



BLACKFRIARY ARCHAEOLOGY
FIELD SCHOOL

Digging the Past Growing the Future

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BLACKFRIARY COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

TRIM, CO. MEATH, IRELAND

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DIRECTORS:

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INTRODUCTION

The Blackfriary Community Archaeology Project is a unique, hands-on opportunity for students to excavate the remains of a 13th century Dominican friary in the town of Trim, County Meath, Ireland. The Black Friary was founded in 1263 CE by Geoffrey de Geneville, Lord of Meath. Built in part using exotic imported materials, the friary reflected the wealth of this medieval lordship and its contacts with the rest of Europe. The importance of the Black Friary during the late medieval period is also indicated by its use for political and ecclesiastical assemblies. In 1542 CE, as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the commissioners of King Henry VIII suppressed the friary and sold its lands, buildings and material goods. The church and other buildings were dismantled in the post-medieval period, but the place itself retained local significance and continued in use as a burial ground. The changing burial practices reflect larger religious changes in Ireland, from medieval Christianity, through the introduction of Protestantism as the official state religion and into a time of proscription of Roman Catholicism. During this last period, long after its buildings had been destroyed, the Black Friary became the final resting place for many who were excluded from burial in consecrated ground, particularly unbaptised children.

This project focuses on the remains of the Black Friary and has three primary components: **excavation** of the friary buildings, **bioarchaeology** and **community archaeology**.

Excavation of the friary buildings aims to determine their extent and layout as well as the nature of the associated infrastructure, such as drains, water management features and gardens. A clearer understanding of how the physical structure of the friary changed over time will help illuminate both the relationship between the friary and its founder, Geoffrey de Geneville, and its relationship with the town and community. In addition, combined with the evidence from other medieval religious houses, examination of the Black Friary will elucidate the various factors that influenced whether religious structures were maintained, altered or destroyed following the Dissolution.

The goals of the **bioarchaeological research** are to delineate the area and extent of the cemetery and of burials within the church and cloister; to describe the nature of mortuary practice throughout the life use of the site as a burial ground; and to determine the date range and characteristics of the burials, including the biological profile of the interred individuals. By ascertaining who was buried at the Black Friary, where they were buried and when, the bioarchaeological research will inform our understanding of the long-term relationship between the local townspeople and the friary.

The **community archaeology** aspect of the project aims to engage the local people of Trim with the Black Friary and the ongoing excavations. This community engagement takes many forms, including community open days, visits from local groups, school children and tourists, and the participation of local volunteers on site. Interaction between members of the public and the excavation is continually evolving, as local people become interested in and protective of a site that they had not previously recognised as having heritage significance.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the field school is to introduce students to practical archaeological field methods, including excavation, field recording and laboratory protocols. More specifically, on successful completion of the field school, students will be able to:

- Understand the different elements of an archaeological field project and the relationships among these elements
- Apply standard excavation methods to archaeological contexts
- Use standard recording techniques to document excavation results
- Undertake preliminary processing of archaeological artefacts and ecofacts
- Undertake preliminary analysis of archaeological artefacts and ecofacts

PREREQUISITES

There are no academic prerequisites. This is hands-on, experiential learning and students will study on-site how to conduct archaeological research. Students are required to come equipped with sufficient excitement and adequate understanding that the archaeological endeavor requires hard, physical work. Students must be willing to engage with the local community in a professional and respectful manner both in an official capacity on site and unofficially when off site.

DISCLAIMER – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Archaeological field work involves physical work in the outdoors. You should be aware that conditions in the field are different than those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. Archaeological excavations in Ireland are carried out in all weather conditions including rain. You are required to provide suitable waterproof clothing and footwear as well as sunscreen. Excavation will include moderately strenuous physical work. Students must be in good physical condition and able to walk two 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.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

U.S. Citizens do not need a visa for tourist or business stays of up to three months in Ireland. However, your U.S. passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of your stay. Citizens of other countries, please visit the Irish Embassy website for your home country for visa information.

TRAVEL & MEETING POINT

Students will be met in Trim, Co. Meath. Since students will arrive on different flights at different times of the day, we will meet all students on Sunday July 1st at the Trim Castle Hotel at 6pm. Directions and travel information, along with emergency phone numbers, will be sent to students upon enrollment in the field school. If you fail to make the meeting, please call/text or email Finola O'Carroll or Laura Corrway.

ACCOMMODATION

Students are housed in Home Stay accommodation in the town of Trim, Co. Meath. Home Stay students live with local families and experience true home life in provincial Ireland. Students are to keep the accommodation clean and tidy and to be respectful towards their Home Stay family and roommates. Students walk to and from the site daily (depending on the location of the Home Stay, up to a 35-minute walk). Breakfast and dinner are provided along with a packed lunch Monday through Friday. Meals are not provided at weekends, and students are encouraged to avail of their free time and explore Ireland.



Please note that it is not possible to accommodate students arriving early, or staying on after the end of the program; there are, however, other accommodation options available locally.

