

BLACKFRIARY COMMUNITY HERITAGE & ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT (BCHAP): TRIM, CO. MEATH, IRELAND

Course ID: ARCH XL 159

The Medieval Landscape of the Black Friary

Jan. 8–Feb. 4, 2017

DIRECTORS:

Ms. Finola O’Carroll, Irish Archaeology Field School; on behalf of the National Monument Service, Department of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht, (finola.ocarroll@iafs.ie)

Dr. Denis Shine, Irish Archaeology Field School, Australian National University (denis.shine@iafs.ie)

Dr. Stephen Mandal, Irish Archaeology Field School, Executive Director (stephen.mandal@iafs.ie)

Ms. Bairbre Mullee, Irish Archaeology Field School, info@iafs.ie



INTRODUCTION

The Irish Archaeology Field School (IAFS) provides a unique field school opportunity teaching students how to critically assess an archaeological site within its landscape. We achieve such an understanding by deploying a range of methods that include archaeological survey, archaeological excavation and post-excavation analysis (focusing on artefact curation and conservation). The diversity of this course allows students to understand the significance of an archaeological site within its heritage setting in general, and that of the medieval streetscape of Trim in particular. To facilitate such a multi-faceted program, instruction will be conducted at the site itself, as well as in dedicated on-site facilities.

Trim Town

Trim town is nestled at the western limit of the Boyne Valley. The valley is one of the world’s great archaeological landscapes as it houses world renowned archaeological and heritage sites, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne (Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth) and the Hill of Tara. The medieval town of Trim is named from the Irish “*Ath Truim*”, meaning “the ford of the elder tree”. It was established – at least the parts visible today – by Hugh de Lacy during the 12th century CE, as a result of the Anglo-Norman conquests. Subsequently, the town developed into one of the primary medieval centers in Ireland, partly due its strategic location on the River Boyne. While archaeological evidence indicates the presence of a monastic site within the town from the 6th century CE, Trim town is best known today for its high medieval landscape (from c. 12th century CE). The town still contains an intact

medieval street layout and is home to the largest conserved Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland, Trim Castle. Within the town, just outside the original medieval town defenses, is the Black Friary, a 13th century Dominican friary. This is the current location of the IAFS investigation.

The Black Friary

The Black Friary was established in 1263 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 in historical records, which describe its use for political and ecclesiastical assemblies. As part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries (from the 1530s CE onwards), 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 site 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 last building had been dismantled, the Black Friary became the final resting place for many who were excluded from burial in consecrated ground, particularly unbaptised children.

The Project

The Irish Archaeology Field School investigations are part of the Blackfriary Community Heritage and Archaeology Project (BCHAP); this project focuses primarily on excavating and recording the remains of the Black Friary, while also striving to understand the place of this important site within the medieval landscape of Trim. Since excavations on the site commenced in 2010 we have helped clarify the scope and layout of the friary buildings, as well as the associated infrastructural and agricultural features. These include the water management system as well as herb and vegetable gardens. Research is also beginning to illuminate the importance of changing burial practices on the site. Understanding how the friary and cemetery changed through time will help inform us on: (A) the relationship between the friary and its founder, Geoffrey de Geneville; (B) the impact on and function of the friary on the political, economic and social evolution of the town and community of Trim, and (C) 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. It is crucial here to compare and contrast the evidence as suggested by the historical and archaeological records. One rarely supports the other, a fascinating discrepancy that sheds important light on the differences between the few who wrote the historical records and the many who lived in antiquity.

At its core BCHAP is a community archaeology dig, with investment from the local community and Meath County Council (the local governing authority and landowners of the site). IAFS hosts numerous community events each season, including on site family days, walking tours, school visits, exhibitions, and community lectures. IAFS also actively strive to develop the site as a community amenity/green field space. The community aspect of the Black Friary dig means that students, staff and community members are all contributing to the excavations, leading to an open learning environment that extends beyond typical archeological training.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The programme will introduce students to a range of techniques used by modern archaeologists both in excavation and survey. Students will learn the typical progression of archaeological research through non-invasive survey, archaeological excavation and laboratory protocols (focusing on artefact curation and remedial conservation). Student research will be complimented by tours to a number of heritage sites, as well as a series of archaeological lectures/workshops:

- Understand different strands of archaeological enquiry and their application in an archaeological research context
- Critically interrogate historical records and archaeological survey data, as part of an overall research design
- Have an understanding of the skills required for the conduct of an archaeological excavation

- Understand on site laboratory protocols, and how these contribute to artefact research, conservation and interpretation
- Have an understanding of the medieval history of both Ireland and Trim

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 192 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.

