men hoped to enrich themselves by establishing a port along the north Down coast. This does not mean that economic opportunities did not motivate Smith. In the re-printed 'Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith...' it is stated that Smith knew that the Ards were 'lying well for trade by sea' (Extracts from "The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith..." 1698 in Lowry 1867, 25). The potential of the original grant (or the desperation of Smith's descendants) is testified to by the efforts made in the 1620s to reinstate the lands later granted to Sir James Hamilton.

One of Brown and Burrows' stated motivations for requesting the land grant in north Down is that there was no extant religious house with a rival claim, nor 'in consideration that there is no house in that country (Castlereagh excepted)' (Brown and Burrows to Queen Elizabeth, 1571, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1571-5*, 102). Since Castlereagh was a Clandeboye O'Neill tower house, it is understood that the term 'house' more specifically means tower house. Consequently it seems that even to Englishmen a

tower house signified lordship. Had a grant been made and their enterprise been a success it would have tested a hypothesis for this thesis – that tower houses were constructed as a focal points for trade. Regardless, no attempt to establish a port along the north Down coast was made until the following century at which time Hamilton constructed his 'tower house' at Bangor and cattle exports were directed to Donaghadee.

A further colonisation attempt can be discussed that had a tower house at its centre. In 1570 the Englishman Captain Browne (possibly the same as described above attempting a different strategy) was leased the lands surrounding 'Island Maghee' by Bishop Merriman. Until recently this grant was have presumed to have been Mahee Island, with Mahee castle the tower house referred to in a petition to Lord Bughley in 1572 requesting aid with building costs. O'Dowd has suggested that this petition to Burghley instead refers to Island Magee in County Antrim, often described at the time as 'Island Maghee', explaining the confusion (Petition of Captain Brown to Burghley, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1571-5*, 246). Islandmagee in County Antrim was also within the Clandeboye O'Neill territory and held by Bishop Merriman. However, Mahee castle may be the tower house referred to since the Thomas Brown petitioning for lands in north Down could be the same Captain Browne of 'Island Maghee' (plate 18).

The tower house located at Island Magee, known as Chichester castle, dates to *c.* 1570, a better chronological fit than Mahee castle for the construction described in the petition. MacDonald has found strong evidence for a fifteenth-century construction date through the course of excavation at Mahee castle (NISMR, DOW 017:004, Philip MacDonald, QUB Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Data Structure Report No. 11, licence no. AE/02/79). Both MacDonald and O'Baoill, excavating the previous year, found pottery that indicates a fifteenth to sixteenth-century occupation date and signs of abandonment at the end of the sixteenth century. The tower house was then rebuilt in the seventeenth century, before, again going into decline. It is therefore possible that Brown was referring to a period of extensive rebuilding in his petition to Burghley.



Plate 18

Mahee castle, possible site of an attempted colony by Captain Browne in the 1570s

8.2.2 Scottish colonisation in the seventeenth century

Through a process of legal transactions possibly the most influential Scottish families within the region were able to acquire large tracts of land within a short space of time (Gillespie 1985, 121-2). Sir James Hamilton purchased land from the Anglo-Irish Whyte family and within a short space of time ultimately commanded the entirety of the barony of Dufferin to supplement his original grant of lands in Ards (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 256). William Montgomery used a similar approach to purchase much of the upper Ards. Thus by the 1630s roughly the upper half of the study area was possessed by Scottish landowners, with piecemeal estates in Lecale held by New English settlers such as Cromwell [although a number of Anglo-Irish lords continued to hold land] (as illustrated in Robinson 1984, 94).

These Scottish landowners attracted Scottish tenants so that by the time of the 1659 census over half of the study area's population could be described as 'settler'. This demographic is most clearly seen on Hamilton and Montgomery's lands. Killyleagh,

Hamilton's caput in Dufferin, had a total number of inhabitants of between 150-199 of which the Scots and English population was 60-79% of this. Newtownards and Bangor, both in the north of Ards, had a similar percentage of settlers in their populations. The 1660 Poll Tax records higher numbers of Gaelic-Irish in Lecale with Downpatrick, Dundrum and Strangford's inhabitants 40-59% Scots and English and Kilclief's 20-39% after adjustment for erroneous categorisation of Irish and Scottish surnames (Smyth 1988, 73-75, 78). Gillespie observed that areas of low native population tended to attract the greatest numbers of Scottish and English settlers. This situation persisted because, unlike in Planted areas, there was less of an impetus to displace the native inhabitants. Tenants also tended to settle in these areas since they were near the point of disembarkation and poor communication links to the interior at this time encouraged settlement near the point of entry [often Donaghadee] (Gillespie 1985, 58, 60). The demography by 1660 has led Smyth to conclude, agreeing with Gillespie's interpretation, that 'overall, Co. Down is quite striking in its admixture of populations, and the densely populated lands of Ards and Lecale register no segregated townlands. Its rich variegated societies and landscapes appear to have had more assimilative powers than much of the rest of Ulster' (Smyth 1988, 75-6). This stood in contrast to official Plantation policy, which prohibited the renting of land to Irish tenants (Robinson 1984, 184). Others have suggested that the area's distinctiveness continuing from the medieval period, remained to such an extent that the settlers found that they had more in common with the natives than they did with settlers elsewhere in Ireland (Gillespie 1989, 106-8). It is suggested here that contact before colonisation in the form of trade aided this assimilation, which extended to the agricultural landscape too, with the 'whole range of livestock and crop types involved in the plantation agrarian economy...present' (Robinson 1984, 180).

County Down had been since the days of the Earldom of Ulster a contact zone, a political state that may have allowed its inhabitants to rapidly adjust to the political climate of the day. This effectively allowed Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish tenants to adapt to the changes of the seventeenth century (Gillespie 1985, 43, 46). A further factor was that many of the County Down settlers had spent considerable time in Ireland before acquiring their estates. Lord Cromwell had served in the Nine Years War and bought his lands with his army pension, while James Hamilton had been a fellow of Trinity College Dublin since 1591, living in Dublin before that as a schoolmaster (Gillespie 1985, 40). Trading contacts between Down and western Scotland and north-

west England were likely to have been extensive also, increasing familiarity with Irish culture, in the preceding centuries. Hugh Montgomery in fact had trading contacts in Carrickfergus who helped him obtain his lands in north Down, while Sir James Hamilton's younger brother was a merchant (Robinson 1984, 52).

It is proposed that cultural and economic familiarity alongside assimilation caused tower houses to be constructed and occupied into the mid seventeenth century. This is in contrast to policy for Plantation houses, which clearly stated that houses must be built in the English style. Despite such a policy, it was found during excavations at Movanagher, County Londonderry that some buildings were constructed in the Irish style by English occupants, although this is attributed to local labour perpetuating older building traditions (Horning 2001, 376).

Settlers in other regions of Ireland that underwent Plantation and colonisation also occupied tower houses. Klingelhofer believes that Elizabethan government officials in Munster occupied tower houses, adapting them when required, viewing them as the vacant seats of Gaelic lordships. He does argue, however, that in the following century the tower house was abandoned in favour of the 'castle-house' [i.e. the defended house] (Klingelhofer 2010, 21-22). The fact that Scottish and English settlers in County Down preferred to build and occupy tower houses as a means of engaging with the maritime economy is supported by statements such as that made by MacDonald in his excavation report for Mahee castle:

> A final historically derived question is why did Mahee castle, unlike so many other tower houses, fail to form a focus for a seventeenth century plantation? Although the coastal distribution of tower houses in County Down reflects the importance of maritime factors to their function in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the early seventeenth century plantations, Mahee Island must have been perceived as an increasingly isolated being located far away from the major coastal road system around the lough [*sic*]. It may be partly for this reason that the site was abandoned and failed to form the focus for later settlement (MacDonald 2002).

If Mahee is implied as being unusual for failing to be used as the centre of plantation in the early seventeenth century, then it raises the question as to how many tower houses

can be identified as colonisation centres or were occupied at this time. The evidence discussed above shows that, in Down at least, those from outside Ireland occupied tower houses. As Gillespie interprets it: 'They did not simply transfer Scottish and English customs and beliefs without change to their new Irish home. Rather they modified their mode of living to suit their new environment' (Gillespie 1989, 132).

Perhaps this willingness to construct and occupy tower houses is a symptom of the origins of the new landowners. Tower houses/pele towers are numerous in Scotland and northern England. The possibly longstanding trade interactions between Down and these regions must have influenced their cultural landscapes, with County Down not seeming so alien to the new arrivals. Jope, author of the *ASCD*, wrote an article describing the Scottish features present at tower houses in the north of Ireland. He agrees with the above interpretation, stating: 'The whole of the north Irish sea coastlands must often be considered as a unit...This is especially so in trade' (Jope 1951, 31). In this article a number of inherently Scottish architectural features were examined, with the distribution of these features then compared with the known historical distribution of Scottish landholdings. It was found that one feature in particular, corbelled turrets, quite accurately reflected Scottish landholdings, although this is openly stated as being a generalisation. Amongst this group is one definite example within the study area, Bangor (plate 17). A second, Killyleagh, possibly had corbelled turrets, as is shown in Raven's 1625 view, but since the castle was rebuilt in 1666 any trace of it has been destroyed. Other Scottish features according to Jope are less indicative in the north of Ireland of Scottish settlement, including the 'Z plan' tower house and the Scottish style of gun loops. Other features such as harling and the roofing over of wall tops are common in both countries and are interpreted as evolving simultaneously due to similar climatic conditions (Jope 1951, 38). Sherlock noted a similarity between his 'Group B' Irish tower houses (of which Kilclief and Castleward are examples) and Scottish tower houses. In both the hall is located upon the principal vault at first floor level (Sherlock 2010, 131). The predominant distribution of this type of tower house in the east of Ireland could imply Scottish influence from an early date, or it could indicate that the two styles developed at the same time. Either is possible since Kilclief was constructed in the first half of the fifteenth century, whereas Castleward is later in date, taking its name from its Elizabethan occupants. It also may suggest that the master builder probably responsible for the 'gatehouse type' tower houses was Scottish (see pp 207-08 for further detail of these sites' similarities).

Despite Jope's assertion that corbelled turrets strongly corresponds with Scottish landholding, there are only two examples within the study area compared to the total number of thirty-one in the north of Ireland. It is also acknowledged that Bangor was probably in this style because the port's trading links would have been almost exclusively with Scottish ports (Jope 1951, 36). In this instance, perhaps a prominent display of Scottish tower house architecture was deliberate to reassure merchants and sailors from Scotland, and visually remind them that this was not an alien place. Since the 'tower house' at Bangor served as accommodation for visiting mariners, this architectural style may have also been chosen to make vistors feel welcome, thus encouraging their return business.

While tower houses were constructed in Scotland and thus did not pose a cultural shock to Scots newcomers, there was no tower house tradition in the place of origin of many of the English settlers. Lane's willingness to make his caput at Ringhaddy castle is discussed on p. 173, but in other instances we see English settlers building new tower houses using Irish traditions. Castleward, probably constructed in the early seventeenth century by the Ward family, contains Irish style wicker centering in its vaulting, as is acknowledged by Jope, even if its lay-out may have its origins in Scotland (Jope 1951, 39). Mahee castle also has wicker centering. What is witnessed here therefore is not simply an English borrowing from Scottish building traditions as Jope suggests, but rather a merging of different ethnic architectural styles. Consequently it is proposed that newcomers felt little need to assert a separate identity in their choice of residence. They instead continued the Gaelic-Irish and Anglo-Irish tower house tradition.

8.2.3 Defended houses

Breen observed in west Cork that Gaelic-Irish landowners in the seventeenth century 'took a conscious decision to move away from the monumentality of the late medieval period' and constructed defended houses. This he attributes to changed political and socio-economic conditions and the desire to separate themselves from traditional architectural expression (Breen 2005, 157-8). Another argument for the move away from tower houses is the changing use of internal space with privacy and space becoming more important, tower houses being less commodious than defended houses (Loftus 2009, 13). This section discusses whether the development of defended houses



Plate 19a

Ballyspurge defended house, located on the eastern shore of the Ards peninsula and across Cloughey bay from Kirkistown castle.



Plate 19b

Location of Ballyspurge defended house (right) relative to the shore of Cloughey bay (left).

contributed to the decline of tower house popularity in County Down. In the past defended houses have been viewed as supplanting the tower house in popularity (reflected in chronological organisation of many publications on the topic). This interpretation is quite determinist though, and there is strong evidence to suggest that both buildings ceased to be constructed at the same time (Sharon Weadick, pers. comm.).

The defended house is another neglected building form of the early modern period, also referred to as a fortified house, plantation castle, defensible house and stronghouse alongside other names. Due to its comparative lack of study such arguments as that the defended house replaced the tower house do not have much evidence on which to state their claim. Weadick has attempted to redress this situation, using the available archaeological and cartographical records to estimate the number and distribution of defended houses. She identifies six defended houses, and a further two possible sites within the study area. This list includes the re-built Killyleagh castle, the seventeenth-century occupation of Dundrum castle and the disputed Newtownards castle, as well as the examples discussed below (Sharon Weadick, pers. comm.).

'The Abbacy' at Ardquin was built by Bishop Echlin in the early seventeenth century. This T shaped manor house is in the style of an undefended residence and would have stood in marked contrast to the vertical tower houses still being constructed and occupied nearby. At one storey plus attic in height, it does not, according to the *ASCD*, contain any gun loops. However, walls to the east of the building have been attributed to either forming part of a building extension or a bawn wall with flanker (*ASCD*, 255-6). Another single storey defended house on the Ards peninsula is Ballyspurge, also known as 'The White House' (plate 19a). Unlike 'The Abbacy' though, Ballyspurge has an identifiable bawn wall and has pistol loops built into its walls. This house, exhibiting both defended and undefended styles, was probably built in the 1640s, in other words after the last attributable date of a newly constructed 'tower house', that of Bangor in 1637. Both Kirkistown castle and Ballyspurge were built by successive members of the Savage family, which could indicate the younger generation choosing to build in the new style. Like the tower houses though, Ballyspurge was constructed with a commanding view of Slane's Bay, *c.* 130 metres to the north of the site (plate 19b). Ballyspurge is in an area of comparatively high tower house density, being less than two kilometres from Castleboy tower house, and three kilometres from Ardkeen tower

house on the other side of the Ards peninsula. Ballyspurge is also directly across Cloughey Bay from the early seventeenth-century Kirkistown castle. Therefore if building styles had changed, the choice of location and potential to participate in the maritime economy had not. It is possible that illegal trading activities contributed to the construction of buildings in the seventeenth century in the lower half of the Ards peninsula. Robinson comments that illegal grain export to Scotland was undertaken from the creeks between Portaferry and Donaghadee as a reaction to the grain duties of 1618 (Robinson 1984, 175). The beaches along this stretch of the coast would have facilitated the drawing up of small boats appropriate for smuggling. The area's comparative distance from customs officials based in Strangford and Bangor (after 1616 when it seized part of the right of customs surrendered by Carrickfergus) would also have aided this illicit activity.

Another site location similar to the tower houses can be observed at Ballydugan, only a few kilometres outside of Downpatrick and approximately one kilometre from Woodgrange castle. Today the bawn wall is the only standing remains from what Walter Harris described in 1744 as 'formerly a large strong house, with a drawbridge and turrets for defence' (Harris 1744, 39). It is hard to tell from this description what the house actually looked like. It has been listed in the *ASCD* as a fortified house, but the attribution of turrets by Harris suggest a tower house rather than a defended house. Its location has been described as: 'In former times [it] must have been completely isolated by the Quoile marshes and was presumably approached by a causeway from higher ground on the W[est]' (*ASCD*, 257). This siting is similar to many of the tower houses that were built on an island, only accessible via a causeway or by boat. With the damming of the Quoile River it is impossible to calculate how navigable the river at Ballydugan would have been, since contemporary references refer only to access as far as Downpatrick. If the site could have been approached by small boats, this would have given Ballydugan a strong connection with the market town of Downpatrick. It is also possible that Ballydugan was located to take advantage of salmon fishing, as it is suggested on p. 247 that tower houses further downstream were situated to profit from this activity.

This similarity of siting between tower houses and defended houses is one that is echoed across Ireland, according to Weadick. She has observed a preference for siting along rivers and by lakes in lowland fertile areas. This led her to suggest that like tower

houses, defended houses had a similar message of power and control to convey from their location within the landscape, an interpretation agreed upon by O'Keeffe and Quirke (O'Keeffe & Quirke 2009, 100; Weadick 2009, 79). Another interesting issue is Weadick's observation of the number of fortified houses where a residential wing was built onto a pre-existing tower house, as in the style of Leamaneh castle. This could possibly have been the style of Newtownards castle. Reportedly Hugh Montgomery rebuilt the priory church and 'the stump of an old castle' here as a residence in 1618, the residence then being destroyed by fire in 1664 (*ASCD*, 260). It has been difficult to ascribe an accurate categorisation to Newtownards, although it has been included as a tower house site here on the basis of the *ASCD*'s reference. The re-build seems to have been a defended house, but based on such comparative evidence it is possible that Montgomery may have included a tower house in his later plans. Keeping the tower house building fabric would have also aided him in projecting his lordly authority onto a newly acquired landscape. In light of recent work into great halls independent of tower houses (see, for example, Sherlock 2010) it could be suggested that a further number of tower houses fit in with the Leamaneh style, if the attached residences were constructed from timber. Indeed, this would also correlate with Weadick's observation of an increased use of timber as a building fabric.

The pattern described above is one of evolution and continuity rather than a radical break from the tower house to the defended house. The reluctance to cede to entirely new building traditions is also suggested by the sheer number of tower houses. There are twenty-nine tower house sites within the study area under investigation, compared to a maximum of eight defended houses (the actual number is probably less). It seems possible that a significant proportion of these tower houses were occupied during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Consequently it can be said that the two traditions co-existed, with many continuing to live in tower houses. Even taking into consideration the constraining factors against building a new defended house, for example, lack of funds and technical expertise, the comparative numbers alone are a statement against the rapid abandonment of the tower house in favour of defended houses. For example, Manning found at Clogh Oughter that the defended house located on the lough bay was constructed on the same site as a medieval house, across from the island tower house. Similarly, if tower houses were not occupied in the seventeenth century, then their symbolic meaning of permanence, tradition and continuity could be acquired by a defended house through site association (Con Manning, pers. comm.).

It is remarkable how many of the defended house features listed by Weadick are present within County Down tower houses (see Weadick 2009, 66 for the full table of comparative features between fortified houses and tower houses). One of these is timber flooring and stairways, a notable feature of Strangford castle. Another is the presence of ovens (some brick lined) within the house, an unusual feature present at Sketrick castle. This suggests that the presence of such later architectural features within tower houses that also contain late medieval features (such as ogee-headed windows) may indicate continuous occupation to the mid seventeenth century. At a minimum, such shared architecture supports the argument that throughout the period when tower houses and fortified houses were built contemporaneously the two building forms influenced and informed one another (O'Keeffe & Quirke 2009, 110).

In conclusion, there is little evidence that new building styles caused the decline of the tower house in the study area. The same approach to controlling the landscape, especially the maritime landscape, continued into the middle of the seventeenth century. When we consider also that the fortified house fell out of favour around the same time as the tower house it becomes apparent that we are not looking at the 'death' in tower house in isolation, but rather the gradual abandonment in construction of defended buildings. A common feature between the two buildings is their location, many sited to maximise interaction with the maritime landscape. It is suggested that the motivation behind their abandonment is connected with this, a conjecture returned to later in this chapter.

8.3 Warfare and political conditions

8.3.1 Warfare in the tower house era

It has been further suggested that technological advances in warfare caused the demise of the tower house (see for example Sweetman 1995, 44; Leask 1951; 143-4; O'Keeffe 2000, 55; McComish 1969-70, 16-21). Such developments in warfare were not limited to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries though: gunpowder was known in Ireland in the fifteenth century; an arquebus is recorded as having been fired as early as 1487; with the first documented instance of cannon being used in 1488 (Leask 1951, 143; O'Keeffe 2000, 55). The tools of heavy artillery were therefore known in Ireland from approximately the middle of the tower house period. It has also been argued recently

that the military role of tower houses in the sixteenth century was more limited, as evidenced by architectural features such as ground floor entrances and the use of turrets for accommodation (Naessens 2009, 207; McNeill 1997; 217).

McComish suggests three reasons why these military developments did not affect the tower house: one, Irish topography meant that it was difficult to bring artillery to many tower houses; two, the inferior quality of many guns found in Ireland at this time; and three, that well-trained gunners were rare (McComish 1969-70, 16-19). Subterfuge and mining could also be used to gain access to a tower house. McComish gives the impression in his article that these latter methods were less than satisfactory medieval tactics that only worked in a few instances and were instead employed out of habit.

McComish makes a generalisation in his article: that poor communication routes reduced the ability to transport heavy guns to inland tower houses, instead suggesting that 'guns could always be landed from ships' wherever possible (McComish 1969-70, 16). If this statement was accurate we might expect artillery being used at tower houses located by navigable waterways. The vast majority of the County Down tower houses are situated by water, although they are not unusual in this as even a cursory glance at a distribution map of tower houses across Ireland shows the sheer numbers that are located on the coast and on major waterways. McComish infers that it was comparatively easy to bring artillery to such tower houses. If this was the case then we might accordingly expect more documented instances of sieges and of cannon warfare and, in consequence, the phasing out fairly rapidly of the building type for practical reasons. The question of how artillery might be employed at lacustrine tower houses is similarly not explained. If a lacustrine site were accessible by river the bringing of artillery may have been comparatively straightforward, but where it would have involved long journeys overland the situation is more complex. Since some Gaelic-Irish lords may have made their capita at crannógs at this time this issue also applies to this high status settlement form (O'Conor 1998, 81-2; O'Sullivan 1998, 168). To bring siege artillery capable of significantly damaging a tower house's external wall, such as was the case at Clogh Oughter (Con Manning, pers. comm.), implies a considerable amount of effort.

These methods were possibly effective in at least one instance in the study area. In 1470, according to the Annals of the Four Masters, Sketrick castle [called Sgath-deirge

in *AFM*] was 'took' by O'Neill from the Clandeboye O'Neills and delivered into the hands of the MacQuillins. Although the annal entry describes the assembled force as 'a great army' (such a frequent term to be almost a convention in the annals), no mention of unusual tactics is made so it can be presumed that the castle was taken by unremarkable means and probably not through the use of heavy artillery. Sketrick castle was well constructed against the possibility of siege, containing an interior kitchen (identifiable by brick lined recesses interpreted as ovens) and a covered well within the small masonry bawn. It is possible that these features reduced the threat of being starved out. This in turn may indicate that in this case either subterfuge was employed or an accommodation was reached. Barry concurs that tower houses were 'relatively impregnable in the face of a siege' so long as the occupants had sufficient supplies. Stating that usually it was by alternate means that tower houses were taken, particularly through use of the element of surprise (Barry 2004). Since there is no sign of rebuilding work in the extant parts of the tower house there is no building evidence for collapse after mining or being fired on.

The siting of many tower houses upon bedrock is often interpreted as a safeguard against mining. Possibly the most striking example of this within the study area is Audley's castle, which sits atop a rock outcrop that serves to assist its command over the surrounding landscape. This height, unusual in the study aream allows Audley's castle high visibility from both land and water. It is possible that the choice of site served a dual purpose, in a defensive manner with the solid rock foundation preventing mining and the height from artillery, while also creating an awesome visual backdrop.

8.3.2 Warfare in the seventeenth century

The decline of tower house construction seems to occurred over a relatively short period of time during the mid seventeenth century. However, tower houses continued to be occupied in a number of cases, even if new examples were not being constructed. This alone implies that military technology did not solely cause the demise of the tower house. It is still important though to consider the impact seventeenth-century warfare might have had on tower house chronology.

The year 1641 is sometimes seen as a watershed moment, threatening the security of the Plantation and perhaps illustrating to occupiers the futility of their tower house and/or bawn in repealing an attack (Leask 1951, 140; Horning 2001; 383). By the time of the

Confederate Wars there are several examples of tower houses being taken by artillery force. This includes Killyleagh castle in the study area which was successfully besieged, and badly damaged, by Cromwellian forces under the command of General Monk in 1649 (Lawlor 1939, 16). However, even star-shaped forts and other seventeenth-century fortifications specifically designed to withstand heavy fire often fell, or at least were extensively damaged, as was the case at Smerwick in 1580; Kinsale in 1601; Dunboy in 1602 (although in this case the works were added to a tower house) and Duncannon in 1645 amongst others. Even though large artillery pieces were used in these sieges, they were not relied upon solely and attempts at both subterfuge and sapping were constantly made (Irish Battlefields Project, forthcoming). Instances of tower houses and other fortifications falling are very low when compared to the possible number of tower houses occupied at the time. Most of the attacks on tower houses occurred in areas that formed focal points for extensive fighting. Such as in the later stages of the Nine Years War where efforts were focussed on west Cork, where a Spanish force had landed to support the rebels.

It is suggested that the perceived threat of military attack was judged to have been so low as to not impact on the decision to build a tower house. Some castle specialists have argued that artillery was not effective until the 1650s, meaning that we should not be looking for changes in building patterns before the 1660s at the earliest (McNeill in Klingelhofer 2010, 100). A warning against a military determinist interpretation is made by Klingelhofer who states that: 'The seriousness of these campaigns [Elizabethan wars] changed the practice of warfare in Ireland, even though physical evidence for those changes is limited' (Klingelhofer 2010, 37). Indeed Sir Ralph Lane, 'an inveterate coloniser and expert on military fortification' occupied Ringhaddy castle and planned to develop a colony there, showing that even one knowledgeable in military tactics would reside in a tower house regardless of their defensive capabilities (Gillespie 1985, 44).

8.3.3 Bawns

Bawns containing gun loops can be viewed as a compromise between the reality of seventeenth-century warfare and the tower house. Tower houses were practical in that they could provide shelter for occupants and goods. Bawns could potentially provide an extra layer of defence as well as being used for several protective reasons including the sheltering of boats, and the corralling of animals. There is contemporary written

evidence of low level violence, usually in the form of raiding, dating from the Elizabethan period. Both Stanihurst and Camden state that lords wished to defend themselves through use of a bawn (whether stone or earth and timber) and slept in the stone tower to counter the damage that could be done by arson (Sherlock 2010, 117). Low-level violence also remained a feature of the seventeenth century in Down, with attacks on settler villages by kern not uncommon (Gillespie 1985, 154; Klingelhofer 2010, 22). The comparative importance of each of these concerns in questioned. Naessens thinks that bawns were never constructed for military purposes, as artillery would have breached them as it could tower houses (Naessens 2009, 199). Breen agrees, but thinks bawns at tower houses reflect defensive concerns in a more mental sense. He interprets them as showing 'resistance against the new settlers' and symbolising an expression of confidence (Breen 2007, 112, 146).

8.3.4 Local politics and tower houses

It is suggested that local political conditions encouraged the continuation of tower houses well into the seventeenth century, at least in the study area. Local political instability continued in County Down, reflected in the behaviour of Hamilton and Montgomery, whose actions evoke images of the medieval magnate at odds with his neighbour. This political situation has been commented on elsewhere, as Gillespie has stated: 'To explore the way in which county Down society worked we need think not of the county as some form of community but rather as a series of interconnected units' (Gillespie 1997, 145). Loeber goes even further than this, interpreting the lands of Hamilton and Montgomery as 'fiefdoms' where government officials could not exercise their authority (Loeber 1991, 65). Both Hamilton and Montgomery were expansionist in outlook and keen to acquire additional lands in the area, which led to at times open hostility (Gillespie 1997, 147). In fact, Sir James Hamilton directly forbade in his will of 1616 that any of his heirs marry a descendant of William Montgomery, an objection attributed by the editor of the *Hamilton Manuscripts* as a result of the ongoing legal disputes between the two men (Copy of Sir James Hamilton's Will, in Lowry 1867, 48).

Indeed, the development of local government structures in Down was resisted with lords seeking to defend the independence of their estates rather than pooling their resources into local government (Gillespie 1997, 148). This is reflected in legal matters largely being dealt with by the manor courts. In the case of the more fragmented lordships of Lecale, the number of legal petitioners seeking redress from the Dublin administration

is striking (Gillespie 1985, 157). The socio-political landscape of east Down in the early to mid seventeenth century therefore may not have resembled other colonised areas of Ireland where there was a transformation 'from a feudal, kinship based polity to one dominated by a centralized state apparatus, underpinned by capitalist mercantile economy' (Lyttleton & Rynne 2009, 17). This political situation may also have been a consequence of the region not being under direct Crown control since Down was not an escheated county. The consequence of this was that local lords had more opportunity than landholders in official Plantation schemes to personalise the cultural landscape.

Since County Down was essentially still a frontier society and contact zone between different ethnicities in the seventeenth century, this may have influenced their continued use of tower houses. In this case we might expect to see tower houses being occupied along the borders of lordships. Examples of such strategic seventeenth-century siting might be Newtownards (border between Hamilton and Montgomery) and the tower houses along the Quoile River (border between Hamilton controlled Dufferin and the piecemeal estates of Lecale). Based on so few a number, however, it is impossible to make firm conclusions on this topic. Indeed, it has been argued throughout this thesis that the tower houses on the Quoile River were located in order to profit from riverine trade and communication routes. This situation is not just limited to County Down though, as Barry has observed that most tower houses in Ireland as a whole were not strategically sited aside from some notable examples in Limerick and in south Wexford (Barry 2004).

8.3.5 Conclusion

Consequently it is possible that in County Down at least conditions continued that fostered the continued use and construction of tower houses into the mid seventeenth century. A possible reason for the discontinuation of tower house construction was a shift to more systematic warfare, as witnessed during the Confederate and Cromwellian wars. Although the specific instances of tower houses being targeted is low compared to the actual number of tower houses occupied in this period. By the seventeenth century a more deadly and accurate form of warfare was being witnessed, with war waged by the central government with the aim of conquest. Even during this period though, pitched battles were a rarity and instead it is more common to find references to guerrilla attacks on Crown forces (Irish Battlefields Project, forthcoming). Indeed, across Ireland it seems that the Gaelic-Irish preferred to fight from 'fastnesses' rather

than basing themselves at tower houses. The scorched earth tactics employed in warfare were, however, by merit of their sheer scale, a new threat (O'Conor 1998, 98-103). Settlements, crops and livestock were systematically destroyed leading to severe economic problems that, it is argued, negatively affected the tower house.

8.4 Economic change

8.4.1 Introduction

Increasingly, the connections between tower houses and the late medieval economy have been recognised, particularly through regional studies. Ní Loingsigh observed the correlation of tower houses with landing places and anchorages in north Donegal (Ní Loingsigh 1994), as has Naessens in his study of south Connemara tower houses (Naessens 2007 & 2009). Away from the overtly maritime tower house (located on maritime routes and identified or implied in a function in trading activity) the involvement of tower houses in the late medieval economy is witnessed everywhere. This is implicit in the fact that tower houses are strongly associated with fertile lands and are regularly taken as strong indicators of wealth and prosperity within a region. At the very least, tower houses provided secure protection for lords and their material goods. As MacCurtain, in her regional study, has stated: 'There were economic and social functions attached to occupancy of tower houses, as well as the more obvious military role' (MacCurtain 1988, 439-440).

MacCurtain's statement implies more. Many functions were attached to the tower house, and it is difficult to extricate any one of these for individual examination. For Gillespie, probably the person who has published the most on early modern east Ulster, the economy was central to colonisation. In his mind, the two events are interlinked in such a way as to make them nigh inseparable. Perhaps it is this larger socio-economic movement that has led to the obscurity of the cause of tower house decline. Lyttleton and Rynne have suggested that the period 1550-1700 is book-ended at one end by feudalism, and at the other, by capitalism (Lyttleton & Rynne 2009, 18). As Breen, drawing on the theory of historical materialism (which this author believes over-simplifies historical processes, particularly when applied to an Irish context) defines this economic change in the context of Plantation in Cork, 'commodities beyond the needs of the individual...involved in a nationwide or international exchange market...associated with individualism of enterprise, emergence of individual land-ownership, tenancy and private property' (Breen 2005, 209). This may be simplifying

matters somewhat as it is argued here that County Down experienced a level of economic and mercantile activity that is strongly reflected in its maritime located tower houses. It is therefore suggested that the emergence of capitalism in Down was appreciable from the late medieval at least, with the tower house distribution an indicator of this level of commerce. This process accelerated and was more noticeable from the end of the Tudor Conquest onwards, particularly with the exploitation of natural resources. The period of economic transformation was therefore over a much longer time scale than approximately 150 years, with the chronology and functions of the County Down tower houses reflecting the changing economic fortunes of this region. The mid seventeenth century is interpreted here as the key to the decline of the tower house, as Breen and O'Sullivan observed, 'change can be seen in new economic practices, changing settlement patterns and in the processes of industrial and resource exploitation' (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 200). If it has already been seen that the arrival of new settlers, changing tastes and warfare were not solely responsible for the death of the tower house (section two), then can an economic event explain the demise of this emblematic building?

Certainly County Down between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries underwent continuous economic upheaval, yet this does not seem to have deterred tower house construction. Two interlinked socio-economic factors can be identified as influencing the bulk of this economic uncertainty: warfare and changes in landownership, both discussed earlier in this chapter. It is my suggestion, therefore, that interest in the colonisation of east Ulster has overshadowed a major contributing factor to the decline of the tower house, namely changes in the maritime economy.