CULTURE, LOCAL ENVIRONMENT & ETIQUETTE

The town of Trim is 30km (about 20 miles) northwest of Dublin. Although located near Dublin, Trim is far from being a suburb of the capital city. It is a quintessentially small, friendly and safe Irish town. It is often referred to as the Heritage capital of the Heritage county of Ireland. All the relevant local government agencies are aware of the students' presence in the town, and they and all townspeople are anxious to ensure that your stay is safe and enjoyable. Students are asked to respect local sensitivities and traditions and to understand that participants in the field school are not entitled to any special treatment or privileges.

This project involves the participation of Irish university students and volunteers from the local community alongside international students. Although everyone will speak English, even those joining us from mainland Europe, students should expect surprising cultural differences and exciting opportunities to learn not only about the past but about the lives of others as well. International 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.

EXCAVATION/TOOL KIT

Students are required to bring a basic tool kit. This includes but is not limited to:

- An archaeology trowel: 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 gloves suitable for work in wet weather (i.e., textile gloves with a rubberised palm)
- Work shoes or boots: closed- toe, waterproof footwear that will be comfortable for both walking and kneeling. A hiking 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 also need trail shoes or similar for field trips, etc.
- Sunscreen: Students should wear an SPF daily to protect against UV exposure and windburn. Despite its relatively cool summer temperatures, Ireland has high UV radiation in the summer months.
- Sunhat: a peaked or wide brimmed hat for wearing while digging
- Insect repellent

FIELD PROGRAM

Excavation: Students will participate in guided excavations on site. Potential areas of excavation include structural remains of the friary, burials within the church and cemetery, and other medieval features within the friary precinct. What precisely each student excavates will depend entirely on the overall pace and research goals of the excavation at that time.

Recording: Students will maintain a personal field notebook in which they will record their daily activities. They will also participate in completing feature sheets, writing up site records, drawing plans and taking site photographs.

Cataloguing: Students will learn to identify, describe and catalogue various finds, including artefacts, architectural fragments, animal bone and human remains.

Laboratory: Students will participate in guided post-excavation methods to carry out initial processing, interpretation and archiving of all excavated materials. Scheduled lab tasks will include washing, sorting and cataloguing finds as well as digitizing records.

SCHEDULE

Unless stated otherwise in the detailed schedule below, students will work on site Monday to Friday. The normal working day is from 9:00am to 5:00pm with a morning tea break from 11:00-11:30am and lunch from 1:30-2:30pm. In addition to working on site, students will be introduced to archaeological field methods and Irish archaeology through a series of lectures and field trips. The field trips will place the Black Friary within the broader context of Irish history and locate the site in the archaeological landscape of the Boyne valley. Except for the scheduled field trips on the Saturdays of Weeks 2 and 3, students will have weekends free to explore the area and other parts of the country.

PLEASE NOTE: Amendments to this schedule may be made during the program to accommodate necessary review of archaeological methodologies, changes in work practice due to weather conditions, and community requirements.

INDICATIVE SCHEDULE IN ADDITION TO SITE WORK*

Week	Day	Time	Activity
1	Sunday	6:00pm	Welcome meeting in Trim Castle Hotel
	Monday 10AM START	Morning Afternoon	Lecture: Project Orientation Field trip: Walking tour of Trim, Trim Castle
	Tuesday	Morning	Lecture: Archaeology of Medieval Ireland/Trim
	Wednesday	Morning Afternoon	Lecture: Archaeological Methods & Community Archaeology Excavation orientation
2	Tuesday	Afternoon	Lecture: Bioarchaeology of Medieval Ireland
	Friday	Afternoon	Review of field journals (for all)
	Saturday	All day	Field Trip: National Museum of Ireland
3	Saturday	All day	Field Trip: Carlingford
4	Thursday	Afternoon Evening	Turn in field journals (if required) Farewell party
	Friday	Evening	Prepare for Saturday departure

**Please note: Changes to this schedule may occur due to factors beyond our control such as archaeological discoveries, weather, community requirements, etc.*

ASSESSMENT AND LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

The Blackfriary Archaeology Field School does not currently offer courses for academic credit. However, we are happy to provide an assessment of a student's work at the Black Friary if they can arrange credit at their home institution or request letters of recommendation.

In such cases, students will be assessed based on their fieldwork participation and field notebook. Assessment of fieldwork 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. The field journal will be evaluated based on completeness, attention to detail and accuracy, and willingness to attempt interpretation. Project staff will instruct students on the expectations for the daily entries in their notebooks, which will be presented for evaluation during their final week on site.

STUDENT RESEARCH

Requests from students who wish to pursue research on the Black Friary material will be considered after discussion with the project directors and on production of a formal research proposal. If the proposal is accepted, the student must sign an Intellectual Property Agreement before beginning any research.

REQUIRED READINGS

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- Hurley, M. F., Sheehan, C. M., and Cleary, R. M. 1995. *Excavations at the Dominican Priory, St. Mary's of the Isle, Crosse's Green, Cork*. Cork Corporation, Cork.
- Lynch, A. 2010. *Tintern Abbey, Co. Wexford: Cistercians and Colcloughs. Excavations 1982-2007*. Department of the Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht, Dublin.
- Murphy, E. M. 2011. Children's burial grounds in Ireland (cillini) and parental emotions towards infant death. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 15: 409-428.
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- O'Sullivan, B. (and Fenning, H., ed.) 2009. *Medieval Irish Dominican Studies*. Four Courts Press, Dublin.
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