

ANNUAL REPORT: FERRYCARRIG, IRELAND – SUMMER 2018

FIELD SCHOOL- *The Medieval Landscape of Ferrycarrig: Tracing the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland*

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Students recording the curtain wall in Cutting 3 of the Carrick Archaeological Site

The 'Digging the Lost Town of Carrig' archaeology project is carrying out archaeological research and excavation at the site of the Carrick Ringwork, Ferrycarrig, Co. Wexford, Ireland. Excavations during the summer 2018 season focused on further investigation of archaeological cuttings originally excavated in the 1980s (Cuttings 1, 2 and 3). A new archaeological cutting (Cutting 4) was also opened. These cuttings investigated the probable burnt out 12th century wooden structures and medieval masonry, which is likely to relate to a castle on the site constructed by 1231 CE and/or structures referenced in a document dating to 1324 CE. Excavations were again carried out in July 2018; works will resume in our winter season (January-February 2018). All summer excavations are concluded with a brief summary of progress to date provided below:

Cutting 1: The previous winter season had concentrated on re-exposing the 1980s excavation surface to carefully record any remaining archaeology. Excavations in summer 2018 continued to clarify these features. A series of walls at the cuttings northern, southern and eastern extent were investigated and clarified as forming a large structure – possibly the hall referenced as being on the site in 1324 CE. The walls were found to be built on very different foundations but bonded together. The walls also post-dated rubble deposits on site, indicating phases of masonry construction at the site and/or that the walls may represent a remodeling of the original 13th century stone castle. The base of the cutting was also investigated through the excavation of a discrete sondage. This clarified a rubble deposit as lying above the possible 12th century ground/floor surface. The 12th century surface lay itself above a re-deposited clay, which probably derives from the excavation of the original 12th century fortress ditch.

Cutting 2: Investigations were also resumed in Cutting 2. Previous excavations had clarified a robber trench - presumably representing the quarrying of stone from 13th/14th century wall foundations – as well areas of charcoal, oxidized soil and a small number of post-holes. Further excavations were undertaken on the oxidized deposits and new post-holes were uncovered, for the first time revealing clearer linear/structural patterns. Radiometric dating of the oxidized deposit sealing these posts supports a later 12th century date (results of this dating will be published shortly). Excavations in Cutting 2 also removed overlying ‘barrow baulks’ left behind after the 1980s excavations – this exercise proved incredibly lucrative for the recovery of medieval artefacts (see below).

Cutting 3: The final cutting containing archaeology from the 1980s excavations was re-exposed, with the 1980s excavation level carefully cleaned and recorded. Within this cutting two new walls were encountered, as well as evidence of 13th/14th century floor surfaces. These walls appear to have been heavily quarried out – probably in the 18th and 19th centuries – but formed the western limit of the same structure. As the structure is on a direct east-west axis, unlike any other structures on the site, it has been tentatively suggested this may be the chapel recorded at the site in 1324 CE. A large enclosing curtain wall was also found in Cutting 3 – see below:

Cutting 4: Cutting 4 was opened solely to find the eastern limit of the ‘chapel’ structure. A 13th deposit containing frequent artefacts was encountered directly above the probable 12th century ground surface. A liner cut/ditch was also uncovered - this was not the expected orientation of the ‘chapel’ eastern wall and so is unlikely to be a ‘robber trench’ where the wall once stood.

Work continued recording the archaeological cutting from the 1980s excavation through the earthen bank. This excavation was concluded and backfilled, with radiometric dates confirming the buried sod layer (relict ground surface) below the fortress bank pre-dates the 1169 CE construction date. A large stone wall (c. 1.8m) in width was also recorded in Cutting 3 for the first time. The wall is currently thought to have been constructed in advance of any other masonry features on site, to replace the 12th century wooden palisade.

Almost all the artefacts from the site (with the exception of a few sherds of Victorian pot) date from the late 12th/early 13th to 14th centuries, matching the historical records that record a 150-year lifespan for the settlement. Pottery included Leinster Cooking Ware, Wexford Type Cooking Ware, Wexford Type Coarseware, Wexford Type Ware, Saintonge, Saintonge Sgraffito, Minety Ware, Bristol Redcliffe etc. Other notable finds included a possible bridle piece, belt clasp and Later Neolithic/Early Bronze Age lithics; the latter presumably speak to the known presence on Bronze Age man on Carrick Hill 200m to the southeast 4500 years ago.

Our aims for 2018 – to clear the site of vegetation, re-expose the 1980s dig and commence a major research project - are now completed, and a new method statement will be drafted and agreed with the Irish State for 2019. This year the project also secured funding to commence a conservation and management plan for the site and planned an academic volume and conference for 2019, to celebrate the 850th anniversary of the Norman Landing in Ireland. The volume will consist of 12 chapters, presenting the history, wider context and archaeology of the Carrick site. Funding has been secured for the book and writing is well progressed on several chapters. The first publication on the site was also issued this summer in the journal *Archaeology Ireland*, a significant achievement considering the project only commenced in January.

At the IAFS we are supportive of our student's continuing professional development and post-graduate studies. As this is a new project the opportunities for student research are constantly expanding. This season we:

- Acted as external supervisor for a post-graduate study on ringworks (ringworks are one of the earthen castle types used during the Norman conquest)
- Supported a past student in PhD research, conducting geophysics of this site and other sites in Ireland
- Supported a number of student applications to post-graduate studies, with several choosing to study in Ireland
- Supported past students in publications, including publications on the Carrick site

It should be noted that all students wishing to carry out research on material from the site must undertake one season of excavation at the site first and then are required to comply by the Irish Archaeology Field School Intellectual Property (IP) protocols, which can frequently include completion of an IP agreement.