

# BLACKFRIARY COMMUNITY HERITAGE & ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT: TRIM, CO. MEATH, IRELAND

*Course ID: ARCH XL 159*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Blackfriary Community Archaeology Project is a unique, hands-on opportunity for students to excavate the buried remains of a 13<sup>th</sup> century Dominican friary in the town of Trim, County Meath, Ireland. The Black Friary was founded in 1,263 CE by Geoffrey de Geneville, Lord of Meath. Built in part using exotic imported materials, the friary reflected the wealth of this medieval lordship and its contacts with the rest of Europe. The importance of the Black Friary during the late medieval period is also indicated by its use for political and ecclesiastical assemblies. In 1,540, as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the commissioners of King Henry VIII suppressed the friary and sold its lands, buildings and material goods. The church and other buildings were dismantled in the post-medieval period, but the place itself retained local significance and continued in use as a burial ground. The burial practices speak to the customs and histories of their times, from a medieval cemetery, through the change in the official state religion and into a time of proscription. During this last period, long after its buildings had been destroyed, the Black Friary became the final resting place for many who were excluded from burial in consecrated ground, particularly unbaptised children.

This project focuses on the remains of the Black Friary, and has three primary components: **excavation** of the friary buildings, **community archaeology** and **bioarchaeology**. **Excavation** of the friary buildings aims to determine their scope and layout as well as the associated infrastructure, such as drains, water management features and gardens. A clearer understanding of how the physical structure of the friary changed over time will help illuminate:

- 1) the relationship between the friary and its founder, Geoffrey de Geneville, and its relationship with the town and community; and
- 2) the fate of medieval religious houses following the Dissolution, specifically the various factors that influenced the manner in which religious structures were maintained, altered or destroyed.

The goals of the **bioarchaeological** research are:

- to delineate the area and extent of the cemetery and of burials within the church and cloister;
- to describe the nature of mortuary practice throughout the life use of the site as a burial ground; and
- to determine the date range and characteristics of the burials, including the biological profile of the interred individuals

By ascertaining who was buried at the Black Friary, where they were buried and when, the bioarchaeological research will inform our understanding of the long-term relationship between the local townspeople and the friary.

The **community archaeology** aspect of the project aims to engage the local people of Trim with the Black Friary and the ongoing excavations. This community engagement takes many forms, including community open days, visits from local groups, school children and tourists and the participation of local volunteers on site. Interaction between members of the public and the excavation is continually evolving, as local people become curious about and protective of a site that they had not previously recognised as having specific heritage significance.

#### **ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS**

**Credit Units:** Attending students will be awarded 12 quarter credit units (equivalent to 8 semester units) through our academic partner, UCLA Extension. UCLA is a top ranked research university and its archaeology program is ranked amongst the best in the country. All IFR field schools instructors and curricula are approved both by the corresponding academic department and the Academic Senate at UCLA. This field school provides a minimum of 160 direct instructional hours.

**Transcripts:** Transcripts are available through UCLA UnEX and instructions for ordering transcripts may be found at <http://bit.ly/2bD0Z3E>. Grades will be posted and transcript available usually within six weeks after the end of this field school. All IFR field schools are designated XL classes – courses that are equivalent to undergraduate courses offered by the UCLA regular session. All XL courses are transferable for unit and subject credit toward the Bachelor's Degree at all campuses of the UC and CSU systems. Classes numbered 100 to 199 are considered upper division (junior/senior). For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2bjAqmy>.

**UCLA students:** Students can take classes through UCLA Extension to complete requirements. However certain considerations must be taken into account. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2bJWeHK>.

**Credit Units Transfer:** Most universities accept UCLA credit units – there are very few exceptions. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the transferability of the credit units with school officials BEFORE attending the field school.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the field school is to introduce students to practical archaeological field methods, including excavation, field recording, and laboratory protocols. More specifically, on successful completion of the field school, students will be able to:

- Understand the different elements of an archaeological field project and the relationships among these elements
- Apply standard excavation methods to archaeological contexts
- Use standard recording techniques to document excavation results
- Undertake preliminary processing of archaeological artifacts and ecofacts
- Undertake preliminary analysis of archaeological artifacts and ecofacts

#### **DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

Archaeological field work involves physical work in the outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. Archaeological excavations in Ireland are carried out in all weather conditions – including rain. You are required to provide suitable waterproof clothing and footwear as well as sunscreen. Excavation will include moderately strenuous physical work. Students must be in good physical condition and able to walk three miles a day comfortably.

