INTRODUCTION

The Irish Archaeology Field School provides a unique program, introducing students to basic field skills within a multi-period burial site, in Ferns, County Wexford on Ireland’s south-east coast. The program is designed for students from a variety of academic backgrounds with an interest in archaeology, history, osteoarchaeology and physical/forensic anthropology. Students will gain practical experience in a range of site-based skills, including excavation, archaeological recording, artefact retrieval, sampling etc. As the site is a known burial ground they will also be introduced to burial excavation procedures (in a controlled staged environment) and analyses of skeletal remains, exploring topics such including: human and comparative osteology; determination of sex and age-at-death; estimation of living stature and identification of palaeopathological conditions. The program incorporates cultural heritage excursions to provide students with academic context and an immersive heritage experience of Ireland.
St Aidan’s Monastery and Mary’s Abbey – Your Program Setting

The Ferns Field School is located at the site of both St Aidan’s c. 7th century monastery and a 12th century Augustinian Abbey in the town of Ferns, County Wexford, Ireland. This site is a multi-period complex, originally founded by St Aidan at the turn of the 7th century, which also contains Early Medieval crosses and cross slabs, the twelfth century Augustinian Abbey (Mary’s Abbey), and thirteenth century medieval cathedral (Edan’s Cathedral) within its wider confines. While excavations of this site only commenced in 2020, it is anticipated that human remains from both the Early Medieval monastery and later 12th century abbey will be exposed during field excavations*. The burial practices at the site are presumed to speak to the customs and histories of their times, from an Early Medieval cemetery, through its High Medieval usage, and latterly the change in the official state religion and into a time of proscription. During this latter period the Abbey was suppressed (from 1538 AD/CE), but was still described as a church and belfry, dormitory, chapterhouse, hall, and other buildings with c. 600 acres and other interests. Long after this time, and up to the present day, the wider site continued as a place of worship and burial focused on St Edan’s Cathedral (which was remodelled in the 19th century as a Church of Ireland structure).

By working on this program students will not only gain an introduction to archaeological field skills, but also how to excavate and assess human skeletons more specifically. By undertaking the course on an archaeological research dig (under the tuition of one of Ireland’s leading bioarchaeologists) students will learn how the skills of a bioarchaeologist are integrated into the overall management and execution of archaeological excavation.

* Students on this program will not be excavating real skeletal materials. For the possibility of excavating burials students must commit to a minimum of four weeks: please consult our four-week program for details.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 2 semester credit units (equivalent to 3 quarter credit units) through our academic partner, Connecticut College. Connecticut College is a private, highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see grading assessment and matrix). This field school provides a minimum of 80 direct instructional hours. Students are encouraged to discuss the transferability of credit units with faculty and registrars at their home institution prior to attending this field school.

Transcripts: An official copy of transcripts will be mailed to the permanent address listed by students on their online application. One more transcript may be sent to the student home institution at no cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the National Student Clearinghouse: http://bit.ly/2hvurkl.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The program will introduce students to a range of field techniques used by archaeologists, with a focus on those used by osteoarchaeologists during the identification, excavation, and analysis of human skeletal remains. Student research will be complimented by tours to several heritage sites, as well as archaeological lectures, workshops and lab sessions.

After completion of the course students will:

- Understand different strands of archaeological enquiry and their application in an archaeological research context
- Understand the skills required for the conduct of an archaeological excavation
- Understand the basics of excavating human burials
- Distinguish human bone from most common animal bones
- Understand skeletal analysis techniques and how to use these to determine sex, age-at-death, and living stature from complete/partial skeletons
- Understand the basics of palaeopathology and skeletal trauma identification
- Have a one-of-a-kind cultural experience in Ireland
• Have a base understanding of the medieval history (with a focus on burial practice) of Ireland and more specifically, County Wexford

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
Our primary concern is with education. Traveling and conducting field research involve risk. Students interested in participating in IFR programs must weigh whether the potential risk is worth the value of education provided. While risk is inherent in everything we do, we do not take risk lightly. The IFR engages in intensive review of each field school location and programming prior to approval. Once a program is accepted, the IFR reviews each program annually to make sure it still complies with all our standards and policies, including those pertaining to student safety.