PREREQUISITES

There are no academic prerequisites. This program is hands-on, experiential learning and students will learn how to conduct archaeological research in a live field environment. What is required is enthusiasm, an open mind and a readiness to 'give it a go'.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. Archaeological fieldwork in Ireland is carried out in all weather conditions – including rain. You are required to provide suitable waterproof and weatherproof clothing and footwear as well as wind protection. However, in bad weather you will also be provided with shelter. Archaeological investigation 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.

GRADING

Quiz (5%): A quiz will be held at the end of Week 2 to assess student understanding of archaeological techniques and their application in Irish archaeological research.

Field school Participation (50%): Students are required to participate in all field school activities, including research, archaeological survey, excavation and laboratory 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 Workbook (20%): Students are expected to complete a field school workbook and present it for evaluation during their final week on site. Project staff will instruct students on the expectations for workbook entries.

Workshop Presentation (10%): As a group, students will give a short presentation on some aspect of their field experience at the Black Friary. This presentation will focus on one of the main components of the field program. These will be given at the end of Week 4. Students will be assessed based on their ability to work in groups as well as on their presentation delivery.

Research Paper (15%): Students are expected to submit an individual research paper (1,500 words of text plus appropriate in-text citations, illustrations, and bibliography). The paper is due two weeks after the end of the field program though students may submit earlier if they so wish. This paper should be submitted via email as a MS WORD document to Ms. Finola O'Carroll (finola.ocarroll@iafs.ie) and Dr. Denis Shine (denis.shine@iafs.ie). For their research paper students will be assessed on their ability to organise and critically evaluate historical and field data, and the strength of their subsequent argument.

ACCOMMODATION

Students will stay with local families at the town of Trim. Home Stay students live with local families, and experience true home life in provincial Ireland. 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. Students are encouraged to avail of their free time at weekends and explore Ireland.

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 at 6pm. Trim Castle Hotel is located almost directly adjacent the main public bus stop in the centre of Trim town; this bus stop is serviced by regular bus services from Dublin (see <http://www.buseireann.ie/> for more details).

If you fail to make the meeting, please call/text or email Dr. Denis Shine and/or Ms. Finola O'Carroll. You will be sent relevant contact details once you are enrolled in the course.

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 can involve the participation of volunteers from the local community alongside IFR students. Although everyone will speak English, all students should expect surprising cultural differences and exciting opportunities to learn not only about the past but about the lives of others as well. 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.

Please note: As BCHAP is a public archaeology initiative students must also be prepared to engage with the local community in a professional and respectful manner both in an official capacity on site and unofficially when off duty.

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.
- **Waterproof outdoorwear:** a jacket (with a hood if possible) and pants – gortex is best (but expensive). You will need something sturdy that will stand up to wear and tear of everyday use in excavation. You can buy waterproof gear locally in Ireland (if you choose to do this, budget to spend about €50/\$70).
- **Warm layers** – wool, fleece, thermal layers – you should bring and wear lots of layers rather than one warm/heavy layer. Bring things that are suitable for outdoor work.
- **Sunscreen:** students should wear an SPF daily to protect against UV exposure and windburn.
- **Hat:** something to keep your head warm. A peaked hat can be useful for shade while digging.
- **Laptop/tablet:** a device on which you can prepare and submit your presentation and written assignments. A smart phone is not suitable for this.

FIELD PROGRAM

The field program, while focused on excavation, includes instruction in archaeological survey and post-excavation techniques. The program is primarily based on the Black Friary site in Trim, although students will also be brought to a regional heritage site each week. Site and project orientations will be conducted at the start of week one.

Week 1 – Survey and Commencing Excavation: Following project orientation and induction students will be introduced to, and trained in, the application of DGPS and Total Station Survey. Based on existing archaeological survey data for the site (such as topographic, Lidar and GPR surveys) and more ‘traditional sources’ (such as the historic Ordnance Survey map collection) students will be expected to work in groups with IAFS staff to set out an archaeological cutting (arguing what research question ‘their’ cutting might address). A range of other survey type tasks will be completed in Week 1.