8.4.2 Colonisation and the economy

Academic literature contains a number of references to the status and regional economic importance of Strangford and Ardglass in the late medieval period (see pp 128-31, 133, 147-8). During the Tudor Conquest this status was inevitably compromised as the scorched earth policy decimated the basis of export. The region's proximity to western Scotland, too, made it a popular location for rebels to obtain supplies, as is testified in the references to this in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* (see p. 181). The difficulties of the time are also witnessed in the archaeological record. At Quoile castle, a hoard of seven Elizabethan silver sixpences were discovered in a crevice during conservation work (NISMR, http://apps.ehsni.gov.uk/ambit/Details.aspx?MonID=7579, accessed 10 April

2011). Coin was continually in short supply in Ireland over these centuries and it is presumed that the tower house's occupants kept this hoard to tide them through uncertain periods. Indeed, there is a strong correlation between hoards and political turmoil regardless of temporal or geographic location (Andy Woods, pers. comm.). The economic potential of the study area was well-known to Elizabethan courtiers and Scots alike. Numerous petitions for plantation were made to Elizabeth I, some of which may have been successful had it not been for other circumstances (see pp 154-5). For example, Sir Ralph Lane's proposal included bringing 'men of trade' to Ringhaddy castle from Manchester and Liverpool. This intention shows that he recognised the economic opportunities of Strangford Lough's numerous harbours, inlets and anchorages and the potential for economic expansion in his suggested port's hinterland. Lane's stated plan was also to construct extensive fortifications in the area, including developing Strangford castle further with ordnance (Loeber 1991, 57). Clearly to Lane, the success of his economic enterprise was dependant on the continued use of the tower house. Lane had been resident at Ringhaddy castle and used tower houses in the region as bases, so he knew firsthand the practicality of the structure.

The reason why tower houses did not cease to be built after the Tudor Conquest probably lies with the tower house's flexibility. They were not so expensive to construct, easy to garrison if figures given in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* are accurate, located in prominent positions with wide views of the surrounding countryside and sea, constructed in locations perfect for supply routes and, in many cases, had excellent storage attached to, or within, the tower house. Consequently, tower house attributes, so attractive to the late medieval populace, were equally as appealing to the militaristic society of late sixteenth-century Ireland. As previously discussed, tower houses could be levelled by artillery, yet the vast majority of battles, encounters and sieges took place away from them. Their military function was not the only reason for their occupation.

8.4.3 Ethnicity and the economy

Scots had been based in Dufferin at least from the fifteenth century (Gillespie 1985, 49). The area's proximity to Scotland, combined with trade contacts means that Scottish involvement in Down predates long before the large scale arrival of settlers encouraged by Hamilton and Montgomery. The extent of Scottish population in the coastal areas of the county was part motivation for Elizabeth I's willingness to populate the region with English (Loeber 1991, 29, 31). County Down has consequently been described as a

contact zone between the Gaelic-Irish, the Anglo-Irish, the English and the Scots. Interaction between these groups must have contributed to the area's economic successes in the late middle ages. However, it was to tear the region apart in the turbulent decades of the late sixteenth century and in the mid seventeenth century.

By its very definition a frontier was a place of instability and change. Some scholars view tower houses as a good indication of a frontier region since they proliferated in unstable areas (for example, Barry 1995, 220; McAuliffe 1991, 106-7; Morrissey 2005, 559). Tower houses were also a sign of cultural assimilation since they were constructed by all ethnicities in Irish society (Duffy 1982-3, 26-7 in Shine 2011; Morrissey 2005, 7). Barry observed that densities of tower houses reflect a regional outlook and power base, in response to the degradation of central government authority (Barry 1995, 220). County Down in the late medieval period was under the Geraldine sphere of political influence, much of coastal Lecale was in the possession of the Earl of Kildare. County Down's tower houses were occupied by agents of Elizabethan government who attempted to install themselves as local magnates through petitioning for land grants once the Nine Years War had ended. Perhaps this was part of the continued appeal of tower houses in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, since local interests dominated in this period too. Others view the march or frontier, not as a contact zone, but rather a war zone, where racial conflict occurred (Smith 1988 & 1989 in Shine 2011). As has been explored earlier in this chapter, however, the contact between the different ethnicities in Down was not characterised by military entanglements and upsets. This situation led Gillespie to assert that low population density compared to the wealth of raw materials available in County Down facilitated a more harmonious relationship between ethnicities since competition was not a feature of daily life. This is even though Down was one of the few areas where new settlers entered in large numbers, many of whom did not move into the interior as planned by Plantation officials, but stayed in the area. He believes, too, that despite the comparatively large numbers of immigrants in east Ulster the population required to maximise the potential of the area's natural resources meant that many landowners would have taken Irishmen as tenants, despite official instructions to the contrary (Gillespie 1985, 58-9). This level of co-existence has been noted elsewhere in areas where Gaelic-Irish were required to form the tenant class. Shine has observed that appropriation of traditionally Gaelic-Irish lands by the Anglo-Normans often did not lead to any appreciable retributions, thus it is suggested here that the situation was

replicated to a similar extent in the study area with the arrival of Scots and English settlers (Shine 2011).

8.4.4 Tower houses and the sixteenth and seventeenth-century economy

The economic potential of coastal Down was well known to both Scottish and English, with the aftermath of the Tudor Conquest providing the perfect opportunity to capitalise on this. Economically and socially, the Tudor Conquest was a major interruption for the county – Gillespie estimates that the already small local population was further decimated by migration, poor harvests and influenza epidemics (Gillespie 1985, 47). The haphazard nature of mercantile activity in this part of Ireland (compared to the established merchant communities and networks witnessed in the bigger ports of Ireland, Britain and Continental Europe and in late seventeenth and eighteenth century Belfast) would have meant that the structures in place prior to the Tudor Conquest would have been easily (if temporarily) dismantled by the treacherous conditions caused by endemic warfare. However, the opportunity for such mercantile economic activity would have been apparent, with many structures still in place, ranging from warehouses (as at Ardglass) to jetties (as at Inch, and doubtless in many other locations too) to the tower house. Even taking aside the lack of documentary evidence for late medieval commercial activity in the region, the expansion of the economic sphere following the cessation of hostilities must have been rapid. Indeed, as Agnew observed in her study of seventeenth-century Belfast 'the rapid growth of a port is a sure indication of the existence of a stable and prosperous merchant community' (Agnew 1996, 1). Although she is at odds with other historians, such as Gillespie, in determining that the growth of the Ulster ports in the early seventeenth century was not as rapid as was first thought. This economic expansion was accelerated by the arrival of Scots and English in large numbers to repopulate and work the land. It seems unlikely that this eonomic success would have been as profound as it apparently was, had it not been for a pre-existing commercial structure from which to develop.

Bangor is a port on the Ards coast that gained prominence in the early seventeenth century. A customs house, looking very much like a tower house and included as one in the *ASCD*, was being constructed here in 1637. The architecture of this 'tower house' has already been discussed (pp 159-60). The increased reputation of Bangor is reflected in its architecture, making Donaghadee all the more unusual.

Although Killyleagh has the most impressive tower house, according to the *Hamilton Manuscripts* it seems Bangor that received the most attention from the Hamilton family in terms of developing trade. Bangor, like Ardglass, has a port building that resembles a tower house (plate 17). In Bangor's case this 'tower house' was to serve as a customs house for the port. It fulfilled a residential function too, providing accommodation for visiting mariners. Hamilton, who owned the settlement, maintained in a house in the town. It is possible that Sir James Hamilton chose to develop a port at Bangor, rather than elsewhere on his extensive coastal lands in Clandeboye, Ards and Dufferin, because it brought him into direct competition with Sir William Montgomery, who, according to customs returns, was making a success of his port at Donaghadee. Hamilton obtained permission from the Crown to develop his port at Bangor, with Gillegroomes (modern day Groomsport) and Holliwood (Holywood) designated as creeks under of Bangor. It is worth noting that Groomsport is the nearest settlement to the north of Donaghadee (Lowry 1867, 30). Hamilton's younger brother, Gavin, apparently was a merchant in Glasgow and obtained a lease along the River Bann, near Coleraine, where he was successfully exporting goods to Scotland before he was killed prematurely when one of his boats overturned (Lowry 1867, 11). It was perhaps the family involvement in mercantile activity that encouraged James Hamilton to diversify here too. It is unclear whether Hamilton wished to expand his trading remit into a profitable separate income for himself. In the letters patent granting him the rights to trade at specific ports and creeks on his lands, linen yarn is mentioned as being exempted, but aside from this only grain and wine are specifically mentioned as exports (Letters Patent of 3rd James I., 1605, to James Hamilton, Esq. in Lowry 1867, viii). In 1606 Hamilton was granted the rights to customs for the region by James I, this right was re-granted in 1611-12, shortly before the date of the extant Port Books.

Other economic opportunities at sites elsewhere on his lands seem to have escaped him. Ringhaddy, whose potential was realised by both Sir Thomas Smith and Sir Ralph Lane, with its maritime links to the port of Strangford was passed over for development in favour of the north Down coast, instead the tower house was made part of dower lands. In fact, no mention is made in the *Hamilton Manuscripts* of trade taking place at Ringhaddy at this date. In a letter patent of James I to James Hamilton dating from 1620 Hamilton was granted (or affirmed) the right to establish and maintain ports at

Bangor, Ballywalter[1] and Killyleagh. The only creek noted as coming under the influence of Killyleagh is Carrownesuire (Carnesure, just south of Comber and north of Mahee Island). The anchorages and quays at Ringhaddy, Sketrick and Mahee castles are not mentioned (Letters Patent to James Hamilton, dated 14th March (19th James I.), 1620, in Lowry 1867, xxii). However, it is doubtful that Hamilton would have met with much success in the long-term, since the overwhelming influence of Belfast from the mid seventeenth century effectively annihilated the activities of the smaller east Ulster ports, and even wiped out the previously dominant Carrickfergus. This situation is witnessed at Donaghadee, the port Hamilton was probably most trying to emulate.

What occurred in the study area is a situation replicated throughout Ireland - the rapid consumption of the country's natural resources for fast financial gain in the wake of the Tudor Conquest and Stuart consolidation. A number of new ports came to prominence with colonisation. Donaghadee rose in the seventeenth century from a place of no importance to a profitable port settlement. Much of the town's success came as a consequence of a preference to export live cattle rather than salted beef. Agnew in her study of merchant activity in seventeenth-century Belfast noticed that 'The principal port for the export of cattle from the Lagan valley was Donaghadee, which offered easier loading for livestock than at Belfast, and a shorter crossing to the English ports of the north-west; Strangford had similar advantages' (Agnew 1996, 118). There is a motte at Donaghadee, which indicates twelfth-century settlement, but notably no tower house. Donaghadee does not seem to have been a medieval port and only appears to have gained prominence in the seventeenth century thanks to its easy distance to the hinterland of the Lagan River valley and its location directly opposite Portpatrick on the Scottish coast. This allowed it to export live cattle in large numbers. According to Robinson too, it may have also profited from the illegal grain trade with Scotland after the imposition of duties on this export in 1618 (Robinson 1984, 175). By deduction, Donaghadee may not have a tower house because it was not a focal point for late medieval economic and trading activity. Indeed, its harbour is still very difficult to navigate even despite modern improvements so the conditions would have been even worse then, its selling point today is still the easy sail once out of the harbour over to Scotland. But this does not explain why a tower house was not constructed at the

[1] Admittedly probably the only place on the eastern side of the Ards peninsula that Hamilton could create a port at, since Donaghadee was in the possession of Montgomery and the southern part of the barony at this time still mostly held by Savage.

settlement in the early seventeenth century, particularly since Donaghadee was also a major point of arrival for Scottish immigrants, especially after it was awarded the location of a ferry between Scotland and Ireland in 1616 (Robinson 1984, 176). It should also be mentioned that neither has a defended house been identified at this location. The only possible reason that can be suggested for this lack of a tower house is that it was a deliberate choice, with Montgomery simply choosing to have his primary residence in Newtownards.

Montgomery, Hamilton's nemesis, had more success in the short-term with Donaghadee's development, then known as Port Montgomery (despite not constructing a tower house at the town). Indeed, Agnew found a reference to a number of vessels attached to the port of Donaghadee (plate 20). 'In 1675, Donaghadee had a fleet of about eighteen ships ranging from twenty to sixty tons, and in 1697 the total of seafaring people (i.e. seamen and fishermen) living there out-numbered those at Belfast and Carrickfergus combined' (Agnew 1996, 131-2). These were all small vessels, but the number is significant. There are only a few vessels attached to the Lecale ports mentioned in their Port Book. Even though Agnew's figure dates to some sixty years later, the greater customs income at Lecale compared to Donaghadee suggests that the Lecale ports had more local boats than the Port Book states. This is important for estimating the actual level of commercial activity taking place, but also in that it highlights a potential shortcoming in what at first glance



Plate 20

Donaghadee town and harbour. The present appearance of the harbour has been developed to mitigate the poor natural harbour here.

appears to be the most comprehensive early seventeenth-century document for trading activity.

In the same microfilm reel as the Port Books are successive lists of customs collected from Irish ports. In 1632 for example Strangford is recorded as having taken £214 2s 2d in customs dues, while Bangor took in £339 2s 9d and Donaghadee £193 1s 2d. By the following year Bangor had climbed to £638 19s 2d, Donaghadee to £303 16s 4d. Strangford had also climbed to £391 4s 6¾ d (*General Accounts*, PRONI, MIC 199/1). This raises the question - just how much trade was diverted from the dominant Lecale ports of the late medieval period to these new ports associated with the colonisation of north Down? Although Donaghadee's figures are lower than Strangford's the lower value of live cattle exports probably indicates that there were either the same number, or more, boats entering the former harbour than at the Lecale ports. It is also probable that the entry for Strangford incorporates all the Lecale ports that are also included in the Port Book, whereas the entries for Bangor and for Donaghadee are for a much smaller area. If trade was being drawn away from the late medieval Lecale ports to these new ports then what 'knock on' effect did it have on the tower houses of Lecale since their location would indicate that they formed a part of the maritime networks? Could this decline in importance and income be at least part cause for the cessation of construction of new tower houses? This is a possibility, particularly when combined with the fact that Lecale was comprised of several fragmented and weak estates. Economically, it probably could not even begin to compete with the magnate-like hold and the level of investment Hamilton and Montgomery put into their estates to the north. A combination of extensive (pastoral) farming and the need for wide hinterlands to support the developing ports also meant that larger estates were more practicable.

However, Agnew observed that Donaghadee's status as the primary port for the export of live cattle went into sharp decline immediately after the passing of the Cattle Acts (Agnew 1996, 118). It is unlikely that the Lecale ports noticed such a profound about-turn in fortunes as a result of this tax legislation – Donaghadee's economy was almost solely focussed on cattle, whereas Lecale's was more diverse. Undoubtedly though, it was a knock to the once-thriving local economy, particularly if there were any merchants who specifically traded in cattle products, or butchers who engaged in a small amount of trade.

A possible contributing factor to the rapid decline of the smaller County Down ports is a lack of diversity in the exports. This is in keeping with the attitude of immediacy apparent amongst many early seventeenth-century settlers in Ireland, many of whom were content to 'get rich quick' through exploiting the raw materials of their new lands. This is perhaps best seen in the rapid destruction of Ireland's oak forests, well recounted by McCracken (1971). Although the Lecale ports, with their historic role in maritime trade, were perhaps better equipped than most to deal with the economic crises of the mid seventeenth century, since they were probably exporting a wider range of items than elsewhere in Down. Even the established ports could not compete with the trade goliath that became Belfast, aided by a population of mostly gentry that allowed it to act more as a service centre, with luxury goods predominating amongst imports (Gillespie 1984, 24).

Economic change is witnessed in the historical record, it now stands to see whether it is also present in the archaeological. Fortunately there have been a variety of excavations in the study area. Less fortunate is that these excavations are confined to the western reaches of the study area.

Mahee castle (also known as Nendrum castle due to its proximity to the early medieval monastic site of that name), the northernmost excavated tower house under consideration, was investigated in 2001 by Ruairi Ó Baoill and in 2002 by Philip MacDonald of Queen's University Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork. This site is one that appears to have been very strongly connected to the maritime landscape – there is a quay structure, situated *c.* 100 metres to the south-east (i.e. facing out into the centre of Strangford Lough). The tower house also contains an internal boat house, identified in the *ASCD* and accepted by this author because of the orientation of a barrel vaulted area running the length of the tower house and situated so as to allow the dragging up of a small boat from the water. As previously discussed on p. 155, the dating of Mahee castle is problematic. It was accepted, based on the historical record, that the tower house was built *c.* 1570 by Captain Browne, being occupied only for a short time before being abandoned in the seventeenth century. Reinterpretation of the documents and analysis of structural features and finds, mainly pottery, from the excavation have led to suggestions that the tower house is in fact earlier, being built in the fifteenth century and

occupied until abandonment in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. Certainly this interpretation fits in with a seventeenth-century pattern of decline.

What is suggested here is that Browne could have exaggerated in his account and may have simply refurbished the castle, a far more plausible interpretation based on the two year period between Browne (probably) petitioning for lands in the region and a subsequent request for aid. The maritime orientation of the tower house does support Browne's declared interest in developing trading networks, while the ruined state of Mahee castle before *c.* 1570 lends credence to his statement that there was no 'house' in the area other than Castlereagh.

The variety of finds recovered from this excavation was sadly a little limited for the purpose of this study, mostly being animal bone and some pottery of which a rough date can be attributed, but do not seem to have been imported wares. MacDonald does feel that the site has 'specific deposits that will provide insights into the economic role of coastal tower houses in County Down' (MacDonald 2002). Perhaps future examination of these artefacts will support the assertion here, that Browne attempted a colony on Mahee Island but was thwarted by the problems associated with the Nine Years War. Certainly his plans were a precursor to the colonisation of the early seventeenth century, which were met with much greater success.

Farther south from Mahee castle, in the middle of the barony of Dufferin is Ringhaddy castle. This site was excavated in 1994 by the Irish Underwater Archaeological Research Team, the summary results of which were published by Colin Breen (Breen, 1997). As at Mahee castle, the structures surrounding Ringhaddy castle are strongly suggestive of close ties with the maritime landscape. The occupation of Ringhaddy too by Sir Thomas Smith's son during his failed colonisation attempt indicates that this tower house had special strategic significance in the decades before the Nine Years War. This interpretation is supported by a statement in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* that Ringhaddy was a place excellent for supply by both sea and land (The Lord Deputy and Council to Secretary Cecil, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-1603*, 502). This is echoed too in the choice of Ringhaddy castle as the base for Brian MacArt O'Neill's rebellion and for trade with Scotland, until the time when Lane entered Lecale with a force of men, at which point O'Neill razed the tower house (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 166). Later Brian MacArt re-entered Dufferin and interestingly used Clea Lough as his

base. Although not stated in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.*, Clea Lough is well-known within the area for its crannog, and it must be here that MacArt stored his supplies, they only being captured after subterfuge was employed (Declaration and petition of Sir Rafe Lane to the Lord Deputy and Council, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 503-505).

The economic opportunities presented by the site did not escape Sir Ralph Lane who re-edified the tower house and petitioned to be allowed to start a plantation there, with a 'defensible town', since it was bordered to the west by extensive woodlands: 'There is timber growing hard abroad to build other ships or gallies', and to the east by Strangford Lough: 'The haven is large enough to contain the largest fleet of ships of burden or gallies which any Prince has' (Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, 12 May 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 505). Lane had also taken the liberty of leasing nearby Ringdufferin castle to further his aims and after the capture of Brian MacArt's stores stated that he had used the corn found there 'to sow the land again' (Declaration

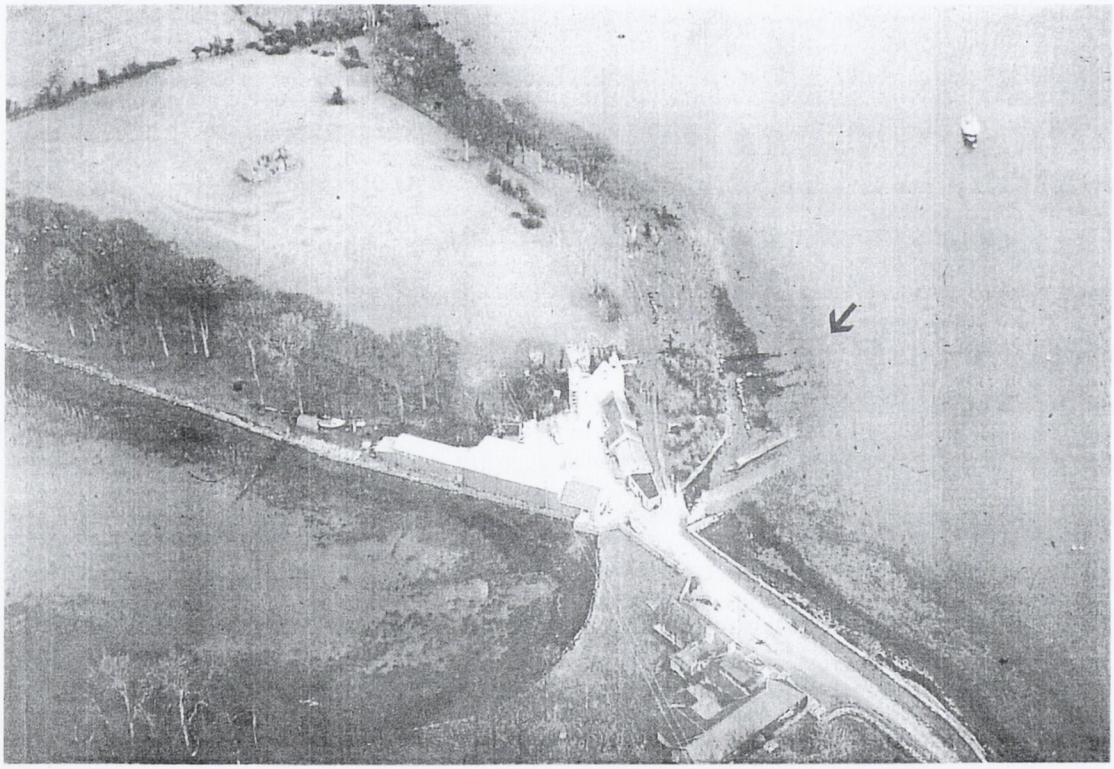


Plate 21

Aerial view of Ringhaddy castle, causeway, anchorage and landing place. The site of the underwater exacavation is marked with an arrow.

After Breen 1997, 64

and petition of Sir Rafe Lane to the Lord Deputy and Council, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 503-505). Only a few years later, after Lane's death, the territory was to be purchased by Hamilton, who did exactly what Lane proposed from his caput at neighbouring Killyleagh, with financial success.

What attracted the excavation of this site was the tower house's maritime economic role under Brian MacArt, particularly the statements that up to twenty Scottish barques were anchoring at the 'road' under the castle wall every week and that Strangford Lough was a great support to rebel activity with 'frequent trade into it of Scottish barques with munition, cloth, wine and aqua vitae' (Declaration and petition of Sir Rafe Lane to the Lord Deputy and Council, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 503-505; Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, 12 May 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 505). The excavation duly focussed on the landing place associated with Ringhaddy castle (plate 21). Utilisation of an underwater ledge located by the jetty meant that it was accessible at both high and low tide although larger vessels such as the barques would have had to have anchored slightly offshore at Ringhaddy Sound (the road referred to in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.*) and have its passengers and goods ferried across. This excavation also recovered limited artefactual evidence for an economic role in the form of trade at a tower house. Finds recovered include: North Devon Ware, bottle fragments, musket balls and corroded iron, finds described by Breen as reflecting the 'wide variety of artefactual remains that can be found on the seabed of a historic anchorage' (Breen 1997, 63). The artefacts recovered do accurately reflect the goods stated in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* as being imported by the rebels. Since the artefacts recovered during this six day investigation are identified as being in association with the anchorage then we can presume that many other items associated with trade would not have survived in the archaeological record, or could not be discovered without larger scale flotation. Grains, wooden barrels and the cloth mentioned in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* may not have been preserved well in this environment.

Consequently this excavation revealed the economic needs of warfare, yet also shows how by the close of the Nine Years War attentions were already shifting to new settlement plans and economic profit. Dufferin was probably not as densely populated, nor as developed as the surrounding areas so it may have escaped the worst of the scorched earth policies, especially since it was occupied by an English soldier and

garrison. This may explain Dufferin's appeal to early seventeenth-century settlers. Ringhaddy thus provides an insight into the economic situation experienced at a tower house over a specific period of time, which is in contrast to the experience uncovered at the excavated tower houses.

We can successfully determine the effects of an economically turbulent time at two neighbouring sites in Dufferin through the archaeological record. The experience in Lecale, arguably the wealthiest part of the study area in the late medieval period, now needs to be identified. At Inch near the county town of Downpatrick, in the barony of Lecale, river dredging in 1992 uncovered timbers belonging to either a bridge or a jetty. These timbers underwent dendrochronological dating. One was found to have a date of 1529 ± 9 years, the other 1564 ± 9 years. Metal detecting at the site as part of the excavation also found a bronze weight box with sixty brass disks and part of a set of miniature weighing scales. The latter finds were taken as indicators that trade was taking place at the site. What can be concluded from this excavation is that before the Tudor Conquest some level of economic activity was present at a landing place outside Downpatrick. This site is farther along the Quoile estuary than Ballintogher, a place of trade noted in the early seventeenth-century Port Books and associated with what is now referred to as Castle Island tower house (called 'Balentogher' castle in a 1641 deposition of Lieutenant Edward Davies). No mention of activity of this rough date at Inch has been found in the historical documentation consulted. It is possible that any trade at Inch was incorporated into the returns for Ballintogher, although since Ballintogher is approximately six kilometres away along the Quoile from Inch it seems unlikely that the two were confused. Indeed, since Inch lies on the outskirts of Downpatrick at the site of the earlier Cistercian abbey of the same name, it would be expected that any customs collected there would have been under the heading of Downpatrick if not recognised by its own name. Another explanation is that the location ceased to be used as a point of trade as a consequence of the economic upheaval from the Nine Years War.

Also in the barony of Lecale but located further south from Downpatrick is the late medieval port town of Ardglass. Ardglass is the location in which we find the highest density of tower houses (six) and it was the focus of excavations by Mark Gardiner and Tom McNeill of Queen's University Belfast between 1998 and 2000. Gardiner's excavations focussed on Jordan's castle, while McNeill's was at the Newark.

Gardiner uncovered a well-drained storehouse or warehouse attached to Jordan's castle, discussed on p. 40 as an example of an idenfied storehouse. The presence of drainage channels indicates that the goods lodged in the storehouse were of sufficient value that the occupiers wished to ensure their preservation from damp. Such goods requiring protection from the elements could include grain, salted fish, hides, as well as imported goods such as sugar, salt and spices. Analysis from pottery finds at the site show the presence of pottery from Dublin, Brittany and the Iberian peninsula, the West Midlands of England and possibly south-west France (Hinton in Gardiner 2005). The precise place of manufacture for the latter pottery could not be identified, nor are potential dates mentioned in the pottery report. Since there is only one historical reference from the early seventeenth-century imports, of wine coming to Ulster from La Rochelle (see p. 76), it is possible that the pottery implies a far more extensive late medieval trading network. This is very possible since the Nine Years War severely disrupted to the point of elimination, any contact with Europe. This of course does not leave out the possibility that Continental goods reached Ardglass period by way of re-export from Scotland or England.

The historical and archaeological evidence for trade in these centuries has been discussed on pages 68-78. This section seeks to identify the specific role of tower houses in the maritime economy in these two centuries. The evidence from Gardiner's excavations at Jordan's castle also refutes a common claim that Ardglass lost prominence to Strangford at the end of the sixteenth century due to the political struggles of the time (e.g. Breen & O'Sullivan 2007; McErlean *et al.*, 2002). This suggestion of Ardglass's decline could be supported by the dating evidence from tower house architecture. However, it is very difficult to securely date tower houses based on their features alone. The finds from Jordan's castle show that the port was active, and that the tower houses had a continued role in this, in the seventeenth century; archaeological evidence that is further supported by the surviving Port Book excerpts (see pp 73-4). There is historical evidence for a decline in Ardglass's fortunes in the mid seventeenth century as the Earl of Kildare sold his customs in 1637, after years of litigation. The town's decline is reflected in the report by the Surveyor General of Customs where Bangor, Donaghadee and Strangford are ranked higher in customs returns than Ardglass (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 212).

In summation, the results from excavations at the warehouse at Jordan's castle combined with those at the neighbouring Newark by McNeill (see p. 45 for a discussion of the late medieval function of this site) provide a vital insight into the activity at the port of Ardglass that cannot be satisfied by the written sources alone. Combined with the historical documentation the excavations show that there was a considerable shift in what was exported and imported between the late medieval and early modern periods. The low numbers of grains - oats, barley to a lesser extent, and wheat in small amounts – recovered from an early seventeenth-century context may indicate that this was a lull period in Ardglass port's history as it coped with the fall-out from the Nine Years War and entered into competition with other newer ports to the north (Hinton in Gardiner 2005). It possibly also shows the reactions to duties imposed on the export of grain to Scotland in 1618. The presence of Continental pottery combined with the dearth of seventeenth-century historical references to Continental connections possibly signifies a shift in trading routes towards the north Irish Sea region. Furthermore, it is an example of what can be accomplished in a large-scale excavation using pottery and fish bone specialists and palynologists.

The combination of historical evidence and the archaeology at the tower houses tells an economic story of decline at the end of the sixteenth century, corresponding with a period of complete devastation. However, this economic calamity was evidently not a cause for the decline of the tower house, as by the end of this period it is very apparent that those in Ireland had realised that re-edification of the tower houses after the wars would be economically very profitable. In consequence, despite the economic hurly-burly of this period, the tower house was still needed by natives and settlers alike as a basis for their economic expansion. Thus the Tudor Conquest did not sound the death knell of the tower house, rather the climate after its conclusion ensured that tower houses received a second lease of life. It has already been discussed that colonists both occupied existing tower houses and built their own. The evidence detailed below explains that this phase of building corresponded with an economic boom.

The new period of new tower house construction and refurbishment that occurred after the Tudor Conquest corresponds with a period of investment in the region associated with colonisation. The economic opportunities present in coastal County Down appear to have been well understood by those who viewed Ireland as a way of making their fortune. What is unusual in County Down, however, is that the settlers chose tower

houses rather than fortified houses and plantation castles as their residences. This may have been because colonisers in Down were aware of the practicality of the tower house. The number of port buildings in County Down also implies that defensible tower house architecture was the most appropriate for buildings with a maritime economic emphasis. Tower houses were also an excellent way to project lordship to recently acquired lands, being an accepted part of lordly authority that appealed to both the Gaelic-Irish and the Anglo-Irish.

This period of tower house rejuvenation was not to last long though. By the middle of the seventeenth century Ireland was undergoing severe economic hardship. Construction of Bangor 'tower house' ceased at this time, and Kirkistown is the last known true tower house to have been constructed in the region. Refurbishments of tower houses also seems to cease in this period, Portaferry castle underwent improvements post-1623, as did Quintin castle at around this time. Both of these tower houses were held by Montgomery, through his intermarriage with the Savage family in the case of Portaferry castle and his purchase of Quintin castle from Dualtagh Smith. While all Irish ports declined in activity at this time, by the end of the seventeenth century only a handful came to dominate Irish commerce. In coastal County Down's case Belfast, to the immediate north of the study area, was to become a major industrial centre for the next two hundred years, as was Newry to the south on a lesser scale. Improved infrastructure to these two ports led to the complete bypassing of the study area. For example, Donaghadee's boom at the start of the seventeenth century was due to its location in relation to the cattle grazing areas along the Lagan Valley. The area's topography meant that it was easiest to walk the cattle to Donaghadee for boarding onto vessels for export to Scotland.

The cementation of large estates removed the need for the proliferation of tower houses. Traditionally each lord had his own tower house, but fewer lords meant fewer tower houses. A lack of funds to build and maintain what effectively must have been a country residence for many lords who took up residence in Belfast, must similarly have had an impact. Fewer local lords also meant a reduction in tensions that removed further motivation for constructing tower houses. Whether tower houses were a sign of enmity between local lords, or a sign of mutual reassurance is a moot point amongst castellologists. Regardless of which interpretation is followed, a reduction in the number of competing land-owners drastically reduced the need for tower houses.

During this time land improvements were implemented, including bog drainage, while the need to manage large estates necessitated the improvement of land-based communication routes within and between lordships. A previous major barrier to land-based routes, the extensive woodlands (most notably the Dufferin) was also removed by the large-scale clearance of wood for industry and export. Indeed, Gillespie places some of the success of Belfast and the north Down ports on the road system that was developed in this region (Gillespie 1984, 19). The need for smaller scale ports and creeks interspersed at strategic locations along the coast was therefore removed with the ability for land-based transport. The correlation between the County Down tower houses and anchorages and maritime 'roads' has already been explored (see pp 42-3). It is concluded that the shift away from maritime routes reduced the need for tower houses, which had acted as building centres and way-stations along maritime networks.

In addition, the opportunity for local lords to capitalise on their resources by exporting the produce of their newly acquired lands from their own ports and creeks (as it has been suggested was the case previously) was eradicated by the overwhelming growth of Belfast and Newry. With the ability to compete with these new ports removed, emphasis instead shifted to estate production. This reduced the need for investment outside of funding the expansion of agricultural land, with the tower house a direct casualty of this.

It has been proposed that many seventeenth-century Plantation towns failed because they were based on the principles of English urbanisation and were located too close to one another to be successful in an Irish context. Calculations based on travelling time to markets may have underestimated the mobile nature of Irish society and so hinterlands were too small to support an urban economy. County Down may have weathered this situation better than most, since seventeenth-century settlement was based on a pre-existing urban network (Gillespie 1984, 15-21; Robinson 1984, 166). This mobility extended to merchants who tended to be freemen of several ports. This impacted on the provision of credit facilities (used for investment in estates) since it has been observed that merchants resident in one port tended to diversify their commercial interests into other areas, such as money lending (Gillespie 1984, 22-24). This continuation of medieval economic practices into the seventeenth century presented no problems until a combination of poor harvests, political and economic instability,

declining population and lack of credit for investment in the cheap land bought by urbanites took effect.