If you have medical concerns, please discuss them with your doctor. All other concerns may be discussed with the project director – as appropriate.

#### **PREREQUISITES**

There are no academic prerequisites. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Archaeology involves dynamic physical work and exposure to the elements and thus will not be the typical university learning environment. You will get sweaty, tired, cold and wet and will have to walk several kilometers daily to and from the site, and work in the outdoors. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient energy, excitement and adequate understanding that the archaeological endeavor requires hard, physical work. Students must be willing to engage with the local community in a professional and respectful manner both in an official capacity on site and unofficially when off duty.

#### **GRADING**

**Quiz (5%):** During the program, an open-book quiz will be held to assess understanding of terminology relating to excavation and excavation methods, as described in the student handbook and demonstrated in practical methods.

**Fieldwork Participation (50%):** Students are required to participate in daily field school activities, including excavation and post-excavation work. Assessment will be undertaken by the supervisory team and will be based on attendance, willingness to work and to try diverse tasks, attention to detail and accuracy, participation in teamwork and contribution to discussions.

**Field Journal (20%):** Students are expected to maintain a field journal and present it for evaluation during their final week on site. Project staff will instruct students on the expectations for the daily journal entries.

**Research Paper (25%):** Students will be assigned to small groups and given a research theme. Students will be allocated time to undertake research in groups. Each student will focus on one component of the group theme and present an individual research paper (1500 words of text plus appropriate in-text citations, illustrations, and bibliography). The paper is two weeks after the last day of your program (though students may submit earlier if they so wish), and should be submitted via email as per the instructions that will be given in the program orientation. Please note: failure to submit on time may affect your transcript award schedule. Students will be assessed on their ability to organise and interpret information, their comprehension of the

readings and the strength of their argument, and for their presentations, on their ability to work in groups.

*It is the duty of the student to ensure that the UCLA grading and transcript award schedule meets their home institution requirements, where time constraints apply.*

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students will be housed in Home Stay accommodation in the town of Trim, Co. Meath. Home Stay students live with local families, and experience true home life in provincial Ireland. Students are to keep the accommodation clean and tidy at all times and to be respectful towards their Home Stay family and roommates. Students will walk to and from the site daily (depending on the location of the Home Stay, up to a 35-minute walk). Breakfast and dinner will be provided along with a packed lunch from Monday to Friday. Meals are not provided at weekends, and students are encouraged to avail of their free time and explore Ireland.



Please note that it is not possible to accommodate students arriving early, or staying on after the end date of the program; there are, however, other accommodation options available locally. Local transfers are not included.

### **TRAVEL & MEETING POINT**

Students will be met in Trim, Co. Meath. Since students will arrive on different flights at different times of the day, we will meet all students on the Sunday, first day of arrival at the Trim Castle Hotel ([www.trimcastlehotel.com](http://www.trimcastlehotel.com)) at 6pm. Directions and travel information will be issued to all students once you are enrolled in the field school.

If you fail to make the meeting, please call/text or email Ms. Bairbre Mullee. You will be sent her phone number once you are enrolled in the course.

### **VISA REQUIREMENTS**

US Citizens do not need a visa for tourist or business stays of up to three months in Ireland. Your passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of your stay.

Citizens of other countries, please visit the Irish Embassy website at your home country for visa information.

### **CULTURE, LOCAL ENVIRONMENT & ETIQUETTE**

The town of Trim is 30km (about 20 miles) northwest of Dublin. Although located near Dublin, Trim is far from being a suburb of the capital city. It is a quintessentially classic, small, friendly and safe Irish town. It is often referred to as the Heritage capital of the Heritage county of Ireland. All the relevant local government agencies are aware of the students' presence in the town, and they and all townspeople are anxious to ensure that your stay is safe and enjoyable. Students are asked to respect local sensitivities and traditions and to understand that the presence of such a large expedition in town does not entitle participants to any special treatment or privileges.

This project involves the participation of Irish university students and volunteers from the local community alongside Institute for Field Research students. Although everyone will speak English, even those joining us from mainland Europe, students should expect surprising cultural differences and exciting opportunities to learn not only about the past but about the lives of

others as well. IFR students will be immersed in Irish culture through learning, language, food and music, and should be prepared for the rewards and challenges that life in a different culture will offer.

