



READING THE IRISH LANDSCAPE AND ITS ROLE IN IRELAND'S CULTURAL HERITAGE BIRR, CO. OFFALY, IRELAND

Course ID: ARCH365AQ

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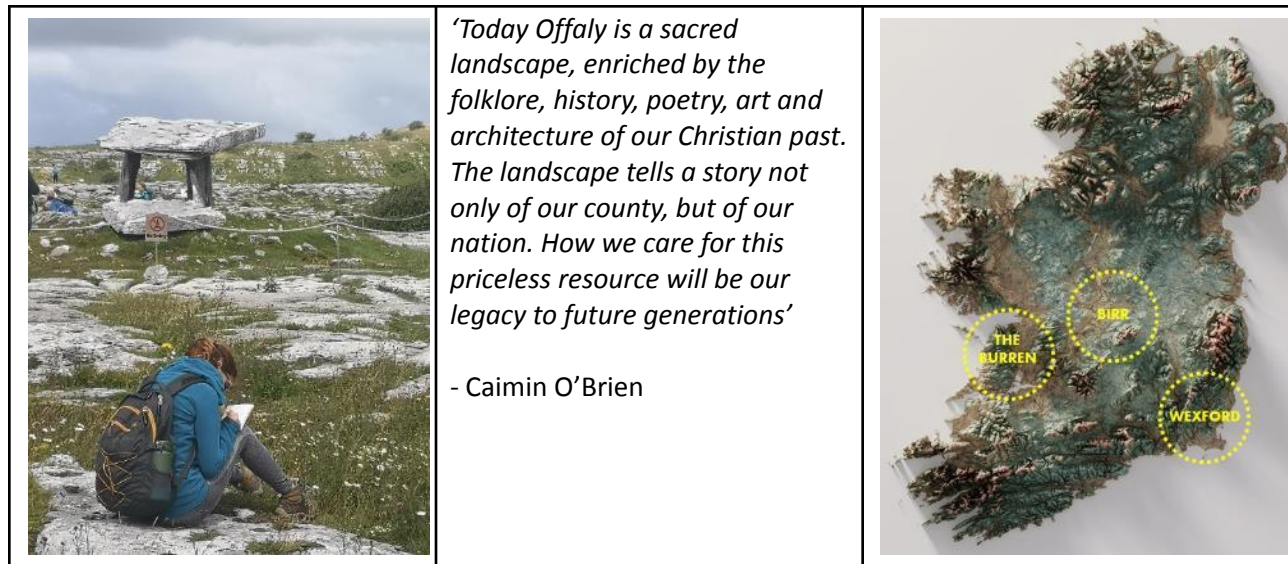
Academic Credits: 2 Semester Credit Units

FIELD SCHOOL DIRECTOR(S):

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OVERVIEW

This field and lecture-based field school provides students with an in-depth understanding of how human settlement and cultural heritage is shaped by the natural environment. Students will gain a broad understanding of how a variety of landscapes are formed, impacted, managed and understood through both natural and cultural lenses.

The landscapes for this program are based in the very heart of the Irish Midlands (in the vicinity of Birr Town), providing ready access to an extraordinarily wide range of natural habitats and culturally important archaeological sites. This location acts as a convenient springboard to a variant range of landscapes and study sites further afield.

This field school is holistic in nature, affording students insights into the natural environment: from the bedrock geology that literally forms the foundations for the topography to the glacial and post-glacial

geomorphology, ecology, archaeology and traditional and contemporary economy (and indeed mindsets) of the Midlands. Thus, this program is designed to provide a foundation level knowledge to students from diverse disciplines including environmental science, geology, geography, ecology, archaeology, anthropology and other backgrounds.

An important element of this program is the volume of fieldwork and the scale and variety of field trips to different locations. These will provide students an opportunity to experience, appreciate, as well as record (through mapping and survey exercises) and interpret the variation in environments and landscape types within Ireland – and how these influence the country's cultural and natural heritage.

The program provides a practical introduction to all aspects of the cultural heritage of the Irish landscape. It aims to give students a sound introduction into how to relate cultural heritage to the underlying geology as a foundation to the landscape.