The IFR does not provide trip or travel cancellation insurance. We encourage students to explore such insurance on their own as it may be purchased at affordable prices. Insuremytrip.com or Travelguard.com are possible sites where field school participants may explore travel cancellation insurance quotes and policies. If you do purchase such insurance, make sure the policy covers the cost of both airfare and tuition. See this Wall Street Journal article about travel insurance that may help you decide whether to purchase such insurance.

We do our best to follow schedule and activities as outlined in this syllabus. Yet local permitting agencies, political, environmental, personal or weather conditions may force changes. This syllabus, therefore, is only a general commitment. Students should allow flexibility and adaptability as research work is frequently subject to change.

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
Field school Participation (60%): 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 Journal (40%): Students are expected to complete a field school journal and present it for evaluation during their final week on site. Project staff will instruct students on the expectations for workbook entries and will provide a mid-program assessment on journals, to allow students time to rectify any shortcomings.

TRAVEL, ROOM & BOARD, & SAFETY LOGISTICS
An IFR field school is designed to provide positive, constructive experiences for communities, students, and researchers. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the following protocols have been developed based on the assumption that any participant in an IFR field school may be an asymptomatic carrier of SARS COVID-19. Our goal, with these protocols, is to reduce the possibility for COVID-19 transmission among participants, staff, and local community members. IFR depends on the complete and sustained commitment of all students to stay healthy and to help others stay healthy. On enrollment, students commit to comply with
all aspects of the IFR COVID-19 avoidance policy as well as any/all policies specific to their respective IFR field school.

PRIOR TO TRAVEL

Students must arrange a test for current infection for COVID-19 through a RT-PCR test for themselves in their home location within 72 hours prior to arrival at the destination and upload proof of negative result to their IFR application portal.

After demonstrating they tested negative, students must take all precautions possible to ensure they remain COVID-19 free prior to and during travel to the field school. Students should plan to travel in the safest manner that they are able (e.g., avoid flights with long layovers and multiple connections). In addition, we require the following from all students: use of a face mask during travel to, from, and on airlines, ferries, trains, busses, and the like; regular washing of hands; and, in so far as possible, maintain social distancing of 6 feet / 2 meters in airports and other spaces.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Citizens of the US and Canada do not require visas to enter Ireland. You will need your passport to be valid for at least 90 days and will enter on a tourist visa. Citizens of other countries are asked to check the embassy website page at their home country for specific visa requirements.

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

TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)

We suggest you hold off purchasing your airline ticket until six (6) weeks prior to the departure date. Natural disasters, political changes, weather conditions and various other factors may force the cancelation of a field school. The IFR monitors local conditions 6-7 weeks prior to the beginning of each program and makes a decision accordingly. This approach allows sufficient time to still purchase deeply discounted airline tickets.

Students will be met at Edan’s Cathedral, Ferns, Co. Wexford. Since students will arrive on different flights at different times of the day, we will meet all students on Sunday, June 14th, at the Cathedral at 4pm. Full details on reaching Ferns will be provided in the online orientation once you are enrolled in the course.

If you missed your connection or your flight is delayed, please call, text or email the field school director immediately. A local emergency mobile phone number will be provided to all enrolled students.

LOCAL PROTOCOLS, REGULATIONS, & EXPECTATIONS

In Ireland we follow the government guidelines and restrictions, which are published on the Health Service Executive (our equivalent of the CDC), which has a designated webpage for Covid19 restrictions, information and advice (see https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/).

The Irish government recently issued a 5-phase plan for the control of Covid19 in Ireland. At 25th November 2020, the Republic of Ireland was on a Level 5 status.

