

Diamond Park Dublin 1

Archaeological Assessment



GARAHY 11/02/2019

SITE NAME

Diamond Park, Gardiner Street Lower and Seán MacDermott Street Lower, Dublin 1.

CLIENT

Dermot Foley, Argus House, Blackpitts, Dublin D08 DD56

PLANNING

Pre-planning

LICENCE

N/a

REPORT AUTHORS

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DATE

11th February 2019

ABBREVIATIONS USED

DoCH&G	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
NMS	National Monuments Service
OS	Ordnance Survey
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
LAP	Local Area Plan

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Section 1 Introduction

Report summary

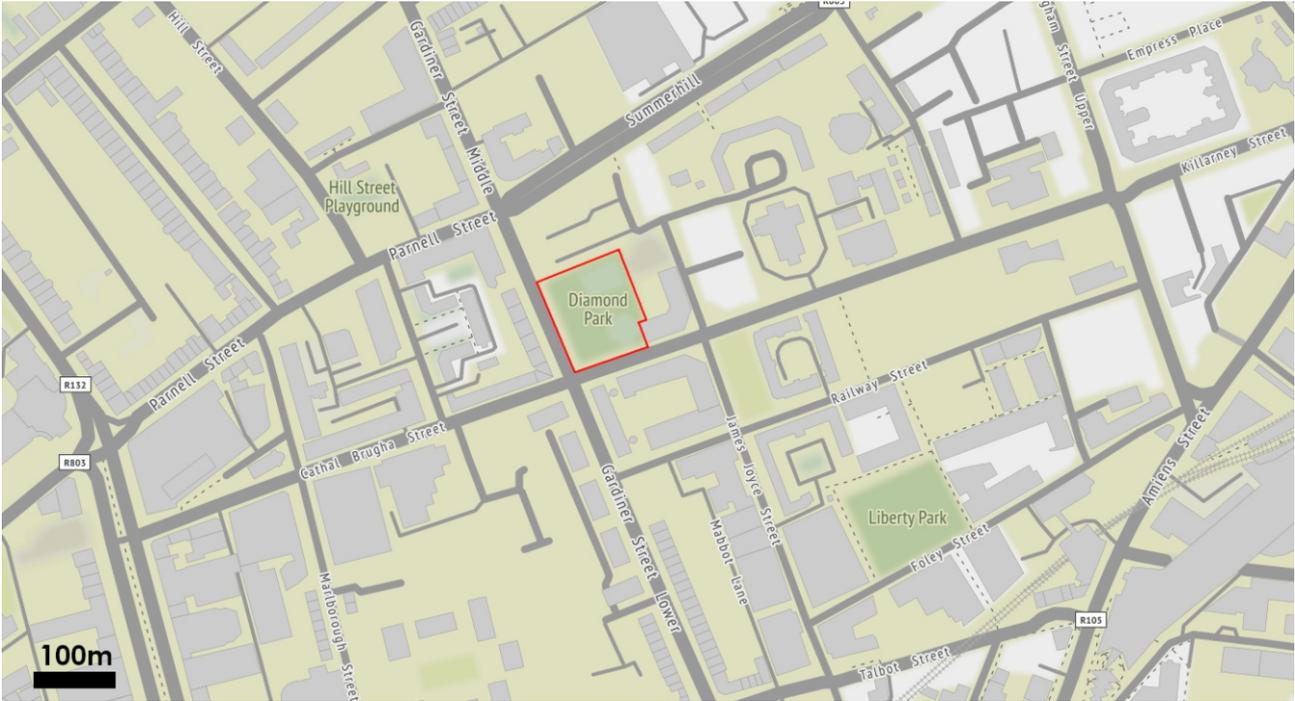
The purpose of this desktop assessment is to inform the project design for the refurbishment of Diamond Park of the archaeological potential of the park itself and the immediate environment. The site was undeveloped until the late 18th century by the Gardiner estate. The large red-brick terraced Georgian houses declined into the slums and tenements of the Monto red-light district in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By the late 20th century the neglected buildings were demolished to make way for Diamond Park.

The development of the Georgian buildings and basements would likely have removed any earlier archaeological deposits, at least in the

south and west of the park. The basements themselves and the Georgian foundations likely survive in situ, beneath the present park, as does the leftover everyday items of the people who lived and died in those buildings over the course of almost two centuries. These artefacts are a precious source of information on what was one of the largest red light districts in Europe, but which has received very little historical or archaeological attention.

It is recommended in this report that all groundworks in advance of the refurbishment of the park be monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist and that all subsurface structural remains be archaeologically recorded and planned, with the purpose of preserving by record this corner of the north inner city.





Site location

Site location

Diamond Park is a 0.4ha park that is located on the north-eastern corner of the junction of Gardiner Street Lower and Seán MacDermott Street Lower, Dublin 1. The park borders Kavanagh Court Student Accommodation to the north and the Rutland National School to the east (ITM 716121, 735121).

Project proposals

Diamond Park has been identified as a priority refurbishment project to improve the quality and experience of the public realm for the local community in the North Inner City. This report is intended to inform the design of that project.

