



# **THE SHORT FERNS PROGRAM: DISCOVERING AIDAN'S MONASTERY INTRODUCTION TO EXCAVATION (INCLUDING THE RECORDING OF HUMAN REMAINS) AT COUNTY WEXFORD, IRELAND**

**Course ID: TBA**

**July 12–July 25, 2020**

**Academic Credits: 2 Semester Credit Units (Equivalent to 3 Quarter Units)**

**School of Record: Connecticut College**

## **DIRECTORS:**

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This program is a short introduction to field archaeology. It is designed to present students with the fundamentals of field work and a taste for the rigors of field research. Students interested in a full session field school should consider applying to any of our standard 4-5 weeks long programs.

## **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. 7<sup>th</sup> century monastery and a 12<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 commence in 2020, it is anticipated that human remains from both the Early Medieval monastery and later 12<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 a 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 involves risk. Students interested in participating in any IFR program must weigh whether the potential risk is worth the value of education provided. While risk is inherent in everything we do, we take risk seriously. The IFR engages in intensive review of each field school location prior to approval. Once a program is accepted, the IFR reviews each program annually to make sure it complies with all our standards and policies, including 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](http://insuremytrip.com) or [Travelguard.com](http://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 with to help to 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.

#### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students will stay with local families in the County of 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 some host families are in rural settings and may not be in the town of Ferns. 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.

## TRAVEL & MEETING POINT

We suggest you hold purchasing your airline ticket until six (6) weeks prior to departure date. Natural disasters, political changes, weather conditions and a range of other factors may require the cancellation of a field school. The IFR typically takes a close look at local conditions 6-7 weeks prior to program beginning and make Go/No Go decisions by then. Such time frame still allows the purchase deeply discounted airline tickets while protecting students from potential loss if airline ticket costs if we decide to cancel a program.

Students will be met at Edan's Cathedral, Ferns, County Wexford. Since students will arrive on different flights at different times of the day, we will meet all students on Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 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 fail to make the meeting, please call/text or email Dr. Denis Shine. You will be sent relevant contact details once you are enrolled in the course.

## 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.

## CULTURE, LOCAL ENVIRONMENT & ETIQUETTE

The town/village of Ferns is 105km (about 65 miles) south of Dublin. Ferns is a quintessentially classic, small, friendly Irish village. Local agencies are aware of the students' presence in Ferns, 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 the presence of such a large expedition in Ferns does not entitle participants to any special treatment or privileges.

This project can involve the participation of volunteers from the local community (or elsewhere) alongside IFR students. Although everyone will speak English, all students should expect surprising cultural differences and exciting opportunities to learn not only about the past but about the lives of others as well. 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.*

## 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>).
- 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 outdoorwear**: 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.

## 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\*

<i>Week</i>	<i>Day/Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>
1	Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup> (July)	Afternoon	Students arrival and welcome meeting
	Monday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Morning	Lecture/Project Orientation
		Afternoon	Field trip 1: Tour of Ferns and Ferns Castle
	Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup>	Morning	Lecture/Workshop: Archaeology of Medieval Ferns/Wexford
		Afternoon	Field trip 2: Tour of INHP and Carrick
	Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup>	All Day	Excavation (and post-excavation)
	Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup>	All Day	Excavation (and post-excavation)
Friday 17 <sup>th</sup>	All Day	Excavation (and post-excavation)	

	Saturday 18 <sup>th</sup>	All day	Free Day
	Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	All day	Free Day
2	Monday 20 <sup>th</sup>	All day	Excavation (and post-excavation)
	Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup>	All day	Excavation (including workshop on burial excavation)
	Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	All day	Excavation (including workshop on burial excavation)
	Thursday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Morning	Lecture/Workshop: Bioarchaeology Workshop 1
		Afternoon	Lab Session: Assessing Skeletal Remains
		Evening	Turn in field journals
	Friday 24 <sup>th</sup>	Morning	Lecture/Workshop: Bioarchaeology Workshop 2
Afternoon		Lab Session: Assessing Skeletal Remains	
Evening		End of program cultural event/prepare for Saturday Departure	
Saturday 25 <sup>th</sup>	All day	Depart	

*\*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.*

Corlett, C. 2012. Ferns, Co. Wexford. Heritage Guide No. 59. Archaeology Ireland: Dublin.