As part of the program students will visit the following different locations:

BIRR



Birr will act as the 'base' for the entire program. Birr is a small town (population c. 6000) that nonetheless contains all modern amenities and is well served by public infrastructure. The town is well known as one of Ireland's most important Heritage Towns, with significant early and later medieval archaeology and history, dating from at least Saint Brendan's 6th century CE monastery. Today the town is best known for its mid-18th and early 19th century CE elegant Georgian streetscapes. At the centre of the town is Birr Castle, a 17th century CE structure built adjacent to the location of the original 12th century CE castle site. The castle remains the home of the Earls of Rosse to this day. The demesne landscape of the castle, which evolved from the oak parkland of the late medieval castle, is one of the finest in Ireland.

A large area of land surrounding Birr (and a large amount of County Offaly in general) is underlain by raised bog, much of which until recently was exploited for fuel and the generation of electricity by Bord na Móna, the state's peat development company. The conservation of the resulting cutaway bog is currently a major exercise in ecological restoration in the region. Approximately 24 km north-east of Birr is one such restoration project - the Lough Boora Parklands, one destination for our fieldwork.

SLIEVE BLOOM MOUNTAINS

Located directly south of Birr are the Slieve Bloom Mountains, made up of rocks of considerable geological interest, as these mountains represent a highly significant episode in the geological history of Ireland. The rocks that make up the Slieve Blooms date to the Devonian and Silurian periods, 350 to 440 million years ago. At the beginning of that time, the area that is now the north-west of Ireland and the area that is now the south-east of Ireland, were on opposite sides of a shrinking ocean known as the Iapetus Ocean. By about 410 million years ago, these two areas collided, and a great mountain-building phase was in progress. The present-day Slieve Bloom Mountains lie along, or are very close to, the 'Iapetus Suture', the notional line that marks where these two areas with very different early geological histories amalgamated to create the area now known as Ireland. Several of the field trips, and much of the field instruction in recording techniques, will be undertaken to the foothills of these mountain ranges.



THE BURREN



Students will undertake a field trip in the Burren. The Burren is underlain by limestones of the Lower Carboniferous (Visean) period. The limestone formed as sediments in a tropical sea which covered most of Ireland approximately 350 million years ago. The Burren is one of the finest examples of a Glacio-Karst landscape in the world. At least two glacial advances are known in the Burren area. However, it is probably the effects of the last glaciation (the Midlandian) that are most in evidence in this National Park. It is thought that most of the Burren was overrun

by ice during this glaciation. This is evident by the presence of fresh deposits of boulder clay at altitudes of just under 300 metres. Of particular interest is the impact of the first farmers who arrived into this region on their surroundings, with the removal of tree cover resulting in a dramatic and catastrophic change to the landscape. The Burren is Ireland's most biodiverse area, internationally famed not just for its geology but also for its flora and fauna, and the rich archaeological heritage preserved here. During their stay, students will be introduced to all aspects of the geological and cultural heritage of this unique area. They will also become aware of how agricultural history shaped the geological and cultural character of the Burren as they see today.

OTHER LOCATIONS

In addition to the above locations students are frequently brought to complimentary projects being run by the Irish Heritage School, including their live archaeological excavations, where timing permits.

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 highly ranked liberal arts institution with a deep commitment to undergraduate education. Students will receive a letter grade for attending this field school (see assessment, below). This field school provides a minimum of 80 hours of experiential education. 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's home institution at no cost. Additional transcripts may be ordered at any time through the [National Student Clearinghouse](#).

PREREQUISITES

There are no academic prerequisites for this field school. What is required is enthusiasm, a sense of excitement and a readiness to give it everything. Students must be willing to engage with the local community, in which they are working and living, in a professional and respectful manner, both during the official work hours and when 'off duty'. This program entails a lot of fieldwork and walking up to 5 miles per day.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

On successful completion of the program, students will:

- Have a good base understanding of the merits of taking a holistic, 'landscape wide', approach to any form of research inquiry – be that archaeological, cultural ecological etc;
- Be familiar with an outline of the archaeological and cultural heritage of Ireland, and in particular how archaeological heritage is expressed relative to, and influenced by, the underlying geology and topography –i.e. how people and place are co-defined and inscribed in landscape.
- Have a good understanding of the basic elements of Irish solid and glacial geology and how geology as 'bedrock' is instrumental in shaping the ecology, society and economy of the Irish Midlands (and other studied landscapes);

ASSESSMENT

Fieldwork Participation (60%): Students are required to participate fully in the daily schedule. 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 (30%): Students are expected to maintain a field journal and present it for evaluation during their final week. This notebook should record student's daily activities, including details on geological mapping exercises, notes on all fieldwork, check-lists of flora and fauna and details of lectures and laboratory exercises, as well as personal observations.