Section 2 Archaeological Background

Record of Monuments & Places

Six Recorded Monuments, including historic Dublin itself, are listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) close to Diamond Park. The RMP files held by the National Monuments Service were consulted for further information on these monuments

DU018-020 Historic Dublin

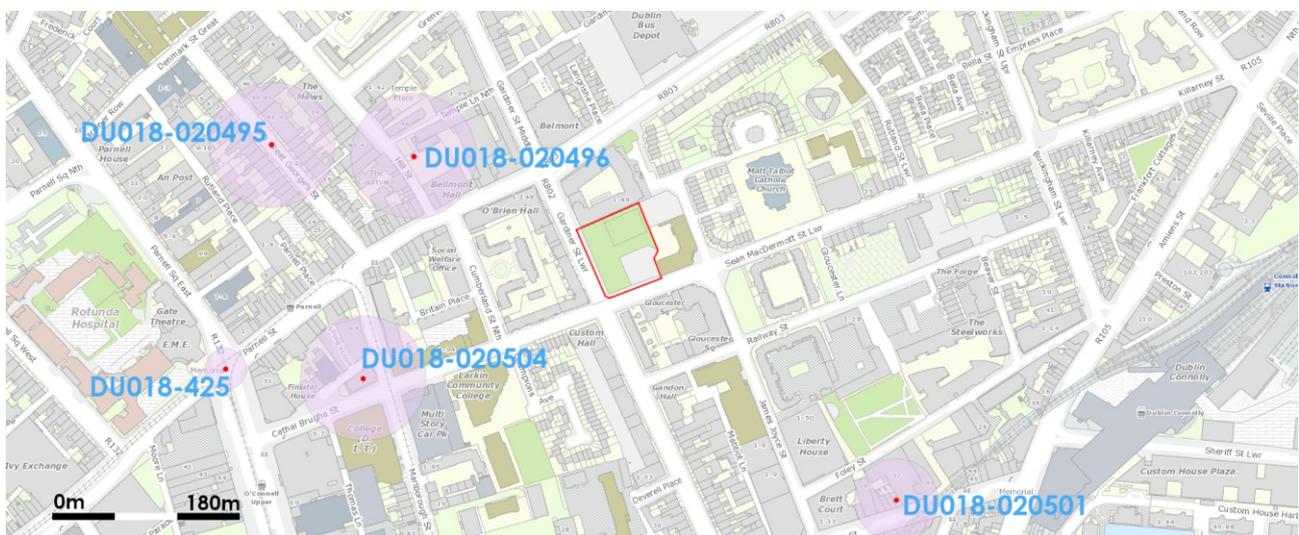
Diamond Park is just outside of the historic Dublin RMP. The southern limit of the park borders the historic city. The boundary of the historic city in this part of Dublin ostensibly follows the limits of 18th century development as depicted on Charles Brooking's map of 1728 (Giacometti 2011).

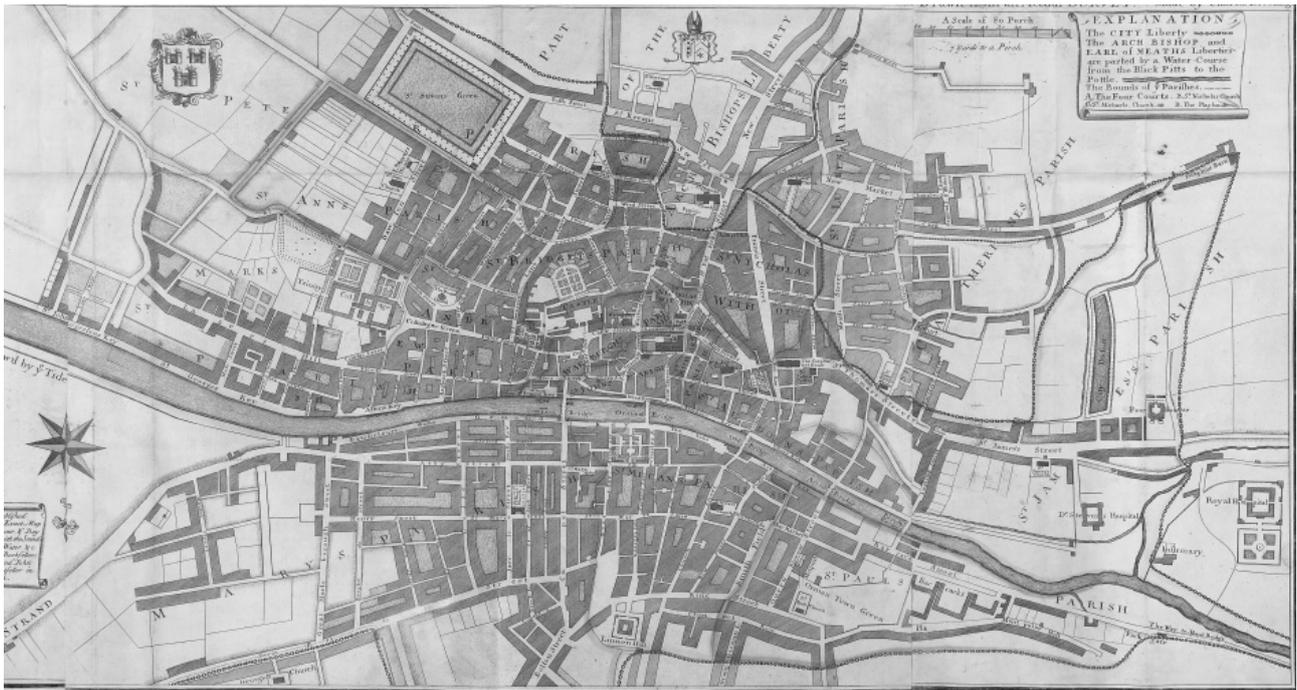
DU018-020495 Burial ground

A possible cemetery site of Viking origin, the extent of which is unknown. In a letter to The Irish Builder in 1897, Patrick Traynor cited the

