

SPIKE ISLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, IRELAND

Course ID: ARCH XL 159

June 11 –July 15, 2017

DIRECTOR:

Dr. Barra O'Donnabhain, University College Cork, Ireland (barraod@ucc.ie)



INTRODUCTION

This field school is part of a larger research project that examines the archaeology of the 19th century prison on Spike Island, Ireland's Alcatraz. Dealing with criminals by means of long-term incarceration is a relatively recent development. In Ireland and Britain, long-term confinement only became the dominant means of punishment and social control in the mid-19th century. Globally, that century was a critical period for the development of modern prison systems with considerable innovation and experimentation in methods of incarceration. The architecture of many of the purpose-built prisons from this period reflects new ideas about the redemptive nature of isolation, discipline and work. The physical isolation of prisoners was not possible on Spike Island which was an early 19th century military fortress that was converted to a prison in 1847 at the height of the Great Famine in Ireland. The prison at Spike Island was tied into the British imperial system of power as in the early years of its operation, it was one of the main holding centres for Irish convicts transported to Australia and to Bermuda. The annual reports of the Inspectorate of Prisons show that the suitability of the fort was regularly questioned and the prison was closed in 1883.

There is a rich body of documentary sources regarding the 19th century prison on Spike Island but these papers primarily provide an insight into the perspective of the authorities. The documents are mostly silent on the lives of the convicts, on those of most of the front-line staff and on the human realities behind the official version of events. Archaeology provides a means of investigating daily life in the prison and the triangle of relationships between convicts, warders and the institution while also providing a means of investigating the roles of incarceration and transportation within British imperialist systems. Material culture has the potential to provide an insight into these relationships and both the official and unofficial economies of the prison. The latter includes the black economy that doubtless existed between convicts (and their keepers) and the evidence of passive resistance to the prison regime (eg. smuggled goods).

Historical sources indicate that over one thousand convicts died on the island during the 36 years of operation of the 19th century prison, with 80% of those dying during the years of the Great Famine. In the 2016 season, we will continue our investigation of the convict cemetery that was probably

established in 1859. We will be testing if we can identify individual skeletons by matching bioarchaeological analysis with historical data. We will also continue to investigate the foundations of prison buildings that were demolished in the 19th century.

Among the primary objectives of the Spike Island Field School is to provide students with a better understanding of how archaeology is practised in the field. This will be achieved by providing the student with a classroom-based introduction to the basis of field methods in archaeology, and by providing a practical working knowledge of excavation, laboratory and field recording methods. The field school is an opportunity to spend five weeks in a unique location.

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/2bDOZ3E>. 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

None. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study onsite how to conduct archaeological research. Archaeology involves physical work and exposure to the elements and thus, requires a measure of acceptance that this will not be the typical university learning environment. You will get sweaty, tired, cold and wet and have to work in the outdoors. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that the archaeological endeavor requires hard, physical work.

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. This program operates in an area where the weather changes frequently. Average daytime temperature in July is 68°F. Rainfall in Ireland can be frequent and work continues in light rain. You are required to provide suitable water-proof clothing and footwear as well as sun screen and insect repellent. These can be purchased locally prior to departure to the island, which is uninhabited.

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

GRADING

Grading will be based on four components:

Exam (10%): An exam will be held at the end of Week 3 on archaeological field methods.

Fieldwork participation (50%): Students are required to participate daily in field school activities, including field and lab work.

Field notes (20%): Students are expected to maintain a field journal and present it for evaluation at the end of the field school. Project staff will instruct students on the standard requirements needed to complete the daily journal entries.

A paper (20%): Students will develop a paper topic during the field school. This will be based on materials that will be made available before the field school begins. All topics to be agreed with the project director. Papers will be due on Monday of Week 5.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT

Students are responsible for making their own travel arrangements. Please be sure to arrive in Cork on or before June 11 (Sunday). The field school will conclude on July 14 (Friday). Students should plan onward travel or return home anytime on July 15 (Saturday).

Our rendezvous point in Cobh is the Commodore Hotel (www.commodorehotel.ie) which is on the seafront and a five minute walk from the railway station (Commodore Hotel, Westbourne Place, Cobh). **We will meet at the Commodore Hotel on June 11 at 4pm.** It is essential that you are on time for this meeting. If you arrive early, our meeting room is booked from noon so you can wait for everyone else to arrive. Check with the hotel if you are going to leave your bags unattended.

