



Uncovering the Monastic Midlands, County Offaly, Ireland

Course ID: ARCH 365BK

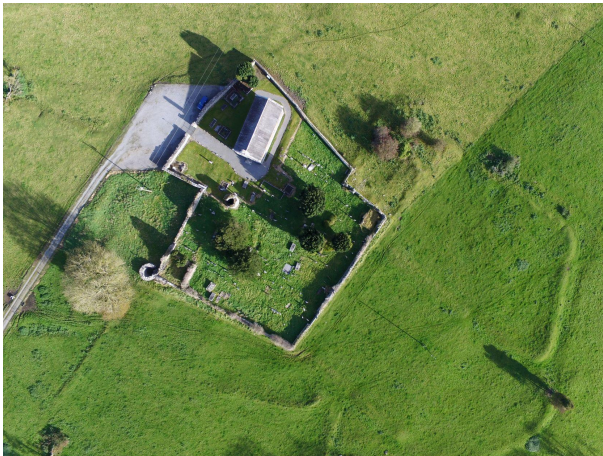
Academic Credits: 6 Semester Credit Units (Equivalent to 9 Quarter Units)

June 26th to July 23rd, 2024 – PROGRAM 1

July 24th to August 20th, 2024 – PROGRAM 2

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTOR(S)

Dr Denis Shine, Irish Heritage School (denis.shine@irishheritageschool.ie) (and up to seven associate staff).



OVERVIEW

This field school is an integral part of the major research project, the *Monastic Midlands*. It takes a holistic landscape scale approach to community based archaeological research, assessing several monasteries in the midlands region of Ireland.

Described as a ‘flowering garden of monasteries’, County Offaly, in the heart of the Irish Monastic Midlands, is best known archaeologically for the number and scale of the early medieval monasteries, which to this day continue to dominate the landscape. Between the fifth and seventh centuries AD evangelist monks arrived in what is now County Offaly, attracted by the region’s centrality and its proximity to four of the five medieval provincial boundaries.

The landscape they entered was formed through eons of geological processes and is now dominated by both the River Shannon (Ireland's longest river), flowing northeast to southwest through the region, and a series of winding glacial ridges (known as eskers) which provided natural east to west routeways through the low-lying wetland landscape. These natural routeways became a focal point for major monasteries, such as Clonmacnoise, which later developed into one of the largest cities in early medieval Ireland. Of course, people had lived in the midlands for millennia before these missionaries arrived, so the archaeological landscape the missionaries entered is also of critical importance to understanding their placement. Equally, the early medieval monasteries were subjected to later Viking attacks and were frequently surpassed by, or added to, by Anglo-Norman foundations, who typically added new chapters to the monasteries' histories in the later medieval period. Indeed, whilst many of the monasteries fell out of use, several continue as places of veneration and worship into the present day.

As such, this field school offers a holistic approach to investigating the *Monastic Midlands* of Ireland, studying the landscape, earthworks, buildings, folklore, spirituality, artefacts and the buried human remains of these spectacular sites. Considering the longstanding, and sometimes continuing, role several of these monasteries play in the landscape, the people and archaeological sites that came before and after the monasteries are an integral part of the story, with this project seeking insight and understanding of midlands life and society through time. We are seeking to understand the cultural heritage of the region by understanding how people lived, shaped their environment, built structures, and memorialized the dead. Each summer our understanding of this *Monastic Midland* landscape will be further augmented by more in-depth studies of an anchor site or sites.

The field school is based in the heritage town of Birr, a handsome and charming town, which was the location at which St Brendan founded his c. sixth century monastery. Our campus in Birr serves as a base for all our course teaching and lab-work, but also acts as a launching pad to investigate several regional monastic and later medieval sites.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The *Monastic Midlands* Research Project is inspired by, and arises from, our long-standing relationships with Offaly County Council (the local government authority) and several local communities in the midlands. To date we have supported or directly undertaken archaeological and conservation projects with a range of groups including at Birr Castle, Clonoghill Castle, Roscomroe Medieval Church, St Brendan's Monastery and Church, Kilcomin Medieval Church, Killeigh Friary, Maigh Leana Fort and, in greater depth, Seir Kieran and Lemanaghan monasteries (to name only a few sites and communities we work with!). Whilst the names of these sites will become more familiar to students attending our program, the recurring theme is to provide local community groups with both free professional archaeological advice and archaeological fieldwork, so that they may better understand the importance of their early medieval monuments and cultural heritage. This program is a crucial addition to our wider *Monastic Midlands* research, as students will actively contribute to a range of projects and allow us to expand our community-based research.