Ireland currently operates a ‘Green’ List of countries from which people can travel to Ireland without quarantining. At time of writing, this is under review, and is being aligned with EU policy.

People arriving from outside of Green list countries are currently required to self-isolate for a period of 14 days on arrival in Ireland. It is likely that this restriction will remain in place until a reliable, rapid testing system is in place at point of entry.

Wexford is a relatively small, friendly and safe Irish town, [some 140km] south of Dublin. All the relevant local government agencies are aware of the students’ presence, and they and all the people of the town 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 team of outsiders in town does not entitle participants to any special treatment or privileges.
Although everyone will speak English students should expect surprising cultural differences and exciting opportunities to learn 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.

Please note: As the project 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.

FACE MASKS / FACE COVERINGS

All students, faculty and staff are expected to wear face coverings. Face masks, along with social distancing, are among the most effective ways of minimizing the spread of the coronavirus.

The objective of wearing a mask is to capture potentially infectious droplets from the wearer. Therefore:

- Masks or respirators that are equipped with an "exhalation valve" are not permitted, unless covered by another mask.
- Neck fleeces (gaiter masks) are considered the least effective form of face masks, and are not permitted. (The material found in gaiters tend to break down larger droplets into smaller particles that are more easily carried away in the air.)
- Folded bandanas and knitted masks are ineffective and are not permitted.
- Masks must be worn so as to cover both the mouth and nose. If your mask becomes loose, it can be tightened by twisting the ear loops.

ACCOMMODATION

Students will stay with local families in Co. Wexford. Home Stay students live with local families, and experience true home life in provincial Ireland. Students will be brought to the site daily. Students should understand that the host families are in rural settings, requiring taxis to reach the town of Wexford. 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.

Homestay accommodation is an integral and critical part of our Covid-19 planning as typically, our students stay with local families.

It is possible but unlikely that the programs will go ahead but that we will use alternate accommodation (e.g. hostels / holiday cottages), but it is hoped that the students will continue to avail of homestay accommodation, as it is an important component of the cultural immersion our programs provide.

Students and staff will be able to isolate within their homestay accommodation, in line with our government health advice. For example, a suspected (or confirmed) case must isolate in their own room and have access to their own bathroom.

All participants in a field school, students and staff, will wear masks while indoors (i.e. during lectures, during labs, in shared residential spaces, etc.).

Regular hand washing will be a part of the project’s daily schedule.

MANAGING COVID-19 CASES & OUTBREAKS

Students and staff will be required to download the health services COVID-19 tracker app, which identifies close contact. The Irish health service operate a contact tracing protocol that has proven very effective.

The Irish health service has a defined protocol for isolation including a mechanism for receiving social welfare payments.

As students are housed with homestay families, we will follow the same protocol as per existing illnesses, and act accordingly.
Students who test positive for COVID-19 or present symptoms of COVID-19 will be required to self-isolate for 14 days and we can accommodate them in their program accommodation if required – however, this will be at an additional cost.

The closest ICU facilities are in Wexford town, Co. Wexford. These are less than 30 minutes away from program bases.

A risk assessment will be undertaken six weeks from the start of the program based on current Irish government health service advice.

**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 Marshalltown type trowel ([https://marshalltown.com/4-stiff-london-style-pointing-trowel-wood-handle](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 a pair of trail shoes or similar for field trips etc.
- **Waterproof outwear**: a jacket (with a hood if possible) and pants – gore-tex 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.

**COVID19 Prevention**: All participants in a field school, students and staff, will wear masks while indoors (i.e. during lectures, during labs, in shared residential spaces, etc.).

**FIELD PROGRAM**

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

**Week 1 – Excavation Orientation and Fieldtrips**: Following project orientation and induction students will be introduced to the wider research area and period through a series of lectures and visits to regional heritage sites, such as Carrick and Ferns Castle. These fieldtrips will help demonstrate the different physical, archaeological and cultural landscapes surrounding the site.