Further contributing to this situation are the political changes of the period. There is a strong correlation between those ports that came to dominate trade from the seventeenth century and centres of government administration. This pattern is made even more apparent by the fact that Dublin came to be the wealthiest port in the country despite the fact that it had a poor harbour facilities and relied on an outport. But it was the seat of government in Ireland and the location of the English factors. Economically, such political connections came to be highly significant after the economic downturn of the mid seventeenth century, since it was the administrative centres that attracted investment and wealthy inhabitants. In the case of Belfast, its harbour was not as good as the others in the region but it operated more as a service centre for the upper classes in the early decades of its existence. The demographics of the town's population contributed to its rapid growth by the late seventeenth century since it was wealthy and influential. Belfast's location as the closest major port in Ulster to both Dublin and England (and also Scotland) aided the cementation of economic dominance (Agnew 1996, 4). Finally, the further development of a formalised port hierarchy aided Belfast's ascension. A port hierarchy was present in Ireland from a much earlier date, indeed, an Elizabethan statute only allowed for overseas trade at designated ports where there were Crown officials (Breen 2007, 86). However, this process accelerated and became more politicised in the seventeenth century with ports actively seeking to designate neighbouring ports as their creeks. This is seen at New Ross, for example, where both Waterford and Kilkenny sought to designate it as their port. New Ross increasingly became to be dominated by Waterford and Kilkenny's interests even though it had a deep harbour ideally suited to the bigger vessels of the later seventeenth century (Brian Donovan, pers. comm.). This aggressive acquisition of status is also implied by Belfast's relations with its surrounding areas, Belfast purchasing Carrickfergus and Ardglass' customs rights in 1637 (Robinson 1984, 116; National Archives, Kew, Ms Talbot c.7/36-7).

8.4.5 Comparative evidence

The historical evidence indicates that by the first decades of the seventeenth century a change in demand for raw exports from Ireland had occurred. This export industry was not controlled by locals and by magnates with a vested interest in the locality, but rather

by Crown government and its agents, who had their capita away from the tower house density. This centralisation of trade and commerce, and the concentration of money and resources by the state, is reflected in the lay-out of the modern city, with commercial areas in designated spaces, unlike in medieval towns where they formed the heart of the settlement (White pers. comm.). In this way, as interest shifted to the resources available in the newly planted areas of Gaelic Ulster, the tower houses and the medieval networks they represented were neglected.

The identifiable contributions to the demise of the tower houses are both many and interconnected. Isolating one factor is both impossible and hides the true picture of a variety of socio-political-economic affects. What is certain is that this situation was not limited to County Down alone. Indeed, it is not only apparent in Ireland – the shift away from a multiplicity of small medieval ports associated with the tower house to large dominant ports in the early modern period is witnessed across Europe. New cities developed at locations away from medieval cities, or from places that were unimportant in the middle ages, leading to many deserted post-medieval settlements (De Vries 1976, 151-4). This pattern has started to be further observed and analysed in recent years as part of an increased academic interest in early modern and industrial archaeology, and the transition between the periods. Consequently the subject is growing, and at this time definitive conclusions cannot be drawn until the available evidence has undergone further academic attention. In particular, there is little comparative work for the end of medieval building traditions in general across Ireland, so it is difficult to draw parallels between the situation with tower houses and crannógs or vernacular housing, for example. The County Down tower houses are also immediately comparable to other tower house concentrations on the east coast, such as Carlingford, Wexford or Dalkey. Unfortunately the decline of tower houses in these areas have not been studied either. Comparison with the west coast, where the economic situation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was rather different, may not be accurate in its conclusions for this reason. However, the tentative findings prove illuminating when they are compared to County Down.

Regional studies of coastal tower houses can be used to draw comparisons although none of these extensively focus on the decline of tower houses and the reasons for this. The density of extant tower houses at the deserted coastal settlements of Clonmines indicates to Breen and O'Sullivan that these urban, coastal tower houses were inhabited

by the mercantile class, and so served a commercial function (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 164). This use of the tower house is further supported by the fact that the town was deserted after Bannow Bay silted up to the extent where vessels could not access it, and thus trade could not take place (Brian Donovan, pers. comm.). Although Hore recorded that one of the tower houses (no. 1434 in the *Archaeological Inventory of Wexford*) was occupied by the Sutton family until 1849, the use of this tower house by the mid nineteenth century was probably very different from its original purpose (Hore 1901, 215; Moore 1996, 154).

Naessens observed in County Galway that economic pressure on Gaelic-Irish lords started in the sixteenth century when the Old English merchant classes in Galway City began to purchase land and country estates in nearby rural areas, a process enhanced by the redistribution of monastic and church lands to Englishmen (Naessens 2009, 76). In County Down this process is a feature of Belfast's rise to prominence in the seventeenth century, when town residents began to acquire lands outside the town, in the old territory of the Clandeboye O'Neills for use as country residences, for investment, and to secure a hinterland for Belfast's port (Agnew 1996, 44-7). Ethnic distribution aside, another significant difference between Galway and Down worth bearing in mind was that in the late medieval period the county was dominated by the port of Galway, and in Naessens's study area, to a lesser extent, Ballynahinch County Galway. Coastal Down in this period did not have a port of comparable status to Galway, but it did have a multiplicity of maritime settlements. As a consequence this number of ports could possibly amplify the changes in settlement and trade in the mid seventeenth century, as it examines the decline of a number of settlements rather than an isolated example. As has been postulated here, that tower houses formed focal points within a greater maritime community and routeways, Naessens found evidence of the processing of hides at Gaelic-Irish capita. Hides were also probably traded and exchanged in smaller bays in the county, and Naessens suggests that abbeys were acting as clearing houses (Naessens 2009, 187). These activities were legislated against in the sixteenth century, thus removing this income from tower houses. Sadly Naessens does not look at the end of tower house building in his thesis, although he acknowledges the need for work in this area.

Kelleher noted in her Cork-based study that the sea and its hinterland were integral to settlement survival, with the interaction between trade, fishing and terrestrial activity

allowing localised settlements to compete long after they should have been in decline. This situation enabled Cork to prosper in the seventeenth century, as it was located on the routes between Europe, England and the American colonies (Kelleher 2007, 131, 133). In west Cork new settlements were established, and socio-economic structures were redeveloped in the early years of Plantation (Breen 2005, 136). The number of settlements springing up in Cork is similar to that experienced in Ulster, where it was observed that 'There was now much greater diversity of settlement in new settlement and trade centres. A laissez faire market had been introduced and individual activity and initiative was actively encouraged' (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 207; Breen 2005, 163). Breen and O'Sullivan further interpret the County Down coastal tower houses as 'individual entrepreneurial enterprises outside of the existing urban centres' with an overtly maritime focus (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 166-7). Perhaps the tower house's suitability for this type of venture was partly responsible for the ultimate shift away from the tower house and associated settlements. Not that economic activity was too rigidly controlled by Crown agents, but that competition was created in unprecedented, and based on Gillespie's investigations into survival rates of seventeenth-century markets in Ulster, untenable numbers (Gillespie 1984, 29). Only the best funded ports could survive the harsh economic climate of the mid to late seventeenth century.

Horning's site of Movanagher, a Plantation village, in County Londonderry is a village and bawn site abandoned after the 1641 Rebellion. As previously discussed, while the decline of the construction of the tower house occurred around this time, there is little concrete evidence to link the two events. If anything, construction started to tail off in the decades preceding the Rebellion and civil unrest was common during the period of tower house use in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The tensions that culminated in the 1641 Rebellion seem to have been partially fuelled by the years of exceptionally bad harvests in the 1630s. The economic repercussions of harvest failure both motivated rebellion and decreased profit that could have been used for tower house construction. Horning also found evidence for a continued Gaelic-Irish building tradition in the seventeenth century, one that was adopted by settlers (Horning 2001, 395). If Gaelic-Irish vernacular styles of construction were in use contemporary with the tower house, then this supports the contention that a larger set of processes (the most likely being economic changes) affected the social and built landscape.

On a European scale, some intresting parallels come from Sweden. Of the towns investigated in Sweden, all had a maritime trade emphasis during the middle ages. In the mid seventeenth century though, the focus of this activity shifted to a new, planned area of the existing settlement. Thus the situation in Down is not exactly replicated in Sweden. Perhaps these examples have been examined because it is easier to observe such movements within a single town rather than over an entire region or country. In Malmö a new marketplace was established, which caused movement away from the medieval thoroughfare of Södergatan (Thomasson 2004, 185). This situation was replicated too at Kalmar. In the medieval period Kalmar was of significant maritime port, being located on the Baltic Sea. As in coastal County Down, the port of Kalmar was dominated by a castle. In the 1660s and 1670s, however, a planned town in Renaissance style was created, which shifted the focus of the town away from the medieval settlement and castle to a new area. A similar decline took place farther north at Linkoping, and attempts to revive the fortunes of the town were not successful, instead new development took place at a site away from the medieval centre. Such trends to develop a new town at a separate site from the medieval settlement has been interpreted as a characteristic of Renaissance thinking – that everything should be ordered and correct, inclding the landscape (see work by Tagesson on settlement change in Linkoping, e.g. Tagesson 2002, 94-109). While it is impossible to draw any firm comparisons between Ireland, specifically County Down, and Sweden at the present time, what is apparent is that the same broad patterns in settlement change can be observed: in the mid seventeenth century new settlements were developed away from the medieval port towns and their associated castles. In Sweden too, the motivation behind this may have been predominantly economic.

A further parallel with County Down, particularly the Newark, are the 'tenement houses' present in Swedish port towns. These resembled booths and they were rented out to retailers. The major difference between these buildings and the Newark was that the former contained fireplaces. Fireplaces are not present at Ardglass, which was what led McNeill to propose that the booths there functioned as shops. In Sweden at least, there was prestige in building a house with rooms or apartments that could be rented out (Joakim Thomasson, pers. comm.). At Ardglass the row of retail unites undoubtedly generated a good income, if not prestige. It was also observed that Swedish merchants in the later middle ages constructed their buildings from stone. This has been interpreted by Thomasson as a symbolic action with the merchants choosing stone as a

means of displaying they had the ability to deliver the goods. This situation changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with timber construction becoming the preferred building material (Joakim Thomasson pers. comm.).

The tower houses of County Down therefore represent a microcosm of what is actually a much larger European process. This brief study also raises bigger issues in our conception of the transition from late medieval to early modern period, highlighting that a single or set of historic events cannot be considered a watershed when examining material culture. If anything, it shows that the things we consider 'medieval' in nature continue well into what we define as 'modern' as was suggested by McNeill at the outset of this chapter (McNeill 2007, 12). If the theme that can be observed here is movement – the movement of settlements and the movement of economic networks, then it implies that there is no settlement continuity between the late medieval and the early modern periods. Indeed, Gillespie observed that of all the new markets granted in the first half of the seventeenth century in County Down, only 20% survived until *c.* 1830. Several presumed settlements associated with the medieval tower houses did not survive into the modern era (e.g. Ringhaddy, Ardkeen and Castleboy castles). Yet this is not completely the case as several settlements did, albeit at a lower status. Ardglass, Strangford, Killyleagh, Portaferry, Killough and Downpatrick all still exist as towns in the modern landscape.

8.5 Tower houses in the modern era

The economic downturn of the mid seventeenth century continued on into the eighteenth century in the case of coastal County Down. This led such contemporary commentators as Smith in 1744 to describe previously successful port towns as 'mean' and 'decayed', and this situation was to continue throughout the next century (Smith 1744, 20). Strangford and Killough are exceptions. As discussed, Strangford went into a brief decline in the seventeenth century, but by the late eighteenth century it ranked eighth of Irish ports in terms of tonnage of ships registered. It had also resumed its place as the main port of Lecale, a position it maintained into the mid nineteenth century. Jope has interpreted this resurgence as a consequence of Strangford's operation as an outport for the county town of Downpatrick, since the larger boats of this period could not make it up the Quoile River (*ASCD*, 435). Killough's success as a small port pivoted on investment made by Sir Robert and Michael Ward after 1671, including the establishment of a salt works by 1724 and the construction of a quay by

the time Harris was writing in 1744. This prosperity was to prevail throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this time thanks to investment by Viscount Bangor who improved the harbour to facilitate the export of grain (Jope 1966, 417). Economic success at some settlements, and decline at others could have contributed to the survival into the present day of so many tower houses. As Breen and O'Sullivan noted in the case of Ardglass 'this abandonment phase has resulted in the survival of a large number of later medieval features of the town' (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 188).

Some tower houses in this region continued to be occupied into the eighteenth, and in one probable case, the nineteenth century. The antiquarian writers provide much of the historical evidence for tower house occupation in the modern period. In the case of Quoile castle a wall tablet located in the church at Saul was erected in memory of John West, died 16 February 1866, the 'son of John West, born in Quoile castle, 1727, died 1787' (*ASCD*, 248). Thus it appears that the West family occupied Quoile castle long past the point recognised by scholars as the heyday of the Irish tower house. Neighbouring Walshestown castle also shows signs architecturally of later inhabitation, confirmed by Lewis as being the residence of R.F. Anderson at the time of his writing in 1837. The windows in Walshestown castle were expanded and sash windows were inserted presumably around the time that it was occupied by Anderson. The *ASCD* makes no mention of these windows (unlike those inserted in Kirkistown castle, below), although they are marked on the tower house plan (*ASCD*, 254). Based on the survey of tower houses and the surrounding landscape undertaken as part of the thesis (see appendix from p. 289 for a gazetteer of sites), Walshestown castle seems to have held a position in the once-impressive Victorian gardens attached to Myra House. It appears likely that the tower house was used recreationally by the occupants of the later 'big house'. The extensive modernisation undertaken at some point in the 1800s at Kirkistown castle likewise implies later occupation. The *ASCD* provides a detailed summary of what these alterations were, including: the alteration of the earlier windows to sash windows (as at Walshestown above); the insertion of fireplaces; the re-plastering of the lower storeys; the decoration of these lower storeys in pseudo-Gothic style; the replacement of the original spiral stair by two straight flights; the addition of a stone constructed porch; the closing off of chambers with stud and plaster partitions; and, most visible of all, the construction of massive buttresses to (unsuccessfully) counter subsidence (*ASCD*, 238-41). Based on Smith's description of Kilclief castle in 1744 as being 'entire' and roofed with thatch, it would appear that this tower house was used in

the mid eighteenth century for some purpose (Smith 1744, 24). So too, according to Smith was Portaferry still occupied by the time of his writing, as he writes that it 'is now inhabited by Andrew Savage', while Kirkistown was the residence of Mrs Lucy Magil, the Widow Savage (Smith 1744, 46, 67). It is interesting that the Savages continued to occupy the tower houses constructed by earlier generations of the family. Lewis similarly records that Mahee castle was the summer residence of the Knox family before the date of his writing, who also used the quay for landing boats.

Other tower houses were updated, and their original forms incorporated into later projects. Killyleagh castle is probably the most ostentatious castle under this heading (plate 22). A castle (presumably a tower house) is depicted at Killyleagh on a map of *c.* 1568 attributed to Lythe, though there is no trace of this building in the extant structure (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 112). Hamilton built a tower house on the site shortly after acquiring his Dufferin lands, in a markedly Scottish style. The features of this tower house are only known from Thomas Raven's 1625 map of Killyleagh, where it is featured in a bottom corner. This tower house was damaged by Cromwellian forces in 1649 and subsequently repaired in 1666. The Bavarian style structure that stands today was devised by Sir Charles Lanyon in 1850, his work effectively obliterating the architecture of the earlier tower house, with the exception of a few features, such as lintels and doors bearing the dates 1625 and 1666. These items were relocated to the bawn wall (which was repaired, and the gatehouse added, in 1862) and were probably kept as features because they emphasised the historic association of the family with the castle and surrounding landscape. A similar situation took place at the Newark. The building here, depicted by Grose as a ruin in his drawing, with its medieval features still present (this was published in 1791, but it seems likely Grose's visit took place before restoration), was rebuilt in 1790 by Lord Charles Fitzgerald for use as a residence (plate 23). Fitzgerald sold his Ardglass estate to his step-father, William Ogilvie, in 1806. As at Killough, Ogilvie invested in the town and rebuilt the port, taking advantage of the profits to be made from the return of the herring shoals to the County Down shores. A final example from the study area of a tower house being reused in a later building project is Quintin castle, occupied in the early seventeenth century by Dualtagh Smith and then sold to Sir James Montgomery. Montgomery subsequently sold Quintin castle to George Ross *c.* 1700. By the mid nineteenth century, the tower house was reported as being in a state of disrepair, but it was then incorporated into the structure that exists today. As with Killyleagh castle, the semblances of the medieval castle (to nineteenth



Plate 22

Modern day Killyleagh castle, extensively remodelled in the style of a Bavarian castle from the seventeenth-century tower house in the mid nineteenth century by Sir Charles Lanyon

century minds anyhow) were maintained at Quintin, in the latter's case the most obvious castle feature to be retained are the stylised battlements.

Audley's castle and Castleward tower house were incorporated into the estate plans of the Castle Ward estate. The Ward family purchased neighbouring Audley's castle from the Audley family in 1765, but in the 1850s the inhabitants of Audleystown village were 'shipped to America' by the Wards 'and the area was incorporated into the landscape park' (Reeves-Smyth 1995, 35). Inclusion of these two tower houses into the estate probably ensured their preservation (though Audley's is noted by Lewis as being ruinous by the mid nineteenth century), possibly because they contributed to the vista,

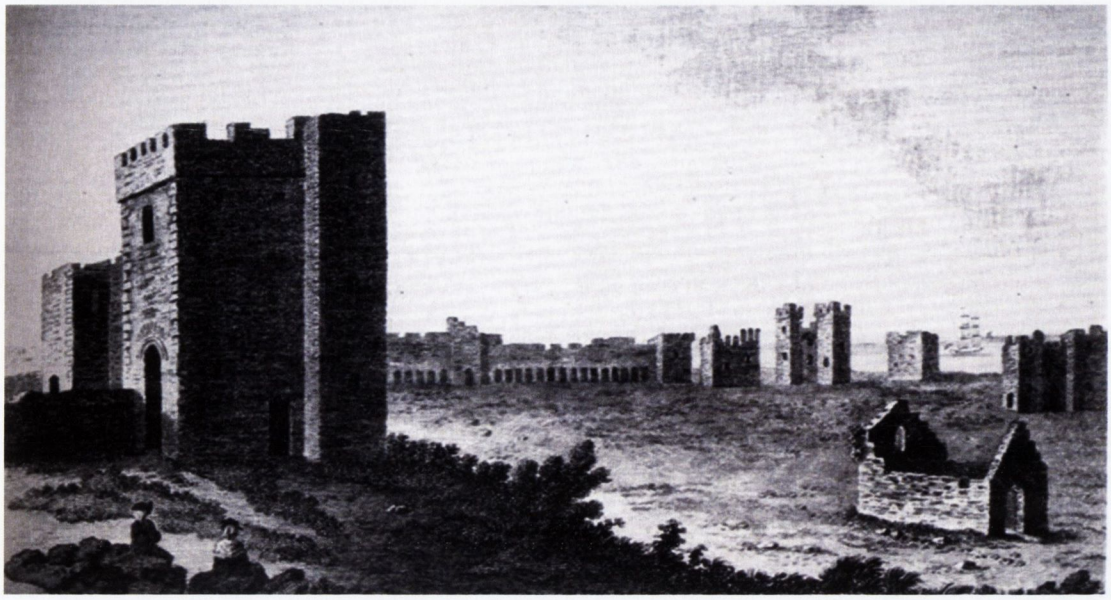


Plate 23

Depiction of Ardglass by Grose. The Newark is located centre background. Although published in 1791, the drawing pre-dates the refurbishment of the Newark
Grose in the *Dublin Penny Journal*, 1833

provided excellent vantage points for observing the landscape and were visible reminders of the family's history.

Some of the tower houses of coastal County Down were left to ruin until rescued by antiquarians (such as in the case of Jordan's castle, which was acquired and repaired in 1911 by F.J. Bigger and on his death in 1926 transferred to the Ministry of Finance) or until modern legislation for the protection of historic monuments provided a framework for the management of tower houses. Others became a local novelty, such as Sketrick castle, which was hit by lightning in 1899 and collapsed soon after.

Some tower houses were completely destroyed, probably for building stone, so their approximate location can only be ascertained from Tudor era maps, or because parts of their foundations are traceable in places on the ground. The destruction of others is a known entity, for example, King's castle in Ardglass was partially rebuilt in the early nineteenth century, but was destroyed in the middle of that century (*ASCD*, 225). Ardkeen was demolished *c.* 1717 by Hugh Savage, who, according to Harris, instead built himself a new house further down the shore. The tower house was 'cleared out' in 1898, presumably for building stone, though it is remarkable that this had not taken

place before this date (Harris 1744, 48). Newtownards's use is less certain. The castle (and it is not completely certain that there was a tower house there since there is a dearth of evidence for it) may have been in ruins by the start of the seventeenth century, since it formed part of the priory which would have had its lands dissolved, and it was employed as shelter by the first wave of Scots colonisers in the early seventeenth century to north Down (*ASCD*, 431). There is an eighteenth-century view of the later ruinous gatehouse into which the possible tower house had been incorporated (*ASCD*, 260), but this structure also does not survive into the present day. Many other tower houses are noted as being in ruins by the time of Harris, Smith and Lewis' writing.

8.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the fate of the tower house in County Down is varied. There was a boom in construction in the late medieval period, as was the case across Ireland. During the Tudor Conquest many continued to be occupied, and their appropriateness was recognised by Englishmen, who saw the economic opportunities represented by these monuments in a post-conflict period. With colonisation came another resurgence in construction. Yet by the mid seventeenth century construction of tower houses abruptly ceased. The reasons for this have already been discussed, and they are likely manifold, although an economic motivation is hard to discount as being a major factor in the demise of the tower house. Although Strangford was head port for the region until the mid seventeenth century, by the end of the seventeenth century Belfast was the dominant Ulster port and coastal Down's proximity to this settlement probably accelerated the process of decline. So too was there a shift to larger estates, controlled by fewer people that impacted the construction of tower houses both because of increased local political stability and fewer people of the social strata who would have ordinarily built tower houses. Although there was still the need to transfer excess agricultural produce to the ports for export, the role of the tower houses in this appears to have declined with the development of inland settlements and a road system that reduced the need for maritime transport routes.

It seems less likely that technological developments in warfare were a direct cause of the tower house demise, although it probably highlighted tower house inadequacies against sustained military assault. More probable a factor were the economic after effects of these wars. Robinson comments: 'destruction of the towns and villages [in the wars] only served to speed up the rationalisation of the urban networks. Only the

urban centres necessary to maintain service and marketing facilities were rebuilt' (Robinson 1984, 191). Tait *et al.* observed that change overcame continuity from the Tudor period onwards: 'Shifting patterns of trade, accompanied by the expansion of towns, the development of markets, and the growth of commercialized farming, would naturally have been followed by changes in diet, settlement, class structure; perhaps even language and religion. But in Ireland, early modern developments were exceptionally abrupt and exceptionally extensive. They also entailed a considerable degree of violence and destruction.' (Tait *et al.* 2007, 9). Consequently it can be argued that it was the economic consequences rather than the direct military activity of such campaigns that impacted the tower house. Emphasis on developments in warfare has only served to obscure the true multi-faceted cause for the tower house's decline. The socio-political conditions in County Down could perhaps have encouraged the continued use of tower houses, since the magnate-like behaviour characteristic of the late middle ages continued under unofficial plantation. However, this suggestion should stand up to further scrutiny – later (seventeenth century) tower house construction is noted elsewhere in Ireland and it would be interesting to examine the ethnic make up and minor political events in these areas to see if any parallels could be drawn. Although the maritime function of the tower house has been explored in other regional studies, few of these have looked at the continued use of the tower house into the early modern period. Again, it would be illuminating for the subject if this period of construction and use was discussed in further detail with reference to the maritime economy.

Despite the cessation of tower house construction, it is not enough to simply describe this event as the 'death' of the tower house. As has been seen, some continued to be occupied in their original form, while the symbolism of others was recognised and incorporated into more extravagant buildings, constructed to evoke the imagery of chivalry and imply longevity. Sadly, throughout the period of tower house construction and occupation they were never the focus of documentation, thus the specific motivations for their continued use past the middle ages is as difficult to determine as when they were first built.

Chapter Nine – Discussion: defining the tower house

9.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the main functions of a tower house based on the County Down case study. It assembles the evidence from this thesis's chapters and places it in the context of its potential contribution to castle studies. It is drawn primarily from the results of fieldwork undertaken at twenty-nine tower house sites as part of the remit of this thesis, and assessed in the context of the work on castles and tower houses already discussed in the introduction on pp 11-21. Special reference is made to the published studies of County Down and its tower houses, namely: Jope's 1966 archaeological survey of the county; McErlean, Forsythe and McConkey's archaeological survey of Strangford Lough's maritime landscape (2002) and the recent doctoral thesis by Eadie where County Down was one of five county case studies examining the functions of tower houses (2009).

The following chapter deals with the following identified tower house functions, with an emphasis on possible maritime and commercial roles:

1. Defence
2. Residence
3. Symbolism
4. Commerce
5. Industry
6. Trade
7. Fishing
8. Maritime networks
9. Manorial

Based on this examination of functions and roles, an identifying criteria for tower houses with a commercial and/or maritime role is developed. Each of these functions will be discussed in the context of the tower houses they are best applied to. Not all of the County Down tower houses fulfilled each and every one of these roles, and some carried out these functions to a greater or lesser extent than others. What this thesis seeks to highlight is the multifaceted use of the Irish tower house, specifically how adaptable they were to the social context of the centuries of their construction. In this author's opinion, for too long have they been regarded as the small defensive residences

of the lesser nobility, features of a fragmented and weak political system and viewed as the response to endemic low-level violence focussed on cattle raiding. Instead it is proposed that they reflected a range of human actions and a response to the socio-economic opportunities of their day. It is suggested that many tower houses were viewed as an investment opportunity by their builders on which financial profit could be centred and recouped from. As a result the focus of this research has necessarily been on the relationships between the tower house and the surrounding landscape, both maritime and terrestrial.

County Down was chosen as a case study for a variety of reasons these are discussed in full on pp 10-11, one of these reasons being that academic investigation of tower house roles has largely concentrated on Gaelic-Irish regions. County Down is an interesting region into which to apply these hypotheses since the demographics of the county reflect the full range of ethnicities inhabiting Ireland from the fourteenth to early seventeenth centuries. From a landscape perspective the region is diverse: in places it is comprised of hills, woods, low-lying land, fertile land, bog, lakes, with the Mourne Mountains lying to the immediate south of the study area. From a maritime landscape perspective, a range of interactions can be explored thanks to an extensive sea coast in addition to the sheltered Strangford Lough. The study area is, in short, a microcosm of a greater Irish picture, and consequently an excellent place in which to examine the various roles and functions of the Irish tower house.

Fieldwork has primarily focussed on the tower house's position within the landscape and the relationship with these landscape features, as well as on the architectural features relevant to the aims of the thesis. Correspondingly less attention has been paid to the internal arrangements of the tower houses in question, unless they are indicative of this wider landscape role. For a fuller account of the daily use of these tower houses, and further information on the residential role discussed below, it is suggested to read Eadie's doctoral thesis on 'A New Approach to Identifying Functions in Tower Houses' (2009), which extensively considers the lifestyle uses of the County Down tower houses, including their defensive, domestic and symbolic functions.

9.2 1. Defence

The defensive function of the County Down tower houses, and indeed of tower houses more generally, has been discussed already in the previous chapter. This discussion has

concentrated on the changes in military technology between the late medieval and early modern that could have contributed to the demise of the construction of tower houses. This research found that technological advances in warfare had little impact on the continued construction and occupation of tower houses. It was additionally suggested based on the findings, that defence had little to do with the choice of tower house site. This situation is best illustrated by the location of Mahee castle, which is partly built into a drumlin which then rises directly behind the tower house, meaning that it is completely possible to stand on the drumlin and throw missiles onto the wall walk. The later tower houses in particular seem to have little reference to increased precision and effectiveness of artillery in both their location and use of defensive features, beyond the adoption of gun loops.

This prior discussion has focussed more on the occupation of tower houses in the early modern and modern periods and the lack of response to military technology. It is equally important, though 'a road more travelled', to consider the defensive role of tower houses in terms of medieval military tactics and technology. To paraphrase Coulson, we will examine a 'motivational building analysis' of medieval military determinism (Coulson 1996, 179). There are a number of tower house features often cited by scholars as defensive, and each of these will be considered in turn in a County Down context, before deciding whether this indicates a defensive function in late medieval tower houses.

- 9.2.1 Machicolations

Machicolations are being discussed first as they are probably the most visible defensive features of the County Down tower house, although not the most numerous. They are possibly one of the more ornate external tower house features, next to the crenellations and often stand out on an otherwise quite plain and small structure. Although their use in protecting entrance doors is well understood, they also probably served a symbolic function as well as providing an aesthetically pleasing design when arched between two projecting turrets (plate 24, see below). Jordan's castle takes this one step further, by having two machicolation arches it was able to create an imposing



Plate 24

Machicolation arch spanning between two projecting turrets (the 'gatehouse type')

aspect when viewed from the harbour. The symbolic function of machicolation arches is seen outside of the study area. At the Hospital Priory of Saint John The Baptist in Newtown Trim, County Meath this author observed that the box machicolations here had no slots running through them, compulsory for the ejection of missile deterrents. As with many of the other defensive features there appears to be no chronology for the employment of machicolations – they are found on the 'gatehouse' type of tower house, believed to have been constructed in the first half of the fifteenth century as well as the later Castleward castle.

The multifunctional use of machicolations is apparent, however. It was an easily operated device for protecting doorways, and did not require intensive labour to operate. It contributed to a pleasing building façade and the height required for its positioning meant that, along with the roof crenellations, it was a building feature visible from afar. It is suggested that the machicolation was the medieval equivalent of the modern day burglar alarm, showing that the tower house occupant was intent on protecting his

residence and valuables. Consequently the machicolation not only plays into a defensive capability, but also as part of symbolic and commercial tower house functions.

- 9.2.2 Murder Holes

Murder holes operated in a similar fashion to machicolations in that they were employed as devices through which to drop missiles on potential attackers. Most often murder holes are found over lobby areas and past the entrance door in the interior of the tower house. It has been suggested by numerous castle scholars that murder holes served a dual function, since they were also useful communication tools. In this manner a doorman or porter could check with those inside whether to admit someone seeking entry. Eadie identified conclusive proof of this function in Audley's castle. In her study of what is likely a porter's space in the ground floor chamber of the tower house she found that the murder hole here served a more appropriate function as a communication tool (Eadie 2009, 361). It would be interesting for future researchers to apply the methods used by Eadie here to a wide range of tower houses and castles to see if this situation is manifested elsewhere.

- 9.2.3 Gun and Arrow Loops

Another useful avenue for future research would be to investigate the usefulness of gun and arrow loops. McNeill found that the loops at Cowd castle were impressive but that only the southern side of the 'tower house' has good flanking coverage (McNeill 2005, 15) and it is predicted that this was the situation at a great many tower houses. It would be expected in particular that those gun loops fashioned from earlier arrow loops would have a reduced or redundant functionality because of the altered range and direction of fire from the newer weapon. It may be therefore that these loop conversions were to keep up fashionable appearances more than having any practical application, and to keep the building relevant as a visible deterrent.

What must also be remembered are the likely small size of garrisons retained at tower houses. During the Tudor Conquest the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* records indicate that the number of men garrisoned at a tower house was fifteen English and thirty Irish (The Lord Deputy and Council to Secretary Cecil, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire. 1601-03*, 503). This was at a time of extensive warfare and political strife, and in this case a government force was present. It is safe to presume consequently that the numbers

available on site at any one time for a tower house garrison in the late medieval period was correspondingly lower. Considering the space available within tower houses based on Eadie's examination of the number of people who could be seated at informal dinner arrangements, and doubtless echoed in the available sleeping space, it seems unlikely that number of soldiers could be accommodated within a tower house. Though of course they could be housed outside in more temporary structures or ancillary buildings or drafted in from the surrounding land. Regardless, it is unlikely that a suitable number of men were ordinarily present to provide effective covering fire from arrow and gun loops, had they been angled towards an appropriate place in the first instance.

- 9.2.4 Crenellations

Crenellations were probably the most visual defensive aspect of any castle, and their symbolism has been much discussed with reference to both Ireland and abroad. As with roof level machicolations, their height and design could be used to reinforce lordly imagery across a wide area.

With regards to wall walks, previously viewed as evidence of guards using the height of tower houses to survey the surrounding territory for potential attackers, new research has found evidence for another use. Many of the County Down tower houses do not have continuous wall walks, meaning that a watchman or guard could not proceed uninterrupted around the top of the castle, reducing the wall walk's functionality as an observation platform. Furthermore, Eadie found in her access analysis of tower houses that the wall walk at Castleward was the lord's area of recreation rather than having a defensive use (Eadie 2009, 273). Again, it would be enlightening to continue this mode of examination to see how many more tower houses employed their wall walks exclusively for this pursuit. In addition, Castleward is notable for its proximity to Audley's castle and the two are intervisible. The private viewing platform (described as such due to parallels with the more formal castle viewing platforms identified at English castles by Creighton 2002, 73) at Castleward is interesting in this context since Audley's castle was ultimately acquired by the Ward family and incorporated into their estate plans, presumably as a scenic location thanks to the tower house's commanding height. This intervisibility now combined with the knowledge of a private viewing platform raises questions as to whether this was an early indication of the Ward family's later policy of acquisition and territorial expansion. This small example also indicates how a building can be studied as a visual manifestation of agency.