As the project is both landscape based, which is assessing an entire county and beyond, and also extends across a significant time period, it is appropriate to give an example of how our community-based research works with students at a single site. A perfect example is the monastic site of Seir Kieran (Saoighir Kieran or the 'fountain of Kieran'), as we have a long established partnership here with the local community. Seir Kieran is a remarkable site, not only due to its prominence as an Early Christian monastery founded by St Kieran, but due to its longevity which continues possibly from pre-historic times through the early medieval and Anglo-Norman Period and onward to the present day. The site provides a unique opportunity to study, in a single location, an early monastic site, a twelfth century

monastery, a multi-period burial site, an Anglo-Norman castle and a medieval borough/town! Based on documentary sources, it is thought that St Kieran's monastery was originally founded in the fifth century AD/CE, making it one of the earlier monasteries in Ireland. The site was active throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods and remains an active place of worship to this day, which is very much 'alive' within the local community.

The Irish Heritage School (IHS), in partnership with the county Heritage Office and the local community, has undertaken significant research around Seir Kieran to date, including:

- Geophysical survey of all state lands surrounding the current graveyard, amounting to some 28 acres; this survey revealed the site is significantly more complex than hitherto understood.
- LiDAR Laser Scanning of the entirety of the known monastery (some 320m across) which can be adapted for monitoring and conservation purposes as well as for remote touring etc;
- Graveyard survey of the extant memorials in the site which identified memorials from the sixteenth century to modern day, as well as much earlier ninth century 'cross-slabs';
- Historical research on the site which has already resulted in publications and specialist reports;
- Regular community engagement projects including site tours, lectures series, vlogging, blogging, children's workshops etc.

Possibly the most important outcome of the above research is that it facilitated the community in achieving one of their key goals, successfully securing state funding to undertake a major program of conservation of the extant medieval walls of the site. The research outlined above will allow us to establish a strategy, in partnership with the local community, the local authorities and the National Monuments Service (the Irish state body responsible for heritage), for keyhole excavations at the site which will help us understand the layout, scope and phasing of enclosures identified in geophysical surveys.

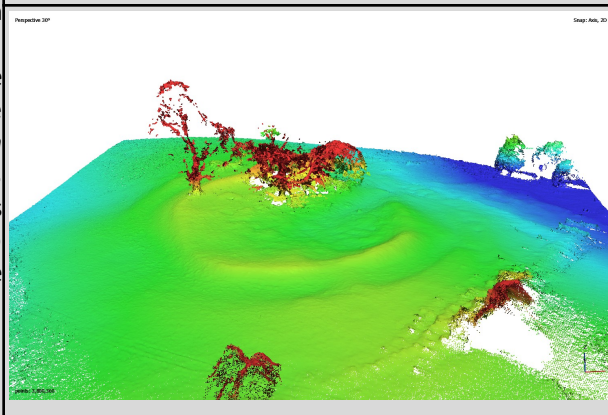
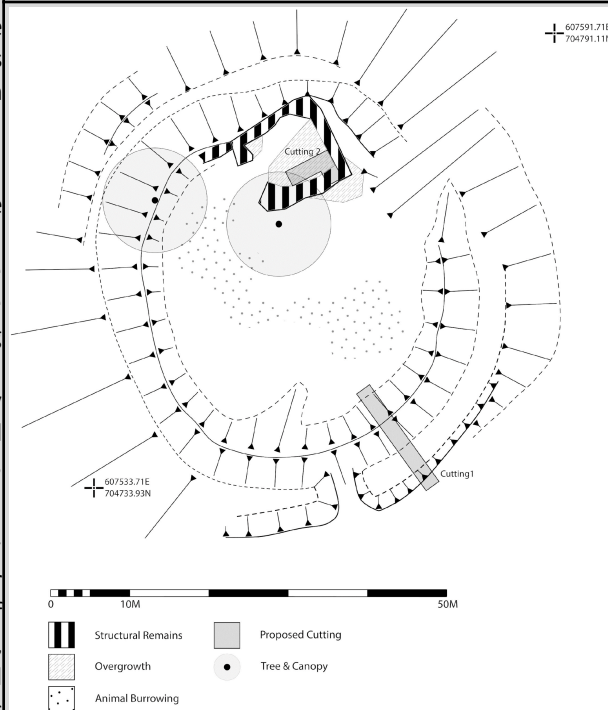
Whilst Seir Kieran perhaps best exemplifies the nature of the long-standing community orientated research partnerships we have fostered with local communities in midlands, our 'anchor site' for 2024 is Clonoghil Castle on the outskirts of Birr Town.