Ted talk (10%): At the end of Week 2, students will be required to give a 3-minute presentation on a research topic of their choice, but which must be related to the program. The presentation will be given to the group in the form of a 'Ted Talk' and may use power point or other visual aids.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All IFR field schools begin with a safety orientation. This orientation addresses local and program protocols concerning student behavior, appropriate attire, local practices and sensibilities that may be unfamiliar, potential fauna and flora hazards, IFR harassment and discrimination policies, and the student Code of Conduct.

WEEK 1

During the first week, students will come to understand the geology and ecology of the Midland region. Emphasis will be placed on the examination in the field of geological and glacial landforms, flora and microfauna. Laboratory work will comprise microscopic examination of plants, on floral evolution and the interaction between plants and their pollinators.

WEEK 2

During Week 2 the students will spend two to three days in the Burren, County Clare. The Burren is Ireland's most biodiverse area, internationally famed for its karst geology and the rich archaeological heritage preserved here. During their stay the students will be introduced to all aspects of the natural and cultural heritage of this unique area – specifically how the two interplay. They will also become aware of how agricultural history has shaped the natural and cultural character of the Burren, and how modern agricultural practice works to conserve and enhance that threatened heritage. As stated students may also visit other locations.

At the end of Week 2, students will present their Ted Talks on their chosen research topics.

DAILY SCHEDULE *

Unless stated otherwise in the detailed schedule below, students will be committed to program activities from Monday to Friday inclusive, attending lectures and field visits. The normal working day is from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm with a morning tea break from 11:00 to 11:30 am and lunch from 1:30 to 2:15 pm – variations to the schedule will exist during field trips. In preparation for their field visits, students will be introduced to the different areas of the country through a series of lectures (as outlined in the schedule below). Students will have the weekend free to explore the area and other parts of the country.

Indicative Schedule

		MORNING	AFTERNOON
WEEK 1			
09-Jun-23	Sunday		Welcome & orientation
10-Jun-23	Monday	Lectures: Geology of the Midlands in relation to the world at large (with particular reference to the United States)	Fieldwork: Visit to Glenbarrow and its environs for a geological field trip, including geological/geographic mapping and interpretation
11-Jun-23	Tuesday	Lecture: Bogs in Ireland, their formation, exploitation and restoration	Fieldwork: Study in the Bog of Galros, interpreting the influence of geology and landscape on archaeology, history etc.
12-Jun-23	Wednesday	Lecture: The flora of central Ireland; floral biology	Fieldwork: Lough Boora Flora study & collection of material for microscope work
13-Jun-23	Thursday	Laboratory work: Working with plant materials	Laboratory work: Working with plant materials
14-Jun-23	Friday	Lecture: Aquatic invertebrates and biological sampling	Fieldwork: Invertebrate sampling in Midland rivers; Laboratory work: Working with aquatic invertebrate samples
15-Jun-23	Saturday	Free day	
16-Jun-23	Sunday	Free day	
WEEK 2			
17-Jun-23	Monday	Fieldwork: Travel to the Burren National Park at Carran.	Fieldwork: Tour to significant medieval (Cathair Mór) and Neolithic (Poulnabrone) archaeological sites; visit to the Cliffs of Moher
18-Jun-23	Tuesday	Fieldwork: Trip investigating the Prehistory and the Early Christian period on the Termon	
19-Jun-23	Wednesday	Ted Talks	Travel to Birr
20-Jun-23	Thursday	Fieldwork: Travel to a range of cultural heritage sites in the midlands, on which the Irish Heritage School are currently undertaking research	
21-Jun-23	Friday	Lecture: Environmental Impact Assessment (Cultural Heritage)	Workshop: Cultural Heritage Assessment of local landscape
22-Jun-23	Saturday	Depart program	

**Please note: amendments to this schedule may be made to take account of weather conditions or urgent unforeseen circumstances.*

READINGS

PDF files of all mandatory readings will be provided to enrolled students. 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.