- 9.2.5 Projecting Turrets

Projecting turrets are often identified as typical defensive features of tower houses. The feature is well-established in County Down, in particular the 'gatehouse' type of two projecting turrets from the same face is sometimes referred to as the 'County Down type' (see plate 24). This belies the diversity in this feature apparent in the county examples, however, as there are examples of the 'Z plan' (Ringhaddy castle, although not as pronounced as other examples), one projecting turret both square (Portaferry castle) and circular (Bangor) as well as numerous examples with no projections. As a consequence, the gatehouse type is in the minority, albeit a visible one. It is likely (though only one, Kilclief castle, can be dated with any accuracy) that these tower houses were built at roughly the same time, based on their external similarities, which has led me to describe all of this type as dating from probably the first half of the fifteenth century. The external similarities have led myself and others (*ASCD*; Eadie 2009 for example) to attribute them to the directive work of one individual (possibly Scottish, see p. 159), County Down's own version of James of St. George.

The fact that the style was replicated to such an extent (at least four – Margaret's castle, Audley's castle, Kilclief castle and Jordan's castle, with further possibilities at Castleboy and Ardkeen castles and excepting those that may have conformed to this style that are now too ruinous to ascertain) raises issues with regards to the symbolism of this action. It may imply solidarity in the action of construction since they were not commissioned by the same person, one-upmanship in having a better example than the last, a great level of popularity and fashion, or just that there was no other choice. The last of these options seems the least likely based on Eadie's comparison of the internal dynamics of these externally quite uniform structures (Eadie 2009). There is a sophisticated level of adaptation to the needs of individual lords that indicates that the likely master-builder was skilled in his craft to adapt his designs. The residential repercussions of this, and the symbolism inherent in the buildings is discussed in greater detail in the relevant sections of this discussion below.

Eadie states that these tower houses with projecting turrets were not constructed so as to provide flanking fire. Instead she found that their orientation was to protect the main entrance doorway (Eadie 2009, 185). This feature could have provided defensive cover for the doorway.

An additional useful function, or side-effect depending on interpretation, was that these projecting turrets, whether single or double, provided much needed space for amenities. In the case of the 'gatehouse type' the stair rose in one and latrines were accommodated in the other. The convenience of this arrangement cannot be underestimated, especially with regards to locating the stairs. In the examples with no projecting turrets, stairs are normally mural or in some examples, would have probably have been internal and constructed of wood. Mural stairways add another structural and defensive issue – the weakness in the wall caused by stair accommodation meant that the wall had to be appropriately thick. In some cases, this was mitigated against by having the stair rise in different walls at different storeys (e.g. Sketrick castle).

- 9.2.6 Doorways and Entrances

As has been discussed elsewhere in the thesis, an experiment undertaken at Queen's University Belfast where tower house entrance doors were recreated and subjected to the most likely methods of forced entry – fire and battering – found that they were ineffectual, being quickly and easily broken down (Berryman 2009, 9; Eadie 2009, 207).

The best entrance for a tower house, despite these findings, is a single entrance, rather than multiple entrance doorways. The majority of tower houses in Ireland did have single entrance doorways, a situation present in Down. The exception to this pattern is the double entrance at Strangford castle (see pp 45-51 for further discussion of Strangford castle's potential dual functionality). Waterman believes that these entrances were not contemporaneous with one another, certainly a first floor entrance was more easily defended than a ground floor entrance (Waterman 1967, 83). Aside from the question mark over Strangford castle, there are no other tower houses within the study area with a first floor entrance.

- 9.2.7 Base batter

A base batter on a castle is often regarded as a safeguard against mining. Certainly, a thicker base would have made it more difficult for sappers to tunnel undetected, but in many cases a base batter was probably a reaction to the threat of subsidence. It was a practical impossibility for every castle to be sited atop a solid bedrock base, which both acted as a strong measure against mining and a secure foundation. This consideration

would have been paramount in the minds of tower house builders and engineers, because of the small area of a tower house compared to its height. Mahee castle, for example, has a base batter noticeable at one side of the tower house – this is the side of the castle that abuts the shoreline of the tidal Strangford Lough, structurally the weakest part of the foundations. One has only to look at Kirkistown castle to see the potential effects of subsidence on a tower house – it has had to have frequent improvements to straighten the tower, including the most visible attempt, buttressing at some point in the Victorian period.

- 9.2.8 Bawns

It is very likely that many tower houses made use of wooden bawns, which probably explains why there are comparatively few stone constructed bawns left extant. Another issue with bawns is that they were open to plunder for good quality building stone after the tower house had been abandoned. For example, it is very difficult to ascertain anything of the stone bawn at Audley's castle aside from the area it enclosed. What is also surprising is the small area enclosed by some, Sketrick castle being a notable instance. At this site it seems unlikely that there would have been ancillary buildings contained within the bawn walls. The ruinous condition of this bawn too means that it is difficult for us to tell what the original appearance and function might have been. Considering that Sketrick is the only specific tower house site in the study area that was besieged in the later middle ages (Ardglass is excluded from this statement as a town and since it was apparently besieged during the Tudor Conquest, and Killyleagh castle since it came under attack in the Confederate Wars) the bawn's location close to the tower house walls may be explained by security reasons.

This poor survival rate means that it is difficult to test the theory that the defensive emphasis at tower house sites shifted to the bawn later in the construction period. Eadie in her study observed that the number of turrets and loops in the bawn walls at Kirkistown castle significantly increased its defensive capabilities (plate 25). This corresponds with the tower house's later construction date, supporting a reactive interpretation to changing military technology (Eadie 2009, 183). The preservation standard at Kirkistown castle is unusually high, however, probably because it was occupied during the time when other tower houses were mined for their stone, and it may be that the level of preservation here skews the evidence. The bawn at Kirkistown,



Plate 25

Seventeenth-century bawn with corner towers at Kirkistown castle

as with the castle, has subsidence issues that has led to its part collapse. This suggests that it would not have been an effective defence since it could be easily mined or battered.

Consequently the bawn most likely did add to the defensive character of the tower house, but it is also possible that it had further functions as to the tower house site as an entity that have not yet been addressed by academia.

- 9.2.9 Prisons

Two of the case study tower houses contain internal prisons – small, windowless chambers with externally locking doors – these are at Sketrick and Audley's castles. Sketrick, as has been recounted, had quite an unusual history compared to the knowledge we have of the other sites, it also has more quirky features in general than other examples (plate 26). The presence of a prison at Audley's castle is more difficult to ascribe a reason to. It does not present a terribly militaristic front, its height and situation upon bedrock excepted, instead the different attributes seem to combine to form a particularly impressive symbolism, more akin to that of a great stone Castle.

- 9.2.10 Siting

The vast majority of County Down tower houses are not sited in a place suitable for natural defence. Aside from the aforementioned Audley's castle, Ardkeen castle and the similarly located (though further distant from the coast) Castle Bright, which are both atop eminences with a solid rock foundation. It is suggested here though that

Castle Bright did not fulfil the same functions as most of the other tower houses forming the cohort, while both Audley's and Ardkeen castles are easily accessed from the flatter land to the rear. These approaches can be utilised by those approaching from either land or water, as well worn trackways attest.

This can be compared to Murphy and Potterton's comments that 'during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a preoccupation with safety developed, as coastal piracy and attacks by the Irish started to increase in frequency. The construction of the fortified harbour at Skerries, the establishment of a colony on Lambay and the building of a new wave of castles can all be seen as responses to these threats' (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 405). This statement implies that raiding may have come more from sea than from land. As such, the choice of site in terms of height and other defensive qualities would have been less important than a site close to water with a commanding presence. This consideration again shows how the different functions of tower houses interacted and contributed to one another and highlights the difficulty in isolating them for detailed examination.

9.2.11 Conclusions

As a consequence of the consideration of each of these potentially defensive aspects of the tower houses we cannot say conclusively that defence was the sole functional motivation. There are too many contributing concerns for this to be the case, apparently defensive features provided a symbolic function too. Defensive features probably served as effective and suitable deterrents, as well as providing a sense of awe and furthering lordly intent. In their own right they must have held an acceptable visual language to the medieval and early modern onlooker that we can only begin to hint at.

There is evidence that tower houses could be, and were, effective protective structures in a siege, despite the evidence from the experimental archaeology undertaken at QUB. Sketrick castle withstood attack before finally falling after an indeterminate period of time in 1470 (*AFM*). Killyleagh castle fell to a Cromwellian army, although it is a moot point as to the military technology used to subdue the castle (see p. 168). It is doubtful that any tower house was designed to withstand serious battering, but as was pointed out in the discussion on the decline of tower house popularity, even specially constructed star-shaped forts that were supposedly designed to combat such technologies could not hold out for long against such a determined attacking force. Sketrick castle may have

been remarked upon in the annals because of its features – it has an internal kitchen, covered well enclosed within a bawn encapsulating a small ground area – that combined to make it perhaps more resistant to siege than other sites. The kitchen may be a later addition, however, as the oven recesses are lined with brick, which is more in keeping with later occupation than the reference to it in the late fifteenth century would suggest. These features may not have been present at the site at the time of its siege, and very possibly show later adaptations to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century fashions for tower houses. The covered over well with passageway leading out from the bawn may have purely have been created for reasons of convenience. Certainly such a sub-mural passage would have been quickly identified by an attacking force and either directly utilised or manipulated as a weak point within the structure.

Eadie, citing Donnelly and Mitchel's investigations, states that, despite the traditional interpretation of the tower house's motivation for existence, they were actually built during periods of stability rather than strife (Eadie 2009, 86-7). This research supports

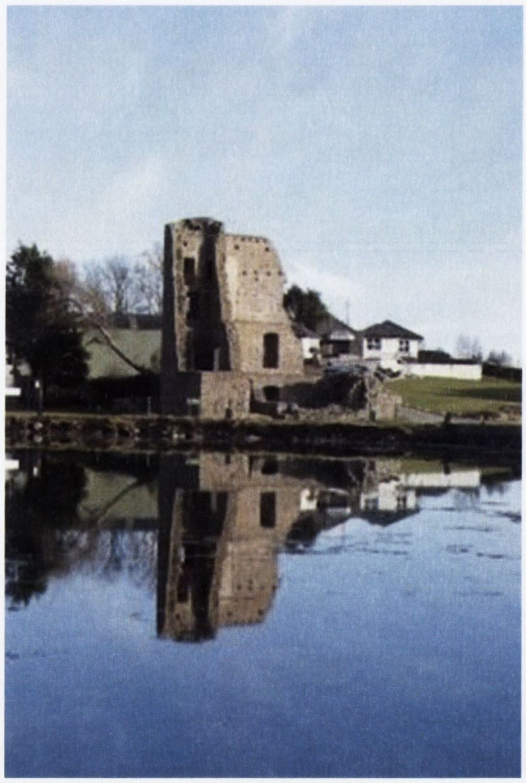


Plate 26

Sketrick castle. The kitchen is the chamber on the right, the prison and guardhouse on the left (not visible), with the internal boathouse running between the two.

the chronology of the tower houses in Down as the site features database shows (see appendix, from p. 359). Aside from Quoile and Walshestown castles, none of the tower houses were constructed during times of prolonged and serious warfare and struggle, most notably the Tudor Conquest of Ireland which drastically affected the region's economy and stability. Even then, neither Quoile nor Walshestown castles can be accurately attributed to the late sixteenth century, they were simply described as such in the *ASCD*, and there is no contradictory evidence. Both are comparatively plain tower houses, aside from Walshestown castle's enclosing bawn wall which could well have been a later addition to the main tower. It may be that these tower houses may, in fact, date from the middle of the sixteenth century, or are two more examples of construction in the boom years of the early seventeenth century. They could also be tower houses dating from the several attempts to colonise the county in the 1570s. This is a particularly plausible explanation for their construction since we know that existing tower houses were occupied in this period as focal points of attempted settlements. While no tower house can be securely (as securely as tower house dating can ever be) dated to the late sixteenth century, this does not mean that they were not occupied throughout these turbulent decades. In the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* in fact there are numerous references to tower house occupation by Englishmen and armies, one of whom, Sir Ralph Lane seemed to have been so impressed with what he found at Ringhaddy castle that towards the close of the war he made advances to obtain the necessary rights to colonise. There is a level of detail described in his plans that led to the suggestion here that it would probably have been a very successful venture and one that would have changed the ethnic and demographic composition of the county for a long time (see pp 173 & 183).

This observed pattern of construction – boom periods in the early to mid fifteenth century, first quarter of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century – correspond with periods of stability. Even then, the reason for the temporary cessations in construction was probably due less to fear of attack or conflict and more to do with the massive disruption and collapse of the Irish economy. War disrupted communication networks, partnerships and agreements based on trust, while resident armies consumed agricultural produce to the extent that there was little or none available for export, and foodstuffs had to be imported. There would simply not have been enough currency (in its widest term) in circulation to support construction of tower

houses, no matter how inexpensive modern historians believe them to have cost. This situation would have persisted regardless of the removal of the contested tower house function and involvement in commerce.

Eadie's aforementioned examination specifically refers to eight tower houses falling in the study area of this thesis: Audley's; Castleward; Jordan's; Kilclief; Kirkistown; Portaferry; Strangford and Walshestown castles. Although she frequently warns of the pitfalls of directly comparing different Irish regions, she does propose that County Down contains some of the more defence oriented tower houses. The sites under consideration do encompass the range of defensive capabilities present at tower houses – from Strangford being determined as the most defensive tower house (although whether the two entrances were treated as contemporaneous with one another at this part of the thesis is unclear) and Walshestown the least, despite its bawn. The upshot of this is that, when two anomalous tower houses were removed from the comparison of the five counties (Down, Louth, Wexford, Galway and Limerick) for skewing the results, County Down was found to be the second highest scoring county in this category (Eadie 2009, 182, 195, 197). Despite this, when plotted in a chart the visual picture is for the median range of the spectrum. However the interpretation, this discussion of tower house features in light of other considerations warns against viewing them solely as having a defensive motivation. Depending on the reader's interpretation of the effectiveness of the arguments contained here, it also raises questions as to the defensive capabilities of tower houses elsewhere in the country since they may have had even less suitable adaptations for protection.

9.3 2. Residence

That tower houses provided a residential function is indisputable. Even the most basic definition a castle or tower house encompasses a residential role, viewed as the provision of accommodation for a lord, his family and retinue. However, the degree to which a specific tower house provided residential functions, and the permanence of this is still open to interpetation.

The residential function of tower houses can be implied by the organisation of chambers – it is presumed that one, often the chamber rising in the floor directly above the vaulting, serves as a great hall with another chamber, usually on the next floor, providing sleeping accommodation. Further residential adaptations are fireplaces,

kitchens and increased utilisation of space in the main chambers. This does not consider what ancillary buildings that provided residential functions existed external to the tower house proper. The second part of Eadie's recent study examined the provision for residential functions in the aforementioned tower houses. This took the form of analysing what seating arrangements the identified hall chamber could accommodate. Through this analysis of space Eadie found that seven out of the eight County Down tower houses that are included in both this and her thesis had provision for small scale cooking, Castleward was the exception to this rule. By small scale cooking, the provision of space for the lord, his immediate family, servants and guests, associates or visitors is meant, seated informally (Eadie 2009, 224, 233). In general the County Down examples were less capable of catering for a wide variety of food consumption scenarios (e.g. feasting, large scale dining, entertaining) than the examples from the other case study counties, much of which is presumed to be directly a consequence of their small size (Eadie 2009, 249).

When the defensive and residential uses were plotted and compared, a pattern seemed to emerge that suggested that defence and domestic functions were opposed. In other words, the more defensive a tower house was determined to have been, the less provision was made for the domestic functions of cooking and eating (Eadie 2009, 226). It is suggested here that such a simple comparison might be misleading. We cannot tell what structures co-existed within a tower house. Nor is the smaller stature of County Down tower house taken into account, which probably does explain the reduced functionality of interior space. In terms of the number of residential features a better comparison might be on the ratio of features to square metres of space, as this would remove the obstacle of size. It could also be that emphasis was placed in County Down on external features for reasons other than defence, such as for symbolic control of the landscape. Finally, the reduced level of domesticity apparent in these tower houses may be accounted for by other, competing functions than a simple defence-residence balance.

There is also the pervasive argument that the Renaissance heralded in new demands on internal space, with different notions of privacy and comfort than previously, linked to the emergent concept of individuality. This movement is usually equated to the increased numbers of defended houses being constructed in the seventeenth century, although this isn't a pattern replicated in County Down, as previously discussed on pp

164-5. Eadie observed, however, that there was a move towards more 'commodious livings' towards the end of the tower house period. She interprets this as being the new standard for symbolic displays of power over more obviously defensive features (Eadie 2009, 378). It further supports the notion that tower houses served the demands of lords in the seventeenth century better than defended houses could, albeit with a few adaptations to the interior lay-out of space.

As with the former interpretation of the use of domestic space contributing to the overall symbolism of the tower house structure, other seemingly domestic chambers could also be imbued with symbolism. This is seen with the number of smaller or mural chambers around the tower house entrance and around the hall. These chambers have been interpreted by Eadie as places to control access to the lord within the building and an interior use of public displays of status (Eadie 2007, 127). Even in those instances where there are no minor adjoining chambers she found that this function could be articulated. For example, her survey found that the ground floor chamber in Audley's castle contains a slop hole, wall cupboard and loop overlooking the approach to the entrance door. The combination of residential features and capability for monitoring access to the tower house shows that there was a porter present (Eadie 2009, 162).

Based on this and other features she questions the proposal that medieval castles were semi-private compared to residences in the early modern period being private. This interpretation is shared here, since it is contested here that tower houses in Down had a public role in the form of commerce throughout their period of use. Tower houses doubtless served a residential function, but this has not been examined in any depth in this thesis as it falls outside of its remit. For context, both Eadie (2009 & forthcoming) and Sherlock (2006 & 2010) provide excellent discussions on the internal use of space in tower houses in the light of new academic approaches. In stating this, the residential function of each tower house has been a consideration in this study. In working towards providing a definition of a commercial and/or maritime oriented tower house there have been a number excluded from consideration as tower houses, instead being referred to in this thesis as 'tower houses' to differentiate them. These are those structures identified as serving a primary purpose as a port building. This is not to say that other tower houses did not serve this function as well, but in the former case they do not provide a residential function.

Consequently, the domestic function of tower houses has been the categorising factor in determining whether or not a building was a tower house. This means that either the term tower house has to be rearticulated and expanded in scope, or a new or sub category needs to be considered. Another issue is the temporality of the domestic function. For example, Bangor has been termed a 'tower house' (see appendix p. 286 for a full explanation of this term) because of its identifiable role as a customs house but has been included as a tower house in the database (appendix from p. 296) because it provided sleeping and eating accommodation for visitors (again, identified from the contemporary historical source material). Horn castle too may have provided accommodation informally for visiting mariners (McNeill 2005, 14) yet Cowd castle has no recognisable residential role.

9.4 3. Symbolism

Symbolism is the 'buzzword' amongst castellologists, and has been since the mid 1990s. Symbolic interpretations of castles have probably overtaken militaristic ones in popularity, and the study has had particular success in examining the great stone castles of England. The symbolic study of castles is limited too in that it often considers landscape in its narrowest terms. Many, particularly English-based, studies only look at landscapes with regards to the immediate area of interest to the lord, primarily the demesne, and the utilisation of natural features within this (for example, Creighton 2002, 72-84; Johnson 2002, 19-54; Liddiard 2005, 97-109). It is mooted too how much of a rounded perspective on medieval and early modern society can be gained through examination of solely high status sites (kings and magnates) without considering the interactions with the landscape the lesser populace might have had, or the settlements they inhabited. Tower houses are still high status sites in the context of regional Ireland, yet a study of their landscape role does factor these issues into the equation. Hopefully future study will enlighten us further.

Considering symbolism in landscape terms, and in the relation of one tower house to another within a landscape context invariably raises questions as to the intervisibility of sites. Intervisibility, aside from being a symbolic consideration, is also of benefit when trying to uncover the specific motives of an unknown individual. Intervisibility is commonly interpreted as a sign of mutual support, often in defence, but in this study it acquires an interesting perspective when examined in light of social interactions and the economy.

As with the appearance of defensive capabilities, it may be that intervisibility was not for mutual defensive support of a symbolic nature. In fact, it could be in some cases a sign of intimidation. We do not currently know the backdrop to the Ward's acquisition of the Audley estate (though it can probably be ascertained from the papers deposited in PRONI) but the action of incorporating the lands into a park, dispossessing the associated settlement's inhabitants and using the tower house as a folly and viewpoint implies a symbolism beyond the simple purchase of land for profitable use. The issues surrounding intervisibility of castle sites could probably be explored more through consideration of modern estate papers as, as is seen with the Hamilton and Montgomery disputes stretching over generations, more recent actions can indicate older patterns of behaviour. As with this thesis's brief consideration of the occupation of tower houses in the modern era (see pp 194-9), it is believed that much knowledge can be gained through taking a wide temporal view of these sites.

A further consideration when considering the symbolic aspects of intervisibility is whether it should be interpreted in this manner at all. Many of the County Down tower houses are intervisible and it is highly probable that in some of these cases this had no other meaning than the utilisation of the best site (figure 10). If a tower house was to be constructed by a navigable source of water, near communication networks, be financially viable and be located within a specific lordship on fertile and relatively flat land (at a minimum) the range of site choices must have been fairly limited. Add to this proximity, insofar as possible, to a port for the export and sale of agricultural produce and this choice is narrowed again. Consequently site choice and intervisibility may reflect less on individual actions and more on the constraints on these.

Regardless of this, control of the landscape does seem to be a primary consideration in the utilisation of site choice and design of the tower house. Of the maritime and commercial features considered in this study, control of the landscape was the most persuasive non-provable factor in considering a tower house to have this orientation. Probably due to site limitations and the natural topography of the area, a more overt use of symbolism was required. There are a number of tower houses that reserve their finest features for facing out towards the sea, lough or river, while the plain and unadorned face addresses the land based approaches. The overwhelming majority of castles reserve the most impressive angles for approach, so as to affect a variety of messages to

those advancing (Johnson 2002, 26). If tower houses were presenting their most impressive aspect for those viewing from the water then it can be assumed that a) communication was predominantly water-based and b) the visitors this display was designed for had extensive involvement with the maritime landscape, possibly merchants. What we can tell from this orientation is that these tower house occupants sought to engage with the maritime landscape and that this was a major consideration when planning their tower house. It may also indicate that attack was expected from water and that a pleasant view was a benefit. Some tower house occupants at least personally took an interest in the view for whatever reason, as the private wall walks indicate.

That the intention was to command and interact with the maritime landscape is attested to by the sheer number of the investigated tower houses that are located in close proximity (i.e. within *c.* 200 metres of, and easily traversable access) to navigable water, be that a harbour, anchorage, landing place or artificial quay. Most of these anchorages (term used broadly) could accommodate several vessels with deep anchorages compared to medieval boat building technologies. In some examples this offshore anchoring was brought to the tower house walls by either an artificial quay or an artificial or natural landing place for smaller boats. That larger vessels had to anchor slightly offshore with tenders and smaller boats being able to directly approach is a sign that these sites fed into a wider network. It also shows that the tower house occupants strove to improve access to these networks and viewed this as integral to a successful site. One has to wonder in the case of Mahee castle, for example, whether the quay was constructed after the castle when it was realised that Browne's economic and colonisation motivations could not be effected from that particular site choice, being subject to strong tides leaving tidal flats (see p. 97). Consequently, the symbolism of the tower house was not just directed at navigable water in general, more specifically it was oriented towards the place where boats sheltered.

We can also presume that had elevated land been available to tower house builders they would have chosen to construct their tower houses here. However, the low-lying coast of Down made this impossible and so the next best option was to construct within a couple of hundred metres of anchorages and landing places. This may also explain the success of tower houses compared to fortified houses in the region in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, since tower houses had the physical height to command

large areas of the maritime landscape in the absence of natural altitude. Six of the tower houses are located atop eminences of varying height. One, Castle Bright, from its distance from the shoreline appears to have had a lesser role in its interaction with the maritime landscape. The other four, Killyleagh castle, Audley's castle, Ardkeen castle, and at least Jordan's castle and Margaret's castle in the town of Ardglass, have made use of natural height to increase their command over the maritime landscape. As with the castles surrounded by moats in England, the water (be that the sea, river or lough) would have reflected the tower house so adding to the visual impression of the site to the anchorages below.

Castle Bright is an interesting conundrum in light of this discussion since it is located on a commanding site with extensive views along the Irish Sea coast of Lecale (plate 27a). To merit this utilisation of natural height, however, proximity to the shoreline has had to be sacrificed. It is roughly one and a half kilometres from the shore, nor would access from the coast have been easy. However, it is located near to another tower house with no view to the maritime landscape so it is instead proposed that these tower houses were located with a manorial function in mind. Castle Bright still has maintained some level of involvement with the maritime landscape, since it would have held a commanding presence to mariners travelling along the coast. This is described, in the context of the other County Down tower houses, as indirect control of the maritime and commercial landscapes compared to the direct control witnessed at the majority of sites in the study area.

The aforementioned machicolation and turret arrangement at Jordan's is similar to that found at Audley's and is viewed as an adaptation of the same principles to an urban context and a reduced site area (plate 27b). Eadie (forthcoming) and Gardiner (2005) have interpreted Jordan's as being positioned to present its best face to the pre-existing trackway located to the north of the tower house. It is instead proposed here that this is purely coincidental as viewing the tower house from all aspects of the harbour shows that the structure presents its full quotient of symbolic features to the entire scope of the harbour through quite a complicated design arrangement that necessitated an additional storey in one of the turrets. This arrangement shows that presentation of the tower house in a maritime landscape setting was one of the key requirements of this tower house upon its construction. This is further support for the idea of a regional tower house builder since the same symbolic control of the maritime approaches to the tower



Plate 27a

Part of the commanding view from Castle Bright



Plate 27b

Jordan's castle, Ardglass. One of the machicolation arches is visible on the right

house, and port in the case of Ardglass, is employed at Jordan's, Ardkeen and at Audley's castle.

It has been suggested that Kilclief played a role in navigation, being used to identify the safe passage for larger vessels into Strangford Lough (see p. 91). This was based on the modern sailing instructions for the area, which used a combination of natural features, including a clump of trees located next to the tower house. It was suggested that the tower house was used in earlier times instead of the more intransigent clump of trees. This also corresponds with the comparative evidence for ecclesiastical control of navigation, most notably the setting of lights. In a symbolic context the tower house at Kilclief acted as a visual reminder to those entering the lough, which could be interpreted a number of ways depending on the purpose of the vessel entering - that trade was monitored and controlled, of a unified front of landholders, of a profitable region in which to do business etc.

Examination of the *Admiralty Charts* has also shown an interesting control of marine access to this tower house. The sandy beach in front of the tower house would have been recognised by medieval mariners as a welcoming place to draw up boats, sandy beaches having been identified elsewhere as the most common place for low level informal commercial activity (Gardiner 2007, 85). Throughout the study area, particularly on the eastern Ards coast, these sandy stretches may have been the only available sheltered anchoring places until later port development. However, despite the visual invitation at this site the *Admiralty Charts* show a complex approach to this shore from the south, requiring local piloting knowledge to navigate around the dangerous submerged rocks. The approach to Kilclief castle is therefore another reminder to those seeking to trade with the region that local cooperation was necessary. As has been previously discussed, although the navigation issues surrounding this stretch of the County Down coast seem to the modern mind a deterrent this was not the case at the time of tower house occupation. Parallels have been drawn with the navigation of the Bristol Channel where owing to the slow knot speed of medieval vessels, a strong tide was viewed positively. The requirement of a local pilot likewise does not seem to have been a negative, the regional studies of other maritime tower houses in Ireland identified that this was necessary at a multitude of sites (for example at the tower houses of Iarchonnacht described in Naessens 2009, 215, 246, 318). Based on the sheer number therefore, a local pilot seems to have been an accepted part of medieval navigation. The

number of contemporary references too to the havens of this coast also indicates that the region was prized in a time when medieval sea faring involved hugging the coastline as far as possible, and also a reliance on a number of sheltered places in case of unexpected rough sea conditions.

County Down was a contact zone throughout the period under consideration, between Old English and Gaelic-Irish in the later middle ages, and between Old English, Gaelic-Irish, English and Scottish in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Eadie has remarked that Down's ranking as second in terms of defensiveness 'is telling' when bearing the ethnic diversity of the country in mind (Eadie 2009, 210). Coming from an economic interpretation, which centres on cooperation and action driven by financial gain, ethnicity cannot be equated with defence. It is instead suggested that the appearance of defence (as it is has been shown how this could be for appearance only) is instead linked to ostentation and deterrence as a protection of assets. Eadie's interpretation also raises larger issues in the differences in the respective historiographies of the late medieval and early modern periods. Late medievalists tend to whitewash the period as that of localised endemic conflict and hostility, whereas early modernists are more apt to consider the period following the bloody and larger scale (comparatively) warfare of the Tudor Conquest until the 1641 Rebellion as a period of reconciliation and rebuilding. This latter interpretation particularly has been applied to Down, largely since it escaped Plantation in the official context. This study has been a small attempt to reconcile these two diverse historiographies, but it is hoped that future research will continue to consider this 'transition period' as a whole, leading to new interpretations that accounts for human action outside of a processual approach.

The presentation of the lordly self to others probably increased in importance in the context of colonisation. There are numerous examples of pre-existing high status sites being utilised by settlers in the early seventeenth century and witnessed also in the continued use and construction of tower houses, even by those who came from areas of England where there was no tower house tradition. This was a pattern observed at the time of the Anglo-Norman Conquest too, with Anglo-Norman castles being constructed atop or near older high status Gaelic-Irish sites. Since many of the seventeenth-century settlers needed to project an image of confidence, wealth and power it is surmised that the tower house best fit these symbolic demands as well as having a practical application. Add to this the fact that many of the newcomers came from lower status

backgrounds, either dispossessed local lords, second sons, entrepreneurs or professional politicians, and it is easy to see how symbolism and presentation became an accepted part of successful colonisation.

Symbolism applied not just to control of the landscape though, it was also a concern in internal decoration and use of space. Eadie has discussed the symbolic importance of effective presentation inside the tower house, including utilisation of decorative features. She likewise considers the importance of feasting to projections of lordship, as this was apparently a high status activity, since 'without the feast, these towers were without the public stage' (Eadie 2009, 238). The ability to host feasts inside a tower house further projected lordly attributes, although she found little evidence of this, suggesting that such activities used an ancillary hall (Eadie 2009, 233, 236). Interesting for this study too, she found that the interiors of the County Down tower houses were less concerned with display than examples from elsewhere in Ireland, this assessed on the basis of patterned doorways (Eadie 2009, 326). Since we know from this discussion that lords in the region were not unfamiliar with the visual language of symbolism, there must be an explanation for this lack of internal ornamentation. Possibly attention was more focussed on outward displays, where return was greatest.

Finally and particularly important when keeping a commercial motivation in mind, was the tower houses' ability to project wealth and success. Despite estimated figures as to the cost of constructing tower houses being quite low (Gardiner, pers. comm.) it was still an investment requiring a return of some manifestation. Naessens observed in his County Galway case study that this return was most commonly financial in nature. Based on the discussion above, it seems likely that this situation was paralleled in County Down (Naessens 2009, 212).

9.5 4. Commerce

As is discussed in the previous sections, the location of tower houses within the landscape has indicated a variety of interactions with the landscape. Some of these interactions imply the commercial role of the tower house; however, too commercial and the tower house is declared to be a 'tower house' since it does not fulfil a full-time residential function for a private individual (see p. 241). Some of these examples have already been discussed in the context of the residential function of tower houses, but the most obvious case of this is the Newark, also known as Ardglass castle but it is

preferred to refer to it as the Newark since it does not encompass a domestic function. This site was first proposed to have been a warehouse but excavation has shown it to have been a row of retail units (*ASCD*, 221; McNeill 2005, 13).

There are other tower houses that combined the commercial and full-time domestic. Excavation by Gardiner at Jordan's castle led to the identification of an attached stone warehouse (Gardiner 2005, 29). This warehouse could have been reserved for household use, but its size implies that it was used for commercial purposes. This would also be in keeping with the maritime symbolism of the tower house and the common assumption that it was a merchant's residence (although I was unable to find a historical reference to this was unable to be located). Another reason why it was most likely a commercial warehouse was the level of investment that went into it. Aside from its construction from stone, alterations were made to channel water away from the interior. This is interpreted as an improvement to combat damp conditions that would have quickly spoiled stored agricultural by-products. This case shows that without excavation it is often impossible to identify what structures were present in conjunction with the tower houses. If stone built structures do not survive even at foundation height, then this site goes to illustrate the lack of knowledge we have of ancillary buildings. The other benefit of having a warehouse or storehouse made out of less permanent fabric than stone is that they could be relocated if the site wasn't suitable. In the case of Jordan's castle though, the cramped site in the medieval port town probably meant that there wasn't much space available for outbuildings. As with the potential storehouse at Audley's castle, near the port settlement of Strangford, a stone-built storehouse would have acted as an impressive symbolic statement on the behalf of the occupant. In the case of Jordan's castle and its presumed merchant occupant, it could have been used for the acquisition of business, as a visual display of the wealth accumulated through this pursuit. This orientation towards business, and the establishment of commercial links, is supported by Eadie's findings from investigating the interior use of the tower house. Her assessment found that Jordan's castle could accommodate almost fifty people in what she describes as an 'entertainment' capacity. By this she more specifically means an informal environment where 'the focus is more on likes of intimate conversation, business, dancing, games, relaxation and so on' (Eadie 2009, 238). She found evidence of the separation of interests too, commonly regarded as a sign of a dual commercial/residential function (see Strangford castle below). In the case of Jordan's castle, the family room where cooking took place was located on one floor of the tower

house, with the room reserved for dining and entertainment on another. Eadie further presumes 'the principal chamber would probably be the one used for business' (Eadie 2009, 329). Consequently a commercial function could be accommodated even within the walls of a tower house.

