

ANNUAL REPORT: FERRYCARRIG, IRELAND – SUMMER 2021 FIELD SCHOOL

The Medieval Landscape of Ferrycarrig: Tracing the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland

Name of Directors: Dr. Denis Shine



Students gathering around experimental archaeology projects they contributed to, including a medieval mortar mixer and a smiths workshop

SECTION A: PUBLIC PORTION OF THE REPORT

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. Excavations thus far have uncovered the remains of 14th structures (a possible medieval hall and chapel), as well as a large curtain wall/structure, which may be the remains of a castle recorded on the site in 1231 CE. The dig has also revealed burnt out structures and earthen defenses, which relate to the first ever Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland!

Excavations during the summer 2021 season focused on further investigation of archaeological cuttings originally excavated in previous seasons (Cuttings 3 and 4). An archaeological cutting

(Cutting 7) was also commenced toward the western limits of the medieval hall, while a second new cutting (Cutting 9) was also opened and completed on the bank top, toward the southeastern limits of the probable medieval chapel, referenced in a document dating to 1324 CE. Excavations were carried from July-August 2021; works will resume in our winter season (January-February 2022). All summer excavations are concluded with a brief summary of progress to date provided below:

Cutting 3: In previous seasons in Cutting 3 medieval walls were encountered, as was evidence of 13th/14th century floor surfaces. As the structure is on a direct east-west axis, unlike any other structures on the site, it has been suggested this may be the chapel recorded at the site in 1324 CE. This season the floor surfaces were excavated further, while a smaller extension to the cutting was undertaken on its eastern side to expose more of the chapel wall. A ditch feature of indeterminate date/function, found at the conclusion of our last season, was also fully excavated. Unfortunately, this excavation did not provide clarification on the date or role of this ditch, which stratigraphically appears to be the earliest feature on site. However, this may be clarified by specialist analyses and radiometric dating.

Cutting 4: Cutting 4 was originally opened to find the eastern limit of the 'chapel' structure in previous seasons. During excavations this cutting also revealed a series of presumed 12th century hearths and a series of intercutting pits, which are of indeterminate function. This cutting was virtually concluded at the end of the last excavation season, but final planning and documentation of stratigraphic relationships was conducted in July 2021.

Cutting 7: A new archaeological cutting was opened over the projected southwestern corner of the probable medieval hall (another structure which was recorded on the site in 1324 CE). This cutting will require at least one more season to conclude. However, already a large rubble deposit, deriving from the collapse of the hall's corner, was encountered, as was intact masonry marking the southeastern extent of the hall. Crucially two phases of masonry were exposed directly adjacent each other, with an earlier phase possibly relating to a castle that was constructed on the site by 1231 CE. A midden deposit, comparatively rich in medieval pottery to the rest of the cutting, was exposed at the cutting's northwestern limits.

Artefacts: Almost all the artefacts from the site (with the exception of a few sherds of Victorian pot) continue to date from the late 12th/early 13th to 14th centuries, matching the historical records that record a 150-year lifespan for the settlement. Pottery included Leinster Cooking Ware, Wexford Type Cooking Ware, Wexford Type Coarseware, Wexford Type Ware, Saintonge, Saintonge Sgraffito, Minety Ware, Bristol Redcliffe etc. Other notable finds included Later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age lithics. Several pieces of glazed 'burnt clay' which were recovered, have been identified as probable kiln furniture. One of the nicer artefacts from this season was an intact medieval arrowhead, with warfare and sieges documented as part of the site's history.

Research Aims, Reporting and Dissemination of results

Our program of vlogging, blogging, publishing etc. continued in 2020/2021, albeit severely seriously curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in the cessation of excavations. As such we launched an innovative 'virtual heritage school' - an online 'cultural heritage world' featuring online talks, virtual tours on Carrick, book and movie reviews, children's interactive activities, pre-recorded videos and a whole host more. The highlight of this virtual heritage initiative was an archaeological masterclass series investigating various specialisms, used at Carrick, which was frequently attended by over 500 people.

Despite Covid-19, we have still been extremely successful in disseminating the project, as follows:

- Lectures/promotion online for the international and Irish peer community
- Tours of the site for the entire excavation season for the general public
- Continued campaign of online dissemination – with a focus on expertly produced Vlogs
- Hosting our annual Carrig 850 Open Day with 5+ heritage themed attractions. This was one of the best attended events in the history of the Irish National Heritage Park.
- Running an oversubscribed community excavation in tandem with the students excavation season.
- A second Masterclass series was held on site (outside) during the excavation season – with some of Ireland’s foremost archaeological specialists coming to Carrick to speak with students and community volunteers.
- Through seed funding from the Community Monuments Fund (granted by Ireland’s National Monuments Service) running an incredibly successful program of experimental archaeology projects, including building a medieval smith’s workshop and mortar mixer, re-creating replica medieval walls on site, installing new site signage and documenting the whole project as a mini documentary.
- All the above were heavily documented in local and regional media, with the project featuring heavily on radio, print media and online forums.

Student research

At the IAFS we are supportive of our student’s continuing professional development and post-graduate studies. This season we:

- Acted as external supervisor for a post-graduate study on the socio-economic impacts of the Anglo-Norman invasion
- Supported an honours thesis on the importance of Anglo-Norman deerparks as social statements
- Supported a program of PhD research on archaeological replicas
- Supported several student applications to post-graduate studies, with several choosing to study in Ireland
- Supported past students in publications and/or conference papers, including publications on the Carrick site

It should be noted that all students wishing to carry out research on material from the site must undertake one season of excavation at the site first and then are required to comply by the Irish Archaeology Field School Intellectual Property (IP) protocols, which can frequently include completion of an IP agreement.