frequent discoveries of bones, swords and spears when foundations were being dug on North Great George's Street, Summerhill, Gardiner's Row and Mountjoy Square as evidence that the Battle of Clontarf was fought somewhere between present-day Capel Street and the Tolka River (Traynor 1897). He included with his letter an essay from The Dublin Magazine of June 1763 by the Rev. Dr. Edward Ledwich who witnessed "vast quantities of human bones" being discovered in the New-Gardens (present-day Parnell Square) and on Cavendish Row and Granby Row. A large sword, a 2-foot spear and numerous iron rivets were also discovered at the latter. The sheer amount of human remains lead Ledwich to conclude that they could only have come from the Battle of Clontarf and not some later battle associated with the coming of the English, who fought with much fewer numbers (Ledwich 1763).

Locations of nearby RMPs. Note the boundary of Historic Dublin (DU018-020) is not marked on this map





Charles Brooking's 1728 A map of the city and suburbs of Dublin. Note that Brooking's map is aligned so that north points downwards

DU018-020496 Church

St. George's Church is situated beside Temple Street Children's Hospital in Harwicke Place. Considered one of Dublin's most beautiful buildings, it was built for the wealthy Protestant community of the north inner city between 1802 and 1813. The architect was Francis Johnston who also designed the GPO on O'Connell Street (Dublin buildings website).

DU018-020504 Graveyard

The extent of the graveyard associated with St. George's church (DU018-020496) is unknown. The church predates the formation of Hill Street; therefore, its western boundary was not originally confined by the line of the street. It is possible that the cemetery may have been truncated by the later laying out of Hill Street. The core of the cemetery is no longer in situ, the area having been cleared to build the Hill Street playground (Giacometti 2005).

DU018-020501 Tidal Mill

The site is located c.240m to the north-west of a tidal mill pond and associated mill site at Talbot Street. The earliest reference to the mill is noted in a lease granted to Jonathen Amory in

1675 on land beside 'the water mill lately built by Mr. Gilbert Mabbott' (de Courcy 1996, 7). Gilbert Mabbott appears later in the Assembly Records of 1669 and his tidal mill was situated on his land which extended from the seashore at modern Talbot Street back to Montgomery Street (Dillon Cosgrave 1909, 88). An unnamed feature marked on de Gomme's map of 1673 near the modern City Morgue on Store Street is later named (on Bolton's map of 1717) as the 'corner of Mabbot's Wall' (de Courcy 1996, 240). The mill may have gone out of use, and the millpond infilled, by the mid-18th century (de Courcy 1996, 240) and no surface trace now exists (Stout 1997, RMP Field Notes).

DU018-425 Parnell statue (Nat. Monument)

The following account of this monument is derived from the report on the 'History of monuments. O'Connell Street area' commissioned by Dublin City Council in 2003 (SMR file):

'Sackville Street was also to be the location for one of the last sculptural initiatives in the city before independence when, in 1899, the foundation stone was laid for a monument dedicated



The Parnell Monument, located on O'Connell street, commemorates Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891) Irish nationalist politician and leader of the Land League (DCC Historical Postcards Archive HP29)

to Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891)...where it now stands in answer to the O'Connell statue at the south end and terminates the parade of nationalist statues on the primary thoroughfare of the capital.

Augustus Saint-Gaudens, an Irish-born sculptor and the most eminent in the art of public monuments in the United States, accepted the commission... (and he) planned a monument which would integrate sculpture and architecture.

He finally presented Parnell in what he considered a noble and calm manner, depicted in an open frock coat, with one hand resting on a table and the other extended dramatically as if making a point at a parliamentary debate. In an incongruous gesture to the neo-classical programme of decoration on the nearby Rotunda, the base of the monument is decorated in swags and bucrania, resulting in an odd proximity of ox-skulls to Parnell's feet. The shaft of the

monument is constructed in undecorated ashlar granite.

The names of the thirty-two counties and provinces on bronze plaques around the base were part of an earlier scheme for the four-sided pyramid, representing the four provinces and were retained for the revised triangular shaft. There is a stark contrast between the presentation of Parnell and O'Connell, the former does not symbolically rise above political structures, but tries to find a new form of expression, accessible to the people in the location of the figure.

(John) Redmond chose a passage from one of the more extreme Parnell speeches for the inscription, '... no man has the right to say to his country, "thus far shalt thou go and no further" and we have never attempted to fix the ne plus ultra to the progress of Ireland's nationhood, and we never shall' (SMR file, compiled by Paul Walsh).

Previous excavations

Numerous archaeological investigations have taken place in the area around Diamond Park. Given the high number of these, the table below summarises only the results of those investigations that have taken place within two blocks of the park. Further discussion of those results is limited to only those investigations that revealed significant and relevant archaeological features and/or deposits.