ANCHOR PROJECT IN 2024 – CLONOGHIL CASTLE

As stated, in 2024 our anchor project will focus on the medieval site of Clonoghil Castle (which we will be excavating in tandem with surveys of several other regional monasteries and castles as outlined above). Clonoghil Castle is located on the outskirts of Birr Town (home to the Irish Heritage School) and is an extremely important site to the history of the town, as it represents one of only three known medieval monuments in Birr. Clonoghil is a potentially multi-period site containing a tower-house or hall-house, surrounded by an earthen ‘bawn’, which itself could be contemporary with the stone castle or represent an earlier ringfort – potentially being several centuries older than the castle itself. Whilst Clonoghil’s primary importance is undoubtedly medieval, the site continued to be an important monument in the post-medieval period, as most clearly evidenced in its use by renowned glass makers the Bigo Family from 1623 AD/CE.

In summer 2024 we will excavate two archaeological cuttings. One of these will be placed across the southeastern side of the monument (where the ditch and bank are most obvious) and will further examine the date and form of the enclosing ‘bawn’ feature. The second will be excavated on the interior of the surviving ‘castle structure’, and will hopefully date Clonoghil Castle, clarifying if it is a tower-house or a significantly earlier hall-house. The excavations follow geophysical surveys and field surveys, completed by past students in 2023.

Clonoghil represents a potentially unique opportunity in Birr to assess, in a single location, over a 1000-year long medieval history. This timespan includes some of the more significant historical events to occur in Birr, most obviously the coming of the Anglo-Normans and the construction of a new castle(s?) by 1207 AD/CE, as well as the return of the O’ Carrolls by the fourteenth century. Should the earthen closure be clarified as a ringfort it may also be contemporary with some of the major historical events associated to the monastic site of Birr, such as the Synod of 697 AD/CE when the *Cain Adomnáin*, some of the world’s earliest human rights legislation, which protected innocents in battle, was passed. Excavating a potentially early medieval site so close to the town could add extremely worthwhile secular context to these renowned historical events.



PROJECT AIMS

The key aim of this program is to facilitate and guide community aspirations for their monuments. Whilst research is at an advanced stage at Seir Kieran, work at other sites will be more survey oriented or may adopt a more social focus, such as the capturing of oral testimonies, building recording, geophysical survey, etc. Regardless of exact work undertaken in any particular field school, findings will contribute to the overall *Monastic Midlands* Project, which aims to conduct a decade plus long body of research, resulting in a much better understanding of this crucial archaeological landscape through the generation of publications, archives, online resources etc. Equally importantly, the project will also engender a better appreciation and understanding of the midland's fabulous heritage amongst several local communities, helping to safeguard its sites into the future. An ancillary benefit of the project is also the encouragement of additional tourism in the midlands, built on slower, immersive and intimate cultural experiences of its monastic heritage.

The key project aims of excavations at our anchor site, Clonoghil Castle, in 2024 is to contribute to our understanding of medieval Birr. It is hoped that by undertaking keyhole excavations at Birr's medieval sites over the next three years, couple with both completed and planned archaeological surveys, we will be able to publish a major study of medieval Birr, as our first marquee study location, in the next five years. This book would represent the first of multiple publications related to the *Monastic Midlands*.

ACADEMIC CREDIT UNITS & TRANSCRIPTS

Credit Units: Attending students will be awarded 6 semester credit units (equivalent to 9 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 270 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/2hvvurkl>.