### EXCAVATION/TOOL KIT

Students are required to bring a basic tool kit. This includes but is not limited to:

- A four inch pointed archaeology trowel (also known as a four inch pointing trowel): We recommend a marshaltown type trowel (<https://marshalltown.com/4-stiff-london-style-pointing-trowel-wood-handle>).
- Work gloves: gardening glove suitable for work in wet weather (textile glove with a rubberised palm).
- Work shoes or boots: closed toe-footwear, waterproof that will be comfortable for both walking and kneeling: a hiking style shoe or boot would be suitable. Gumboots/wellingtons are also suitable for use on site however if you choose to wear these for digging, you may need pair of trail shoes or similar for field trips etc.
- Sunscreen: students should wear an SPF daily to protect against UV exposure and windburn. Despite its relatively cool summer temperatures, Ireland have high UV in the summer months.
- Sunhat: a peaked or wide brim hat for wearing while digging.
- Insect repellent.
- Laptop/tablet: a device on which you can prepare and submit your presentation and written assignments

### FIELD PROGRAM

**Excavation:** Students will participate in guided excavations on site. Potential areas of excavation include structural remains of the friary, occasional burials within the church and cemetery, and other medieval features within the friary precinct. **What each student excavates will depend entirely on the overall pace and research goals of the excavation at that time.**

**Recording:** Students will maintain a personal field notebook in which they will record their daily activities. They will also participate in filling in feature sheets, writing up site records, drawing plans and taking site photographs.

**Cataloguing:** Students will learn to identify, describe and catalogue various finds, including artifacts, architectural fragments, animal bone and human remains.

**Laboratory:** Students will participate in guided post-excavation methods to carry out initial processing, interpretation and archiving of all excavated materials. Scheduled lab tasks will include washing, sorting and cataloguing finds as well as digitizing records.

### SCHEDULE

In addition to working on site, students will be introduced to archaeological field methods and Irish archaeology through a series of lectures and field trips. The field trips will place the Black Friary within the broader context of Irish history and locate the site in the archaeological landscape of the Boyne valley. Students will also be given dedicated research time for their group presentations and individual papers, and introduced to local research resources. Unless stated otherwise in the detailed schedule below, students will work on site Monday to Friday. The normal working day is from 9:00am to 5:00pm with a morning tea break from 11:00-11:30am and lunch from 1:30-2:30pm. Except for the scheduled field trips on the Saturdays of Weeks 2 and 4, students will have weekends free to explore the area and other parts of the country. PLEASE NOTE: amendments to this schedule may be made during the program to

accommodate necessary review of archaeological methodologies, changes in work practice due to weather conditions, and community requirements.

**INDICATIVE SCHEDULE IN ADDITION TO SITE WORK\***

Week	Day	Time	Item
<b>1</b>	Sunday	Evening	Welcome meeting
	Monday <b>10AM START</b>	Morning Afternoon	Lecture: Project orientation Field trip: Walking tour of Trim, Trim Castle
	Tuesday	All day	Lecture: Archaeology of Medieval Ireland/Trim Field Trip: The Boyne Valley
	Wednesday- Friday	Afternoons	Lectures; Landscape and Geology; Archaeological Methods & Community Archaeology Excavation orientation
	Saturday	All day	Field Trip: Prehistoric Passage Tombs
<b>2</b>	Monday	Afternoon	Meeting to discuss group research themes
	Tuesday	Afternoon	Lecture: Bioarchaeology of Medieval Ireland
	Wednesday	Afternoon	Research time (weather dependant)
	Saturday	All day	Field trip: National Museum of Ireland
<b>3</b>	Tuesday	Afternoon	Research time in library (weather dependant)
<b>4</b>	Tuesday	Afternoon	Turn in field journals
	Wednesday	Evening	Research time (weather dependant)
	Friday	Evening	Prepare for Saturday departure

**\*Please note: changes to this schedule may occur due to factors beyond our control such as archaeological discoveries, weather, and community requirements etc.**

**REQUIRED READINGS**

Museum of London. 1990. *Archaeological Site Manual*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Museum of London, London .

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**SUGGESTED READINGS**

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- O'Sullivan, B. (and Fenning, H., ed.) 2009. *Medieval Irish Dominican Studies*. Four Courts Press, Dublin.
- Potterton, M. and Seaver, M., eds. 2009. *Uncovering Medieval Trim*. Four Courts Press, Dublin.
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- Scott, B. 2005. The dissolution of the religious houses in the Tudor diocese of Meath. *Archivium Hibernicum* 59: 260-276. Article stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40285208>
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