Weeks 2, 3 and 4 - Excavation (located on site, under cover as appropriate): Students will be instructed in archaeological excavation and recording techniques – including excavation of archaeological features, documentation of finds, completion of site drawings and record taking of archaeological deposits. During their time on site students will also be provided with instruction in laboratory protocols, working closely with the materials their digging has generated. Excavations will be covered (as appropriate) to permit excavation in colder/wetter weather conditions.

Weeks 2, 3 and 4 – Laboratory Protocols: A focus will be placed on the cataloguing and remedial conservation of both artefacts and ecofacts, according to standards set by the *National Museum of Ireland* (NMI). The NMI requires that all finds recovered in archaeological excavations are prepared, and conserved where necessary, according to strict protocols, in advance of submission to the museum. Students are expected to understand these processes and will get the opportunity to work with several different archaeological material types (pottery, glass, metal, bone etc).

Fieldtrips: Each week students will be brought to a regional heritage site, including Brú na Bóinne, the Hill of Tara, and Trim Castle. These fieldtrips will help demonstrate the different physical, archaeological and cultural landscapes surrounding the town of Trim. The field trips are designed to help place the Black Friary within its broader historical and geographic context.

** The rotation of students through tasks including excavation, survey and post-excavation is dependent on weather conditions and student numbers; students may be split into smaller groups and rotated through different tasks simultaneously, while changes in the schedule are likely to be made to accommodate poor weather.*

SCHEDULE

In addition to working on site, students will be introduced to archaeological field methods and Irish archaeology through a series of lectures/workshops (as outlined below). Students will also be given dedicated research time in Trim Library to access course readings that may only be available locally.

The normal working day is from 9:00am to 4:30pm with a morning tea break from 11:00-11:30am and lunch from 1:15-2:00pm. Students will have weekends free to explore the area and other parts of the country.

INDICATIVE SCHEDULE IN ADDITION TO SITE WORK*

| Week | Day/Date | Time | Event |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Sunday 8 th | Evening | Welcome meeting |
| | Monday 9 th | Morning | Project orientation |
| | | Afternoon | Lecture/Workshop: Archaeology of Medieval Ireland/Trim Field trip: Trim Castle and Town – A High Medieval Landscape |
| | Tuesday 10 th | Morning | Excavation Orientation |
| | | Afternoon | On site (survey [and excavation]) |
| | Wednesday 11 th | All day | On site (survey [and excavation]) |
| | Thursday 12 th | All day | On site (survey [and excavation]) |
| | Friday 13 th | All day | On site (survey [and excavation]) |
| Saturday 14 th | All day | Free Day | |
| Sunday 15 th | All day | Free Day | |
| 2 | Monday 16 th | Morning | Lecture/Workshop: Landscape and Geology |
| | | Afternoon | Field trip: Brú na Bóinne – The Boyne Valley Landscape |
| | Tuesday 17 th | Morning | Meeting to discuss student research |
| | | Afternoon | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | Wednesday 18 th | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | Thursday 19 th | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | Friday 20 th | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | | | Research time in Library (timing is weather dependent) |
| Saturday 21 st | All day | Free Day | |
| Sunday 22 nd | All day | Free Day | |
| 3 | Monday 23 rd | Morning | Lecture/Workshop: The Irish Rural Landscape |
| | | Afternoon | Field trip: Hill of Tara - Royal Landscapes of County Meath/Ireland |
| | Tuesday 24 th | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | Wednesday 25 th | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | Thursday 26 th | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | Friday 27 th | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | | | Research time in Library (timing is weather dependent) |
| | Saturday 28 th | All day | Free Day |
| Sunday 29 th | All day | Free Day | |
| 4 | Monday 30 th | Morning | Lecture: Archaeology and Community |
| | | Afternoon | Field trip: Carlingford – A Comparable Medieval Landscape |
| | Tuesday 31 st | Morning | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | | Afternoon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting to discuss student research • Turn in field journals • Quiz |
| | Wednesday 1 st (Feb) | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| | Thursday 2 nd | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) |
| Evening | | End of programme event | |
| Friday 3 rd | All day | On site (excavation [and post-excavation]) | |

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|--|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| | | Evening | Prepare for Saturday departure |
| | Saturday 4 th | | Depart |

*Please note: changes to this schedule will occur due to factors beyond our control such as weather, etc.

MANDATORY READINGS

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RECOMMENDED READINGS

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- Murphy, E. M. 2011. Children's burial grounds in Ireland (cillini) and parental emotions towards infant death. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 15: 409-428.
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- Tarlow, S. 2011. *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.