It has been suggested that Strangford is the most overtly commercial true tower house in the study area, as opposed to those port buildings masquerading as 'tower houses' (it has formed the basis of a case study on pp 45-51). Both this author and Eadie agree with interpreting Strangford castle as fulfilling a dual commercial and residential function. Waterman, writing in 1967, suggested that the two entrances were not contemporaneous with one another. Sherlock disagrees, but nonetheless rules out the possibility of it implying a commercial function (Sherlock, pers. comm.). He instead proposes that the first floor entrance is connected to a now destroyed bawn wall. This proposition is rebuffed in this thesis, however, instead the possibility that it was the residence of the customs official that would have been lodged in the town is raised. The lack of communication between the ground floor and rising floors further suggests that they fulfilled two different functions. Based on comparison with buildings of similar lay-outs in England, it is proposed that the ground floor was reserved for commerce.

These are the tower houses in which we can identify a commercial function in their design and orientation within the landscape. It is possible that there are more examples of this use internally, which cannot be so securely identified. The interaction between commercial and residential activity wouldn't necessarily incur architectural alterations. Similarly, low-level commercial pursuits needn't be reflected in the archaeological record, in those cases where excavation has taken place, and it was likely too mundane and insignificant in scope to be recorded by contemporary writers. At least some of those tower houses located in port settlements that engaged in trade outside of the immediate area would have had merchant occupants, who may have conducted their business activities elsewhere than at the residential site.

There is also the possibility that the ground floor at least was given over to public functions and storage in many of the tower houses, not just at Strangford castle. In the case of a mercantile or commercial oriented tower house we might expect high value items to be kept in the ground floor of tower houses for added security. The symbolism noted by Eadie around entranceways would have been of critical importance when

greeting customers, associates and business partners. Not all tower house ground floor chambers were suitable for storage though. Jordan's castle, one of the tower houses mentioned as having a commercial function, falls into this category. During excavations at the site equipment was stored in this chamber in the tower house, however, the sharp angled turn at the entrance to the chamber prevented easy storage of the larger items (Mark Gardiner, pers. comm.). Jordan's castle does have an associated storehouse though that would have accommodated bulkier items such as hides and barrels. This storehouse seems to have been constructed at the same time as the tower house, since a window in the east face of the tower was built so that vision was not impaired by the attached building (Gardiner 2005, 28-9). It is safe to say then, that those tower houses without direct access to the ground floor chamber would not have been suitable for the storage of large items. By deduction then, those with direct access would have been appropriate for this function, even if the specific use of it for this purpose is unable to be identified. This means that half of the tower houses in the study area, excluding those already identified as having a storage function, have the capability for ground floor chamber storage. Due to the ruinous condition of some, where it is impossible to ascertain the floor arrangements, we can tentatively increase the number of tower houses that could have stored large and bulky goods inside the tower house walls. This suggests too that an ancillary storehouse or warehouse may not have been required to be constructed within the bawn or close to the tower house.

Storage rooms are usually ascribed to the ground floor main chamber as they are darker, so not suitable for high status use, and it would mean not having to lift heavy goods upstairs. Eadie warns against this interpretation of the use of ground floor chambers though if there are signs of inhabitation, such as slop holes or a door locking from the inside, and also because almost a third of tower house space would have been consumed by storage if the ground floor was reserved for this function (Eadie 2009, 174). This is a good point worth considering when identifying potential storage rooms in the ground floor of tower houses, however, it stands to reason that multiple uses could be achieved in the one room. It also may be that storage in these commercially-orientated tower houses was a key feature, so inhabitants did not object to 'losing' space.

As at Jordan's castle, those tower houses with a more complicated access to the ground floor chamber may have had an ancillary building that operated as a storehouse. The stone building surviving to foundation level within the bawn at Audley's castle was

initially interpreted as a hall. As part of her investigations, however, Eadie determined that this building could not have served as a hall as the typical medieval seating arrangement for formal dining would not have fit within its walls. Instead, she suggests that it was used as either a service area, stables or as a store (Eadie, forthcoming). Due to the fact that this building is located in a prominent position within the bawn, directly in front of the front (as determined by the architectural features present) of the tower house, and would have been the foremost building in the complex when viewed from the anchorage below it is suggested that this building had a commercial purpose rather than for service. This corresponds with the interpretation that Audley's castle had a maritime orientation, based on its symbolic interactions with the maritime landscape. Consequently it stands to reason that this prominent building was constructed to further this symbolism.

Tower houses would have also been a more pleasant place to do business than at the shorefront. This activity would not have left any trace in either the archaeological or historical record, as previously noted, so can only be insinuated. Business could have been conducted either in the areas reserved for eating or in more private accommodation, either another chamber or the lord's sleeping area. It is argued in this thesis that such activity was likely to occur in a room with decorative features, so as to impress the lord's wealth and suitability as a business partners. Trust would probably have played a greater role than it even does today in economic systems because of the absence of money and coinage in any great amount. Consequently many commercial relationships would have developed from seeing that the potential business partner was a man of means with enough assets to support his business practices.

9.6 5. Industry

This is only a brief discussion of the potential role of industry in the tower house's function, primarily because there is little evidence to suggest that this took place on a large scale. It is far more likely that industrial activity occurred in settlements associated with tower houses. Likewise we would expect to find more evidence for industry in settlements and sites pertaining to the seventeenth century as the economy diversified and in accordance with increased exploitation of natural resources. In particular, we might expect to find evidence of charcoal pits near to woodlands. The in-depth study of this is subject to future research though.

Geophysical survey undertaken at Castleboy castle in 2002 by Geoquest ascertained unusual features that the surveyors suggested might be indicative of metal working taking place in an area adjacent to the tower house. The possibility that these were pits, more specifically furnaces for iron working, was raised. The fact that it seemed to be formed from large boulders indicated that it could have been a blast furnace (Breen 2007, 178). The alternative, also suggested by the report's author, is that the rectangular grouping of the pits may be from a rectangular stone building that no longer survives above ground level. Without full excavation it is impossible to tell which of these options is correct, however, the location of Castleboy would suggest the latter explanation (see below, 'Manorial').

Excavations at Mahee by Ó Baoill (2001) and MacDonald (2002) found slag in an undescribed quantity. This could also indicate the presence of metal workers at the site, although it could also indicate a far lesser scale activity. Excavations by the Discovery Programme's Medieval Rural Settlement Project at Tulsk castle County Roscommon uncovered large amounts of slag that have been tentatively linked to the manufacture of lead musket balls (Niall Brady, pers. comm.). The malleable quality of lead meant that damaged musket balls (usually flattened on one side from hitting a solid object) could be melted down and roughly refashioned again. It is possible that the slag at Mahee castle indicates that this was what was taking place here.

9.7 6. Trade (long distance)

At the end of this thesis it is unfortunate indeed that we cannot identify long distance trade at many tower house sites. Most of the identification rests on the archaeological evidence, meaning that we rely upon excavation and the publication in some detail of the finds. Finds are required to ascertain what was being traded and with where. There is an added complication in that the historical sources, showing exports from the towns, implies that the mainstay of exports from the region were agriculturally based. Thus the organic nature of any deposits pertaining to trade are unlikely to survive, and can only be identified with the aid of archaeological science in the form of grain and bone analysis. We cannot draw any strong conclusions from the reports lodged in the NISMR in Belfast, i.e. those from Mahee, Sketrick and Castleboy castles. Often it was beyond the scope of these projects to undertake detailed analysis of the finds, instead we commonly find lists of artefacts with no detail as to quantity. What must also be considered is that trade may only have taken place at these more isolated (from the port

towns) sites intermittently and for a comparatively short space of time that would affect the deposition rate. The published results of excavation at other sites, namely Breen's from Ringhaddy castle (1997) and McNeill's from the Newark (2005) provide further detail on these finds, indicating the types of imports at such sites and where trade was either directly or indirectly concerned with. The most comprehensive of all is Gardiner's reports from excavation at Jordan's castle (2005), where full pottery, fishbone, charred plant and animal bone analysis was undertaken by experts in each field. The level of detail provided in this report and the time period covered has allowed comparison with the contemporary historical documentation (the Port Books) for the town of Ardglass, which has been a fruitful exercise (see pp 72-4). Pottery has been a good way of dating deposits and indicating trade routes. The pottery from Jordan's castle was analysed, however, the situation at Mahee castle (where medieval pottery was broken up and used as fertiliser in surrounding fields) illustrates how we can often not get a clear picture even from the pottery remains.

There is more evidence in the form of trade identified at the port settlements at which tower houses were present. In these situations we can presume that the tower houses had some involvement in such pursuits, particularly in the case of Strangford, Bangor and Ardglass where we know it was likely that tower houses had a commercial function. At other settlements, notably Donaghadee and Killough, where we have historical evidence for trade in the early seventeenth century, there appears to have been no tower house. This has not been from lack of attempting to identify a tower house that does not survive into the modern day. But in the case of Killough that structure listed in the *ASCD* under 'Destroyed monuments and lost sites' has been corroborated as a windmill, through comparison of this site with other circular tower houses elsewhere in Ireland (*ASCD*, 262; McCarthy 2008; Sherlock 2006).

Although there is no historical evidence discovered through the course of research for it, it is believed that there was more long distance trade taking place at tower houses than both the archaeological and historical records imply. County Down was not the focus of attention by contemporary writers at any stage of the period of history considered in this research. In the later middle ages it was too distant from the Pale to have been noted, and the income from trade not great enough to merit mention in comparison to the economic power houses of Dublin, Wexford and Cork. There is a bias in the record until attempts were made to centralise the Irish economy and to colonise the area for

financial profit accompanying the imposition of the Tudor and Stuart states. Even in this period we are faced with a low survival rate of records and a strong bias in the surviving documentation to what people would do if given a land grant in the area than with what they actually did do once there. In the mid seventeenth century it is the contention here that the rapid rise of Belfast as the dominant Ulster port effectively strangled the trade taking place at the nearby medieval ports and the networks moved away from the study area leading to the desertion of settlements and the abandonment of the construction of tower houses (see pp 188-9 for further context to this scenario).

9.8 7. Fishing

Through the investigation as part of this thesis into tower house involvement in fishing, it was deemed likely that a few sites probably had direct involvement in the fishing industry (see pp 115-20). This included Kilclief castle, identified as a fishing site by McErlean due to the presence of a freshwater stream there and because it was an ecclesiastical site, with church land having the greatest affinity with fishtraps (McErlean & O'Sullivan 2002, 147, 175). Castle Island tower house is another site likely to have been located to take advantage of the potential for fish traps on the Corry Channel in the Quoile River (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 165). We might also expect to see more tower houses constructed along the seaward side of the Ards peninsula if fishing were a lucrative activity, rather than solely along the Lecale sea coast. It may be that the Savage family exercised control over the Ards resources though, as is attested to by the location of an unidentified tower house by the historic Greyabbey fish trap grounds. One of the dated fish traps in Greyabbey Bay corresponds with a likely period of tower house occupation, which implies that this tower house was involved in capitalising on the profits from the fish traps. Due to the marginal nature of fishing, meaning that specific references rarely survive in either the historical or archaeological record, parallels had to be drawn with the conclusions made from other studies of maritime tower houses in Ireland. In this case a midway point had to be drawn for County Down between the situation as it was in south-west and western Ireland where the topography encouraged a dependence on fishing revenue, and south-east Ireland where proximity to south-west England influenced the export market. The location of tower houses in areas suitable for fishing implies that many of them viewed participation in this activity as a supplement to lordly income, but it was unlikely to have been a major source because of the diversity of agricultural pursuits available within landholdings.

There was more evidence for fishing attached to the region's settlements. Much of the fishing activity in the period of tower house occupation was sea fishing, rather than fish trapping, although there is evidence for the latter activity in places in the Quoile River estuary and in the vicinity of Greyabbey (O'Sullivan 2001, 190; McErlean *et al.* 2002, 165). Sea fishing would have probably meant numbers of fishing vessels, and presumably these would have operated out of the ports rather than from specific tower house sites. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that sea fishing took place from tower houses located by the open sea, as discussed above. There is historical evidence for the export of salmon from Ardglass (presumably caught in the Quoile River fish weirs) and archaeological evidence for what were possibly barrels of fish in the storehouse at Jordan's castle (Lewis 1927, 253; Gardiner 2005).

We know of fish processing from later photographic sources, including those of early nineteenth century Ardglass (plate 11a), but it is easy to imagine these activities taking place at harboursides in the medieval period. The tower houses at Ardglass are mostly set back from the harbour (Jordan's, Margaret's and probably King's castles) and the others are set to one side, which would have left open spaces for fish processing, and the loading and unloading of goods onto vessels.

9.9 8. Maritime Networks

Maritime and riverine based networks are probably best exemplified by the presence of ferries, causeways and bridges. Command of these routes would have provided the lord with an additional, or perhaps primary, income through the levying of tolls. Correlation between tower houses and these facets of communication routes has been observed right across Ireland. What is surprising, given the site location and orientation of the majority of tower houses in County Down, is that there are only eight sites identified that potentially controlled such crossings. Of these, five are possibles to have controlled ferry crossings (Strangford and Portaferry castles controlled the historic ferry crossing the Strangford Lough Narrows and Quoile, Castle Island and Walshestown castles in proximity to a likely, though unidentified, ferry crossing the Quoile River downstream of Downpatrick) and the other three (Mahee, Ringhaddy and Sketrick castles) are today located by causeways that probably existed in some form at the time the tower houses were constructed. It is probable that some of these tower houses gathered additional income through the tolling of these resources.

Perhaps this correlation, or lack thereof, is not so surprising given the number of tower houses that are located next to, or within a short distance of, either an anchorage, harbour, quay or landing place, or a combination of these. Based on this fact it seems likely that communication in the study area was via water, be that the sea, lough or river. It is suggested here that the presence of these features allowed the tower houses to form part of a network that fed into the long distance trade taking place at the ports. In this way communication was facilitated and agricultural surplus was easily sold at market in the most cost-effective way. The lower cost of shipping in turn allowing for a more regular interaction with the regional economy. The location by anchorages etc. also allowed the taxation of visiting vessels, be these fishing vessels or those seeking shelter. The problem with this situation, being one of the lowest levels of commercial activity, is that there is hardly any evidence. There is also comparative evidence for this low scale, lordship-centred economic activity from England (see Kowaleski 1995 and Gardiner 2007). Kowaleski's study is fortunate in that it can draw on the excellent medieval trade records from Exeter to examine the town's hinterland and the networks emanating from it. Gardiner's work is more similar to the Irish situation, where there is circumstantial evidence. In his study of hythes and landing places he convincingly argues that low level regional commercial activity would have occurred where it was possible to draw up a boat. This commercial activity could be merely the drying of fish or the situation described above, and could have been facilitated by a transient and seasonally occupied hamlet (Gardiner 2007, 98-9). This is especially true in areas where sandy beaches on which to draw up boats were at a premium. It seems no coincidence therefore that this is also the situation in County Down. These areas offered a taxable opportunity as well as serving the needs of the lordship. Aside from the ability to tax vessels lying under the castle, a sandy beach provided room for shore facilities. Any flat land adjacent to a landing place could perform this function, another taxable opportunity (Naessens 2007, 233-5)

Further investment in regional commercial networks is testified to by the presence of internal boathouses at some of the County Down sites. These are the sites furthest from identified port settlements. The internal boathouse shows that tower house occupants relied on waterborne routes, probably for communication and commerce. At Mahee castle, we know that the late sixteenth-century occupant, Captain Browne, intended to develop his land grant for economic benefit and increasing Crown revenue (Petition of Thomas Brown and Thomas Burrows to Queen Elizabeth, 1571 *Cal. S. P. Ire. 1571-5*,

101-02). It seems probable that the internal boathouse, and quay structure, were investments to allow vessels to approach the site, otherwise subject to tidal flats, to further this aim.

Consequently the position of tower houses by places suitable for the sheltering of boats implies attempts to profit financially, either through the taxation of strange vessels or as an aid to ship their own produce and for communication. As previously mentioned, it was vastly more expensive to transport items by land-based roads than by water, estimated at land transport costing more than maritime after a distance of *c.* nineteen kilometres in the case of moving building stone (Gardiner 2007, 90). The expense of land-based transport must have been even more in Down due to the county's extensive woodlands, and the drumlin country comprised of small bogs interspersed between hills. That the road system wasn't regularly used is supported by Josias Bodley visiting in 1602-3, who couldn't find his way on the 'main' road because it was so infrequently trodden leading to him getting lost and being rescued. This transport problem would have been compounded when moving bulky agricultural produce, particularly barrels of fish and grains, live animals and salted products and hides, so would have made sense to operate within a maritime network. We also have evidence that ports tended to develop in places most convenient to their hinterlands, if not close to these hinterlands. This was the reason attributed to Donaghadee's rise as a port in the seventeenth century, as it was possible to walk cattle from the Lagan Valley. Both the early stages of port development at Belfast and the more established Carrickfergus would have been closer in terms of distance to this region, but the topography mitigated against walking cattle to these ports and it was obviously not possible to navigate the river by boat otherwise this would have been employed as the most cost effective option. The relationships between ports and hinterlands is discussed in more detail on pp 121-3.

It should be noted furthermore that all but four of the County Down tower houses could have fed into this proposed water-based network. The tower houses that do this are all located by places at which it was possible to anchor a boat. These four that are not located in close proximity with easy access to an anchoring place are Castle Bright, Bonecastle, Castleboy and Castleskreen castles. It is proposed that they instead are examples of tower houses with a greater manorial function.

9.10 9. Manorial

It is very probable that at least all of the now rural tower houses in the study area would have had a manorial function. It is debateable whether the urban tower houses similarly served this function, as comparative studies and placename evidence would suggest that some town residents had country estates. Such manorial functions might be a manorial or leet court being held at the tower house as well as it operating as an informal place for grievances to be aired. Certainly the tower houses would have acted as centres of administration for the estate, a place where rents were paid for example. It is suggested too that they would have been located at a place convenient for the lord to administer and monitor his landholdings. The manorial tower house would have been associated with a parish church and agricultural buildings. These buildings and other features, such as mills, warrens and barns have been described as 'attempts by lords to control production' (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 169).

It is very likely that there was medieval or post-medieval settlement desertion at what now appear to be isolated, rural sites. It is entirely probable that the tower house formed the focal point of small settlements. Ringhaddy would appear to have been a site that underwent post-medieval settlement desertion suggested by the location of a church near to, and contemporaneous with, the tower house. Those tower houses that were the focus of colonisation efforts in the seventeenth century (as identified from the sites mentioned in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.*) would probably have had settlements attached to them as well. As locations for renewed economic activity and investment these tower houses would have attracted settlers and natives alike. Examples of this include Ringhaddy and Mahee castles, as well as Killyleagh, which was likely a medieval settlement because of it being the Whyte family's Dufferin caput, but was reorganised and planned by the time Thomas Raven mapped it in the 1620s, as well as the possible tower house at Newtownards. The placename evidence, showing the survival of older Irish names in many cases, suggests that early reliance was on Irish tenants at these sites, at least until larger scale Scottish immigration started, when a mixing of ethnicities would have occurred.

One has to wonder about the extent of the now deserted rural settlements though. It seems probable that some at least cannot have been terribly numerous in terms of occupants and houses. This is particularly true of those tower houses located on the Strangford Lough islands, where there would have been a much reduced land area for

settlement. It is a possibility that the settlement was spread over neighbouring islands, however, using the causeways to travel between fields and houses. Thomas Raven's maps of Hamilton's Dufferin estate implies that many of these colonial settlements were comprised of only a few houses, and these not constructed from durable materials. It would seem that they were scattered about in cleared parts of woodland, with the town fields close by. Possibly they communicated with elsewhere in the lordship by means of water based transport, as traversing the woods would have been difficult, at least until they had been later cleared.

At a minimum an attempt to encourage a nucleated settlement was made at Kilclief castle - a borough was created, presumably adjacent to the tower house, in *c.* 1203-4. No trace of this settlement survives into the modern day which either means that desertion occurred at some point, or the settlement was never a success. The lack of development at medieval boroughs seems to have been a common situation, with Murphy and Potterton estimating that of the more than 170 boroughs established in Ireland only about fifty became commercial centres (Murphy & Potterton 2010, 192). Kilclief is a potentially good example for illustrating the cross-over between the different tower house functions. We know that Kilclief had a commercial function in that it was a navigational aid and was located by fishing grounds. The sandy beach in front of the tower house, quite rare along the coastline, also suggests that the site operated as at least a landing place. It is very likely that it served as a manorial centre for the ecclesiastical landholdings of the Bishops of Down.

There is a tendency to write-off tower houses in maritime and riverine locations as not being manorial in function because they have not been determined as 'central' to the manor. Such studies have focussed on identifying the geographic extent of the manor and identifying the location of tower houses within these in what is an adaptation of central place theory. It is argued here that this interpretation is too disposed to one concept of what centrality means, taking it as being the absolute central point of the estate. Interpretation must focus on the local topography and consider contemporary notions of a central place. In County Down land based communication would have been extremely difficult owing to the terrain of drumlins interspersed with bogs. One only has to look at the modern road system in the county to see this – roads twist along the upper reaches of drumlins and straight line distances between places are multiplied several times over. This situation is made even longer when travelling the roads

connecting the Strangford Lough islands. Considering the cost of land based transportation of goods in the medieval period, it is easy to see why communication was so reliant on maritime routeways and navigable stretches of river. Consequently a location in the centre of a manor may have been a completely unfeasible site when considering the efforts required to travel there. It is instead proposed that in many cases a maritime or riverine location was the most central place in the manor in terms of ease of access. It would be interesting indeed for a future study to examine these sites in relation to their manors, weighting topographical and communication concerns to the site location.

As with all these maritime located tower houses, it seems likely that the lord chose a place convenient for him. Since lands could be dispersed over the lough, including on both sides, across numerous islands and considering the aforementioned difficulties with land-based transportation, these maritime tower houses would have made good estate centres in terms of travelling from and to different parts of the lordship. This would have been likely in the case of the Bishop of Down, who originally built Kilclief castle. His territory, both in terms of his own landholdings and his diocese, spread over a huge area, particularly when considering the vagaries of medieval transportation. It would have been crucial for him to be in the best location for visiting these lands and for travel farther afield.

Identifying manorial landscapes in Ireland has proven problematic, like the identification of features based on studies of manors in England. This problem has been part addressed by Murphy and O'Conor in explaining the low identification rate of fishponds in the Irish medieval landscape (Murphy & O'Conor 2006, 56). If a manor was located by a river or coast then the need for artificial cultivation of fish was rendered unnecessary. Interesting too for this study is the rabbit warren marked on the first edition Ordnance Survey maps at Kearney Point at the south of the Ards peninsula. This rabbit warren, of unidentified date, suggests that a manor could be present in coastal areas, indeed in this case the warren is on the shoreline. Coney Island, near Ardglass, suggests the presence of rabbit warrens in the vicinity of this port town too. The storehouses identified at some tower houses could also have stored agricultural produce, as a barn or granary. As well as this, we do not know what ancillary buildings that served a manorial function existed contemporaneous with the tower houses. Unusually perhaps, we have little standing remains evidence for late medieval mills.

References to a mill at Killyleagh and at Killough occur at a later date, but many of the tower houses are not located by streams suitable for powering a mill. Perhaps milling took place in the non-navigable stretches of the Quoile River, upstream of the tower houses, or the lack of identified mills could indicate a preference for pastoral agriculture. Future study may also ascertain the date of the deer parks marked on the first edition OS maps.

One such deer park is depicted near Ardkeen castle, a motte and bailey with a later tower house constructed atop the motte. This deer park may be associated with Anglo-Norman activity at the site, witnessed in the motte and bailey, but may have continued in use contemporaneous with the tower house. It is further suggested here that Ardkeen could make a good small-scale study of designed landscapes at castles in Ireland. The approach to the motte/tower house is quite complex. Coming either from the bay south-east of the site, or along the causeway from the mainland, to the east of the tower house there is a route that follows the course of least resistance, in part marked as a trackway on the first edition OS maps. Deviation from this route means a steep climb up a drumlin. This route leads to the well preserved entrance to the bailey, seen in a fosse that encircles approximately half of the site, the side not enclosed being a steep drop to flat land and the lough. From the bailey entrance the access to the tower house is remarkably similar to that at Audley's castle. This is based on the location of the surviving part of the tower house – what appears to be a projecting turret containing a spiral stair. If we take this to be the front of the tower house, based on comparison with the gatehouse style tower houses elsewhere in the study area, then the approach is from the rear of the site. Unlike at Audley's castle, the small area enclosed by the bailey would have limited the extent of ancillary buildings. The church to the south of the tower house and the orientation of the trackway to the tower house would suggest that there was a settlement south of the tower house at the small bay there. It is further suggested that this was a fishing settlement, there may be signs of fishtraps in the bay, and the tidal effects feeding into this bay would have made it an excellent location for trapping. A corn mill is marked on the Ordnance Survey maps to the south east of the site, now abandoned, with an extensive deer park recorded in the townland name to the south of this mill. There is therefore the possibility that Ardkeen is the site of a once quite sizeable medieval manor, with a carefully laid out access from the mainland maximising the potential of all these components. Ardkeen also shows how a manor

could make best use of both land and water and how a maritime orientation does not preclude a manorial function.

It is deemed likely that even urban tower houses would have had a manorial role to some extent. At a minimum they would have been a place to receive produce for sale from the countryside and a location for storing this agricultural produce. It was similarly observed by Naessens in County Galway that there was a tendency for urban merchants from Galway City to acquire lands in the countryside, which would have allowed them to extend their product base as well as having lordly connotations for those merchants 'on the make' (Naessens 2009, 76). It is probable that this was a situation that was taking place in Down too, with merchants from the port towns and later, Belfast, because of the profit that could be made from an individual's or family's connections to the land.

Fieldwork has suggested that a number of the County Down tower houses fulfilled an identifiable manorial function. Castle Bright, Bonecastle and Castleskreen tower houses in Lecale and Castleboy castle in Ards seem to operate as manorial centres and had no maritime orientation. This is based upon examination of their location – they are located much farther inland than the other tower houses in the region, and in the case of the former three it is likely that this was because of links with the market and ecclesiastical town of Downpatrick. They are also not located by a navigable water source. As previously stated, Castle Bright has a commanding view over the sea approaches to Strangford Lough, but its distance from the sea and its altitude combined with the difficulty in reaching this height from the sea means that direct contact with the maritime landscape is improbable. It is very possible that Castle Bright served a symbolic role within the maritime landscape, but since it is not intervisible with another tower house it seems unlikely that it served as a watchtower. The placename evidence suggests too that these sites were more manorial in outlook. The three tower house sites all neighbour townlands with names such as Marshallstown, Erenagh and Coniamstown, all of which imply medieval manorial activity, such as the presence of rabbit warrens in the case of Coniamstown. Erenagh is the townland lying between Castleskreen and Bonecastle tower houses and this placename suggests that these lands were hereditary church lands. It is not too much of a presumption to suggest that either, or both, of these tower houses were constructed by members of the erenagh family who controlled the estate thereabouts.

In the barony of Ards Castleboy castle is an anomaly within the study area. Despite being located close to the coast, less than one kilometre, it is situated on flat land between drumlins and has no view of the nearby sea. The two nearest sites, Kirkistown castle and Ballyspurge, the latter a defended house, have a commanding view of the long sandy beach and bay. Geophysical survey of Castleboy has suggested that metal working activity was taking place in the area between the tower house and the (now ruined) church (SMR file DOW025:016). It is the contention here though that the second proposition contained in this report, that what was found here are actually the remains of rectangular buildings, is more probable. A water source would have been required for the scale of metal-working indicated by the geophysical results and there is no source of running water within the immediate vicinity of the site (the nearest stream is *c.* 400 metres away). The orientation of the tower house, *c.* 100 metres to the south-south-east of the church would imply that these buildings were either ancillary buildings of the tower house, or are the remnants of a small settlement that potentially ran perpendicular to a track between the tower house and church.

9.11 Conclusion

Utilising studies that examine the internal arrangements and functions of tower houses has shown itself (apart from being useful in their own right) of great benefit when considering more landscape based interpretations. The internal properties of the tower houses were not a focus in this thesis, save where they had previously identified features through the archaeological surveys pertaining to participation in commerce and in the maritime landscape. Application here on a small scale of the results of Eadie's investigations of the internal dynamics of tower houses in conjunction with a landscape orientation has shown how an inclusive consideration of medieval and early modern building forms is essential in any attempt to obtain a true measure of their role in society. Both types of study – of the internal and the landscape - inform one another and uncover previously unconsidered topics.

This consideration of the potential functions of the County Down tower houses has illustrated that tower houses were essentially multi-functional. This multi-functionalism probably explains the success of the building type from the fourteenth right through to the mid seventeenth centuries. It has become apparent, however, that the individual

tower houses fulfilled the functions outlined above to differing extents, with some being more commercial or manorial, for example, than others.

A purpose of this thesis was to identify the commercially-orientated tower house, and to develop a definition of this that could be applied to identification in the field. This is actually two different questions: first, how do we define a tower house as a separate identity from port buildings that externally resemble tower houses; second, what criteria was used in the course of this thesis, either consciously or subconsciously, to categorise a tower house as having a commercial function?

In terms of defining a tower house, and including it as such in the study, the defensive function was rejected as inconsequential to the effective operation of the site. What, in hindsight, was the determining factor was whether it provided a residential function or not. Under this criteria, the Newark was considered to be not a tower house, which was straightforward and to be expected based on McNeill's findings from excavation. What is more complicated are those examples where the residential function was present, but not on a full-time basis. In this category fall Cowd, Horn and Bangor 'tower houses'. These three tower houses appear, based on the historical evidence, to have provided temporary accommodation for visiting mariners. Thus they fulfilled the residential function, but were primarily commercial in function. It is open to debate whether this makes them 'true' tower houses.

The function of a tower house as an administrative centre has been a deciding factor in defining the tower houses of County Down as well. Unlike the residential function though, all of the tower houses fulfilled this role. In the case of four of the sites, this administrative function was connected to a manorial context, more of a traditional line interpretation of what an administrative function entailed. It is proposed that the commercially-orientated tower house also fulfilled an administrative function, albeit in a more business-like sense. These were centres of estate economic management and regional trade in the case of the more rural examples, and places to administer long distance trade in the urban examples. This study therefore shows that the definition of a castle, and a tower house in particular, as a castellated site with a defensive, residential and administrative function is possibly too narrow and ambiguous. It leaves aside the temporality of these functions, the appearance of these functions and the diversity of functions, all of which this study has highlighted. It also applies a medieval definition

of a castle to the early modern period, a period in which the tower house also had to maintain a colonial function in the case of those several constructed by and occupied by settlers. There doesn't appear to be much of a difference in the maritime economic use of tower houses in these two periods, the end goal being the only dissimilarity, which raises a further issue as to our categorisation of these periods in terms of the use and function of buildings.

The conclusions that can be drawn to identify tower houses with a commercial outlook, are as follows:

- Most tower houses are associated with a settlement. This may be a settlement that has survived into the modern day, or one that is believed to have existed based on the tower house's relation to other structures that imply a settlement, such as churches, or the historical record (e.g. borough charter, intention to develop a settlement stated in petition). These settlements were engaged in trade and in fishing
- Most tower houses are located within 500 metres of, and with easy access to, navigable water (note that the allocation of 500 metres is too generous for almost all of these sites)
- A boat can be sheltered close to the tower house in most cases
- Most tower houses have a commanding view of the maritime or riverine landscape. This has been determined on the basis of the orientation of the most elaborate features and/or entrance and/or approach
- Most of the tower houses have the potential for an internal storage function in their ground floor chambers (i.e. there is the ability to store large and bulky items in this chamber with no obstacles to prevent this), if one has not already been identified
- Most are located by a marine water source, be that the sea or lough
- Smaller numbers have identifiable trade links, merchant or mariner occupants, dual residential and commercial function, command a ferry or causeway, are associated with fishing, or an identified storehouse/warehouse

The analysis of methods of determining trade at tower house sites also proves the benefit of utilising a historical archaeology methodology. A number of further sites were identified as having a long-distance trading link because of archaeological

excavation and archaeological investigation of features. By adopting one or other of these disciplines, it is easy to see how much of the available evidence would have been lost. In this area, the thesis has succeeded in gaining a more inclusive picture of past events.

The thesis has also been successful in determining a number of sites in the county that are predominantly commercial in their function. The results above are similarly encouraging. Most of the tower houses were identified as having a maritime outlook, based on symbolic presentation, location and correlation with maritime sites. Until there is further excavation it is impossible to tell what further evidence there is for a commercial role at each of these sites. The historic documentation has been combed for references to sites and settlements and it is likely that this will remain the case unless a new record source comes to light. At a minimum there is support here for the idea of a regional commercial network, with tower houses forming a part of port hinterlands and thus indirectly interacting with the wider world.