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'.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As this program takes a landscape scale approach, this field school is necessarily holistic in nature and will introduce students to a wide range of techniques used by modern archaeologists, including excavation sills, survey, landscape assessment, architectural recording, small scale excavation and post-excavation. Students will learn the typical progression of archaeological research from learning to read the physical landscape, to non-invasive survey techniques, to excavation and laboratory protocols (focusing on artefact curation and remedial conservation). Please note that while this program will introduce students to these various techniques, the degree to which each approach is used during the field school will be dependent on the needs of the sites investigated. In 2024 students will be excavating

at the medieval site of Clonoghil but will also be rotated through survey training at a range of other sites. Student learning will be complemented by active research at a range of heritage sites, as well as a series of archaeological lectures and skills workshops. On completion of the program, students will:

- Have a broad understanding of how to interpret the landscape from the bedrock up – focusing on geological and glacial processes – and how, ultimately, these dictate the patterns of human settlement;
- Understand the key strands of archaeological enquiry and their application in an archaeological research context;
- Have developed the critical skills needed to interrogate historical records and, especially, archaeological survey data, as part of an overall research project design;
- Have learned a wide range of site survey skills, including the principals of baseline survey (tape survey), total station survey, graveyard recording, GPS survey etc.;
- Understand the skills required for archaeological excavation;
- Have a base understanding of laboratory protocols (on-site and post-ex) and how these contribute to artefact research, conservation and interpretation;
- Have an understanding of the early medieval history of Ireland, the Monastic Midlands, County Offaly and many of its leading sites;
- Understand how heritage can be explained and presented in an engaging manner to local communities;
- Understand how best to work with local communities to build more sustainable and rewarding archaeological projects, where community desires are actively built into the research objectives.

Please Note: As this program forms part of a major research project, working in partnership with local communities and local and national authorities, each program will vary in focus and will change based on the research aims and community needs of each season. Students may not get in-depth experience in every skill above across every season.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The archaeological learning outcomes are clearly outlined in the course objectives above. However, students will also learn several soft and transferable skills which can be applied in other settings. On this program students will:

- Help the local community reach their objectives for leading regional heritage sites;
- Gain hands on experience and learning through the exchange of time, skills and knowledge;
- Immerse themselves in the culture of a provincial Irish town;
- Learn to work in a different professional environment, different to anything they could experience at home, in devising and delivering research focused projects;
- Develop skills in problem solving critical thinking, and cognitive development;
- Attain a unique cultural experience in Ireland, which focuses on the immense heritage of the midland Region – a frequently overlooked hidden gem within the island.

Students will also gain practical archaeological skills which can be applied in a Cultural Resource Management (CRM) setting or indeed in several cognate disciplines. These skills include:

- Learning how to excavate using the Single Context recording system;
- Understanding multiple techniques in archaeological survey;
- Archaeological planning and photography;
- Processing and remedial conservation of archaeological artifacts and samples;
- Learning how to complete a field notebook;

- Geological recording (bedrock and glacial landforms);

ASSESSMENT

Field school Participation (50%): Students are required to participate in all field school activities, including research, archaeological survey, excavation (staged or actual) 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/Paperwork (35%): Students are expected to complete a field school journal and some paperwork and present it for evaluation during their final week on site. Project staff will instruct students on the expectations for journal entries and will provide a mid-program assessment on journals, to allow students time to rectify any shortcomings.

Course Project Work (15%): Students are expected to complete the course projects as instructed by the course Directors and present them for evaluation. The course projects include one or both of the following (depending on the complexity of each individual project in any given season):

- A story board for their site which compiles the site history (based on their desktop assessment training) together with reflections on their site work and entries from their journal. Students will be expected to talk through their story board to the class the end of week four.
- Creating an annotated 3D model for our Sketchfab site, based on their photogrammetry training and instruction in the field.

FIELD PROGRAM

The field program includes instruction in excavation, archaeological survey, post-excavation techniques, landscape assessment, architectural recording and may include other topics relevant to exploring a specific site. The program is based in Birr, 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 (continuing to Week 2) - Orientation and Field Trips: Following project orientation, students will be introduced to the wider research area and period through a series of lectures and visits to regional heritage sites, such as Clonmacnoise, Knockbarron/Drumcullen, Kinnity etc. These field trips will help demonstrate the different physical, archaeological and cultural landscapes in the Monastic Midlands. The field trips are designed to help place the monastic sites within their broader historical and geographic context. An emphasis will be placed on understanding the physical landscape the monasteries were built upon, and how this dictated their placement, growth and scale. A visit will also be paid to the National Museum to study the material culture of Irish early medieval monasteries.