Recommended Reading

David, Bruno and Julian Thomas (2008). *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology*. Walnut Creek, Left Coast Press. Chapters 1, 2 and 4.

Jones, Carleton (2004). *The Burren and the Aran Islands. Exploring the Archaeology*. Cork, The Collins Press.

O' Brien, C. 2006. *Stories from a Sacred Landscape: Croghan Hill to Clonmacnoise*. Mercier Press. Cork

Viney, Michael (2003). *Ireland. A Smithsonian Natural History*. Belfast, The Blackstaff Press: Chapters 1-8, 12 and 17.

Recommended Further Reading/Field Reference Guides

D'Arcy, Gordon (1992). *The Natural History of the Burren*. London, Immel.

Feehan, John (2003). *Farming in Ireland: History, Heritage and Environment*. University College Dublin Faculty of Agriculture.

Feehan, John (2004). *A Long-Lived Wilderness. The Future of the North Midland Peatlands*. ERM in collaboration with the National Wetlands Park Committee.

Feehan, John (2007). *Cuirrech Lifè. The Curragh of Kildare, Ireland*. School of Biology and Environmental Science UCD in association with the Department of Defence.

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

Feehan, John (2014). *Cluain Mac Nóis i nDeilbne hEthra: The Landscape of Clonmacnoise, County Offaly, Ireland*. Offaly County Council in association with Bord na Móna.

Feehan, John (2016). *The Carran and Templecronan Looped Walks*. Clare's Rock Hostel, Carran.

Feehan, John and Alison Rosse (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).

O'Connell, Jeff W. and Anne Korff (eds.) (2001). *The Book of the Burren*. Kinvara, TirEolas (2nd edition).

Viney, Michael (2003). *Ireland. A Smithsonian Natural History*. Belfast, The Blackstaff Press.

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

Conditions in the field are different from those you experience in your home, dorms or college town. Field work, which is so central to the program, involves work outdoors. The Irish weather is very variable, and you should be prepared for field work in all weather conditions – including rain. You are required to bring suitable waterproof clothing and footwear as well as sunscreen. **Students must be able to walk three-five miles (5 – 8 km) a day on rough and hilly ground.**

LOCAL PROTOCOLS, REGULATIONS, & EXPECTATIONS

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 the students' 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 as well. 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.

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 needs to have an up-to-date tetanus shot.

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>

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.

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 Sunday, June 9th, (first day of arrival) 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.

ACCOMMODATIONS



With the exception of the extended field trips in the Burren, the students will be housed in Home Stay accommodation in the town of Birr, Co. Offaly (see schedule). As students live with local families,

they are afforded an experience of true home life in small town and rural Ireland, offering a wonderful opportunity to learn about Irish culture firsthand. Students should understand that some host families will likely be in rural settings, requiring taxis to reach the town of Birr. We will typically meet at a central location in Birr each morning before setting out to our sites. 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 to explore Ireland.

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 etc.); 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.

In the Burren accommodation will be in (single sex) shared dormitory style rooms in local hostels, with meals provided in a communal setting. Food will be provided during extended field trips.

EQUIPMENT LIST

Bring a basic travel/fieldwork kit, which is to include but not necessarily be limited to:

- Clothing suitable for wet and cool (as well as warm!) weather.
- Hiking-style waterproof shoes or boots.
- Sunscreen: when in the field students should wear an SPF daily to protect against UV exposure and windburn. Despite its relatively cool summer temperatures, Ireland has high UV in the summer months.
- A peaked or wide-brimmed sunhat for outdoors.
- Insect repellent (essential for periods of fieldwork).
- Laptop/tablet: a device on which you can prepare and submit your presentation.
- Writing materials, including a strong field notebook.
- All participants in a field school, students and staff, will wear masks while indoors (i.e. during lectures, during labs, in shared residential spaces, etc.).