

ANNUAL REPORT: FERRYCARRIG, IRELAND – SUMMER 2019 FIELD SCHOOL (EX-ARC) Experimental Archaeology and Materiality of the High Medieval Period at Ferrycarrig

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Students conducting an iron smelt at the Carrick Archaeological Site

This new program, which was a resounding success, introduces the role of crafts and technologies in the medieval period in Ireland. Focusing on both the built environment and materiality in the medieval period, students actively participated in a range of bespoke experimental archaeology workshops and projects, focused on pottery, textiles, iron smelting and bronze casting. Through these workshops' students were equipped with a good understanding of medieval society in general, as well as the role of technologies and materiality in people's lives in the 12th- 14th centuries. The program also teaches 'life-skills' such as creativity, problem solving, teamwork, time management, resourcefulness and project design and implementation.

What makes this program completely unique is its collaboration the *Digging the Lost Town of Carrig* archaeological research project. The program is delivered adjacent an authentic *ringwork* castle (the Carrick ringwork), within the confines of the Irish National Heritage Park (INHP) in Wexford, southeast Ireland. This ringwork is one of Ireland's most important medieval monuments and crucial to the earliest stages of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, being the first Norman fortification built in the country in 1169 CE.

A further strength of the program is the partnership with the INHP - Ireland's largest open-air museum, measuring 35 acres (14 hectares). The park depicts 9000 years of re-created history, from first settlers to the coming of the Normans, situated within natural forestry and wet

woodlands. The partnership of a leading academic institution (University College Dublin: UCD), professional field school (Irish Archaeology Field School: IAFS), important research excavation and open-air museum contributes to make this a one of a kind program.

Throughout their time with us the students learnt several core skills, as follows:

Week 1: After conducting orientation, regional field trips and a series of workshops on the excavation itself the first week focused on building a medieval furnace and smelting iron. This replica furnace was based on an authentic example from the Carrick excavation; before beginning their experimental archaeological work students were shown the sites original slag and instructed on how we excavated and recorded the archaeological furnace. After building the furnace in clay the students started smelting – learning all the processes this involves such as processing raw bog-ore, temperature control, processing of charcoal, bellowing, hammering etc. At the conclusion of the smelt students carefully examined the waste products (slag) as well as the physical remains of the furnace – again equating this back to the archaeological site. After the iron smelt students completed a bronze casting. Divided into small groups each student created moulds and cast a belt buckle modeled on an example found from the Carrick excavation. The students kept these as a souvenir of their field school experience.

Week 2: In week two the focus was more on material culture. Students were instructed firstly on the evolution of pottery in Ireland from prehistory through the medieval period and then started making their own pots. For this we used both a modern electric wheel, and a replica medieval kick wheel, built by at the Irish National Heritage Park. Thus far c. nine different medieval pottery types have been encountered on the archaeological site, which are fairly typical of medieval potteries in general; as such the pottery making was intended to teach students about pottery construction, composition, raw materials etc, with a tangible link to the ongoing excavation. As stated by one student ‘actually making the pottery ourselves made it easy to see how wheel-thrown pottery was much faster to make, and could produce more regular pieces... learning more about how the pottery was produced made it easier for me to then recognize it in the field or lab’.

At the end of the week students were able to learn about medieval textiles, which are often overlooked in archaeology as they rarely survive. Instruction was provided on how to process raw wool, including cleaning it and spinning it into yarn using hand spindles. Students were also introduced to various types of weaving.

We are already planning several partnership research projects, such as chemical analyses of our kiln furniture, which may be indicative of the only kiln in Wexford. On a much larger scale we also hope to gradually expand our experimental work in partnership with both UCD and the INHP to start constructing medieval replica buildings on site; this venture is a long term ambitious project, entitled *Building the Lost Town of Carrig*, which will be a natural progression from the current excavations, for a setting such as the INHP. New, more ambitious and permanent student projects are already being planned for next year. At the IAFS we are supportive of our student’s continuing professional development and post-graduate studies. While this is the first year of this program, several students are already in talks with UCD about returning for a masters in Experimental Archaeology, while the IAFS have been in discussion with some students about possible dissertation projects, and other programs of study. Several post-graduate scholars also visited the program (both PhD and masters students) as part of their studies on a diverse range of subjects. It is clear from this first iteration of the program that it has considerable scope to expand, especially in the direction of collaboration with post-graduate student studies.