123-128 Summerhill

Monitoring of groundworks associated with the construction of a student accommodation complex uncovered a post-medieval stone-lined well. It was sub-circular with dimensions and was 1.15m wide externally, and 0.7m wide internally with a depth of 6.1m. The stone lining was internally faced and 0.5m thick. It was constructed with unbonded angular and sub-angular stones. The well is preserved in situ under the development (O'Connell 2016, excavations.ie).

Summerhill bus depot

Infilled Georgian cellars were discovered prior to the development at a new canteen at the Summerhill bus depot. The infill material was unsuitable to lay foundations on, so the new structure was built on micro-piles that extended through the backfill into the natural deposits be-

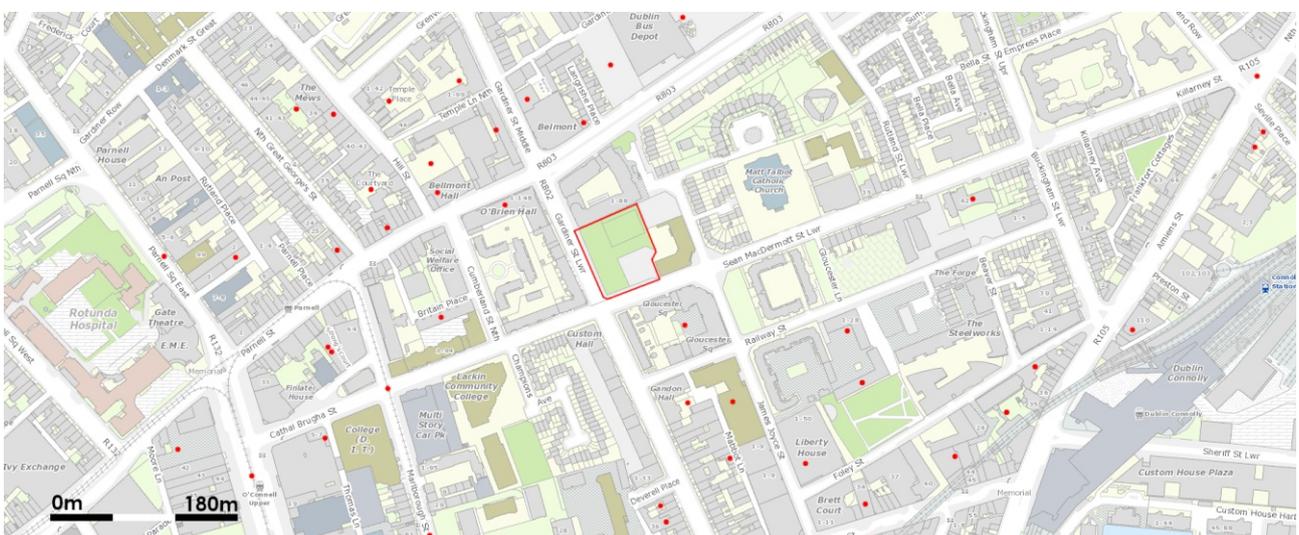
low (Myles 2005, excavations.ie).

18 Langrishe Place

Archaeological testing in advance of a development discovered that the earliest phase of activity found dated to the earlier two-thirds of the 18th century and was represented by an organic layer of garden or cultivation soil and a number of ditches relating to cultivation. The organic layer had large amounts of animal bone and oyster shell that represented discarded domestic food waste. The cultivation and dumping of waste took place to the rear of a group of buildings on North Great George's Street belonging to Nicholas Archdales Esquire, which are marked on Roque's 1756 map of Dublin (Giacometti 2005).

The testing also revealed the foundations of late 18th and early 19th century building foundations and plot boundaries. Behind the buildings were a cobbled back yard and a number of brick-and-stone-lined drains that would have serviced the structures. A stone-lined outhouse or waste pit was also found behind the structure at No. 24A, in which there was a large number of smashed plates of the period. These remains were of archaeological value, as they were within the curtilage of the protected structures at Nos 47 and 48 North Great George's Street (Giacometti 2005).

Location map of archaeological investigations that have taken place in the vicinity of the development site (red dots)



Previous archaeological excavations in vicinity of Diamond Park

Licence	Licence holder	Site location	Summary of results
16E0360	Aiden O'Connell	123-128 Summerhill	Post-medieval well
05E1241	Franc Myles	Summerhill Bus Depot	Post-medieval cellars
05E0354	Antoine Giacometti	18 Langrishe Place	Post-medieval building foundations
03E0971	Claire Walsh	31-35 Gardiner Street Upper	No archaeological significance
03E0569	Teresa Bolger	Gloucester Square	Post-medieval terrace
01E0828	Helen Keogh	Hill Street Playground	Disarticulated human remains
98E0351	Helen Keogh	Hill Street	Post-medieval cellars
97E0038	Helen Keogh	Middle Gardiner Street	No archaeological significance
95E0006	Alan Hayden	O'Brien Hall Gardiner Street	No archaeological significance

Gloucester Square

The remains of early 19th century terraces of houses fronting onto Railway Street, Gloucester Place Lower and the Gloucester Diamond were identified at the site. There were no indications of any earlier archaeological material (Bolger 2003, excavations.ie).