Dowling, G. 2015. Geophysical Investigations at Ferns, Co. Wexford. Unpublished Technical Report for the Discovery Programme.

Doyle, I. 2016. Telling the Dancer from the Dance: The Archaeology of Early Medieval Wexford. In I. Doyle and B. Browne (eds). Medieval Wexford: Essays in Memory of Billy Colfer. pp 35-61. Four Courts Press: Dublin.

Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland. 2004. The Treatment of Human Remains. Technical Paper for Archaeologists. IAI: Dublin.

Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland. 2006. IAI Code of Conduct for the Archaeological Treatment of Human Remains in the Context of an Archaeological Excavation. IAI: Dublin. Available online: [http://www.concernedhistorians.org/content\\_files/file/et/98.pdf](http://www.concernedhistorians.org/content_files/file/et/98.pdf)

National Museum of Ireland: Policy on Human Remains. 2006.

Available online: <http://www.museum.ie/NationalMuseumIreland/media/Corporate-Information/Policies%20and%20Guidelines/Policy-Human-Remains-Final.pdf>

O'Keefe, T. 1997. Diarmait Mac Murchada and Romanesque Leinster: Four Twelfth-Century Churches in Context. The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 127, 52–79.

O' Keefe, T. and C. Bates. 2016. The Abbey and Cathedral of Ferns, 1111-1253. In I. Doyle and B. Browne (eds). Medieval Wexford: Essays in Memory of Billy Colfer. pp 73-96. Four Courts Press: Dublin.

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

Buikstra, J. E., & Ubelaker, D. H. 1994. Standards for Data Collection from Human Skeletal Remains. Fayetteville, Arkansas: Arkansas Archaeological Survey.

Byers, S. N. 2010. Introduction to forensic anthropology. Pearson Education, Boston.

Colfer, B. 2002. *Arrogant Trespass : Anglo-Norman Wexford 1169-1400*. Duffry Press, Wexford, Chapters 1-4.

- Cox, M., & Mays, S. 2006. *Human osteology in archaeology and forensic science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; New York.
- Duffy, S. 1997. *Ireland in the Middle Ages*. Gill and Macmillan, Dublin.
- Hillson, S. 1996. *Dental Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Ortner, D. J. 2003. *Identification of pathological conditions in human skeletal remains* (2nd ed). San Academic Press , Diego, CA.
- Roberts, C. A., & Manchester, K. 2007. *The archaeology of disease*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y
- White, T. D., & Folkens, P. A. 2005. *The human bone manual*. Elsevier Academic, Amsterdam ; Boston.

#### **ADDITIONAL READINGS**

- Barry, T. B. 1987. *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*. Routledge, London. Chapters 1-3.
- Bradley, J., Ó Drisceoil, C. and Potterton, P. (eds). 2016. *William Marshal and Ireland*. Four Courts Press, Dublin.
- Colfer, B. 2013. *Wexford Castles: Landscape, Context and Settlement*. Cork University Press, Cork.
- Doyle, I. and Browne, B (eds.) 2017. *Medieval Wexford: Essays in memory of Billy Colfer*. Four Courts Press, Dublin.
- Green, K. and Moore, T. 2010. *Archaeology, an Introduction*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Routledge, Oxford. Chapter 3, Sections 3.3-3.5.
- Kavanagh, J. 2004. Ferns Upper, Ferns. Multi-period. in I. Bennett, *Excavations 2004. Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*, pp 466–7. Dublin: Wordwell.
- Sweetman, D. 2000. *The Medieval Castles of Ireland*. Boydell Press, Suffolk.
- Ryan, F. 2000. *Archaeological Findings from Monitoring of Phase 1 of Ferns Sewerage Scheme, Co. Wexford*, Unpublished Technical Report (98E0132) by Mary Henry Archaeological Services. Wexford.
- Ryan, F. 2012. Excavation of a Late Iron Age Ring-Ditch at Ferns Lower, Co. Wexford. In C. Corlett and M. Potterton (eds.) *Life and Death in Iron Age Ireland in the Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations*. pp 273-90. Dublin.
- Sheehan, C. 2006. Ferns Upper, Ferns. In I. Bennett, *Excavations 2003. Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*, 532. Wordwell: Bray.