

Presentation Abstracts

Mary Cain

A Study of Bird Remains in Mesolithic Scotland and Ireland

In Mesolithic studies, bird remains are often overlooked in the archaeological record due to biases in recovery of remains and the quantity preserved. Due to the structure of bird bones and the level of preservation of the site, there are few detailed reports about the remains themselves. Many sites with these remains are mentioned in the archaeological record, but few are critically examined. Animals such as shellfish, fish, and mammals often overshadow studies on bird remains in the archaeological record in relation to Mesolithic society.

By compiling data from Mesolithic sites in Scotland and Ireland that contain bird remains, trends in data such as where these remains are being found, species recovered, and quantity and condition of remains, allow for interpretation as to what and how Mesolithic people in Scotland and Ireland utilised birds. Interpretations about the use of bird remains may also reveal more about the significance of birds in Mesolithic society across Scotland and Ireland.

Niamh Millward

How to Get a Job in Commercial Archaeology

The commercial archaeology sector in Ireland has begun to recover since the recession and archaeology consultancy companies are expanding. As a result, there is now a demand for more archaeologists in this sector. This provides archaeology graduates with the opportunity to experience commercial excavations and the chance to begin their careers in archaeology. However, there are a number of steps that must be taken before graduates can apply for work at consultancy companies and

applying for positions in these companies is not straightforward. There is the issue of graduates not fully knowing what is to be expected of them or what duties they may be asked to carry out during site excavations. This presentation aims to give future and current graduates the information they need to prepare for entry into the business of commercial archaeology.

David Stone

The Landscape of Medieval Bərdə, Azerbaijan 6th - 13th Centuries AD

This project is a pioneering research initiative aiming to explore the history of the medieval Caucasian capital of Bərdə, Azerbaijan through the study of archaeobotanical material. This project will explore these issues by drawing on recently generated data collected from a current fieldwork project, The-Archaeological-Exploration-of-Bərdə-(AEB), directed by the University of Oxford. The AEB aims to chart the development of medieval Bərdə with excavations centred around two main sites, Torpak Kala, located in the heart of the city and the second, a rural mound located at Quaratepe. Archaeobotanical material excavated at these sites during the previous two field seasons have been collected and are under analysis. Central to this project is the identification of continuity or adjustment in agricultural practices and land management throughout the study period. The use of novella environmental techniques in medieval Azerbaijani archaeology will reveal new insights into the use of plants during the development of this urban centre, and demonstrate the impacts of political and administrative changes on urban and rural plant management and food procurement in the region between the 6th – 13th centuries AD. The project also aims to connect the history of the city with the development of the surrounding landscape, understanding the administration of this region as a 'province'. Furthermore, as well as answering the research questions above, archaeobotanical survey and analysis of plant micro and macro fossils will play a key role in the wider study of the medieval populations of both rural and urban settlements in Western Azerbaijan.

Thomas Meharg

An Archaeology of the Plastic Baton Round in Northern Ireland: A Less Than Lethal Form of Riot Control, 1970 to the Present Day

This study focuses on the plastic baton round, a less than lethal form of riot control still in use today. The plastic baton round has little history published about it, and security forces withhold many of the sources related to them. Although a modern item, there is very little information available to the public, and this project approaches the object from an archaeological perspective. Focusing on the materiality of the object by outlining the physical qualities of the projectile will allow an objective perspective, free from the political bias that gives these artefacts meaning. The chronology and development of the baton round 'typology' will explain the reasons for the various incarnations over time. In order to understand the biography of the artefact a full investigation into the wider contexts of riot control and non-lethal weaponry itself is also presented. The notoriety of the 'rubber bullet' in Northern Ireland is certainly significant, the value of this artefact is not derived from its material composition, rather the sentimental position it holds in the memories of those who experienced the conflict in Northern Ireland. Fully assessing this aspect is crucial to the understanding of conflict related archaeological items.

Sam Hughes

In My Sword I Trust?

Swords from the Irish Iron Age (c. 700 BC – c. AD 400), though few in number, are remarkably short compared to contemporary examples from La Tene Britain and continental Europe. This has led to suppositions that they were primarily ceremonial weapons or only suitable for "...pub brawls" (Scott 1990, 65). Based on research from my undergraduate dissertation, I propose to discuss these swords as functional objects and whether we can infer their possible use as weapons from blade dimension and morphology. I will argue that, in comparison to swords elsewhere in La Tène Europe, Irish Iron Age swords have features that make them particularly suited for

use as a stabbing or thrusting weapon for fighting on foot. I argue that conscious choices may have been made by the inhabitants of Ireland when it came to importing both weapons and ideas.