Hill Street Playground

Test trenches in advance of the development of the Hill Street playground on the site of St. George's graveyard revealed that there had been significant ground disturbance in the upper 0.6m of soil. This was likely associated with the removal of grave-slabs and the laying down of reinforced concrete slabs followed by tarmacadam. There was evidence for re-deposited human bone fragments within the initial 0.6m of brown clay fill. At least two grave-slabs were laid down horizontally and covered over by the concrete slab. Some redeposited bone fragments were mixed in with the brown clay which lay over the grave-slabs and under the concrete. No in situ articulated human skeletons, i.e. burials, were located in the trenches (Kehoe 2001, excavations.ie).

Hill Street

An archaeological assessment was completed at a development site at the corner of Hill Street and Parnell Street. Three trenches were excavated by mechanical digger. The stratigraphy was uniform and identical within the trenches opened, consisting of recent building rubble and cellar remains overlying a compact, light brown, stony natural (Kehoe 1998, excavations.ie).

Topographical files

The files held in the National Museum of Ireland have been consulted. Collectively known as the Topographical Files, they provide information on artefacts, their find spots, and any field monuments which have been notified to the National Museum.

The Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland do not contain any references to the immediate vicinity of the proposed development area. There are however two finds noted from the general area.

Several disarticulated human skulls, ribs, vertebrae and long bones (Museum Reg. No: Date only 23/04/48) were found in the ruins of old tenements on Henrietta Place to the southwest of the proposed development site. Nothing was found in association to assist in the dating of the finds, however they had been deposited in lime after the building of the houses and some of the long bones and one of the skulls had been cut by a saw. It was suspected at the time that they may have related to burial at the Pro Cathedral or had come from the Rotunda Hospital.

To the south-west of the proposed development site, at 50 O'Connell Street Upper, animal bones were unearthed in the rear basement of the building (Museum Reg. No. IA/15/65/Record only). The basement had originally been a yard. The bones were mainly ox and a few sheep with many showing cleaver marks.

Section 3 History and Cartography

Historical background

The urban environment of the development site means that it is difficult to find evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity. Dorset Street to the west of the study area is thought to follow an early historic route from the north of Ireland to the ford across the Liffey. This route, the *Slige Midluachra*, was established in the centuries prior to the establishment of the Hiberno-Norse town of Dublin. It is likely that the immediate area of the site formed part of the tidal wetlands of the Liffey estuary, which were still a flood plain in the 17th century (Cullen 1992, 254).

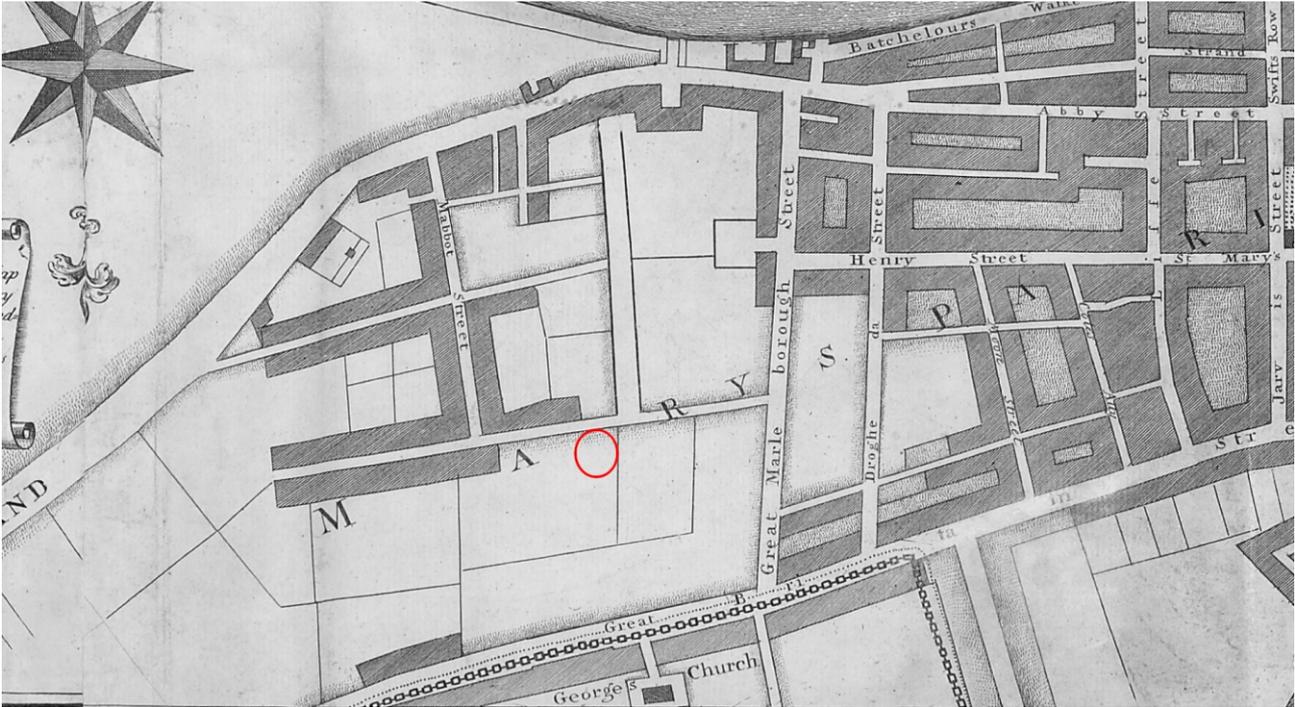
The development site did not form part of the early historic *Baile Áth Cliath* or the Viking settlement of *Dubb Linn*. In the medieval period this area is referred to as 'Crinan' from at least

1192 (Ball 1906, 153) and was owned by St. Mary's Abbey, which was situated far to the west in Meeting House Lane (Clarke 1990, 43). The origin of the abbey is likely to be Benedictine, founded by monks from Savigny in Normandy, but became Cistercian in the 1140s (Holy Cross College 1962, 15). Some historians believe the monastery was founded by Danes in the 10th century (Gwynn 1949, 111).