Weeks 2, 3 and 4

Survey: Following from their training in week one, students will assist with the documentation and survey of regional monastic sites, such as at Seir Kieran, St Brendan's Monastery, Killeigh and Lemanaghan. Students will be instructed in a range of archaeological survey and recording techniques – including architectural recording, digital survey devices, line drawings, graveyard documentation etc. Depending on the community projects being undertaken from season to season, students may also be conducting more social orientated survey and/or educational programs, such as oral history recording or helping to deliver public outreach events.

Excavation (located on site, under cover as appropriate): Students will be instructed in archaeological excavation and recording techniques at Clonohil Castle – including excavation of archaeological features, documentation of finds, completion of site drawings and record taking of archaeological deposits. Excavations will be covered (as appropriate) to permit excavation in colder/wetter weather conditions.

Laboratory Protocols: A focus will be placed on the cataloguing and remedial conservation of both artefacts and ecofacts, according to standards set by the National Museum of Ireland (NMI). The NMI requires that all finds recovered in archaeological excavations are prepared, and conserved where necessary, according to strict protocols, in advance of submission to the museum. Students are expected to understand these processes and may get the opportunity to work with several different archaeological material types (pottery, glass, metal, bone etc). Depending on the season students may work on archaeological materials from both the ‘acnhor project’ as well as potentially comparable medieval sites.

* **Important note:** Not every activity will be delivered in each individual season, but each season will contribute to the overall goals of both the host community and the wider *Monastic Midlands* program at large. The rotation of students through tasks including survey, excavation, architectural recording, landscape assessment, folklore recording, bioarchaeology and post-excavation is dependent on weather conditions, student numbers and the desires of the local community from season to season; students may be split into smaller groups and rotated through different tasks simultaneously, while changes in the schedule are likely to be made to accommodate weather and other external factors. As the program contents change from season to season a more detailed schedule and outline of the field season aims will be discussed with students in both their online and in-county orientations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All IFR field schools begin 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 of the 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 project work and access local readings.

The normal working day is from 9:00am to 5:00pm with a morning tea break from c. 11:00-11:30am and lunch from c. 1:30-2:15pm. Students will have weekends free to explore the area and other parts of the country.

Day/Date	Time	Event
Wednesday (June 26 th or July 24 th)	Evening	Student’s arrival and welcome meeting
Thursday	Morning	Lecture/Project Orientation
	Afternoon	Field trip 1: Birr Castle
Friday	Morning	Lecture/Workshop: Archaeology of Monastic Midlands
	Afternoon	Field trip: Birr Town, examining the medieval story of Birr, concluding with mapping exercises

Saturday	All day	Free Day
Sunday	All day	Free Day
Monday	Morning Afternoon	Lecture/Workshop: The Physical Landscape of the Monasteries Field trip 2: Tour of Knockbarron, Silver River and Killaun with geological and other mapping
Tuesday	All Day	Field trip 3: Clonmacnoise, Drumcullen and Kinnity – including architectural drawing
Wednesday	All day	Survey level 1 – including conducting Desktop Assessment
Thursday	All day	Survey level 1 – including conducting Desktop Assessment
Friday	All day	Field trip 4: National Museum of Ireland to study medieval exhibit, manuscripts, early medieval metalwork and bog bodies Self-guided learning in Dublin
Saturday	All day	Free Day
Sunday	All day	Free Day
Monday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Tuesday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Wednesday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Thursday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Friday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Saturday	All day	Free Day
Sunday	All day	Free Day
Monday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Tuesday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Wednesday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Thursday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Friday	All day	On site (survey, excavation, post-excavation etc)
Saturday	All day	Free Day
Sunday	All day	Free Day
Monday	All day	Cultural Day – including the presentation of project work
Tuesday	All day	Depart program

RECOMMENDED READINGS

PDF files of recommended readings will be provided to enrolled students via a shared Dropbox folder. Students are encouraged to download and/or print readings prior to traveling. Course participants are expected to be prepared to engage the discussions led by facilitators, all of whom will be looking for

compelling evidence that students have read and thought about the assigned readings prior to the scheduled day on which they are first discussed.

Callaghan, S. and O' Brien, C. 2016. *Heart and Soul: a History of Saint Brendan's Graveyard in Birr*. Walsh Printers: Roscrea.

Cooke, T. L. 1875. *Early History of The Town of Birr, or Parsonstown with the Particulars of Remarkable Events in More Recent Times*. Robertsson and Co. Dublin.

