

The few weeks of my life that I spent in Ireland were a wonderful experience and a good beginning. The Jane C. Waulbaum scholarship allowed me to have this experience, as the funds were used for travel and living expenses, and I thank the Archaeological Institute of America for this fantastic opportunity. I arrived in Dooagh, the village where the Achill Field School is located, nearly twenty-four hours after I departed from the United States, tired and filled with excitement. Not only was I taking the first step in my archaeological career, but was also in Ireland, the very place that I want to pursue my future intellectual endeavors.

We did not begin fieldwork immediately. On the first day we had an introduction to the field school, including lectures about Irish archaeology, the history of the field school, and what we would be doing for the next few weeks. The site that we would be working on was the house of the famous Captain Boycott, dated to AD 1854. When Boycott arrived in Keem, a small village to the west of Dooagh, he needed to construct a house quickly and start farming, so he chose to construct it out of "galvanized iron", which is actually corrugated steel. As far as I understand it, he was able to construct his dwelling in less than a week, and added other phases to the house later, this time made from stone. Phase one, the "galvanized iron" portion of the house, at some point caught fire and was destroyed. It was this part of the house that we were excavating.

Field trips to other archaeological sites around Achill Island, the parish where Dooagh and Keem are located, were conducted every week, and the first of these took place on the second day of the field school. We hiked up a gravel road running north from Dooagh to the deserted village at Slievemor, where the field school has conducted the majority of its archaeological work. On either side of the road was a peat-bog, which had portions of it cut and dried for fuel. Before we arrived at the deserted village, we made a stop at a Napoleonic Signal Tower on the North side of the island. This was used as a watchtower to alert the English armies if Napoleon was going to attempt to use Ireland as a sort of "backdoor" to England. We later arrived at the deserted village, and had an introduction to surveying in which we practiced taking measurements and analyzing features on the ruined houses. Afterwards, we hiked a little further north and viewed a few Bronze-age roundhouses that the field school had also done excavations at. Later that night, we had our first lecture in a guest lecture series. This lecture was about the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods in Ireland, and focused on the megalithic structures that dot the country.

The fieldwork officially began on the third day with the removal of the sod and topsoil. Fieldwork was much more intense and physically demanding than I thought it would be, but much more rewarding also. In fact, someone found the stem of a clay pipe on this day. For the remainder of the week we continued to work on the topmost layers of the site, and began to uncover the features of the house. A great deal of glass was uncovered in the first few layers, inevitably coming from the windows of the house. Quite a bit of iron was found too, both in highly corroded clumps and in identifiable forms such as nails and bolts. One particularly interesting find, a piece of a drawer handle bearing a scroll-like pattern, was uncovered on the fifth day of the field school.

On Monday of the second week, we had an introductory session on GIS and AutoCAD, and returned to the field the following day. At this point we moved from digging to planning the site and using Total Station to survey the surrounding area. I remember that I was astounded by our progress with site when compared to what it looked like a week ago. On Tuesday night we had our second lecture in the guest lecture series, this time about transhumance and booleying on Achill Island. This was an introduction to booleying and its importance in the pre-famine folk life of the area. A booley village is a temporary settlement used to watch over cattle as they grazed in the summer fields. Later that week, we had our second field trip, this time to a number of fortified dwellings around Achill Island. The first was a *Crannóg*, an artificial island in the middle of a pond where a house would sit. The second fortified dwelling we observed was a promontory fort, located on the coast. This was an Iron-Age site with a typical ditch-and-bank as a barrier. The final structure we looked at was a tower house near Kildavnet, on the southern part of Achill Island. A local legend states that Grace O'Malley, the pirate-queen, occupied this tower house during the 15th Century.

During the third week, we continued to dig through the sub-layers of the site, and uncovered more features such as something that resembled a chimney that had fallen inwards. I was tasked with uncovering a brilliant plank of carbonized wood near the east end of the trench. When we arrived on site one morning, we found the trench in disarray: looters, probably tourists with metal detectors, had dug up many areas of the site that we were working on. They also pierced a large hole in the plank of wood that I was uncovering, leaving it in fragments.

We actually had two field trips on the third week. The first was to a booley village called Annagh, and these booley houses were not as well constructed as those of the deserted village. They were conical in shape, like stone huts. We also observed a megalithic tomb to the east of Annagh, which was in ruins and was barely recognizable. The second field trip was to two medieval monasteries near Castlebar, a large town to the east of Dooagh. During this field trip we analyzed the architecture of the two buildings and identified which parts were later additions. Afterwards we visited the Folk Life Museum at Castlebar, which was quite interesting and put the booley villages in perspective. Our third lecture in the series was about Irish tower houses and medieval architecture around Ireland. Tower houses are primarily found in the areas of the country where Gaelic culture is strong, and were the only type of castle built by the Gaelic people.

During the final week, we began to uncover further features and to dig test-squares. In one of these squares I found a piece of canvas, covered in tar and stuck to the bottom of a stone. Later that week a local group of Secondary School students, which is the same as High School as far as I understand it, visited our site as an introduction to archaeology. Instead of field trips, we participated in two workshops this week. The first, a finds workshop, involved illustrations and reconstructions, and the second, a human remains workshop, was an introduction to the care and analysis of human remains. The fourth guest lecture covered Bronze-Age ritual and votive deposits in Ireland. This lecture focused specifically on the Dowris hoard, probably the most extensive votive deposit found in the country. Additionally

this week, a couple of the other students and I visited a well preserved court tomb on the northern part of Achill Island.

On the final day, Dr. Sherlock went over our progress at the site with us, and together we looked at a Harris Matrix of all of the contexts and attempted to reconstruct the sequence of events. I also turned in a research paper on this day, as all of the students at the field school were required to write a research paper on one aspect of Irish archaeology that interested them. I chose to write my paper over the changes in burial practices between the Bronze-Age and the Iron-Age, and what these changes could mean. After the field school officially ended, I spent the weekend in Dublin to visit the National Museum, and was privileged enough to see a portion of the Dowris Hoard, which was on exhibition there.

Originally I went to Ireland with the assumption that there would be quite a bit of archaeology concerned with the Iron Age Celts, but I soon learned otherwise. The Iron Age in Ireland is somewhat mysterious, and there is actually little evidence of Iron Age society there. However, there is some evidence, so we can safely say that Ireland did have an Iron Age period. It seems that, throughout the ages, people in Ireland tend to construct newer sites on top of older ones, so perhaps most of the Iron Age evidence is buried beneath places like early medieval sites, or something like that. An example of this is the Hill of Tara, a site that contains multiple periods stretching as far back as the Neolithic. All of this archaeological invisibility intrigues me, and, as graduate school is on the horizon, I may pursue the mystery of the Iron Age in my post-graduate work.