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Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group

IPMAG VI Cork *Plantation Ireland: settlement and material culture, c.1550- c.1700*

By James Lyttleton

IPMAG in conjunction with the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement is hosting a conference that will serve to highlight the significant role that settlement and materiality has played in the transformation of Irish society. Material culture in the form of artefacts, architecture, and grave memorials, as well as documentary sources such as maps, inventories and treatises can provide a perceptive commentary on the lives of people who lived in a society that was

undergoing fundamental changes from medieval lordship to capitalism and centralised state authority. Material culture is a form of expression that not only mediated but also controlled the expression of social mores and identities. This conference with contributions from a multi-disciplinary perspective (archaeology, history and historical geography) seeks to realign the study of settlement and material culture as essential to our understanding of how society in Ireland was transformed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A number of speakers from various academic institutions both home and abroad have been invited to give their insights into the challenges met by early modern society in Ireland. The

conference will be opened by Professor Raymond Gillespie of the Department of Modern History, NUI Maynooth, who has been a doyen of studies in the sphere of colonisation and religion. It is envisaged that the event will be followed by the publication of a conference proceedings on the lines similar to the example set by the thematic monograph published a number of years ago by the GSIHS, *Gaelic Ireland c.1250-c.1650, land, lordship and settlement* edited by Patrick Duffy, Dave Edwards and Elizabeth Fitzpatrick.

The topics to be presented are varied and are only a sample of the research that is currently being carried out by historians, geographers and archaeologists. Terence Reeves-Smyth of the Environment and Heritage Service of Northern Ireland in his paper on *Ireland's 'Great Rebuilding' and the Revolution in Domestic Architecture 1610-1640* will be arguing that early seventeenth-century architectural developments in the country can be equated with Hoskin's famous thesis. This will involve a consideration of the unprecedented building programme of the era, the new forms of architecture emerging and the reasons why.

James Lyttleton, an IRCHSS doctoral student from the Department of Archaeology, University College Cork in his presentation entitled *Faith of our fathers: the Gaelic aristocracy and the Counter-Reformation* will be looking at how the native aristocracy in the midlands contended with the changing cultural and political environment of the time with reference to the persistence and display of Catholic worship. Such activities were taking place in lordships that, by the 1620s, had experienced plantation and

assimilation into a new shire by the name of King's County. Despite the general decline in the fortunes of the native nobility, certain families were able to maintain their pre-eminence in local society as illustrated by their continued patronage of church buildings, the donation of communion chalices and the erection of memorials, plaques and statues. These acts of munificence in a contested spiritual and physical arena suggests that evasion and compromise were aspects of life in plantation Ireland, and as such, offers researchers an invaluable insight into relations between natives and colonists at a local level.

Harold Mytum of the Department of Archaeology, University of York in his talk which is entitled *Archaeological perspectives on external mortuary monuments of Plantation Ireland* examines graveyard commemoration in Plantation Ireland, and compares them with contemporary forms in Britain. Results from site surveys in west Ulster will be set in a wider comparative light, examining the role of heraldry and trade symbols on the one hand, and the varied emphases in inscription content on the other. The extent to which existing social, ideological and material structures were merely transferred to the plantation context is to be considered through this data. Likewise, any innovations prompted by this different set of contexts are also to be highlighted. Whilst seventeenth-century monuments are not numerous, they are widely spread. They created a set of expectations regarding the form and content of a graveyard monument that had an important influence on the development of memorials leading up to the graveyard boom in the eighteenth century.

Clodagh Tait from the Department of

History, University of Essex, in her paper *Relics and the past: the material culture of Catholic Martyrdom in Ireland* intends to look at the relics of clerics and laypeople who died as martyrs for Catholicism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland, comprising both their physical remains and items associated with them. Landscapes and buildings linked with the martyrs will also be considered. As items with very special resonances for Catholics (attracting new interest at intervals quite recently, especially when Oliver Plunkett was canonised in 1975, and a group of other candidates were beatified in 1992), these bodies, possessions and places are both relics of the past and relics for the present.