Dowling, G. 2023. *Geophysical Report, Clonoghill, County Offaly (23R0024)*. Unpublished Technical Report prepared for Offaly County Council the Irish Archaeology Field School.

Green, A. 2017. *Fort Maigh Leana, Ballindown, Co. Offaly: Geophysical Survey Report*. Unpublished Technical Report for the Irish Archaeology Field School.

Green, A. 2017b. *St. Brendan's Church, Birr, Co. Offaly: Geophysical Survey Report*. Unpublished Technical Report for the Irish Archaeology Field School.

Hogan, M. 2007. *The Gospel Book of Mcregol of Birr*. Offaly County Council.

Houlihan, James W. 2020. *Adomnán's Lex Innocentium and the Laws of War*. Four Courts Press; Dublin.

Houlihan, James W. 2023. *The Great Law of Birr. Offaly County Council*. Brosna Press; Ferbane.

Noonan, D. 2003. *Archaeological Assessment at 24-26, Main St., Birr (03E0342)*. Unpublished Technical Report for Lua Ryan.

O'Brien, C., & Sweetman, D. 1997. *Archaeological Inventory of County Offaly*. Stationery Office; Dublin.

O' Brien, C. 2006. *Stories from a Sacred Landscape: Croghan Hill to Clonmacnoise*. Offaly County Council. Mercier Press; Dublin.

O' Keeffe, T. 2014. Halls, 'hall-houses' and tower-houses in medieval Ireland: disentangling the needlessly entangled. *The Castle Studies Group Journal*. No. 27. 252-262.

O' Brien, C. 2006. *Stories from a Sacred Landscape: Croghan Hill to Clonmacnoise*. Offaly County Council. Pay particular attention to Chapters 1, 5 and 9.

O' Sullivan, M. 1997. *The Illustrated Guide to Seir Kieran*. Offaly. Brosna Press: Offaly.

O' Sullivan, M., Shine, D, Rodgers, M. and Mandal, S. 2018. *Seir Kieran. Place, pilgrimage, and tradition in the monastic midlands. Offaly Heritage 10*, 21-42.

Sweetman, D. 2005. *Report on Archaeological Assessment at Syngefield Demesne, Birr, Co. Offaly*. Unpublished Technical Report for Offaly County Council.

Sweetman, D. 2006. *Report on Top-Soil Stripping as part of Archaeological Assessment at Clonoghill Upper, Birr, Co. Offaly*. Unpublished Technical Report for Offaly County Council.

ADDITIONAL READING/REFERENCE GUIDES

Feehan, J. 2013. *The Geology of Laois and Offaly*. Offaly County Council, in association with Laois County Council and the Geological Survey of Ireland.

Feehan, J. and Rosse, A. 2005. *An Atlas of Birr*. Department of Environmental Resource Management at University College Dublin in association with Offaly County Council.

Feehan, John (1979). *The Landscape of Slieve Bloom: a study of its natural and human heritage*. Blackwater Press, Dublin (revised edition 2009).

FitzPatrick, E. and O' Brien, C. 1998. *The Medieval Churches of County Offaly*. Betaprint: Government of Ireland.

King, H.A. (ed.). 1998. *Clonmacnoise Studies Volume 1: Seminar Papers 1994*. Stationary Office: Dublin (revised edition 2007).

King, H.A. (ed.). 2003. *Clonmacnoise Studies Volume 2: Seminar Papers 1998*. Stationary Office: Dublin (revised edition 2007).

PART II: TRAVEL, SAFETY & LOGISTICS

NOTICE OF INHERENT RISK

Traveling and conducting field research can involve risk. 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. Participants should also take every reasonable step to reduce risk while on IFR programs, including following the safety advice and guidelines of your program director, being alert to your surroundings and conditions, letting someone know where you will be at all times, and assessing your personal security.

The IFR does not provide trip or travel cancellation insurance. We strongly encourage participants to consider purchasing this insurance, as unexpected events may prevent your participation or cause the program to be canceled. Insurance is a relatively small cost to protect your educational investment in an IFR program. When comparing trip cancellation insurance policies, make sure the policy covers the cost of both airfare and tuition.

We do our best to follow a schedule of activities, methods training, and programming as outlined in this syllabus. However, this schedule can be easily disrupted by unforeseen circumstances, including weather, revisions by local permitting agencies, or conditions onsite. While this schedule represents the intentions of the program, adaptability is an intrinsic part of all field research, and necessary alterations to the schedule may happen at any time.