The area of Diamond Park was still undeveloped in both John Speed's 1610 and Bernard de Gomme's 1673 maps of Dublin. Brookings map of 1728 was the first to show any substantial development in the area, with the laying out of present-day Corporation Street/James Joyce Street (formerly Mabbott Street), Seán MacDermott Street/Railway Street and Talbot Street, while the development site itself was still in fields.

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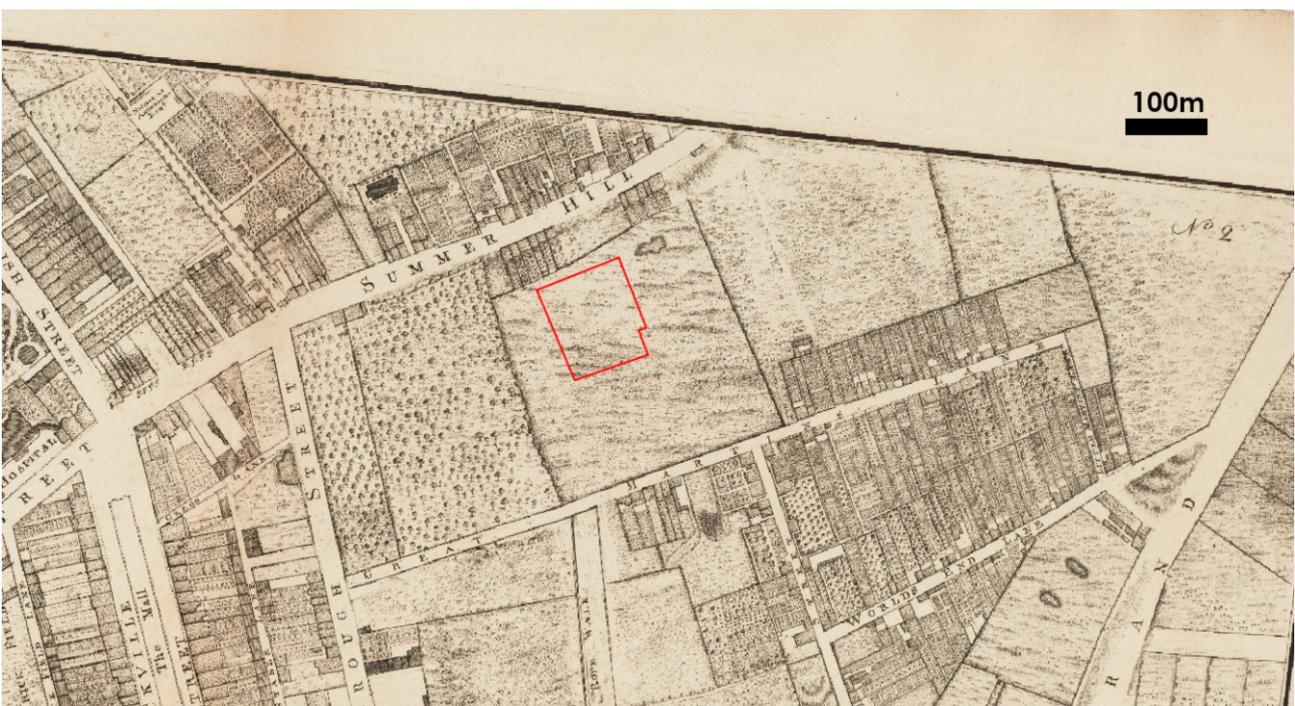


Approximate site location on Brooking's 1728 A map of the city and suburbs of Dublin. Note that Brooking's map was aligned with north pointing downwards

John Rocque's 1756 map of Dublin depicts the area as still being largely rural in character though the nearby properties are beginning to take on a more formal layout with distinctive plots and boundaries. Houses had been built to

the east of the development site along both sides of Great Martin's Lane (present day Seán MacDermott Street), though the area of the site itself was part of a large field, the purpose of which is not discernible from the map.

Approximate site location on John Rocque's 1756 An exact survey of the city and suburbs of Dublin (London). Note that, despite its title, Rocque's map was not drawn to an exact scale





Georgian doorways on Seán MacDermott Street (<http://www.dublincity.ie/image/libraries/067-sean-mcdermott-street>)

The main development of this area of Dublin is strongly associated with the Gardiner estate. Although the Gardiners were active in other areas of the north inner city throughout the 18th century, they do not appear to have turned their attention to this particular part of Dublin before the last quarter of the 18th century.