The study has also critically highlighted the importance of viewing tower houses in conjunction with their landscapes and settlement. This landscape approach has allowed the identification and examination of previously unconsidered tower house functions. More importantly perhaps, it has shown how tower house functions interacted, contributed to, and supported one another. For instance, defensive features imply both defence and symbolism, but when presented towards a large anchorage or a harbour becomes a statement of a merchant's success in business.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to characterise the maritime economy in an Irish regional context. More specifically, it has examined the role of the tower house in the maritime economy. It has further aimed to identify changes in the maritime economy, using tower houses as a medium through which to examine how these changes impacted on society. In this area attention has more specifically been focussed on whether economic change was cause for the cessation of construction of the building type in the seventeenth century.

Intrinsic to the study is the discussion as to whether tower houses, or any archaeological monument for that matter, can be an effective as a means of analysing human action in a socio-economic context. Central to this discussion has been the attempt to identify the extent and nature of a commercial orientation within the sample from the study area in terms of their location and function. The study has attempted to redress, at least in part, the gap in academic knowledge noted by Breen whereby 'one of the most apparent things about the study of this post-medieval landscape...is how little we know about this period...We know little about the actual mechanisms of the fishing, communications and trade that took place' (Breen 2007b, 217).

The thesis opened with a chapter illustrating how a tower house could facilitate a commercial environment. It was explained how trade has not been the sole basis for determining participation in commerce, but how an involvement in the maritime economy could be determined by architectural features and the utilisation of natural resources. Strangford castle was employed as a specific case study within the sample whereby it was illustrated how different functions could be accommodated within the building. This discussion showed how some tower houses had an identifiable commercial orientation. More subtle indications were also analysed, to illustrate how the manorial function of a castle could contribute to commerce. Identification of the correlation between tower houses and anchorages and landing places showed how surplus goods could be exported from sites and how occupants could profit from taxing maritime activity. The issue of tower house relationships with settlements was also raised, highlighting the possibility of settlement desertion which could have obscured our knowledge of how networks operated. This chapter also introduced the 'tower house', in other words those port buildings that architecturally resemble tower houses yet serve a commercial function. This served to highlight how difficult it is to separate

castle roles from one another, suggesting instead that functions were present to differing extents.

Chapter three discussed the evidence that we have for trade within the study area. In this three situations were observed. One, that we have considerably more evidence for trade at coastal port settlements rather than at specific tower houses. This has illustrated the importance of examining how tower houses and settlements interacted with one another through the medium of maritime networks if we are to be able to identify the role in trade of these monuments. Two, we have considerably more primary documentary evidence for the later period of tower house occupation (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). This has meant that by necessity identification of medieval trade has relied upon documentation in secondary sources of academic literature since the evidence is formed from disparate and occasional mentions. This is not to say that there was less trading activity taking place in the study area in the late medieval period, but rather that documentation has either not survived or was not significant enough to be extensively accounted for. This contributes to the third conclusion, that archaeology has a significant role in identifying trade at both settlement and tower house level. Much of the identification of trade came from this source, indicating the importance of an interdisciplinary methodology.

There is similarly little evidence for the types of ship used in maritime commerce in the study area, as discussed in the fourth chapter. Identification of these vessels has relied upon comparative studies and pictorial representations. Based on these assumptions it would appear that both late medieval and early modern period vessels would have been able to approach the anchorages at the tower houses. This could also have had the effect of increasing the potential size of hinterlands since vessels could have accessed the source of goods production and easily and cost-effectively transport such items to port. Technological limitations in boat-building may also have influenced the choice of tower house site, whereby occupants could tax boats that required shelter.

A small number of tower houses in the study area may have had a function in aiding maritime navigation. This was suggested as a function for Cowd castle in Ardglass, and for Kilclief castle. While most of the tower houses probably did not facilitate this, the majority were located or had features oriented to aid their visual and physical command

over the maritime landscape. The examination of navigational use formed the focus for the fifth chapter.

Based on regional comparison with England and with other parts of Ireland, it would seem that control of fishing would probably have been another role of the tower house. There is little historical evidence for fishing in the study area, and it would seem that tower houses benefited from control of fisheries to varying extents. It was argued that income from fishing would have been less important to those tower houses constructed on the shore of Strangford Lough. Here fish trapping probably would have provided a source of fish for local and domestic consumption, but the late medieval preference for sea fishing would indicate that perhaps fish was not trapped for export in Strangford Lough. Those tower houses along the Quoile River estuary may have been located to take advantage of river fishing, particularly salmon trapping. River fish were in demand as a high status foodstuff, which would have meant a potentially significant income for tower house occupants who controlled these fisheries. Those sites located along the coast would have been in the best position to profit from fishing, since most fish were caught in offshore fisheries. Ardglass was particularly well-located to take advantage of this and this probably at least in part explains the density of sites in this settlement. The comparatively lower numbers of tower houses constructed along the eastern shore of the Ards peninsula and seaward coast of Lecale would imply that there was not large scale involvement in the fishing industry. This was possibly because land was suitable for mixed agriculture, which meant that there was less reliance on fish as a staple foodstuff. Tower house construction does decline during the mid sixteenth century, a time when fish exports from Ireland declined (Flavin 2004, 10). This correlation could imply a greater reliance on fishing for income than could be identified. Despite this it was concluded at the end of chapter six that fishing was probably a supplement to lordly income with most fish being caught for local consumption (the commercial herring fisheries offshore from Ardglass being the notable exception).

Chapter seven focussed on identifying the hinterlands of each coastal settlement and explaining how tower houses were located within these. The hinterlands determined are probable oversimplifications of a much more extensive network that led to large and shifting hinterlands in practice. It was proposed that tower houses were central to these networks, forming staging posts and points along a number of maritime networks. In effect the tower houses were the 'landing places' and 'creeks' identified in other

regional studies as commercial posts in a hierarchy of settlements. The result of this is that maritime hinterlands had the potential to encompass the entire coastal and riverine parts of the study area. It is also very likely that each tower house had its own individual hinterland, even if this was just its immediate environs, if they did form points in these networks.

In the first of the two discussion chapters, following on from the data chapters summarised above, the influence of the maritime economy in contributing to the decline of tower house popularity was extensively discussed. Assessment of this was one of the main aims of the thesis. It was found that the increasing influence of the port of Belfast probably accelerated decline by drawing attention away from the networks formed by the tower houses. A reduction in the number of landowners likely also reduced the need for a number of tower houses. Development of road communication and market towns in inland areas very possibly similarly reduced the need for maritime transport routes. While the period of tower house cessation of construction corresponded with technological advances in warfare, it was argued that this was less likely to have been a direct cause for this event. The economic repercussions of wars waged in this way, however, were determined to have been contributors to the demise of the tower house. In this way, warfare has been suggested as masking the true causes for this decline.

In the last discussion chapter, evidence from the data chapters was collated to discuss and identify the functions of the County Down tower houses. This chapter reiterated the need to view tower houses as multi-functional. The ability for tower houses to serve a variety of functions probably explains its popularity as a building form. It was determined that the functions discussed in this chapter were present to varying extents at the case study tower houses, with some being more commercial or more manorial in outlook than others, for example. In light of the small number of buildings that were determined as not being tower houses, they were rejected from this category on the basis of them not providing a residence for a lord, his family and retinue. Finally, a number of features were identified that typifies the commercial tower house. Most were found to have a maritime economic outlook, this was determined on the basis of their command of the maritime landscape and their strong correlation with anchorages, landing places etc. This enabled them to form settlement hinterlands and engage directly with the economy where these features were in place. Until there is more

excavation at rural tower house sites in maritime locations, it is impossible to ascertain any additional evidence for a commercial role.

In conclusion then, it was possible to identify the role of tower houses in the maritime economy and by examining the commercial capabilities of these sites we have been able to determine the financial affairs of their inhabitants. The commercial function was present to varying extent, but this was a function that could be accommodated by the tower house. Although this study has gone some way in identifying the maritime economy in a small region, and has advanced our knowledge of the physical manifestation of this, the thesis has highlighted a number of issues that still need to be addressed.

Future Research

This thesis has highlighted a number of areas which future scholarly work would do well to address. Foremost perhaps is further study into the reasons for the decline of the tower house. The discussion regarding this in chapter eight is intended to provide a starting point by suggesting an economic cause for the abandonment of the tower house in the mid seventeenth century. It would be of great benefit to the discipline if tower house decline were investigated in other regions of Ireland and other potential causes for this decline were argued. Such studies could be compared with settlement patterns elsewhere in Europe with the ultimate aim of identifying whether the relocation or establishment of towns and high status residences was symptomatic of the modern era or whether it was due to colonisation.

Another key research question that has been reinforced through the writing of this thesis are the reasons why some individuals chose to build tower houses and others houses (either defended or manor) in the early seventeenth century. Through the course of this research a commercial argument was used to explain this, combined with the possibility that it may be simply due to personal choice and localised factors. Future study into the decline of tower houses in other Irish regions could explore the interaction and overlap between these two residence types.

More could be understood about localised coastal trade involving tower houses from new regional studies in Ireland. These could focus on areas with better record survival and examine in further detail than was possible here the extant late medieval customs

accounts and port records from Scotland and western England. It would be beneficial for these studies to emphasise the available later medieval records since this has been the record source patchiest in its coverage.

A further issue are the reasons why settlements had the number of tower houses that they did. Ardglass from current evidence seems to have a very high density of tower houses for its status, especially when compared to Strangford which only has one known surviving tower house, yet is repeatedly referred to as being of an equal status to Ardglass. Perhaps preservation is the issue here, for example, the precise number of tower houses in both Carlingford and Carrickfergus cannot be identified while Ardglass is fortunate in having an apparently high survival rate. A study that seeks to identify insofar as possible tower houses that leave no trace on the landscape, particularly those in urban areas where we might expect a higher than usual destruction rate, would be very useful when extrapolating estimated figures for the number of tower houses in Ireland.

This study has examined the maritime economy, but future research into the land-based economy would provide an excellent complement to the findings here. This research could focus on agriculture and woodland cover as the most obvious economic uses of the land but also manorial landscape features such as deer parks, rabbit warrens and fishponds. This study has identified a number of possible deer parks and sites of rabbit warrens that it was not within its remit to examine further.

Finally, also possibly identified through the course of fieldwork for this thesis, is the issue of settlement desertion, whether medieval or post-medieval. It is often very difficult to identify deserted settlements in the Irish landscape but a new methodology for their identification might be to examine approaches to tower houses and other high status sites. The approach to Ardkeen castle, for example, progresses in such a way as to suggest that the route passed through a settlement positioned to the side of the church. Examining how tower houses were positioned with regards to churches, as at Ardkeen and at Castleboy castles, might also indicate where contemporary and now abandoned settlements might have been. This approach could stand to be tested further within this study area and in other parts of Ireland.

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Appendix

Glossary of terms

Burden An old term for a ship's tonnage, or the weight of a ship's cargo, evolving from the number of tuns (wine casks) on which tax was to be paid.

Carvel A construction method in ship-building that, unlike clinker construction (see below) the wood planks lie edge to edge, flush with one another. The result of this construction was a stronger hull, capable of supporting the increased weight of more sails and allowing for larger vessel size.

Castleward Castleward is used to refer to the tower house whereas Castle Ward refers to the Ward family estate.

Clandeboye The territory held by the Gaelic-Irish Clandeboye (Clann Aedh Buidhe) O'Neills in the late middle ages, roughly corresponding to south modern County Antrim and north modern County Down.

Clinker-built A ship-building method using wooden planks that overlapped with one another. The two best known medieval examples of clinker-built ships are the cog (see pp 79-80) and the hulk (see p. 80).

Gatehouse type An informal term used to describe the appearance of some tower houses in County Down. This descriptive term was coined because they resemble the gatehouses of great stone castles. These sites have two projecting turrets at the front, joined by a machicolation arch at roof level.

Head port The highest port in the port hierarchy developed under Elizabeth I. The head port was the main administrative port for a region and was the place from which customs were assessed and paid.

Outport A subsidiary port to another, more economically or politically significant port. Outports were often developed due to access issues at the more senior port, for example silting in the harbour or not being able to anchor boats above a certain draught or number. In Ireland, Dalkey is probably the best known example of an outport as it was the landing place for goods bound for Dublin.

Pilotage The use of visual references on the ground (such as natural features) as an aid to sailing on keeping on course.

Pladdy Former islands, now completely eroded leaving areas of loose material, usually shallow rock outcrops exacerbated by the build-up of sand. They are particularly common within Strangford Lough where tidal effects caused exposure with the tides.

Plantation Plantation with a capital 'P' is used to signify the official policy pursued in the escheated counties. While plantation with a lower case 'p' is used to distinguish the former from the unofficial settlement of Ireland by Scottish and English immigrants.

Port Book A document or set of documents detailing the arrival and departure of vessels from a specific port, or group of ports, between two dates (usually Michaelmas to Michaelmas). Port Books include such details as the goods being transported, the names of the ship's mariner and master and the vessel's capacity (tonnage).

'Tower house' A site determined through the course of study to have had a primarily commercial function. A residential function was either part-time, temporary or not present. Since these sites do not provide a permanent residence for a lord, his family and retinue they have been distinguished from other tower houses proper by use of single quotation marks. See p. 32 for a fuller discussion of this term.

Abbreviations used in the text

AFM	*Annals of the Four Masters*
ASCD	*Archaeological Survey of County Down* (Jope, 1966)
Cal. Close Rolls	Calendar of Close Rolls
Cal. Pat. Rolls	Calendar of Patent Rolls
Cal. Justic. Rolls	Calendar of Justiciary Rolls Ireland
Cal. S.P. Ire.	Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland
PRONI	Public Records Office of Northern Ireland
PRIA	Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, section C
NISMR	Sites and Monuments Record of Northern Ireland (Hill St. Belfast, now partially available online)
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
UJA	*Ulster Journal of Archaeology*

Site name

Ardkeen

SMR Site number

DOW025:005

OS grid reference

578506

Barony

Ards

Description of location

Ardkeen castle is located on the west coast of the Ards peninsula, in other words on the eastern shore of Strangford Lough. It is *c.* four miles north of Portaferry town and to the west of the present-day Ardkeen village. The tower house is constructed on the summit of a motte and bailey atop a drumlin that is connected to the mainland by means of a causeway. To the south of the site is an abandoned parish church and graveyard. There are some signs of medieval use for this church in the chancel-headed window in the north wall. The earliest gravestone seen was from the 1640s. There are 'ruins' marked on the first edition 6 inch OS maps to the south-east of the site, but at the time of site visit this area was too overgrown for full investigation.

It is surrounded by water on all sides, save for the narrow neck of land forming the causeway. Due to the presence of offshore islands, local knowledge would have been required to navigate to the site. There is a landing place below the headland called 'Seneschal's Point', its name attributed to the site's occupation by the Savage family who were Seneschals of Ulster (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 97). The sheltered bays formed by the islands in the lough would have provided safe harbour for vessels, and would have also created a good environment for fish trapping.

Description of tower house

The tower house survives only partially at foundation level. This extant foundation looks to be the base of a projecting turret. It contains a spiral stair, suggesting that the tower house was originally a 'gatehouse type' tower house in appearance. It is therefore probable that it was constructed in the mid fifteenth century, comparing it to the dates of other identified 'gatehouse type' tower houses in the study area. In the absence of contemporary depictions, we cannot extrapolate more on the features of the tower house.

Since the tower house is constructed atop a motte this suggests that any ancillary structures were located within the bailey, marked by a fosse to the east and an escarpment to the west, or on the land nearer the church.

The approach to the tower house, a trackway along the flattest part of the causeway running alongside a shingle beach and landing place then up the least steep side of the drumlin, is reminiscent of the approach to Audley's castle. The alignment of the route compared to the position of the church suggests that there may have been a settlement, now deserted, associated with the site.

The height of the site means that the tower house has a commanding view over the lough and to the water-based approaches to the site (plate 28).

See *ASCD*, 225 for further information.

Unusual features

No unusual features were noted, due to the ruinous state of the tower house.

Noteworthy was that recent ploughing in the field through which the approach passes had turned up a large quantity of material, including post-medieval and modern pottery, brick, roof slates and glass. This further suggests that there was a settlement associated with the site, possibly abandoned at the same time the tower house was demolished in *c.* 1717 (*ASCD*, 225).

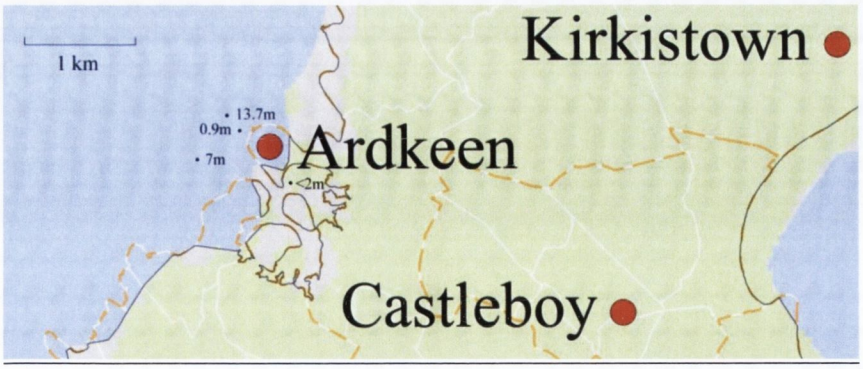


Figure 8

Location of Ardkeen castle on the west shore of the Ards peninsula, with water depths near the site marked

The largest medieval vessel would have required a water depth of approximately four metres in which to anchor (Greenhill 1995, 226)



Plate 28

View of Strangford Lough from front of Ardkeen castle

Site name

Audley's

SMR Site number

DOW031:006

OS grid reference

578506

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Audley's castle is located on the west coast of Strangford Lough, approximately one and a half kilometres sailing distance north-west of Strangford town [it is considerably further by road] (figure 10). It is located atop a rocky prominence – the southern end of this prominence is a cliff (plate 29), while the northern end slopes down to the lough shore. The lough is to the east and south of the site. The location of the tower house gives it a very commanding view over the lough, particularly towards Strangford town and the lough entrance (the Narrows). To the east is 'Audley's Roads' a deep-water anchoring place for boats, there are a further number of other, more shallow, landing places along the nearby coast.

Audley's castle is intervisible with both Castleward and Portaferry castle (figure 10). Audley's castle was purchased by the neighbouring Ward family (of Castleward) in 1765. The site appears to have been incorporated into the Castle Ward plans. The siting of Audley's castle suggests that it might have been used as a folly or scenic vantage point within the later estate.

Description of tower house

Audley's castle is an excellent example of the 'gatehouse type' tower house of County Down (plate 30). Due to its architectural similarities with Kilclief castle, which can be dated, it is likely that Audley's castle was constructed in the mid fifteenth century. It has two projecting turrets – one contains the spiral stairs, the other the latrine. The two turrets are connected by a machicolation arch. It has one chamber at each storey, rising to three storeys in height with a wall walk at roof level. The entrance to the ground floor chamber is protected by a small lobby in which Eadie has identified the presence of a porter who controlled access (Eadie 2009, 174).

The tower house is surrounded by a stone bawn wall that survives to foundation level (plate 2). Within this bawn are the foundations of a stone building, described as 'hall-like' by Sweetman but which Eadie thinks may have been a storehouse (Sweetman 1999, 172; Eadie forthcoming). The positioning of this building in front of the tower house would suggest that the different elements of the site combined to provide a commanding presence over the adjacent anchorage. This is further aided by the height of the site. Indeed, the height has been interpreted as indicating a defensive aspect but access appears to have come from the less steep ground to the rear of the tower house, where there is also a shallow depth anchorage. In this respect the approaches to Ardkeen and Audley's castles are remarkably similar and shows how the approach to a tower house could be controlled.

See *ASCD*, 225-7 for more detail.

Unusual features

This is one of the few sites where we have standing remains evidence for a storehouse associated with a tower house. It is also unusual in that it is a site for which we can determine the precise access route, presumably other tower houses had similar prescribed approaches now obscured by destruction of associated buildings and bawns etc.

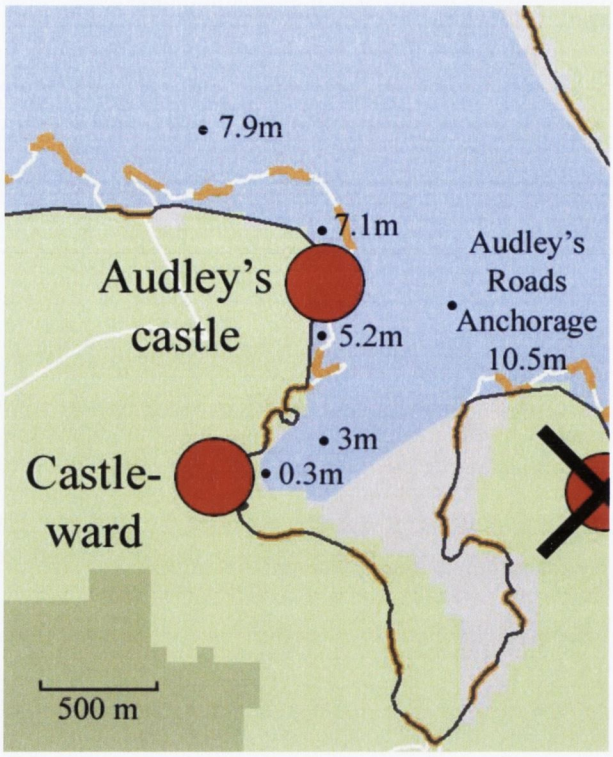


Figure 9

Location of Audley's castle and Castleward, with water depths and Audley's Roads anchorage marked



Plate 29

Rock escarpment to the south of Audley's castle

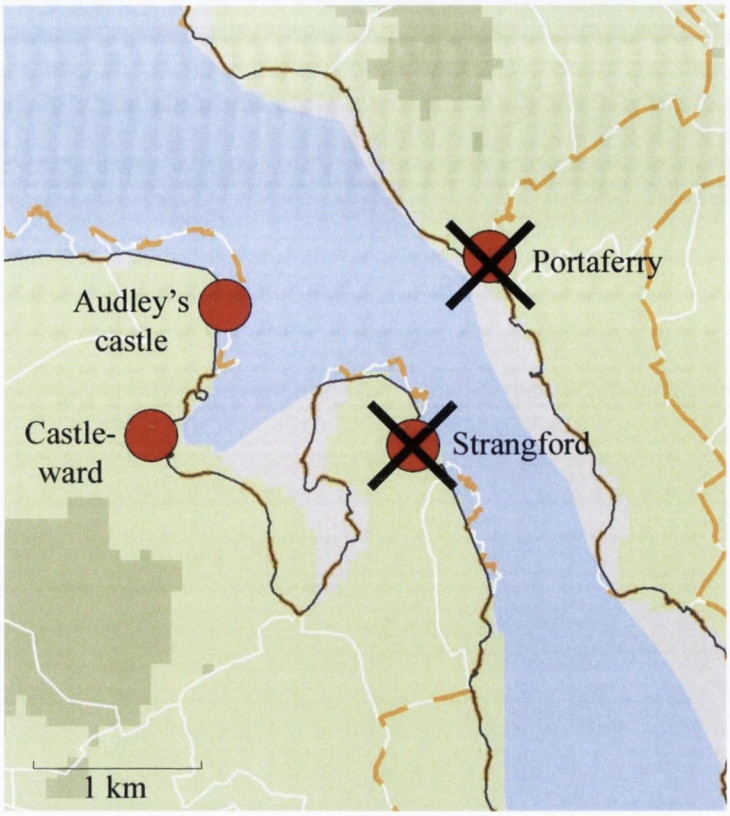


Figure 10

Map to show the proximity and intervisibility of Audley's, Castleward, Portaferry and Strangford castles



Plate 30

Audley's castle

Site name

Bangor

SMR Site number

Undetermined

OS grid reference

505822

Barony

Ards

Description of location

Bangor 'tower house' is located within the modern town of Bangor on the north coast of the Ards peninsula. It therefore overlooks the entrance to Belfast Lough and is the northernmost site considered in the thesis (figure 11). The site is located on the eastern side of Bangor harbour. The site is on flat ground and was probably located directly on, or within a few metres, of the harbour at the time of construction.

Description of tower house

Bangor 'tower house' has been determined not to have been a true tower house since it primarily operated as a port building (customs house and providing accommodation to visiting mariners). It has the latest build date (that we can securely identify) of any building within the study area, being under construction in 1637. The structure is Scottish in architectural appearance, with 'roll-and-hollow moulded skew-corbel' (*ASCD*, 227). It also has distinctive crow-stepped gabling to the north. It rises to two storeys in height and is attached to a rectangular house, also of two storeys, at the north-west angle (plate 17).

As previously stated, Bangor customs house is prominently located on the harbour and it has been suggested here that the Scottish architectural design was for the benefit of visiting mariners since its builder, Hamilton, was familiar with Irish tower house architecture (pp 157-8).

ASCD, 227-8 contains further information on the site's features.

Unusual features

The architectural style of the site is unusual within the context of the other County Down tower houses. Even those tower houses constructed by Scottish or English settlers tend to use Irish tower house building patterns. It is also the last confirmed site to be built in the study area.

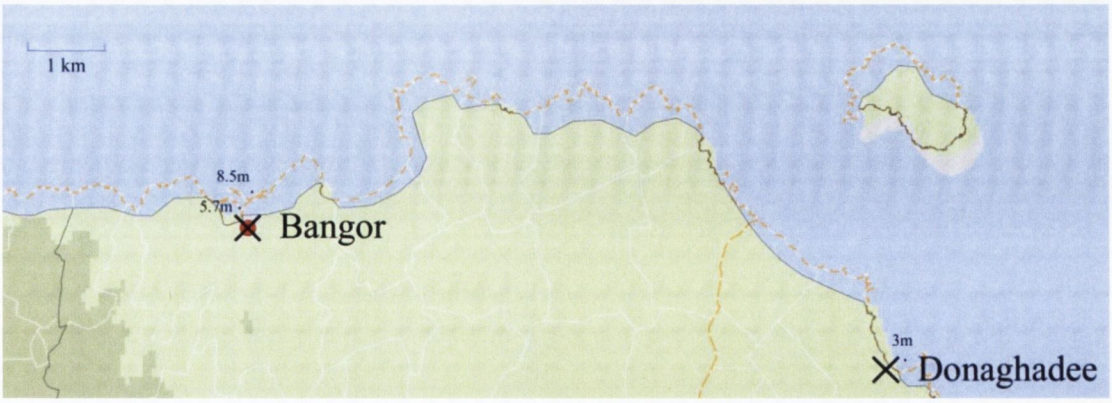


Figure 11

Location of Bangor castle on the north shore of the Ards peninsula, with water depths near the site marked



Plate 31

View of Belfast Lough from Bangor 'tower house'

Site name

Bonecastle

SMR Site number

DOW037:041

OS grid reference

464415

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Bonecastle is located *c.* four kilometres south-west of Downpatrick. It is situated in low undulating land that would have been suitable for either arable or pastoral agriculture. Its location away from water sources and close to placenames that suggest ecclesiastical and earlier Anglo-Norman manorial lands, has led to the proposal that it is one of four tower houses to exercise a predominantly manorial function. Since the local landscape here would have been conducive to communication by land the site could have been associated with the county town of Downpatrick.

Description of tower house

The tower house does not survive into the present day beyond some traces of masonry under ground due to the quarrying of the rock outcrop on which it is sited. We therefore cannot determine how the tower house would have appeared.

The *ASCD*, 228, provides some additional detail on this site.

Unusual features

Bonecastle tower house is one of a small number of tower houses attributed as serving a mainly manorial function within the study area.

Site name

Castleboy

SMR Site number

DOW025:016

OS grid reference

625557

Barony

Ards

Description of location

Castleboy is located on the Ards peninsula, roughly one and a half kilometres from the sea coast on the peninsula's eastern side. Despite this proximity there is no view of the sea. The tower house is located on a small area of flat land surrounded by drumlins.

Description of tower house

Castleboy tower house is in a ruinous condition with only part of the east wall and fragments on the south and west surviving. A turret survives to the south-east and contained a latrine. Jope has taken the surviving fragments to the west to indicate that this tower house once had two projecting turrets. It therefore forms a further example of the 'gatehouse type', suggesting that it, too, is mid fifteenth century in date (plate 32). A church is located less than 100 metres to the north (figure 12). Geophysical survey at the site found indications of either metal-working pits in the area between the tower house and church, or foundation stones for other building/s. Since there is no supply of running water within 100 metres of the tower house and considering the orientation of tower house to church it has been suggested here that the geophysical survey discovered the remnants of ancillary buildings, possibly another deserted settlement (p. 240).

The *ASCD* describes what standing remains there are for this site on page 230.

Unusual features

Castleboy has been interpreted here as being another example of a manorial site. It is unusual though in that it is located less than one and a half kilometres from the sea, yet is in a place with no sea view. A site only a few hundred metres away would have provided a view of the sea.

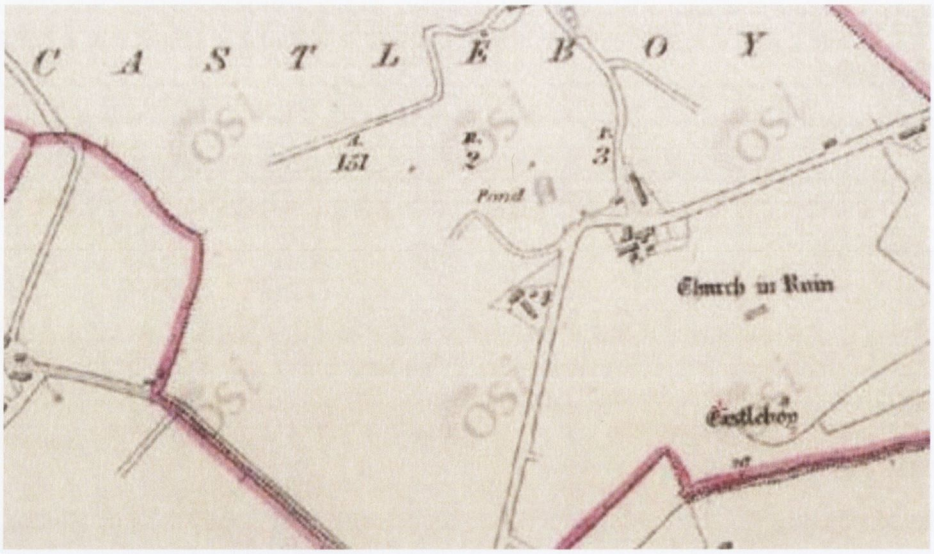


Figure 12

First edition OS map showing location of Castleboy castle and church



Plate 32

Castleboy castle

Site name

Castle Bright

SMR Site number

DOW045:001

OS grid reference

507383

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Castle Bright is located a couple of townlands away from Bonecastle and Castleskreen tower houses (see above and below). It is approximately six kilometres south-west of Downpatrick, being slightly closer to the coast than the two above sites. Unlike these two tower houses, Castle Bright has a commanding view of the sea thanks to its prominent location atop a natural ridge. Despite this commanding view of the landscape it seems unlikely that the tower house directly interacted with the sea even though it is only *c.* three kilometres from the coast. This is deduced because of the steep climb from the shore up to the tower house which would have made the transport of goods difficult (this natural height can be seen in plate 27a). In contrast, the landscape between Castle Bright and Downpatrick would have been much more conducive to land-based communication.

Description of tower house

About half of Castle Bright tower house remains standing – the east wall and the corners of the north and south walls. The east wall stands to a height of three storeys. The tower house was either floored in timber or had an unusually flat vault. Since timber flooring is the more likely explanation, this hints at a construction date possibly in the sixteenth century (plate 33).

As previously stated, the tower house has a commanding presence over the maritime landscape and the coast. Although it has been judged unlikely to have maintained direct interactions with the maritime economy, Castle Bright could have operated as a watchtower. The timber flooring and possible watchtower function at Castle Bright is reminiscent of Cowd castle in Ardglass (see below). The size implied by the length of the east wall at Castle Bright strongly suggests that it could have served a residential function, unlike Cowd castle. The comparatively easier communication with Downpatrick and the site's location in an area suggestive of manorial activity (see

Bonecastle entry above) likewise implies that this was a site with a mostly manorial function.

Castle Bright is described in the *ASCD* on pages 230-1.

Unusual features

Castle Bright is unusual in that it is the only tower house to have a commanding presence over the maritime landscape, yet its siting suggests that it did not maintain constant and regular access with the coast. It is also one of a small number of tower houses proposed to have served a largely manorial function.



Plate 33

Castle Bright

Site name

Castle Island

SMR Site number

DOW031:034

OS grid reference

516486

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Castle Island is located on the southern bank of the Quoile River estuary, approximately three and a half kilometres from where the river meets Strangford Lough (figure 19). The tower house is located on flat land at the south-east of Castle Island island and is located on the water (plate 34). There are a number of landing places in the vicinity of the tower house, the precise depth of which at the time of tower house occupation cannot be judged because of the tidal controls affected on the river in the nineteenth century. Since this was a tidal estuary it can be presumed that sandy stretches would have been formed in low tide, impacting on the availability of anchorages close to the tower house. It is also probable that the Corry Channel, running between the island and the mainland was the site of fish trapping, possibly for salmon (see p. 117).

Important for this study is the tower house's proximity to Ballintogher, identified as a place of trade based on the entries in the early seventeenth-century Port Books. Ballintogher is the townland directly across the river channel from Castle Island tower house (see p. 135). Reference to Ballintogher castle in the 1641 Depositions further supports the idea that the two names were used interchangeably (Deposition of Lieutenant Edward Davies).

Description of tower house

Castle Bright is sadly another tower house in a ruinous condition. This is especially unfortunate since it is a tower house associated with trading activity. Thus any features that might further indicate a commercial function have been destroyed. The walls to the north and west survive to only a few feet in height, the waterside walls have been completely destroyed.

The site is discussed very briefly in the *ASCD* on page 231.

Unusual features

Castle Island is one of the sites for which we have evidence for trade taking place at a tower house.