Most direct flights from North America to Ireland land in either Shannon (SNN) or Dublin (DUB). An easier (though not always cheaper) option is to fly to Cork (ORK) via London (LHR: more frequent flights but awful airport), Paris (CDG) or Amsterdam (AMS: less frequent but much more user-friendly airport). If you fly into Cork, take a taxi to the railway station, a short journey. From Shannon, you can take a bus from outside the terminal building to Cork (about 2 hours). From Dublin, you can also take a bus from outside arrivals directly to Cork (about 3.5 hours) or take a local bus to Heuston Station in Dublin city centre and from there take a train to Cork (the bus from the terminal building is a much cheaper option than the train). If you arrive in Cork by bus from Dublin or Shannon, you can walk to the railway station from the bus terminal.

From Cork, you should take a train to Cobh. The journey takes 25 minutes and trains currently run every hour on the hour (liable to change; check closer to the date on www.irishrail.ie). You can also take a taxi from Cork to Cobh.

IMMIGRATION AND VACCINATIONS

Citizens of the US and Canada do not require visas to enter Ireland. All students participating in the field school will be registered in advance at University College Cork and our International Office will send you a letter to show at Immigration.

No vaccinations are required but anyone working in archaeology in Ireland needs to have an up-to-date tetanus shot.

CURRENCY

Ireland uses the Euro. Check with your bank to make sure that your ATM card works in Europe.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Spike Island

Field School accommodation will be in the fort on Spike Island. Spike is a small, uninhabited island in Cork Harbour. While there is no resident population on the island, it is not an isolated place: it is only 500m from land in one direction and 1500m across the harbour from the town of Cobh.

Archaeology indicates human activity in the harbour back into early prehistory while Spike is recorded as the location of a monastic site in the early medieval period (AD 500-1,000). Due to its strategic location facing the entrance to the harbour, the island was transformed during the Napoleonic Wars when, in response to fears of a French invasion, a gun battery and later a star-shaped fort were built. The latter and its ramparts occupy about 70% of the island's surface. The island remained as a naval and military installation for 200 years, from 1804 to 2004. When most of Ireland became independent in 1922, Britain retained Spike and the neighbouring island of Haulbowline until 1938 when they were ceded to Ireland. While both the British and later the Irish army and navy had small military prisons at Spike, the fort has been used as a civilian prison twice in its history. The first of these (1847-1883) is the focus of our research while the 20th century prison provides us with our accommodation!

From 1985 to 2004, Spike Island housed a modern prison and we will be housed in the administration block of this jail (do a Google maps search for Spike Island, Cork, satellite view: our accommodation is on the upper floor of two of the rectangular blocks in the right corner of the fort). The island does not have a resident population so we will be the only people there at night. Tourists visit the site during the day.

Living Arrangements

The accommodation on the island consists of bedrooms, a common room and kitchen. The rooms will be shared. There will be separate rooms for male and female students. There are separate male and female toilets on the corridor while hot showers are in an adjacent building. There will be a bed for each team member and you will need to bring your own sleeping bag and towels (see **What to Pack** for a checklist of items you need to bring).

All meals are provided from Monday to Friday (students look after their own meals at weekends).

Cell phones, Computers and Mail

Check with your cell phone provider about call and data charges while roaming. If this is not provided, you can buy a pre-paid cell phone when you arrive in Ireland. The cheapest deal costs about \$40 US.

If you plan on buying a phone in Ireland, please make sure you arrive a day or two early as the shops that sell these items will not be open on Sunday mornings. Also be aware that you will not find these shops in Cobh so make sure to get these items in Cork. Be aware too that plugs and electric current in Ireland are different from those in the US. Plugs have three squared pins and operate on 230V 50Hz.



We will be living on an island with no resident population so it is best to expect that mail delivery services will not be available.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the field school, students will be able to:

- Understand the different elements of an archaeological field project and the relationships between 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

EQUIPMENT LIST

All excavation equipment will be provided by the project. The excavation sites are only a short walk from our accommodation. The average daily temperature in Ireland in July is 20°C (68°F). The site is on the coast so expect the weather to be variable. Work will continue in light rain so wet weather gear is essential (see checklist below).

All of the items listed below can be bought in Cork. If planning on doing this, best to arrive on Friday or Saturday morning as not all shops open on Sunday mornings in Ireland.

- Sleeping bag
- Towels
- Work clothes
- Walking boots
- Wet weather clothing including leggings
- Wellington boots (may not be necessary, but just in case....)
- Sun glasses
- Sun hat
- Insect repellent
- Adapters for plugs
- Flip-flops

PROGRAM

Excavation: Students will participate in guided excavations at the site of the prison cemetery and elsewhere in the prison complex.

Recording: Students maintain a personal field diary which will remain as the property of the project as part of the excavation archive. Students will also participate in filling out specific excavation forms, map finds, and record stratigraphy.