Luke Gardiner (the first) (d. 1755) was a banker and a member of Parliament who accumulated property on both sides of the Liffey from the second decade of the 18th century (Sheridan 2001a, 91). In 1729, St. Mary's including the Grange of Clonliffe was purchased from the Moore family by the Right Honourable Brabazon Viscount Duncannon and Luke Gardiner. The following year, Lord Duncannon sold his share to Gardiner (Holy Cross College 1962, 25). The development of the Gardiner estate was pursued by three generations of the Gardiner family. It was an estate made by negotiation on land bought in segments. Development began to the west of the develop-

ment site at Henrietta Street, followed by developments at Bolton Street. To the east, the son of Luke Gardiner opened up streets belonging to the Eccles estate situated to the north. The fields beyond Summerhill were opened up to create Mountjoy Square (1792-1818), it was initially planned to erect a new parish church of St. George at its centre, a plan that never came to fruition (McCullough 1989, 65).

It was the second Luke Gardiner in the 1790s who was responsible for establishing Gardiner Street, which was constructed to run for approximately one mile uphill from the architectural set-piece of the new Custom House at its southern end to the graceful terraces of Mountjoy Square near its northern end. The terraces of this later development were, however, already smaller in scale and floor area than their Gardiner estate precursors such as those on Rutland (later Parnell) Square (Cullen 1992, 258). Summerhill (then known as Summer



Gloucester Diamond in the mid-20th century (<http://www.dublincity.ie/image/libraries/gd012-diamond-bar>)

Dublin City Library Digital Collections



Seán MacDermott Street



Development of Diamond Park (<http://www.dublincity.ie/image/libraries/gd027-diamond-park>)

Development of Diamond Park (<http://www.dublincity.ie/image/libraries/gd016-diamond-park>)



Hill) had been established by the earlier decades of the 18th century, but was only partially built up along its northern side by the 1780s at which time its southern edge was “enhanced ... by an undulating terrace of houses with cliff-like bowed back elevations which appear, red-raddled, in a particularly famous slum photo of the 1890s” (McCullough 1989, 64).

The size of the plots in and around the site of the future Diamond Park is far smaller than the generous Georgian plots laid out in the core of the Gardiner Estate, suggesting that building densities were increased for this phase of development. This would have resulted in smaller buildings, which would have attracted lower-class occupants. It is possible that this reflects the changing demographics in this part of Dublin during the early nineteenth century. During the 18th century, development was characterised by the gentrification of this part of the city.

However, during the 19th century this impetus had slowed and by the mid-19th century it had developed a reputation as a red-light district.

Though probably conceived initially as single-family dwellings constructed by a relatively late phase of the Georgian Gardiner Estate development, it is likely that they would have developed into tenements by the end of the nineteenth century. In the mid-19th century this area, known as ‘Monto’ (after Montgomery Street, now Foley Street), centered on Mecklenburgh Street (now Railway Street) was a notorious red-light district (Fagan, T. *Monto: Madams, Murder and Black Coddle*) and was mentioned by James Joyce in *Ulysses*.

At its height the Monto was one of the largest red-light districts in Europe, but in the 1920s it fell into decline. This decline probably owed less to campaigns by puritanical political figures,

Lord Mayor Bertie Ahern opens Diamond Park in 1986 (<http://www.dublincity.ie/image/libraries/gd028-diamond-park>)



who fought hard throughout the 1920s to clean up the Monto, and more to the success of the fight for independence, which led to the abandonment of the British Army base nearby, which had provided the Monto with scores of eager customers.

The tenement buildings on the site of Diamond Park remained standing until the urban regeneration programmes of the 1980s that led to their ultimate demolition.

The present park was developed in the mid-1980s as part of the Corporation Urban Renewal Programme. It was re-designed in 2003 to include a children's playground and an all-weather pitch.