If you have any medical concerns, please consult with your doctor. For all other concerns, please consult with the program director and staff.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC FIELD CONDITIONS

Archaeological field work involves physical work outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different from those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. This program operates during the summer resulting in direct sun exposure, with periods of heavy rainfall. Students should be prepared for varied weather conditions. Additionally, this program involves walking over uneven terrain, often up to three miles per day. If you anticipate any concerns with this level of activity, please discuss this with your program director or IFR prior to committing to the program.

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 other vaccinations are required for entry to Ireland but anyone working in archaeology in Ireland should have an up-to-date tetanus shot.

TRAVEL (TO AND DURING THE PROGRAM)

Natural disasters, political changes, weather conditions and various other factors may force the cancellation or alteration of a field school. IFR recommends students only purchase airline tickets that are fully refundable and consider travel insurance in case a program or travel plans must change for any reason. General information for this program is below, but keep in mind we will discuss any updated travel information and regulations during the required program orientation, which could affect travel plans. We highly recommend that you fly in and out of Dublin airport.

You are required to participate in the mandatory orientation meeting when we will discuss the latest travel information and regulations.

Students will be met in Birr, Co. Offaly. Since students will arrive on different flights at different times of the day, we will meet all students on their first day of arrival (June 26th for Program One and July 24th for Program 2) at Johns Hall, our head office (eircode/zipcode R42Y927) at 8.30pm. Directions and travel information will be issued to all students once they are enrolled in the field school. 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.

STUDENT HEALTH

An IFR field school is designed to provide safe, positive, and constructive experiences for participating communities, students, and researchers. We are committed to protocols and practices that support the health and well-being of all involved in our field school projects, including the members of the community in which these projects take place.

We recommend that students adopt best-practices for arriving in a good state of health to protect themselves and their peers' readiness to set about the work of the field school. A thriving field camp environment is a constant exchange of energy, patience, effort, respect, and service. Arriving healthy is every student's first act of service — their first opportunity to behave in a way that respects the safety and wellness of one another.

IFR programs follow the health requirements and guidelines of local health authorities. You may also wish to consult recommendations from the US Centers for Disease Control at:
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

LOCAL PROTOCOLS, REGULATIONS, & EXPECTATIONS

Birr: Birr is a quintessentially classic, small, friendly and safe Irish town, [some 130km] west of Dublin. All the relevant local government agencies are aware of your 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. 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.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students will stay in homestay accommodation with local families. Two or more students on the program may be placed with the same family. As students live with local families, they are afforded an experience of true home life in small town Ireland, offering a wonderful opportunity to learn about Irish culture firsthand. Typically, students will walk to John's Hall daily, before availing of pre-arranged transport to sites, or walking, dependent on the distance. Students should understand that some host families may be in rural settings, requiring taxis (or a longer walk) to reach the town of Birr. While host families may provide transportation into town on occasion, this is not expected of families and students should be prepared to arrange their own transportation, particularly for social gatherings. Breakfast and dinner will be provided at your host family's house, and provisions will be made for you to prepare a packed lunch to eat on site. Students may avail of their free time at weekends to explore Ireland, though it is expected that you will share your plans with your host family out of courtesy.

As students are placed in homestay, all students have access to safe, sanitary accommodation as well as laundry, showering facilities etc. As noted above, homestay accommodation will include meals, including provisions for a packed lunch. Our homestay network caters for all main dietary requirements (vegetarian, vegan, nongluten etcetera); they provide a well-balanced diet of Irish cuisine, but students should anticipate trying new cuisine and not having all the items they might expect at home. Students are welcome to bring some special treats or a small gift from home to share with their families.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Students are required to bring a basic tool kit. This includes:

- 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>);
- 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 some site work; however if you choose to wear these you may need pair of trail shoes or similar for field trips etc.;
- Waterproof outerwear: 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 €60-€70);
- Warm layers – you should bring and wear lots of layers rather than one warm/heavy layer. Bring things that are suitable for outdoor work and that can be easily removed as the day warms;
- Sunscreen: students should wear an SPF daily to protect against UV exposure and windburn;
- Hat: something to keep your head warm. A hat with a brim can be useful for shade;
- Laptop/tablet: a device on which you can prepare and submit your story board or 3D model. A smart phone is not suitable for this.