Plate 34

View of Quoile River estuary from Castle Island tower house

Site name

Castleskreen

SMR Site number

DOW037:039

OS grid reference

466400

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Castleskreen tower house is located *c.* four kilometres to the south-west of Downpatrick. It is located in the same area as Castle Bright and Bonecastle tower houses meaning that many of the same conclusions have been drawn for all three sites (see above). Castleskreen is located on a rise on the edge of a rath.

Description of tower house

Only the northern edge of the tower house survives above ground and much of this has been determined as not being original. Based on excavation the *ASCD* suggests that Castleskreen was similar to Margaret's castle in appearance (see below) and therefore may be a further example of the 'gatehouse type' of tower house architecture (plate 35). Excavation did show that the tower house had a basement, into which the latrines emptied.

Further details can be found in the *ASCD*, 231.

Unusual features

Castleskreen is another example of what is interpreted as being a manorial tower house.



Plate 35

Castleskreen tower house

Site name

Castleward

SMR Site number

DOW031:005

OS grid reference

574498

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Castleward is located on the western shore of Strangford Lough on Strangford Bay. It is roughly one kilometre south-west of Audley's castle (see above) and approximately two and a half kilometres sailing distance due west from Strangford town. The straight line distance between Castleward and Strangford is far less – *c.* one and a half kilometres as Castleward is located in the bay to the rear of the town (figure 10).

It is located on flat land and is directly on the shore. The shoreline along this side of Strangford Bay is a mixture of sandy and shingle beach (plate 36a). Consequently it would have been appropriate for the drawing up of boats. It is also within one kilometre of a number of landing places, including the deep-water Audley's Roads, commanded by Audley's castle.

Description of tower house

Castleward is estimated to be a late sixteenth or early seventeenth-century tower house, constructed by the Ward family who obtained their lands in the sixteenth century. It is three storeys in height with an attic and wall walk and is quite plain in appearance, though the entrance is protected by a box machicolation (plate 36b). The entrance leads to a small lobby off which run the mural stairs. There is one chamber at each storey with a fireplace in the first floor chamber.

There is a wall between the tower house and the shoreline. It is uncertain whether this is a later estate wall or a bawn wall that was later extended. No mention of it is made in the *ASCD*. Although it is a low-lying site the tower house does command a stretch of anchorage and landing places that are only a short sail from the regionally dominant Strangford.

Further detail on the architectural features of Castleward is available in the *ASCD*, 231-3.



Plate 36a

View of Strangford Bay from Castleward tower house



Plate 36b

Castleward tower house

Site name

Cowd (Choud)

SMR Site number

DOW045:023

OS grid reference

561370

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Cowd castle is located in the port town of Ardglass in the south of the study area. Ardglass is located on the Irish Sea, south of the Narrows and the entrance to Strangford Lough. Cowd 'tower house' is located *c.* 100 metres to the south of the Newark and is thus one of the three tower houses arranged around the harbour at Ardglass. It is sited on flat land, slightly set back from the harbour, approximately one hundred metres from water. It is roughly equidistant between the harbour and the shoreline.

Description of tower house

Cowd castle is attributed by the *ASCD* to the fifteenth or sixteenth century in construction date. It is by far the smallest 'tower house' in the study area, standing at just 5.8 metres by 5.3 metres, a little over half the internal area of the next smallest tower house in the study area, Margaret's castle (see below). It is just two storeys plus an attic level in height (plate 10). McNeill noted that the loops at ground floor provide inadequate firing coverage. It is very plain in appearance and was probably internally floored with timber. There are no fireplaces or latrines located within the site (McNeill 2005, 15).

The arrangements at roof level for carrying the roof have led to suggestions that it had a triangular roof, prompting this author to propose that it functioned as a navigation aid for entry to the harbour (p. 96). McNeill disagrees, citing the landmarks used by modern sailors to aid their approach to the harbour, and instead argues that it served as a watchtower. The physical limitations of this site has led to its categorisation as not being a tower house, since it would have been too small to provide residential accommodation.

Cowd is dealt with briefly in the *ASCD*, 222.

Unusual features

This site is unusual for its small stature. This, combined with its triangular roof, has led to suggestions that it functioned as a navigational aid, watchtower, guard tower or lighthouse, or a combination of all of these.

Site name

Downpatrick

SMR Site number

N/A

OS grid reference

476446

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Downpatrick is the county town of Lecale and is located on the banks of the Quoile River. One disputed tower house site, Hogg castle, is located on the east slope on Hogg Island which, prior to damming, would have been located in the middle of the river.

Description of tower house

According to the SMR, there are a number of potential tower house sites located in the town. This statement is based on the identification of late medieval architectural features incorporated into later structures. Antiquarian writers have called many of these buildings 'castles', although in at least one case the proposed tower house was found to have been a church tower. The SMR dismisses a further two claims of buildings being remnants of a de Courcy period castle, instead suggesting that these structures formed part of the town defences. Since there is no secure evidence for any of these buildings having been tower houses, they have not been included in the discussion in the main body of this thesis.

Unusual features

Downpatrick was an economically and politically significant settlement throughout the medieval period. That no tower house can be identified within the town is highly unusual. Based on comparison with the number of tower houses in other settlements in the region, it seems probable that examples of this castle type did exist. This supports the idea that at least one of the sites listed in the SMR was a tower house, the identifying features for this not surviving into the present day.

Site name

Horn

SMR Site number

DOW045:021

OS grid reference

562371

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Horn castle is, like Cowd castle above, located on Ardglass harbour. It is located only a few metres to the north-west of the Newark (and thus the north-west of Cowd too). It has a similar siting to Cowd castle, approximately fifty metres from both the harbour and the approach to the harbour. It is sited on flat land on a headland that stretches out into the sea.

Description of tower house

Horn 'tower house' has, like the Newark (below), been subjected to later remodelling to the extent that no contemporary features survive. As McNeill describes it: 'were it not for the fact that this building…is referred to…as an antiquity, there would be no reason to include it [in his study]' (McNeill 2005, 13). It was probably plain in appearance and the *ASCD* attributes its date to the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. Documentary evidence discussed by McNeill indicates that it may have been used as accommodation for visiting mariners as well as operating as a mess hall for them (McNeill 2005, 14). Consequently, it does not fit into the definition of a tower house and is instead classed as a port building resembling a tower house.

Horn is discussed at the end of the entry on the Newark/Ardglass castle in the *ASCD* on page 222.

Unusual features

There are no extant features dating from the tower house's construction on which to comment. However, reference to it being used by visiting mariners is unusual and is only paralleled by the (probably later) Bangor 'tower house'.

Site name

Jordan's

SMR Site number

DOW045:020

OS grid reference

560372

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Jordan's castle is located in the port town of Ardglass. It is set back approximately 100 metres from the harbour on a slight rise. This gives it a commanding view both of the harbour and its approaches. Excavation by Gardiner (2005) has found evidence for trackways running to the north and west of the site, showing that the tower house was integrated with (and possibly constructed around) the historic street plan.

Description of tower house

Jordan's castle is a 'gatehouse type' tower house, with two projecting turrets. Unlike the other examples of this architectural type, Jordan's castle has two machicolation arches at roof level. One of the two projecting turrets, that rising to the north-west, is one storey higher than the projecting turret at the north-east (plate 27b). Since the north-west turret also houses one of the machicolation arches it has been suggested here that this design was deliberately chosen to present the most symbolic face possible when viewed from the harbour. Aside from this design quirk, the rest of the tower house, including internal arrangements, conforms to the usual style of the 'gatehouse type' tower house.

Excavation at Jordan's castle, led by Mark Gardiner of Queen's University Belfast, between 1998 and 2002, uncovered the below ground foundations of an attached stone building. This stone structure appears to have been constructed contemporaneously with the tower house, based on the location of windows in the east face, which are aligned so as not to be blocked by the adjoining building. Gardiner has argued that this stone-built structure was a warehouse, this assessment coming from the presence of internal drains that would have kept water away from perishable items. This interpretation was also deduced from the range of finds, including burnt grains and fishbones, found in the building. The details of the excavation and analysis of finds are

contained within the unpublished (forthcoming) excavation report (Gardiner 2005) and on pp 73-4.

As previously noted, Jordan's castle makes use of architectural features and natural height to increase its command over the maritime landscape. Combined with the orientation of the warehouse, and the attribution of it as a merchant's tower house, this lends support to the idea that the site as a whole was designed and positioned for symbolic purposes. Namely, that this was the visual manifestation of the occupant's perception of his important position within the maritime economy. In this way, it is similar to Audley's castle (since both sites share a prominently located stone storehouse/warehouse, have their architectural features oriented towards the water and take advantage of natural topography to lend height), which further lends support to the idea that 'gatehouse type' tower houses in County Down were the product of one master builder.

A more detailed account of Jordan's castle's architecture and appearance can be found on pp 223-5 of *ASCD*.

Unusual features

The double machicolation arches present at Jordan's castle are an uncommon architectural feature within the County Down cohort, most 'gatehouse type' tower houses having only one machicolation arch at roof level (plate 24). The discovery of an attached stone-built warehouse is also unusual. This example both highlights the importance of excavation for our understanding of tower house functions, and also implies that ancillary buildings may have been commonplace at tower houses, even at urban sites where space would have been at a premium. Furthermore, the rising of one of the projecting turrets to a greater height is an overt attempt to increase symbolic control of the landscape of which there is no comparable example within County Down.

Site name

Kilclief

SMR Site number

DOW039:002

OS grid reference

597457

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Kiclief castle is located approximately four kilometres to the south of Strangford town and 9.5 km to the north of Ardglass town. It is sited on flat coastal land with a commanding view along the southern approaches to the Narrows (plate 9a). *C.* seventy-five metres to the west of the castle is a small sandy beach, one of the few sandy beaches along this stretch of coastline (plate 13). Kilclief appears to have been constructed by (or at least occupied by) John Sely, Bishop of Down and is located on ecclesiastic lands, as is testified to by the placename evidence [e.g. the townland of Bishop's Court is the next townland inland from Kilclief] (*ASCD*, 233-4). Submerged rocks off the coast from this sandy beach and shallow water depths when approaching the site (partly depicted in plate 9a) would initially suggest that navigating to the tower house by boat would have been difficult. Despite this, there are references to Kilclief being used for anchorage and for fishing, perhaps signifying that knowledgeable local pilotage was available and the draught of contemporary vessels shallow enough to permit access (Report by Sir Ralph Lane to the Earl of Essex, *Cal. S. P. Ire. 1599–1600*, 69-76; McErlean *et al.* 2002, 107, 149, 164). The position of the tower house with wide views along the approaches to the Narrows could have also meant that it commanded more offshore anchorages than just those directly at the tower house's base. The creation of a medieval borough at the site that pre-dates probable construction of the tower house suggests that there was some formal settlement at the site, although whether this was of any size or was successful is impossible to ascertain, and it is now deserted.

Description of tower house

Kilclief castle is a further example of the 'gatehouse type' tower house (plate 37). Since a rough date for construction can be inferred from its association with the career of John Sely, Bishop of Down, this gives a somewhat secure date of construction to the first half of the fifteenth century. By extension, this likewise ascertains a chronology for the

other examples of the 'gatehouse type' tower house, since their common construction by a master builder seems likely. There is no evidence for contemporary ancillary buildings at this site (the agricultural building now adjoining the tower house to the south is a modern structure). The site does not have any architectural features to increase its command of the landscape, nor does it employ the benefit of topographical height. Despite this, and being located on flat coastal land, it does still manage to maintain an impressive and commanding view of the southern approaches to Strangford Lough. Indeed, by merit of being one of the few features (man-made or natural) of any height along this shoreline, it seems to have been used in the past as a navigation aid for identifying safe passage through the Narrows. Worth noting too, is that the tower house is located away from the Anglo-Norman motte to the north, meaning that there is no continuity in site choice at this location. It is also located on one of the few sandy stretches of beach along this part of the coast, and based on evidence provided by McErlean *et al.*, appears to have also taken advantage of fishing grounds (p. 117).

The architectural and internal features of Kilclief castle are discussed in *ASCD* on pages 233-5.

Unusual features

There are no unusual features per se at Kilclief castle, but its potential use as a navigation aid is unusual. Despite it (or perhaps because of it, based on comparison with English ecclesiastic sites where the clergy had maritime related duties) being an ecclesiastic tower house, Kilclief has one of the most varied interactions with the maritime landscape since it can operate as a navigation aid, is located next to fishing grounds and a sandy landing place, and has commanding views over the Strangford Lough southward approaches. It is also the only tower house along this stretch of coastline between Strangford and Ardglass towns. It is possible that the settlement that is implied by the grant of a borough would have been engaged in the fishing industry.

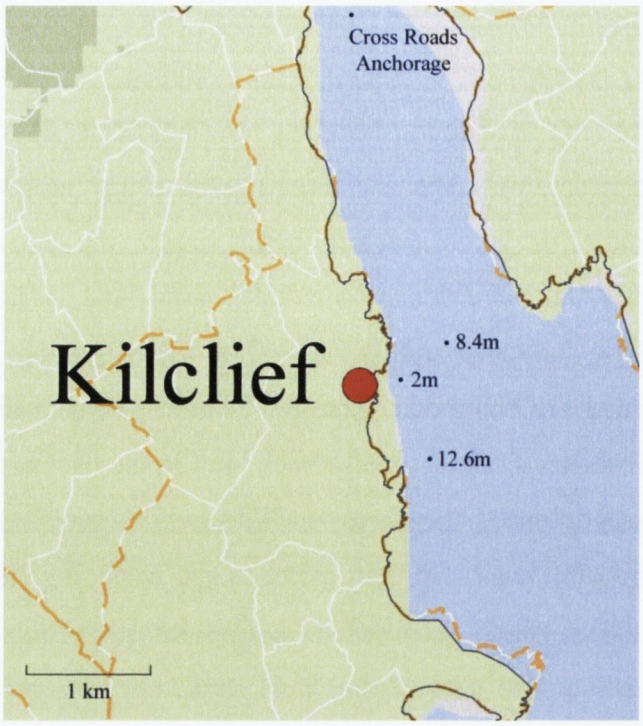


Figure 13

Location of Kilclief castle at the entrance to 'The Narrows', with water depths near the site marked



Plate 37

Kilclief castle

Site name

Killyleagh

SMR Site number

DOW024:030

OS grid reference

523529

Barony

Dufferin

Description of location

Killyleagh castle is located immediately to the north-west of the town of Killyleagh in the barony of Dufferin, on the north side of the mouth of the Quoile River estuary. It is sited on a rise in the land behind the town. The town (post seventeenth century) appears to have been planned around the castle, since the alignment of the main street allows for an unimpeded and commanding view down to the town harbour from the castle (plate 14). The castle is approximately 750 metres to the north-west of the harbour. Despite this distance (it is greater than other maritime oriented tower houses in the study area), the tower house does seem to have a maritime orientation, as implied by its command of the harbour. Killyleagh has a deep and sheltered harbour, although access is complicated by the location of Dunnyneill Island in the centre of the harbour entrance. It is also well positioned to take advantage of shipping in the Quoile River and along the western shore of Strangford Lough. It is only roughly seven kilometres sailing distance from Strangford town and is thus the first harbour after the Narrows and Quoile River on the west coast of Strangford Lough.

Description of tower house

The modern appearance of the site is the result of mid nineteenth century redesign by architect Sir Charles Lanyon [famous for his design of the main building of Queen's University Belfast, now the Lanyon Building] (plate 22). This reconstruction incorporated parts of the earlier tower house, although how much is a moot point, since the tower house was besieged and partly destroyed by a Cromwellian army led by General Monk in 1649 (Lawlor 1939, 16). Fortunately, one contemporary depiction of the tower house survives in a corner of Thomas Raven's 1625 map of Killyleagh town, forming part of the map series surveying the Hamilton family's lands, which is our sole indication of how the tower house appeared before being battered. This shows the tower house to have been in the Scottish style, with decorative corbelling at roof level and a 'pepperbox turret'. It is possible that there was an earlier tower house belonging

to either the de Mandeville or Whyte families on this site that was either restored and altered in the early seventeenth century, or a new tower house was built on, or near the site. It is interpreted here that the site was in use prior to the early seventeenth century, since it is in an excellent location for a tower house - on a slight rise with good access to a sheltered harbour. Lawlor published a summary of the history of the castle in the *UJA* which argues for a lengthy history of site occupation, although his argument that the site was originally a motte and bailey is questioned since what he takes to have been a filled-in fosse demarcating the bailey, may be later garden design works.

No ancillary buildings have been identified at this site. A market place is located directly in front of the castle to the south-east, with the main street running off this. The slight height of the castle compared to the town and harbour, combined with the apparent lay-out of the street plan to allow a direct visual command down to the harbour, combines to suggest that the tower house was sited to maximise control of harbour access. Despite the comparative distance from the harbour compared to the other examples, it has been judged to have a maritime orientation.

Killyleagh castle is discussed in *ASCD* pages 236-8 and in Lawlor 1939.

Unusual features

The early seventeenth-century appearance of Killyleagh castle, as depicted by Raven, is unusual as it is one of the few examples within the study area of a tower house built in a Scottish architectural style.

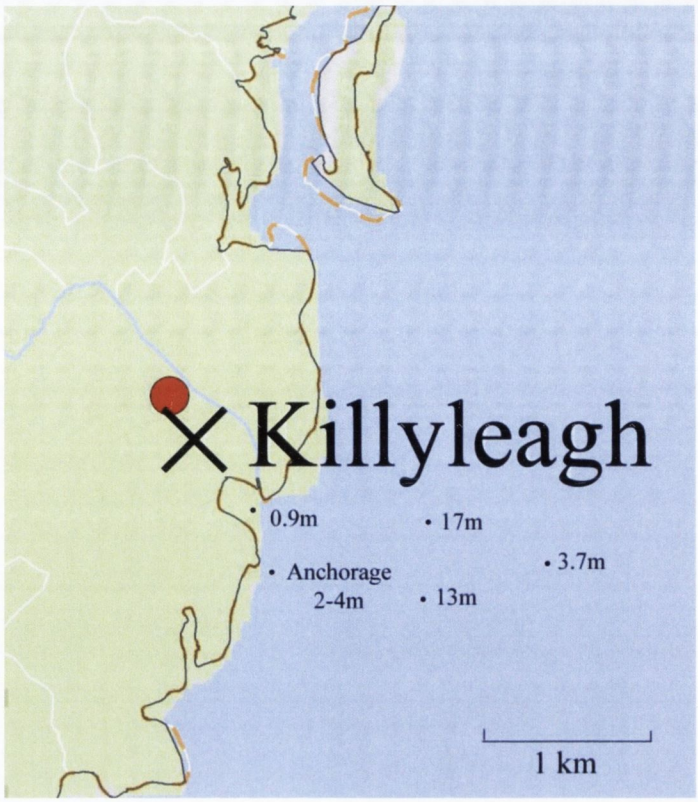


Figure 14

Location of Killyleagh town and castle, with water depths near the site marked

Site name

King's

SMR Site number

DOW045:024

OS grid reference

558373 (but questioned, see below)

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

The location of King's castle is unidentified. The NISMR gives an OS grid reference for the site, however, the *ASCD* does not include such details. Since the content of the NISMR closely mirrors that in the *ASCD* it is unclear from where the information for the OS grid reference was obtained. Indeed, it is commented in the NIMSR online that during topsoil stripping at the location indicated by the OS grid reference, no archaeological evidence for the existence of this tower house was found. In light of this, this thesis does not conclude a precise location for this tower house, our knowledge of which comes from a drawing by Grose (plate 38) and an unconfirmed citation to 'the King's castles of Greencastle, Carlingford and Ardglass' (*ASCD*, 225). Since Grose's drawing (plate 23) is not accurate in its locating of the Ardglass sites, and since the reference above could potentially refer to any of the Ardglass tower houses, there is even the possibility that this site has been confused with another. Despite this possibility, King's castle has been included as a tower house here on the basis that, although Grose's depiction is inaccurate, there is no evidence for him drawing a tower house that did not exist. In the absence of any further evidence, all we can say regarding the location of this tower house is that it was in the port town of Ardglass and, based on the location patterns of the other sites in this settlement, probably had a commanding view of the harbour. It is further presumed that this site was either located directly on the harbour, or on the rise behind the harbour, as implied by the site choices of the other extant tower houses in the town.

Description of tower house

Based on Grose's drawing and the descriptions given by the ACSD and NISMR, King's castle was an architecturally plain tower house and possibly had a smaller tower house located beside it. Since it was completely destroyed in the mid nineteenth century, no further comment on its appearance can be made. The roofing arrangements are not depicted by Grose, meaning that we cannot conclude its function based on this (by

comparison with the triangular roof at Cowd castle which possibly suggests a role in navigation, see above).

The 'other' tower house may possibly have been an ancillary building and, by comparison with Jordan's castle, this may have had a storage function. Due to its destruction, however, nothing concrete can be gathered about this structure. The plain appearance of King's castle would also suggest that it did not employ architecture to increase its command over the maritime landscape, although its location may have reflected this aim.

The site is discussed very briefly on page 225 of the *ASCD*.



Plate 38

Possibly King's castle, illustrated by Grose before 1790

Grose in the *Dublin Penny Journal*, 1833

Site name

Kirkistown

SMR Site number

DOW 025:007

OS grid reference

644580

Barony

Ards

Description of location

One of the few tower houses on the eastern seaboard of the Ards peninsula, Kirkistown castle is sited approximately 750 metres from the sea. It is accessed via a laneway off the main road. The site is located in unusually flat land, for the surrounding area is characterised by drumlins. Indeed, it appears as though the site was partly chosen for this reason as there is a drumlin rising to the north of the tower house. It is possible that at the time of construction the tower house was closer to the sea than it is now as there is an active sand-dune system separating the beach from the main road that runs parallel to the sea. The beach is part of a wide bay and is wide and sandy with few stones, ideal for drawing up boats (plate 39). The tower house appears to be positioned so as to control a headland that projects into the sea. There is a shallow anchorage on either side of this headland, as well as there being a beach on both sides. Also unusual for this stretch of coastline is the lack of offshore submerged rocks. There are a number of wide sandy beaches in the vicinity but all are affected by offshore hazards, Kirkistown's combination of a beach with safe access for boats is therefore unusual along this coastline. There is a graveyard to the north-east of the tower house, however, no mention is made in the NISMR of a historic church at this location.

Description of tower house

The tower house was built by Roland Savage in 1622 and is thus a later example within the study area, as well as being one of the few with a secure date (plate 40). It sits off-centre in a bawn of contemporary date to the tower house. The bawn is notable for having circular flanking towers at the south and west angles (plate 25). Presumably these were mirrored at the north and east before modern alterations and the collapse of part of the wall. The *ASCD* estimates the bawn to have been an irregular parallelogram in shape, with a maximum length of *c.* seventy-eight metres and a maximum width of roughly forty-four metres. Much of the reason for the bawn wall collapse seems to have

been due to the fact that it does not have foundations, but rather was built up from ground level. The bawn wall, as at the tower house, has also been buttressed in places to prevent collapse. The ineffectiveness of the bawn wall as a defensive structure (based on this structural problem) implies that it was built for show and/or privacy.

The tower house is buttressed to the east to alleviate a leaning, the date of this is unknown but since it covers loops it post-dates construction. The buttressing was just one of numerous alterations made to the tower house *c.* 1800 that have changed the interior lay-out of the site.

Internally there are two chambers at each level except for the third storey, which contains three. This is notable since the majority of tower houses in the study area contain one chamber at each level, although parallels can be drawn with other examples that have a second sub-mural chamber (e.g. Sketrick castle, see below). The entrance is on the south-east wall at ground floor level and is covered by a box machicolation at roof level.

For further information see Jope pp 238-41.

Unusual features

The three chambers at second floor level are noteworthy in the context of other tower houses in the region where it is more common to find a single chamber at each level. However, there is a precedent for smaller sub-mural chambers. Likewise, there are few examples of bawns associated with tower houses in the area. Kirkistown's is particularly remarkable for its elaborateness in terms of the flankers and number of gun loops. This has been discussed by Eadie, who found the site to be militaristic in outlook (Eadie 2007, 183). The problems stemming from a lack of foundations implies that the bawn would not have been an effective defensive structure particularly when considering artillery technology in the seventeenth century.

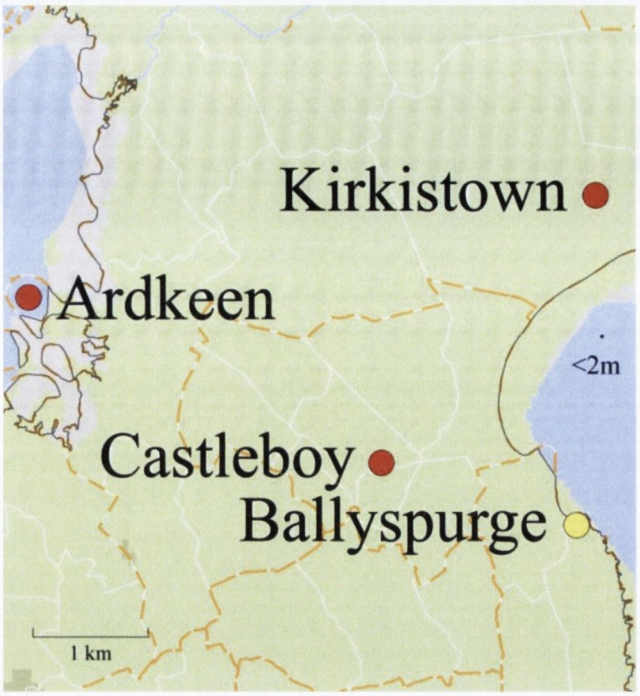


Figure 15

Location of Kirkistown castle on the east shore of the Ards peninsula, relative to other tower house and defended house sites



Plate 39

The stretch of beach to the east of Kirkistown castle

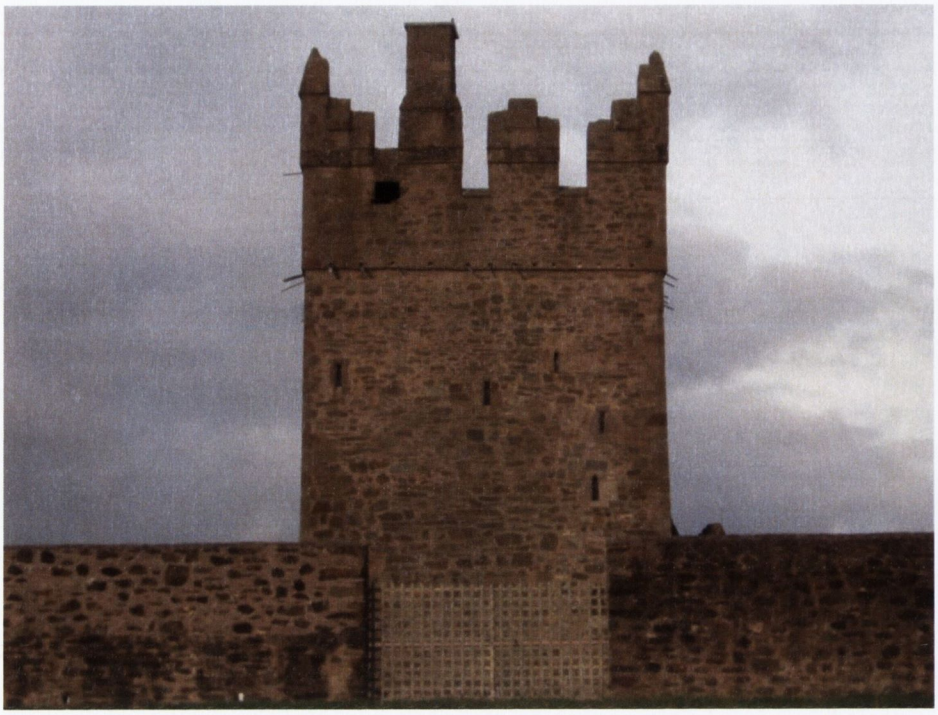


Plate 40

Kirkistown castle

Site name

Mahee (Nendrum)

SMR Site number

DOW017:004

OS grid reference

524640

Barony

Castlereagh

Description of location

Mahee castle is located on the western shore of Strangford Lough at the north-west of Mahee Island, adjacent to Nendrum early medieval monastic site. It is at the immediate south of a causeway running between Mahee Island and Reagh Island (to the north of Mahee Island) that is possibly contemporaneous with the period of tower house occupation (plate 41). It is not located near any settlement, a symptom possibly of the fact that it probably formed the basis of an Elizabethan era colonisation attempt. Indeed, the 'Old Town' marked on the first edition OS maps, that does not survive into the present day, may have been attempted to be redeveloped (presuming there was an earlier settlement associated with the monastic site) in the late sixteenth century (see p. 154 for a full discussion of this). Prior to this attempted colonisation, the lands formed part of the Bishop of Down's estate and came under the territorial control of the Clandeboye O'Neills. The tower house is located on flat land, part of this created by digging out the drumlin to the rear (south) of the tower house. The choice of flat land is deliberate since the drumlin rises immediately behind the tower house. The NIMSR and *ASCD* note the possible presence of a bawn to the south-west, although it is argued here that this stone wall may have been an attempt to shore up the excavation into the drumlin. The tower house is located directly on water. This water suffers from tidal mudflats, and it is possible that the quay associated with the tower house was constructed so as to negate such effects on access by boat.

Description of tower house

Mahee castle is more rectangular in plan than many of the other County Down tower houses. It is in a ruinous condition, but may have stood at three storeys in height. It has two chambers at ground floor level, one of which has been interpreted by the *ASCD* as a boathouse and similarly argued here. This has been determined on the basis of its orientation, its large entrance to the north and the barrel vaulting running along its length (plate 1). It is unlikely that there were any ancillary buildings in the immediate

environment of the tower house since the site area is small. However, buildings associated with the tower house may have existed elsewhere nearby on the island, or across the causeway on Reagh Island with the causeway facilitating movement between the tower house and settlement.

The presence of the internal boathouse strongly supports the idea that Mahee castle had a maritime orientation, as does the construction of an artificial quay adjacent to the site. The location of the tower house with regards to the causeway suggests that it controlled access across this, and possibly profited from exacting a toll on its use.

Mahee castle is discussed on pp 244-5 of the *ASCD*.

Unusual features

There are only two examples of an internal boathouse within the case study – at Mahee castle and at Sketrick castle (see below), its nearest neighbour to the south. This is consequently one of the most unusual overtly maritime features present at a tower house. The appearance of the tower house is also unusual in comparison with the other tower houses, since it is more hall-like in appearance than many of the others.

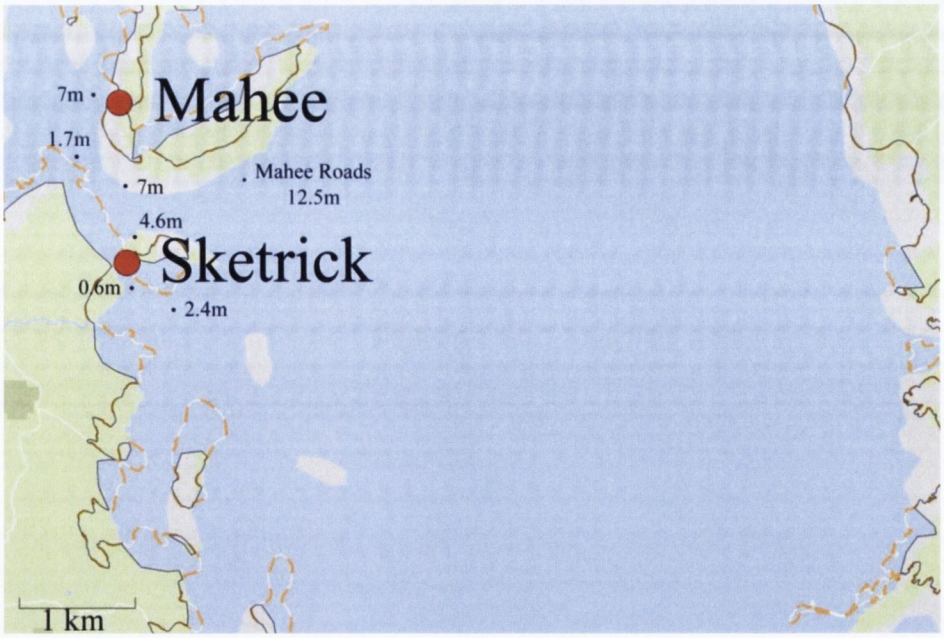


Figure 16

Location of Mahee and Sketrick castles on the east shore of Strangford Lough, with water depths near the sites marked



Plate 41

Mahee castle and causeway to Mahee Island

Site name

Margaret's

SMR Site number

DOW045:022

OS grid reference

560370

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Margaret's castle is located in the port town of Ardglass. It is located to the west of Jordan's castle and the harbour concentration of tower houses (Cowd and Horn castles and the Newark). As at Jordan's castle, Margaret's castle is located on the slight rise back from the harbour, approximately 100 metres from the water.

Description of tower house

Margaret's castle is one of the smallest tower houses in the study area (although significantly larger than Cowd castle, also in Ardglass, see above) at just under seven metres by 6.5 metres in dimension. It is a further example of the 'gatehouse type' tower house found in the study area, with two projecting turrets at the north-east and north-west angles. The structure does not survive to roof level, although it is presumed that it had a machicolation arch here, as at the other 'gatehouse type' examples (plate 42).