Section 4 Site Inspection

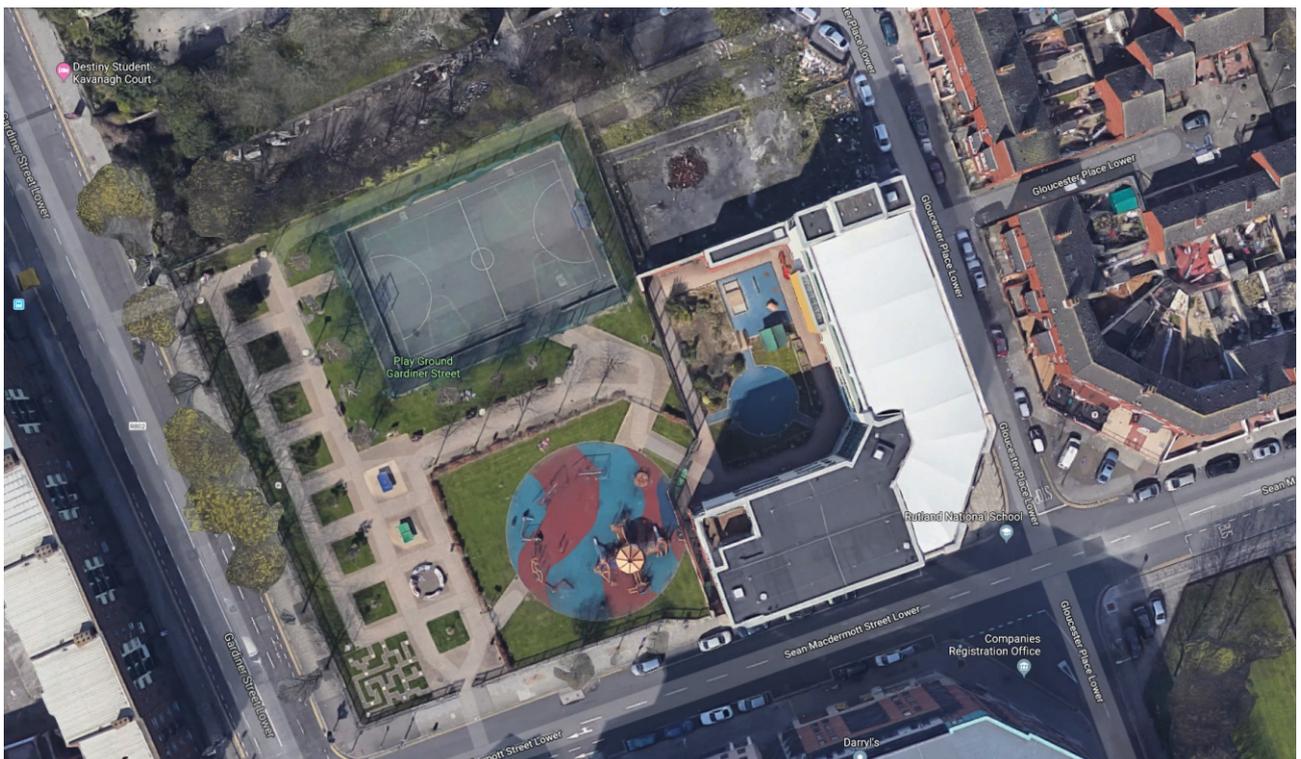
A site visit was carried out on a wet, overcast day in late January 2019. No upstanding archaeological remains or historic architecture was visible on the site of Diamond Park. The park is bounded by the Rutland National School to the east and the Kavanagh Court Student Accommodation to the north. It is open to Seán MacDermott Street and Gardiner Street on its southern and western boundaries respectively, though it is worth noting that the entire park limits are defined by a modern iron fence.

All boundaries, street lighting and street furniture features are relatively modern and of late 20th century or later. Historic granite kerb stones are present on the footpaths on both Seán MacDermott and Gardiner Streets, though they are almost certainly not original to the cur-



Modern boundaries (above two photographs)

Satellite image of Diamond Park (Google Maps 2019)



rent footpaths. In summary, no upstanding feature of archaeological or historic potential survive within the footprint of the Diamond Park site.



Park furniture



Park furniture



Park furniture



Park furniture



Modern development directly north of park



View of park facing east



Historic kerbs to south of park

Section 5 Archaeological Assessment

Archaeological potential

The archaeological potential for the remains of prehistoric and early medieval activity is very low on the Diamond Park site. This is due both to the developed urban nature of the immediate area, as well as the paucity of prehistoric and early medieval discoveries at other development sites nearby. The 18th and 19th interpretation of a supposed Viking cemetery at North Great George's Street, Summerhill, Gardiner's Row and Mountjoy Square (DU018-020495), attributed to deaths from the Battle of Clontarf, is problematic. In any event, pre-Georgian archaeological remains, including remains of the later medieval city, are unlikely to survive within the proposed development site due to the presence of likely 18th century cellaring.

The Diamond Park site was fully built up during the Gardiner development in the late 18th century. Excavations of cellars at other contemporary large-scale Georgian developments during the Cross-city Luas scheme demonstrated how the cellars of these developments were constructed: terraces of Georgian townhouses were constructed as a unit, and involved the excavation of large trenches along the streetfront in which to construct the basements and coal cellars. This building technique would make the survival of shallow pre-18th century material extremely unlikely along the street. In the case of Diamond Park, the entire western and southern strips of the site were almost certainly fully excavated in c. 1790-1800. Similar 19th century basements have been archaeologically identified at Railway Street, Gloucester Place Lower, Sean McDermott Street and James Joyce Street (Bolger, in *Excavations* 2003:570; 2003:571; 2004:0582). Pre-1800 archaeological material has a higher potential for survival in the centre, north and west of the site.

Whilst the Georgian development of Diamond Park may have disturbed earlier archaeology, its large size and depth means that the remains of the Georgian buildings will almost certainly be present below the ground, in particular to the south and west. The current playground and park were a relatively 'soft' development that would not have impacted the foundations of the previous buildings. Although the late 18th century Gardiner development buildings survive well in Dublin and are architecturally well understood, the archaeological analysis of life in these Dublin buildings during the 18th and 19th century buildings has rarely been carried out in Dublin.

Tracing the nature of the lives of the occupants of these Georgian houses into the mid-19th century and early 20th century can be conducted using the material remains - the clay pipes, wig curlers, medical glassware and ceramic pots, food remains and so forth - which may survive in former rubbish heaps. An archaeological excavation of the Diamond Park site may be able to correlate specific artefacts and environmental remains with specific time periods, and specific properties, and this data could be complemented by historical records such as the land registry and census.

The reason this could be worthwhile, is because in the mid-nineteenth century this area, known as 'Monto' (after Montgomery Street, now Foley Street), centered on Mecklenburgh Street (now Railway Street) was a notorious red light district and was mentioned by James Joyce in *Ulysses*. At its height Monto was one of the largest red light districts in Europe, but in the 1920s it fell into decline. There are very few historical records for the Monto, which is why the archaeological excavation of sites such as Diamond Park could be a fruitful and exciting.

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