Cataloging: Students will participate in field sorting and cataloging of finds.

Laboratory: Scheduled lab tasks will include washing, sorting, and cataloging of finds.

SCHEDULE

Week 1:	Sunday	Evening	Walking tour of Spike Island
	Monday	Morning	Lecture: The Archaeology of Ireland
		Afternoon	Field trip: Cork city jail and Charlesfort
	Tuesday	All day	Field trip: History and Archaeology of Cork Harbour
	Wednesday	Morning	Lecture: Archaeological excavation methods I
		Afternoon	Field trip: Cobh Titanic centre and Lusitania graves
	Thursday	Morning	Archaeological excavation methods II
		Afternoon	Archaeological human remains
Friday	All day	Field trip: West Cork	
Saturday	All day	Free	
Sunday	All day	free	
Week 2-5:	Every week day		Excavations at the site; evening laboratory sessions
Week 3	Wednesday	Evening	Exam: archaeological field methods (See Field Manual and Greene and Moore 2010 in required readings below)
Week 5:	Friday	All day	Close and backfill site

Onsite Daily Schedule

We work on the site from 8:00am to 4:00pm with a short morning break at 10.30 and a lunch-break at 1pm. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, we work in the lab from 7pm to 8:30pm. Before our evening meal we gather in the cafeteria and each excavation group gives a report on that day's progress. We will do regular tours of each work area.

MANDATORY READINGS

A reading packet will be available in the project website and other texts will be available during the field season.

- Casella EC. 2005. Prisoner of His Majesty: postcoloniality and the archaeology of British penal transportation. *World Archaeology* 37(3):453-467.
- Greene K, and Moore T. 2010. *Archaeology: an introduction*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. Chapters 2, 3 and 5.
- Maxwell-Stewart H. 2010. Convict transportation from Britain and Ireland 1615-1870. *History Compass* 8(11):1221-1242.
- McCarthy C, and O'Donnabhain B. 2016. *Too Beautiful for Thieves and Pickpockets: a history of the Victorian convict prison on Spike Island*. Cork: Cork County Library.
- Oxley D. 2004. Living standards of women in pre-famine Ireland. *Social Science History* 28(2):271-295.
- Rynne C. 2009. Haulbowline Island, Cork harbour, Ireland, c.1816-1832: a new archaeological perspective on Ireland's 'coloniality'. In: Horning A, and Palmer M, editors. *Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks? Future directions in the archaeological study of post-1550 Britain and Ireland*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer. p 167-177.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Carroll-Burke P. 2000. *Colonial Discipline: the making of the Irish convict system*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.
- Casella EC. 2007. *The Archaeology of Institutional Confinement*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Cherryson A, Crossland Z, and Tarlow S. 2012. *A Fine and Private Place: the archaeology of death and burial in post-medieval Britain and Ireland*. Leicester: Leicester Archaeological Monograph 22.
- Crowley J, Smyth WJ, and Murphy M, editors. 2012. *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*. Cork: Cork University Press.
- Devereaux S, and Griffiths P, editors. 2004. *Penal Practice and Culture, 1500-1900: punishing the English*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault M. 1975. *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*. London: Penguin.
- Martin M. 2007. *Spike Island: saints, felons and famine*. Dublin: Nonsuch.
- McDonough T, editor. 2005. *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, politics and culture in nineteenth-century Ireland*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
- Morris N, and Rothman DJ, editors. 1998. *The Oxford History of the Prison*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morrison K. 1999. *The Workhouse: A Study of Poor-Law Building in England*: English Heritage.

- O'Donnabhain B. 2011. The social lives of severed heads: skull collection and display in medieval and early modern Ireland. In: Bonogofsky M, editor. *The Bioarchaeology of the Human Head: decapitation, decoration and deformation*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- O'Mahony C. 2005. *Cork's Poor Law Palace: Workhouse life 1838-1890*. Cork: Rosmathún Press.
- Orser CE. 2005. Symbolic violence, resistance and the vectors of improvement in early nineteenth-century Ireland. *World Archaeology* 37(3):392-402.
- Orser CE. 2010. Three 19th-century house sites in rural Ireland. *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 44(1):81-104.
- Rhodes LA. 2001. Towards an anthropology of prisons. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30:65-83.
- Rynne C. 1993. *The Archaeology of Cork City and Harbour from the Earliest Times to Industrialisation*. Cork: Collins Press.
- Rynne C. 2006. *Industrial Ireland 1750-1930: an archaeology*. Cork: Collins Press.
- Stein GJ, editor. 2005. *The Archaeology of Colonial Encounters: comparative perspectives*. Santa Fe: School of America Research Press.
- Tarlow S. 2011. *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.