The small size of Margaret's castle is possibly a result of the reduced space available in the late medieval town of Ardglass, and no ancillary buildings have been identified. Unlike the four sites listed above, Margaret's castle was not excavated as part of the investigations by Queen's University Belfast. This means that we cannot firmly conclude much about the internal use, or surrounding utilisation of, the site. The front (i.e. the face of the tower house containing the two projecting turrets) of the tower house faces out to the southward approaches to the harbour. This, combined with the natural height utilised in the choice of site, means that it has a commanding view over the harbour, despite being set back from it. It is a possibility, though unable to be proven, that the tower house was constructed by a merchant family.

Margaret's castle is discussed on pp 222-3 of the *ASCD*.

Unusual features

Margaret's castle is one of six 'gatehouse type' tower houses in County Down and is the smallest example of these.



Plate 42

Margaret's castle (western face)

Site name

Newark (Ardglass castle)

SMR Site number

DOW045:021

OS grid reference

561371

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

The Newark, also referred to as Ardglass castle, is located on flat land on a headland projecting to the south of Ardglass harbour. This rocky headland provides shelter for the harbour and it allowed the Newark to view both the harbour and the southern approaches to it, although McNeill proposes that in 'medieval times it … faced north towards the harbour' (McNeill 2005, 5). It is located within metres of both Horn and Cowd castles (see above) and the water.

Description of tower house

It was suggested in the *ASCD* that the Newark was a 'row of warehouses, used in connection with the maritime trading activities of the port' (*ASCD*, 221). Excavation by Tom McNeill of Queen's University Belfast found further evidence for this sub-division that led him to propose that the structure was a row of retail units with houses (see figure 7) based on comparison with similar commercial buildings in England (McNeill 2005, 13). As a consequence, the Newark is not a tower house at all, as is discussed in further detail on p. 45.

The western half of the building was altered to become a residence in 1790, becoming a golf club in the twentieth century (plate 43). The building that is surveyed and described in the *ASCD* is how it appeared before the golf club era alterations. The building has three towers – at the west, the east and off-centre. The 'shop fronts' are described by McNeill as facing southwards. This would have meant that they would have been visible first when approaching the harbour from the south.

The architecture of the Newark is described in more detail in the *ASCD* pp 220-2 and in McNeill 2005.

Unusual features

This is not the only example in the study area of a commercial building physically resembling a tower house, however, it is the only instance of a row of retail units.



Plate 43

The Newark (left) and view over the entrance to Ardglass harbour

Site name

Newtownards

SMR Site number

DOW006:019

OS grid reference

492738

Barony

Ards

Description of location

'Castle Garden', equated with the possible tower house site in Newtowards, is located in the south of the town, just over one kilometre from the modern shore at the northern end of Strangford Lough. It is possible that the site was slightly closer to the water at the time of construction, however, since land has been reclaimed in this area in recent centuries. Whether a boat of any great size could have approached as far as Newtownards is uncertain. The area to the south of the settlement is subject to tidal mud flats, although even a kilometre further south is navigable by modern day small yachts. The land on which the possible tower house site is located is flat.

Description of tower house

This site may not have been a tower house at all, its inclusion is based on a comment in the *ASCD* that 'Sir Hugh Montgomery, while refurbishing the priory buildings for his own use, is recorded to have occupied the stump of an old castle in Newtown' (*ASCD*, 260). Montgomery seems to have rebuilt the priory buildings at Newtownards as a Plantation bawn and residence. It is possible that a tower house was constructed as part of the priory, and indeed there is much evidence from across Ireland for ecclesiastic tower houses within abbey and priory grounds. Our knowledge of this site comes from documentary reference - Montgomery's house burnt down in 1664 with the site being built on again in 1675 – there is no trace of it in the modern landscape. Likewise, archaeological investigations in 2006 found little evidence for activity at the site before the eighteenth century, aside from a few sherds of what might be medieval pottery, although these are contemporary with the site's use as a priory (NIMSR).

The site, although suggested as including a tower house, is discussed on page 260 of the *ASCD* in the 'Bawns' section.

Site name

Portaferry castle

SMR Site number

DOW 032:003

OS grid reference

593508

Barony

Ards

Description of location

Located on the harbour at Portaferry this tower house is intervisible with Strangford castle immediately opposite across the Narrows (figure 17). Today there is a modern building and road accessing the ferry between Strangford and Portaferry in front of the tower house, between it and the harbour. The tower house is situated on slightly higher ground than at the waterfront, but this ground is overlooked by a drumlin rising behind the town. The view afforded from the upper storeys of the tower house probably encompasses views up Strangford Lough towards Newtownards and along the Narrows towards the Irish Sea. Strangford castle is intervisible with Portaferry castle from ground level, but Audley's castle is highly likely to be visible from the upper storeys too, possibly also Castle Ward. There is ready access to the southern, eastern and western aspects of the tower house, but the north face is abutted by modern development. Consequently a clear view of the castle wall from this direction is not possible. The modern ferry docks level with the base of the tower house, it is a possibility that this is a continuation of site usage. The *Sailing Directions* make it clear that Portaferry harbour is still quite difficult to navigate and neighbouring bays are preferred for anchorage. These conditions may have some bearing on comments made during the early seventeenth century that prior to Montgomery's acquisition of land, the settlement of Portaferry comprised only a few fishermen's cabins clustered around the tower house. This comment implies a settlement standing in marked contrast to Strangford's prestige as a dominant port of the region.

Description of tower house

Portaferry castle was built in the sixteenth century by the Savage family, lords of the Ards. It was repaired, expanded and updated in 1635 at the hands of Sir James Montgomery. Such construction work places Portaferry into the category of tower houses of a very late date of occupation.

Projecting to the south from the south-east angle is a turret containing the entrance and a stair connecting the ground and first floors (plate 44). The entrance was in the western face of the turret and is covered by a machicolation. This turret rises to the height of a further storey above the main block of the tower house and in this respect can be compared with the turret at Jordan's castle, Ardglass since it is the side facing the harbour. This turret houses the stair to second floor level (from this floor it rises in the western side) as well as a small chamber at each storey from first floor level, an unusual layout compared to the other County Down tower houses. As at Strangford castle, directly across the Narrows, all the flooring within the main block of Portaferry castle was of timber. Each level of the turret, except for the second floor, had corbelled vaulting. The north-east angle of the tower house is ruined to ground level, as at Sketrick castle this provides a view of a cross-section from outside. At roof level there is a continuous wall walk which provides access to another small turret chamber. As at roof level, the turret roof has a battlemented parapet pierced with pistol loops.

The tower house is located in a very commanding position over the harbour, and it is possible that the historic ferry anchored at the base of the tower house as it does now. The fact that the turret, with most of the decorative features, projects towards the harbour further emphasises the site's maritime orientation. The small lobby and passageway leading from the entrance rules out the possibility of the ground floor chamber being used as a storage room. Likewise there is no evidence for ancillary structures.

For further information see *ASCD* pp 245-6.

Unusual features

The internal layout of the tower house, with two chambers at each level from the first storey upwards, is unusual. This illustrates the diversity in tower house architecture, even in County Down where the 'gatehouse type' is prevalent.

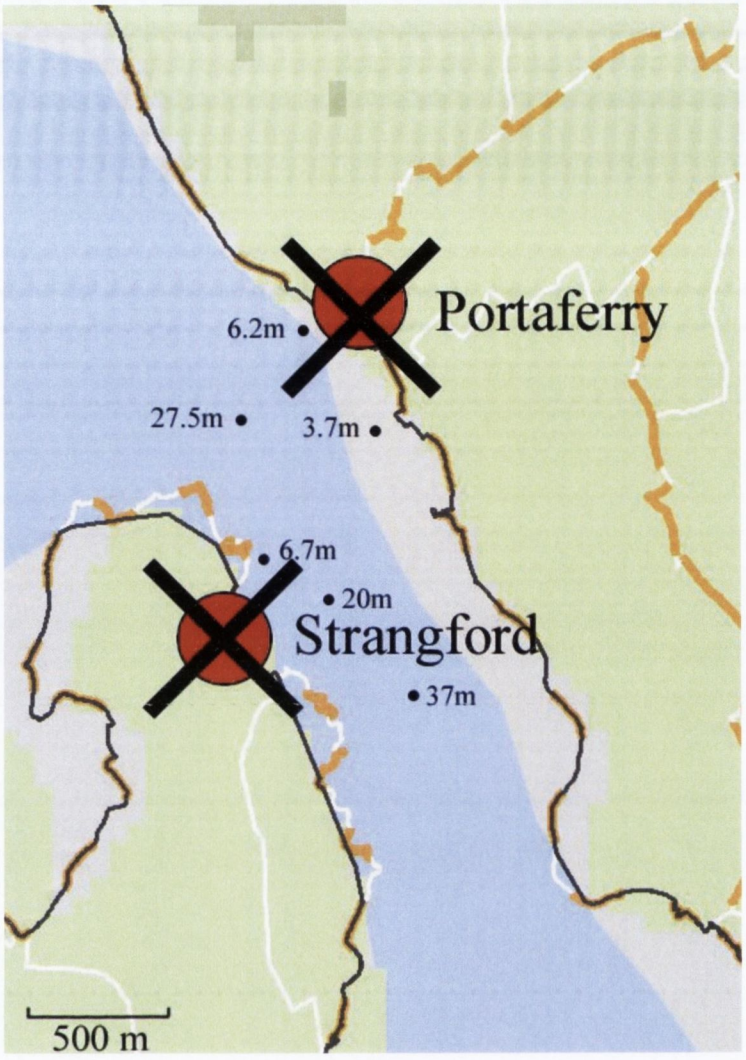


Figure 17

Location of Portaferry and Strangford castles, with water depths near the sites in 'The Narrows' marked



Plate 44

Portaferry castle

Site name

Quintin

SMR Site number

DOW031:009

OS grid reference

632505

Barony

Ards

Description of location

Quintin castle is the southernmost tower house on the Ards peninsula. It is approximately 3.5 kilometres to the east of Portaferry on the eastern shore of the Ards peninsula. Therefore it is on the opposite side of the tip of the Ards peninsula from the Narrows. It is located on flat land on the northern shore of Quintin Bay, a small sheltered bay with a sand and shingle beach (figure 18).

Description of tower house

The tower house dates from before the seventeenth century, when it was purchased by Sir James Montgomery from Dualtagh Smith. It is probably the same tower house as that indicated on Burghley's 1580 maps as 'Smith's Castel'. At the time of the seventeenth century purchase, alterations were made. It was in a reportedly ruinous condition by the mid nineteenth century, at which time the present house was built around it (*ASCD*, 246). As a consequence, there is little of the original tower house on which to base an analysis, but it appears to have been quite plain in architectural style. We cannot say what features it originally had to increase its control of the maritime landscape, although its location on a haven (quite rare along this stretch of coastline) would suggest that it had a maritime role.

The site is quite briefly dealt with on page 246 of the *ASCD*.

Unusual features

Quintin is one of a small number of tower houses along the eastern shore of the Ards peninsula. Along with Kirkistown castle (Bangor excluded since it is on the north-east), it is only one of two tower houses to be located directly on water. It is possible that this was to take advantage of the offshore fishing grounds, but also to tax use of the haven by vessels seeking shelter before they moved into the North Channel or sailed southwards past the tidal Narrows.



Figure 18

Location of Quintin castle, with water depths near the site marked

Site name

Quoile

SMR Site number

DOW031:009

OS grid reference

496470

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Quoile castle is located on flat land on the banks of the Quoile River. Damming of the river starting in the nineteenth century means that it is now set back from the riverbank. The tower house is located on the Lecale side of the river, with the river running to the immediate west of the site. A small bay is to the immediate south of the tower house, probably formed by a stream entering the river at this point. It is probable that this small bay was more pronounced at the time of tower house occupation and consequently could have formed an anchorage at the base of the tower house. If this were the case then the tower house would have been located directly on the water at its west and south. Quoile castle is located along what would have been a navigable stretch of the Quoile River and it probably would have been accessible to larger boats than those that could have approached as far as Downpatrick. It is located approximately four kilometres downstream along the Quoile River from Ballintogher, a port mentioned in the early seventeenth-century Port Books (see Castle Island, above). Similarly, it is only a few kilometres upstream from Downpatrick, the county town. It probably was sited to take advantage of fish weirs along this stretch of the river and possibly also to control the ferry crossing the Quoile River. This ferry is referred to in historic documentation, yet its precise location is unclear.

Description of tower house

Quoile castle is possibly late sixteenth century in date and is in a ruinous condition. On the outside it is quite a plain structure, with little ornamentation, even on the windows and opes. As with Mahee castle, it is noticeably more rectangular in dimension than square, rising to three storeys (possibly with an additional attic level, now not surviving). It has a mural stair rising in the north-east wall until first floor level where it rises in the north-west wall. There are two chambers at ground floor level, although only one at subsequent storeys (plate 45).

Quoile castle is discussed on pp 247-8 of the *ASCD*.

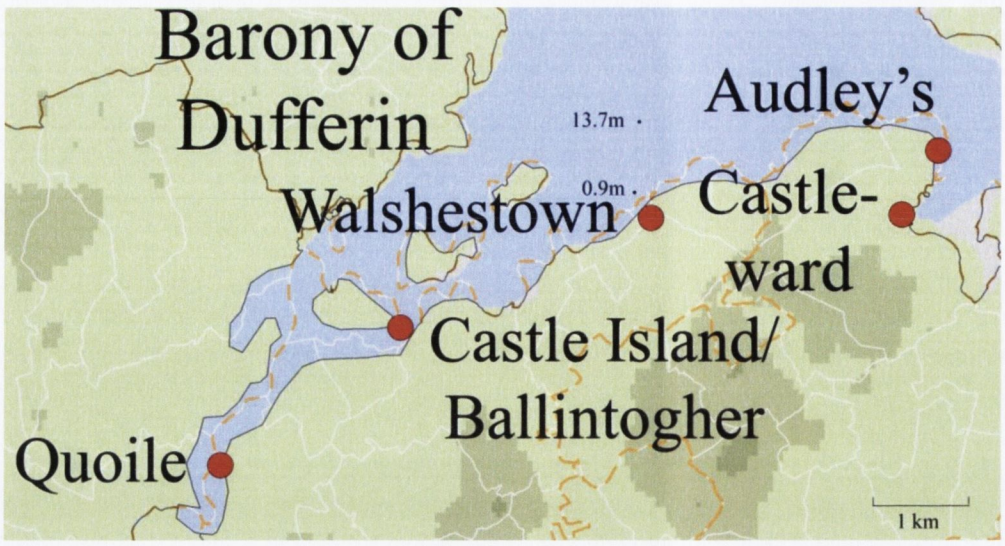


Figure 19

Location of tower houses on the Quoile River estuary. Water depths are not able to be estimated with any accuracy due to the effects of damming upstream



Plate 45

Quoile castle

Site name

Ringhaddy

SMR Site number

DOW024:012

OS grid reference

538589

Barony

Dufferin

Description of location

Ringhaddy castle is located on the western shore of Strangford Lough on Castle Island, an island to the north of a headland that projects from the mainland. Ringhaddy castle is located on a causeway between the island and the headland, this causeway was probably in use contemporaneous with the period of tower house occupation. It is located directly on the water (figure 20). Ringhaddy is approximately six kilometres north of Killyleagh, the nearest town. This site was not surveyed during the course of study, so observations are based on other sources, including the first edition OS maps and *Admiralty Charts*. These maps indicate that sheltered anchorages are available offshore from the tower house, particularly to the north and west (figure 20).

Description of tower house

The tower house possibly dates from the fifteenth century. The tower house was destroyed by Bryan McArt O'Neill as he withdrew from the area in the early 1600s (Breen & O'Sullivan 2007, 166). It then underwent significant rebuilding when it was occupied by Sir Ralph Lane, who sought to establish a maritime-oriented colony there in the aftermath of the Nine Years War (recounted in a number of letters published in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.*) before he died (Declaration and petition of Sir Rafe Lane to the Lord Deputy and Council, 26 October 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 503-505; Sir Arthur Chichester to Secretary Cecil, 12 May 1602, *Cal. S. P. Ire., 1601-03*, 505).

The structure is rectangular in shape, there are projecting turrets of unequal dimensions at the north-east and south-west. The north-east turret contained a spiral stair, while the south-west turret seems not to have been a latrine, but rather provided a small chamber at each storey. The later additions appear to have included the insertion of fireplaces at first and second storey levels and the carrying up of the north and south walls to form gables (plate 46).

A landing place associated with the castle (mentioned in the *Cal. S. P. Ire.* as a landing place for munitions and supplies for the Gaelic-Irish during the Nine Years War) was excavated, a summary of which was published by Breen (1997). These excavations found that the natural anchorage was supplemented by the construction of an artificial landing place, known as a 'hard', and a jetty. This would have allowed goods to be unloaded from larger vessels at the offshore anchorage and ferried to shore in smaller tenders, although smaller boats would have been able to approach the jetty and hard. No date has been suggested for the construction of these structures, although the discovery of cut building stone underwater off the jetty would suggest they were in place from before Lane's occupation at least (Breen 1997, 63).

The architecture of Ringhaddy castle is covered in the *ASCD* on pp 248-50.

Unusual features

As in the case of excavation indicating the presence of ancillary buildings, at this site excavation has identified the use of artificial landing places to enhance the natural landscape.

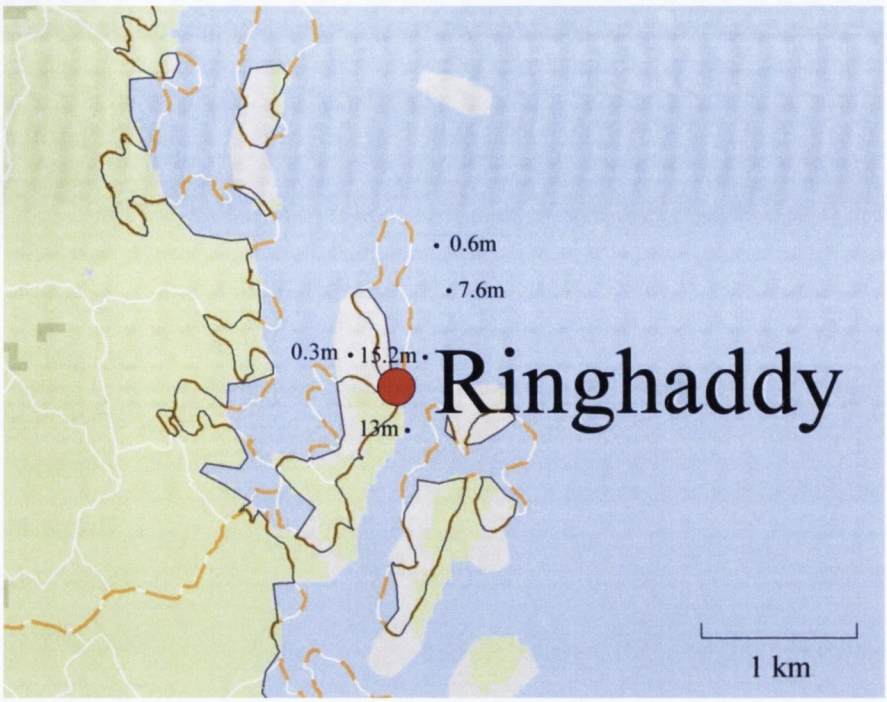


Figure 20

Location of Ringhaddy castle off the west shore of Strangford Lough, with water depths near the site marked



Plate 46

Ringhaddy castle

Site name

Sketrick

SMR Site number

DOW017:008

OS grid reference

525625

Barony

Castlereagh

Description of location

Sketrick castle is located on Sketrick Island, offshore from the western shore of Strangford Lough. It is approximately eight kilometres north of Killyleagh and fifteen kilometres north-north-west of Strangford and Portaferry. As such, it is one of the furthest tower houses in the study area from an identified port town.

The tower house is situated on flat land on the west of Sketrick Island, with a causeway located directly in front of it. The land rises behind the tower house, meaning that it is a further example of a flat coastal site being chosen over one at a height. The tower house is located directly on the water, positioned to command the aforementioned causeway between Sketrick Island and the mainland. There are good anchorages to the south-east of the tower house, although the site is not located to command these, instead facing out over the causeway (figure 16). However, the tower house would have still been able to view these anchorages, and it is visible from the same.

Description of tower house

Sketrick castle has a number of unusual architectural features although it is in a ruinous state after being hit by lightning early in the twentieth century. Along with Mahee castle, it is one of two tower houses in the study area to have an internal boathouse. This is a long and narrow chamber, with a wide entrance at the water side and barrel vaulting running along its length. The internal boathouse is one of four chambers at ground floor level, with two chambers at each storey rising above. Of the other chambers on the ground floor, one has been suggested as being a prison (since the entrance door was rebated from the outside), another a guardroom, and what may be a kitchen based on the presence of what appear to have been brick-lined ovens (*ASCD*, 251). Despite this comparatively complex internal arrangement, the external appearance of the castle was probably quite plain.

Sketrick castle is another example of a tower house with a stone-built bawn. This bawn encloses a very small area, which means that it is unlikely that any ancillary buildings were located within it. Nor does it entirely encircle the tower house, instead it joins the tower house at the east. This creates a defined route to the tower house entrance. Also located within the bawn enclosure, in the north-east angle of the wall, is the entrance to a covered passageway that runs for *c.* twelve metres to a well. The combination of the internal kitchen and covered well has led to the suggestion here that the tower house was particularly well organised to resist a siege. Paradoxically, the covered well would have also formed a weak point in the structure of the defensive arrangements. Sketrick is one of the few tower houses for which we have several contemporary references to its history: it is recorded in 1470 as having been captured by Henry O'Neill (*AFM*); the location to which a large iron gun was being brought by the Earl of Kildare in 1534 (Dublin City Treasurer's Accounts 1540-1613); and in 1536 it was taken by John Prowse, Constable of Carlingford Castle (cited in *ASCD*, 250).

The tower house is described further on pages 250 to 252 of the *ASCD*.

Unusual features

The internal arrangement at Sketrick castle is highly unusual compared to the other sites in the study area. It is only one of two sites that contain an internal boathouse. The diversity of room function potentially within this tower house is a further uncommon situation. It is of course entirely possible that the same occupations (kitchen, guardroom, prison) were catered for in the other tower houses, but a manifestation of this in the architecture does not occur. Sketrick is also one of a handful of sites located to command a causeway between the mainland of County Down and an island. It is one of a small number of tower houses to have a surviving stone bawn.

Site name

Strangford

SMR Site number

DOW017:008

OS grid reference

588497

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Strangford castle is located at the centre of the medieval port town of the same name. It is the only identified tower house within the settlement, which was head port for Lecale through much of the time period under consideration here. The tower house is located on flat land. In the modern landscape the tower house is set back from the water as a consequence of infill. It was, at the time of its construction, located directly on the harbour (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 231) [plate 15]. To the east of the tower house is a small cliff of approximately three metres in height. This interrupts access from the tower house to the modern harbour, though this cliff was formed as a consequence of land reclamation at the harbour. Strangford castle has a commanding view over the town's harbour, across the Narrows to Portaferry and along maritime approach routes to the settlement from both the north and the south. It is therefore an excellent example of a tower house with a maritime orientation, based on location.

Description of tower house

Strangford castle was probably constructed in the late fifteenth century, and is recorded as being in a ruinous condition in 1540, although it was rebuilt in this same century (Waterman 1967, 83). Strangford castle has formed a case study in this thesis on pages 45 to 51. This discussion focuses on the tower house's possible use as a dual function structure, with the ground floor being used for retail, storage or as a customs house and the upper storeys serving as a residence. This interpretation has stemmed from the identification of two contemporary entrances at the tower house (one at ground level, the other at first floor height), which is reminiscent of the architectural arrangement of commercial buildings in England and presents another version of the situation at the Newark (see above). Aside from the dual entrance at this site, it otherwise has a plain exterior (plate 47). Eadie has identified Strangford castle as being the most defensive tower house within her County Down cohort, this may be as a result of its potential function (Eadie 2009, 378).

There have been no ancillary buildings identified at Strangford castle. This, it is suggested, is due to its multi-functional interior use as both a commercial and residential structure. The tower house had a commanding location on Strangford harbour and is intervisible with Portaferry castle, directly across the Narrows (figure 17). Due to the site's location on the harbour, the tower house likely controlled the historic ferry route between Lecale and the Ards peninsula, as its neighbour Portaferry castle (see above) potentially did. Despite this identified connection with the maritime landscape, the front of the tower house (based on its two entrances) does not face out towards the harbour, instead it is oriented towards the north. This possibly indicates the historic approach to the tower house from the harbour, now obscured by later land reclamation, or this was to control the deeper anchorages to the north of the town.

Strangford castle is discussed in the *ASCD* (pages 252-3) and in Waterman's 1967 article in the *UJA*.

Unusual features

Strangford castle is the only dual entrance tower house in the study area, and is the only example of this design north of Carlingford, County Louth (the Mint is a dual entrance tower house there). It is also the only site where a dual function at a true tower house was identified, the other examples of multi-functionality being determined to have been commercial port buildings.



Plate 47

Strangford castle

Site name

Walshestown

SMR Site number

DOW032:001

OS grid reference

545498

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

Walshestown castle is located on flat land on the Lecale side of the Quoile River. It is approximately seven and a half kilometres sailing distance from Strangford and Portaferry. Walshestown castle is located at the entrance to the Quoile River estuary, where it meets Strangford Lough and as a consequence is located directly opposite Killyleagh [*c.* four kilometres sailing distance] (figure 19). It is *c.* two and a half kilometres downstream from Ballintogher. Its proximity to Ballintogher, identified as a port based on its inclusion in the Port Books, has led to the proposition that Walshestown castle and Castle Island (see above) were sited to take advantage of the trade at this site (p. 135). The tower house is set back 200 metres from the water, although due to the changes to the course of the Quoile River, the distance at the time of construction could have been less. It is possible that vessels could have anchored offshore from the tower house either in the Quoile River or at its entrance from Strangford Lough. Today there is a sandy/shingle beach along the riverfront that would be suitable for drawing up boats, but for the same reason as stated above, this beach may not have been present at the time of the tower house's construction (plate 48).

Walshestown castle is now located in the grounds of Myra Castle, a mid nineteenth century stately home. Although now overgrown, Myra Castle's ornamental gardens were once impressive, with a summerhouse, balustraded terrace and cascading lake part of the amenities. It would appear that Walshestown castle was incorporated into this modern designed landscape. The site is set within the gardens and modern windows have been inserted to allow its use until the last few decades, when the gardens fell into disrepair. Building stone, possibly removed from the interior of the tower house, but more likely remnants of the bawn wall and including worked material, is scattered across the land surrounding the tower house.

Description of tower house

Walshestown is possibly a late sixteenth-century tower house, making it one of the few in the study area of this date. It is plain in architectural style, and has one chamber at each storey (plate 49a). A bawn wall surrounded the tower house, that survives today to the south-west (plate 49b). This bawn may have been constructed at a later date than the tower house, it contains gun loops and 'the masonry differs somewhat from that of the tower' (*ASCD*, 255).

There is no evidence of ancillary buildings at Walshestown castle. It is also impossible to determine the approach to the tower house due to the possibility that the shoreline has changed. Since the bawn wall is only partially extant, we similarly cannot ascertain the direction the tower house was oriented in, or use this as a basis of determining approach. The site is very overgrown which not did allow for identification of historic trackways between the tower house and the shore. No contemporary historical documentation of Walshestown castle was identified through the course of study.

See *ASCD*, 253-5 for a description of Walshestown castle's interior and architecture.

Unusual features

Walshestown is a good example of how tower houses were used in the modern period.



Plate 48

Quoile River estuary (Killyleagh is the settlement opposite, in the background) from Walshestown castle



Plate 49a

Walshestown castle



Plate 49b

Partially extant bawn wall at Walshestown castle

Site name

Woodgrange

SMR Site number

DOW030:004

OS grid reference

444465

Barony

Lecale

Description of location

The precise location of Woodgrange castle was not able to be determined at the time of fieldwork. The *ASCD* describes its location thus: '250 yards N. of Woodgrange Cottage is a rath of platform type...delimited by a scarp', the remains of the tower house are located at the north-west of this scarp. Woodgrange Cottage was not identified at the time of visit (despite conversations with a number of local residents). Three raths are marked on the OS first edition six inch maps in the townland of Woodgrange, consequently it was not possible to ascertain in which of these the slight masonry remains described in the *ASCD* were located. Thankfully these raths are located within close proximity of one another, so general conclusions as to the siting of the tower house here were able to be drawn.

Woodgrange townland is located three kilometres north-west of Downpatrick and two kilometres west of the Cistercian abbey at Inch (the site of a mid sixteenth-century jetty, uncovered during excavation, Foley 1992). The townland adjoins the Quoile River (upstream of Downpatrick) and the raths depicted on the OS maps are approximately 500 metres from the river. Despite this proximity to a navigable stretch of the Quoile River, the raths are located at a height above the river. This reduces the ability for the tower house to communicate with the river, but does suggest that the tower house had a commanding presence over this stretch of water. Although it is possible that fish weirs were located along this section of the Quoile River, the height of the site suggests that the tower house did not directly engage in fishing activity.

Description of tower house

The tower house was not able to be identified, however, based on the description in the *ASCD* not much survives beyond a section of wall *c.* three and a half metres long containing a single splayed loop. There is no mention of Woodgrange castle in the historical material consulted.

The site is discussed in the *ASCD* on page 255.

Unusual features

Woodgrange castle is one of a small number of sites located at a height. Woodgrange castle and Castle Bright tower house (approximately ten kilometres away to the south-east) are the only two sites in the study area that have commanding views of water, yet do not appear to have maintained regular interaction with it based on their topography.

Table 1: Basic Description

Site Name	Barony	Location (OS grid reference)	Approx. date construction	Approx. Date end occupation	Tower house	Extant (i.e. foundations visible at a minimum)	Bawn	SMR ref.
Ardkeen castle	Ards	593571	16th century	possible until early 18th century	Y	Y	N	DOW 025:005
Audley's castle	Lecale	578506	probably first half 15th century	possible until early 18th century, incorporated into later estate plans	Y	Y	Y	DOW 031:006
Bangor	Ards	505822	early 17th century	currently occupied	N	Y	N	
Bonecastle	Lecale	464415	possible early 15th century	unknown	unknown	N	N	DOW 037:041
Castleboy	Ards	625557	possible 15th century	unknown - possible early modern occupation	Y	Y	N	DOW 025:016
Castle Bright	Lecale	507383	late 15th or early 16th century	unknown	Y	Y	N	DOW 045:001
Castle Island	Lecale	516486	unknown	unknown - likely occupied mid 17th century	Y	Y	N	DOW 031:034
Castleskreen	Lecale	466400	unknown	unknown	unknown	N	N	DOW 037:039
Castleward	Lecale	574498	late 16th or early 17th century	unknown, incorporated into later estate plans	Y	Y	Possible, later enclosing wall	DOW 031:005
Cowd castle (Choud castle)	Lecale	561370	probably 15th century	unknown	N	Y	N	DOW 045:023

Horn castle	Lecale	562371	probably 15th century	after late 18th century	N	Y	N	DOW 045:021
Jordan's castle	Lecale	560372	probably first half 15th century	unknown	Y	Y	N	DOW 045:020
Kilclief castle	Lecale	597457	probably first half 15th century	likely late 18th century	Y	Y	N	DOW 039:002
Killyleagh castle	Dufferin	523529	early 17th century, possible earlier structure	currently occupied	Y	Y	Y	DOW 024:030
King's castle	Lecale	Unknown	unknown, possible mid 15th (based on Grose's illustration)	possible until 19th century	Y	N	N	DOW 045:024
Kirkistown castle	Ards	644580	early 17th century	likely 19th century	Y	Y	Y	DOW 025:007
Mahee castle (Nendrum castle)	Castlereagh, but within Clandeboye territory, hence inclusion	524640	15th century	after mid 19th century	Y	Y	Partial	DOW 017:004
Margaret's castle	Lecale	560370	probably first half 15th century	unknown	Y	Y	N	DOW 045:022
Newark (Ardglass castle)	Lecale	561371	early 15th century	currently occupied	N	Y	N	DOW 045:021
Newtownards castle	Ards	492738	unknown	possible 17th century	unknown	N	Unknown	DOW 006:019

Portaferry castle	Ards	593508	possible early 16th century	unknown, but likely after 17th century	Y	Y	N	DOW 032:003
Quintin castle	Ards	632505	before late 16th century	currently occupied	Y	Y	N	DOW 032:019
Quoile castle	Lecale	496470	late 16th century	after late 18th century	Y	Y	N	DOW 031:009
Ringhaddy castle	Dufferin	538589	possible 15th century, early 17th century rebuild	after mid 17th century, used as dower house after Hamilton's purchase	Y	Y	N	DOW 024:012
Sketrick castle	Castlereagh, but within Clandeboye territory, hence inclusion	525625	before late 15th century	unknown	Y	Y	Y	DOW 017:008
Strangford castle	Lecale	588497	possible pre late 16th century	unknown	Y	Y	N	DOW 032:001
Walshestown castle	Lecale	545498	late 16th century	after 18th century	Y	Y	Y	DOW 031:008
Woodgrange castle	Lecale	444465	unknown	unknown	unknown	N	N	DOW 030:004
Dundrum castle	Lecale	405370	12th century	after 17th century	N	Y	N/A	DOW 044:006

Donaghadee	Ards	590800			no tower house discovered during course of investigations			DOW 003:011
Downpatrick	Lecale	485445			highly probable existence of tower houses during period			DOW 037:091
Killough	Lecale	536362			no tower house discovered during course of investigations			DOW 045:500
Ardquin (The Abbacy)	Ards	585545	early 17th century	unknown	N	Y	N	DOW 024:032
Ballydugan	Lecale	468431	early 17th century	now adjacent to mill	N	Y	Y	DOW 037:022
Ballyspurge (The White House)	Ards	643551	mid 17th century	unknown	N	Y	Y	DOW 025:019