

## ANNUAL REPORT: FERRYCARRIG, IRELAND – WINTER 2018 FIELD SCHOOL

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*Excavating the 12<sup>th</sup> century bank and possible 13<sup>th</sup> century structure at Carrick Castle, Ferrycarrig*

The 'Digging the Lost Town of Carrig' archaeology project is carrying out archaeological research and excavation at the site of the Carrick Ringwork, Ferrycarrig, Co. Wexford, Ireland. This IFR Field School is in its first season, but continues from previous excavations at the site conducted in 1984 by Isabel Bennett and 1986/87 by Claire Cotter. Excavations thus far have uncovered the remains of a possible 13<sup>th</sup> century castle as well as burnt structures and earthen defenses, which relate to the first ever Norman castle in Ireland! Excavations during the Winter 2018 IFR Program at Carrick focused on further investigation of archaeological cuttings originally excavated in the 1980s. These cuttings investigated probable burnt 12<sup>th</sup> century structures as well as intact medieval masonry, which is likely to relate to stone structures erected at the site as part of a stone castle and town by 1231 CE. All Winter season excavations are concluded with a brief summary of progress to date provided below.

Investigation continued in the southern portion of the site. This season's work concentrated on re-exposing the 1980s excavation surface to carefully record any remaining archaeology, which had not been excavated in the 1980s. Excavations in 2018 exposed a new wall at the northern limit of Cutting 1 and clarified another 'structural' feature – which has previously been interpreted as a path – as a second perpendicular wall. Together these walls may form part of a substantial structure, or a room of a larger structure which measures 6.3m in width (and as yet unknown length). Areas of oxidization and burning were recorded within this room, which could either be the remains of a central hearth or, alternatively, could represent an unrelated burning episode on site.

Investigations were also resumed in Cutting 2, immediately northwest of Cutting 1, in the northwestern portion of the site. In this Cutting a robber trench – presumably representing the quarrying of stone from wall foundation – was recorded. This feature had previously been identified in the 1980s, but this season it was clarified that this joined with the newly identified wall in Cutting 1, thus indicating a second possible room on a larger structure. Areas of charcoal, oxidized soil, stake holes and a small number of post-holes were also re-exposed. While no clear structural patterns were identifiable, these features are thought to relate to burnt 12<sup>th</sup> century structures at the site, which are some of the very first Norman buildings constructed in Ireland. Charcoal from these features were extracted and submitted for radiometric dating.

All program students are trained in all the fundamental principles of excavation and post-excavation. Their first week is focused on introducing them to Irish archaeology, the site, its wider regional context and the single context recording system; this is achieved through a series of lectures, workshops, skill sessions and field-trips. All students are then rotated through a series of tasks which include post-excavation (i.e. processing of finds and samples and data management) as well as excavation, planning and surveying techniques. Our underpinning philosophy is directed toward experiential learning on a live dig environment – where students learn through their successes and mistakes.

Field trips to other notable and relevant sites (sometimes involving research activities such as on student's trips to Ferns) dedicated library time and tutorial like sessions all supplement students on-site experience. This year student learning was also completed by experimental archaeology workshops for the first time, delivered by our project partners the Irish National Heritage Park (INHP). The INHP is a 40 acre parkland, recreating 9,000 years of Irish prehistory and history, that attracts c. 80,000 visitors per annum; it also happens to contain the ruins of Carrick. The INHP is a member of EXARC and in fact contains the longest running experimental archaeology site in the world. They delivered two workshops to the students – focused on pottery manufacture and butchery and cooking of deer. Each relates to the students direct learning, for example how was medieval pottery made or how did the Normans manage their deerparks. The workshops were extremely popular with students as a 'break' from the excavation. Rotation through the different aspects of archaeological work is a strong point of this program– and is singled out as such by past students.

At the IAFS we are supportive of our students continuing professional development and post-graduate studies. As this is a new project, the opportunities for students will expand in future seasons. However, one student has already committed to partnering with the IAFS as an external supervisor, on examining ringwork castles in the southeast; ringworks are one of the earthen castle types used during the Norman conquest.

The annual dissemination of the project exceeded all expectations for year one. This season we have undertaken an extremely successful series of talks, community events and are already drafting publications relating to the project. Key dissemination and outreach included:

- Lectures/promotion in the US by Dr. Stephen Mandal, and a series of lectures held, or to be held, to the Irish peer community by IAFS and their partners
- Successfully establishing a project Academic Committee and expanding existing relations with other research bodies in the southeast and further afield
- Establishing a community outreach calendar (including a community dig, tours, children's events, lecture series etc.)