Ciarraí O'Sullivan

Territory and Community in Early Medieval Ireland: a Landscape Archaeology of the *Túatha* of UíChonaill, Co Limerick

This research looks at the work, and the results that have emerged from the work that I am currently carrying out as part of my MPhil in UCC. This work is an archaeological investigation into the early medieval *túath*, which also draws on historical, place-name and geographical evidence in order to add this picture. The *túath* was one of the territorial divisions that existed in the early medieval period in Ireland and was applied to different levels of territory such as the regional kingdoms, local kingdoms and sub-division of these local kingdoms. The focus of my work is sub-divisions of the local kingdom which varied in character, with different types existing such as 'secular' *túatha*, royal *túatha*, and ecclesiastical estates. Such an investigation is rarely possible with some exceptions, with my study area being one of them. My study area is the *túatha* of the UíChonaill, which geographical corresponds to the western half the modern county of Limerick. An investigation was made possible here because Paul MacCotter, a historian based in UCC, was able to reconstruct the boundaries of the sub-divisions of the UíChonaill. MacCotter used various historical sources to reconstruct these sub-divisions.

Sean O'Connor

Shamanism without Shamans: Possibilities and Limitations of its Use in Prehistory

Shamanism, shamans and a religion are all historically and culturally defined and therefore cannot be assumed as human universals. So how can we use these constructs to understand the past and how can we use material culture to do this? I will use prehistoric Scandinavia and Japan as

case studies to explore the viability of applying these concepts to interpret their material culture.

Shamanism is a term often used to describe and understand prehistoric religions. I argue that the shaman as an individual is not crucial to the use of shamanism as a construct. There can be an individual who takes on the role of a shaman, but the usefulness of shamanism as a concept is not just the existence of an individual but rather the worldviews of the culture that could produce one. Using shamanism as a construct helps to better identify different ontological categories of past cultures, that is why shamans and shamanism are important to the understanding of past cultures. What are the implications of a culture where a shaman could exist? What attributes do they have? What is the nature of that kind of person?

Poster Abstracts

Elise Alonzi (Niamh Daly and Saskia Ryan)

What have isotopes done for Irish archaeology lately?

In the last decade we have seen a proliferation of isotopic studies in Irish bioarchaeology addressing questions such as paleodiet and paleomobility patterns spanning from the Neolithic to Post-Medieval periods. The Irish Isotope Research Group, an innovative multidisciplinary group, was set up to tackle some of the limitations in this field of research in Ireland. The creation of a comprehensive radiogenic strontium isotopic baseline has been established in order to provide a better understanding of the processes affecting strontium isotope variation in the natural environment, for use in the interpretation of (1) biosphere data derived from geological landscapes and (2) biogeochemical data derived from archaeological material.

This research will provide an overview of the important current research being undertaken by members of this group. Comparisons within the

United Kingdom and continental Europe will be illustrated to show how data from the Irish isotopic baseline research can be used when interpreting the results of isotopic analyses from other countries. Ongoing baseline research will be categorized by region, and potential areas of Ireland in need of new research will be highlighted. The data derived from this study will make an original contribution to both Irish geological and archaeological research.

Séamus Ó Murchú

The People of the Blackstairs Mountains; Past, Present and Future

The Irish landscape we see today has been formed and manipulated by thousands of years of human activity. While much of this activity was focused on the lowlands, the uplands were also utilised at various times in the past for various purposes. The fragile ecosystems that survive in the uplands today are not the last vestiges of natural habitat but landscapes which have been heavily influenced by phases of settlement, abandonment, agriculture and industrial activity. Although the Irish uplands have received greater archaeological attention in recent years they remain relatively unexplored archaeologically. This has given rise to an archaeological record which does not match what survives on the ground and thus a poorer understanding of the past in these areas.

This research is based on a small aspect of a larger PhD research project in UCD that investigated the archaeological potential of the Blackstairs Mountains as an underexplored upland landscape in Ireland. Here the use of open source remote sensing datasets (Bing & Google Imagery) for rapid reconnaissance and local communities as information sources and reporters are discussed as a cost-effective means of landscape investigation. Local engagement is of particular value in reporting, interpreting and monitoring archaeological sites and adds life and personality to the past.