Immediately after these field trips’ students will be incorporated into the archaeological dig learning excavation and recording techniques including, excavation of archaeological features, documentation of finds, completion of site drawings and record taking of archaeological deposits.

**Week 2 – Staged Excavation and Laboratory Sessions**:

Students will continue to work on the excavation, but learning outcomes will focus on the archaeological excavation and analyses of human remains (note: excavation will not be undertaken on real human bone in the two week program). A focus will be placed on understanding Irish mortuary practice, specifically looking at the near continuous 1500 years of burial at St Aidan’s Monastery itself. After an introduction to burial excavation (in a controlled staged environment), students will also have the opportunity to analyse archaeological skeletal remains during laboratory sessions, which will cover topics such as: human and comparative osteology; determining sex; approximate age-at-death; living stature; identifying palaeopathological conditions *etcetera*. – teaching will focus on excavation, documentation of burials, completion of site drawings, photography and record taking of associated archaeological deposits.
Students are expected to understand bioarchaeological processes and how they relate to field excavation – specifically the site they are working on.

SCHEDULE

All IFR field school begins with safety orientation. This orientation includes proper behavior at the field area, proper clothing, local cultural sensitivities and sensibilities, potential fauna and flora hazards, review IFR harassment and discrimination policies and review of the student Code of Conduct.

In addition to working on site, students will be introduced to archaeological field methods, Irish archaeology and bioarchaeology through a series of lectures/workshops (as outlined below). Students will also be given dedicated research during their time on site, to prepare their assignments and access local readings.

The normal working day is from 9:00am to 5.00pm with a morning tea break from 11:00-11:30am and lunch from 1:30-2:15pm. Students will have weekends free to explore the area and other parts of the country – but are welcome to remain with their homestay families to relax, study or enjoy the local area.
### INDICATIVE SCHEDULE IN ADDITION TO SITE WORK*

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day/Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sunday 11th</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Students arrival and welcome meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Monday 11th</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>Lecture/Project Orientation</td>
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<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Field trip: Tour of Ferns and Ferns Castle</td>
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<td>Tuesday 13th</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>Lecture/Workshop: Archaeology of Medieval Ferns/Wexford</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Field trip: Tour of INHP and Carrick</td>
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<td>Wednesday 14th</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Excavation (and post-exavication)</td>
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<td>Thursday 15th</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Excavation (and post-exavication)</td>
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<td>Friday 16th</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Excavation (and post-exavication)</td>
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<td>Saturday 17th</td>
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<td>Free Day</td>
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<td>Sunday 18th</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Free Day</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Monday 19th</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Excavation (and post-exavication)</td>
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<td>Tuesday 20th</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Excavation (including workshop on burial excavation)</td>
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<td>Wednesday 21st</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Excavation (including workshop on burial excavation)</td>
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<td>Thursday 22nd</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>Lecture/Workshop: Bioarchaeology Workshop 1</td>
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<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Lab Session: Assessing Skeletal Remains</td>
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<td>Evening</td>
<td>Turn in field journals</td>
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<td>Friday 23rd</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>Lecture/Workshop: Bioarchaeology Workshop 2</td>
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<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Lab Session: Assessing Skeletal Remains</td>
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<td>Evening</td>
<td>End of program cultural event/prepare for Saturday Departure</td>
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<td>Saturday 24th</td>
<td>All Day</td>
<td>Depart</td>
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*Please note: changes to this schedule will occur due to factors beyond our control such as weather, etc. Dependent on student progress during the lab session they may be returned to the field to excavate.*

### MANDATORY READING

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students via a shared Dropbox folder.

- Shine, D. and Mandal, S. 2017. Ferns Archaeological Site Handbook. Unpublished site handbook, which will be circulated to students after enrolment on the course. Typically 50 pages in length.
RECOMMENDED READING/REFERENCE GUIDES


ADDITIONAL READINGS