Patricia Kenny

Secrets in the Stones

Irish passage tombs bear testament to a society capable of extraordinary feats of human engineering and creative expression. Constructed during the Neolithic, they are considered by many to have played an essential role in Neolithic belief systems. It is likely that they were constructed using carefully selected and socially significant materials. Many researchers believe that examining the physical properties of these materials can shed light on why they were included in the monument. As such, the structural stones of these monuments have been examined in some detail.

Stones with inclusions (SWI) are structural stones which include mineral veins, fossils, rock clasts or unusual mineral crystals. They are often mentioned in excavation reports and geological reports of passage tombs. However, their presence has not been examined in detail. This author believes it is possible that SWI were chosen for use in passage tombs because they have geological inclusions. Ethnographic research undertaken in indigenous societies across the globe has shown that some groups attach cosmological beliefs to these types of inclusions. Over the summer of 2016, this author conducted a pilot study examining the presence of SWI at five passage tombs across Ireland. SWI were present at all five tombs, and seemed to be deliberately located, with some spatial patterning. When this is considered alongside the aforementioned ethnographic research, it seems plausible that SWI were culturally significant in the Irish Neolithic. This presentation will consider the results and implications of this study, and highlight areas for further research.

Michael Corcoran

Integrated Geospatial and Palaeoenvironmental Approaches to Understanding Medieval Land-Use in Ireland

This poster illustrates an ongoing PhD research project being undertaken by the author at the School of Archaeology, UCD, in

conjunction with the Teagasc Walsh Fellowships Programme. The objective of this project is to more accurately chart & understand the development of patterns of land-use in Ireland between 1100 AD and 1600 AD, with a specific focus on agriculture, settlement and infrastructure. Concentrating on three study areas in the northwest, east and south of the country, this project explores new pathways to understanding, firstly, how people used and negotiated landscapes in medieval Ireland and, secondly, how decisions about land-use were influenced by broader environmental and climatological influences.

The project's approach is multiscalar, using techniques of geospatial survey (e.g. satellite imagery & LiDAR) and palaeoenvironmental analysis (pollen, charcoal, measurements of peat humification), which are integrated and managed using a GIS. The output is a series of chronologically-constrained land-use models that can be used to assist in the interpretation of the archaeological record. This, in turn, can help to advance the discussion of change and continuity in the use of the medieval rural landscape beyond its current state, which is hampered by a lack of new data and interpretive frameworks.

2017 Conference Sponsors

Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland

Irish Archaeology Field School

United

Discovery Programme

University College Dublin – Student Union

Thank you to everyone who has supported this year's conference!



- Medieval Meath
- Expert Led Courses
- Research Excavation



Dept. of Arts, Heritage
Regional Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs



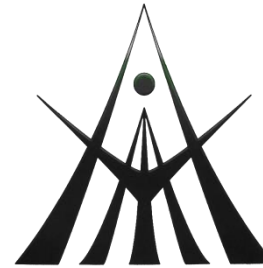
Meath County
Council



The Archaeological
Institute of America

Enrolling NOW!

E. info@iafs.ie
T. +353 1 2020521
W. www.iafs.ie



Association of Young Irish Archaeologists

AYIA 2017 Conference

March 11 Schedule

- 10:00** Introduction
- 10:15** Mary Cain - A Study of Bird Remains in Mesolithic Scotland and Ireland
- 10:35** Niamh Millward - How to Get a Job in Commercial Archaeology
- 10:55** David Stone - The Landscape of Medieval Børde, Azerbaijan 6th - 13th Centuries AD
- 11:15** Thomas Meharg - An Archaeology of the Plastic Baton Round in Northern Ireland: A Less Than Lethal Form of Riot Control, 1970 to the Present Day
- 11:35** Tea Break
- 12:00** Sam Hughes - In My Sword I Trust?
- 12:20** Ciarraí O'Sullivan - Territory and Community in Early Medieval Ireland: a Landscape Archaeology of the *Túatha* of UiChonail, Co Limerick
- 12:40** Sean O'Connor - Shamanism without Shamans: Possibilities and Limitations of its Use in Prehistory
- 13:00** Posters - Elise Alonzi, Patricia Kenny, Séamus Ó Murchú, Michael Corcoran
- 13:10** Break for lunch
- 14:10** Group activities
- 15:10** Tea Break
- 15:30** Group activities
- 16:30** Feedback & IAI Prize for Best Presentation/Poster
- 17:00** End of the day