From further afield, Rolf Loeber of the University of Pittsburgh in his *Biblical and Roman Signposts to the Colonization of Ulster* considers an unpublished document from around 1608 laying out a strategy for the Ulster plantation based on biblical and Roman examples. Past studies on Irish plantations has focused on classical texts – often of Roman or Machiavellian origin – that provided templates for Irish colonization. However, in comparison the Bible was a much more widely read source, which also provided accounts of successful colonial ventures.

The document of around 1608 highlights the successful arrival from Egypt and subsequent settlement of the Jews in the land of Canaan under Moses and Joshua. It also provides examples from Roman history regarding successful and unsuccessful colonisation strategies. Although the piece is unsigned, the document is very likely from the hand of Sir John Davies, who became one of the principal architects of the Ulster plantation, acquiring a large estate

there in the process. An examination of this document shows that many of the eventual steps taken to create the Ulster plantation such as patterns of confiscation, the relocation out of natives, the lottery of lands for the new settlers, and the measurement survey of the lands, were formulated on the basis of biblical and Roman examples articulated in this document.



Field trip to King John's Castle, IPMAG V

Dr Annaleigh Margey is an IRCHSS Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Department of Geography in Trinity College, Dublin and will be exploring the role of maps in the Ulster plantation. In the later half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, mapping in Ulster began apace, as the English Crown and government struggled to visualise unknown lands. As a result, a wide range of maps and map types exist for Ulster. It is this dynamic nature of mapping in the province that will form much of the analysis. Specific reference will be made to five major map genres – preliminary maps of the province, particularly those of the early lordship geography; military mapping; political mapping that aimed to portray the emerging political geography of the province in the 1590s, plantation mapping, encompassing three phases: the claiming of property to the Crown, the assigning of lands to grantees, and the performance of grantees; and estate mapping, with reference to the Clandeboye estate in Cos. Down and

Antrim.

Diarmuid Ó Seaneacháin, an IRCHSS doctoral student in the Department of Archaeology, NUI Galway will be considering the transatlantic dimension and how the Irish colonial experience is placed within it. In 1607, at around the time the Flight of the Earls heralded the beginning of concerted English plantation settlement in Ulster, the first permanent English colony in the New World was established at James Fort, Virginia. This small bridgehead of English settlement subsequently expanded into Jamestown, which served as the capital of Virginia until the end of the seventeenth century. Excavations carried out by the Jamestown Rediscovery project since 1994 have recovered a wide range of seventeenth-century artefacts, from pipe stems to Bartmann jugs and from household nails to suits of armour. These artefacts can reveal a great deal about the everyday lives of the people who used them.

However, the analysis of these objects has relevance not only in North America, but also on this side of the Atlantic. At least some of the early seventeenth-century inhabitants of Jamestown had served in Ireland during the Nine Years War. Furthermore, a number of the members of the Virginia Company chose to settle in Ulster rather than the New World. Since the same type of clients undertook to settle either Virginia or Ulster in the early seventeenth century, there is an expectation that attributes of their material culture may be shared on both sides of the Atlantic. This paper explores the comparability of plantation material culture in Virginia and Ulster.

Colin Breen of the Centre for Maritime Archaeology in the University of

Ulster in Coleraine will examine the seventeenth-century archaeologies in the southwest of Ireland. Historical studies of the century have tended to concentrate on the macro-political aspects of the period and the decades of conflict associated with shifting aspirations to power and religious tension. Archaeological studies of the century have largely concentrated on the physical process of plantation with Ulster receiving particular attention. Munster has been the subject of less specific period-driven research, yet its landscape and social structures were subject to significant change at this time. His paper will attempt to review aspects of existing archaeological evidence for the southwest and try and develop a number of themes which are emergent in this area of study. Greater analysis of the urban process at the larger town sites is important while also addressing the archaeologies of smaller-scale settlement sites across the province. Shifting paradigms will address the scales of economic relations and the mechanisms for the generation of capital in a physical and material sense. Interactions and interconnections between the created web of social relationships also needs to be addressed in the context of settler, visitor and existing community.

Tadhg O’Keeffe from the School of Archaeology in UCD Dublin will consider plantation culture and the birth of the Georgian Order with reference to the seventeenth-century castles of Munster. In this paper, the so-called, and inaccurately-termed, ‘semi-fortified’ houses of the seventeenth century are presented in much of our secondary literature as occupying a somewhat marginal position in the trajectory of Irish architectural development, albeit one that bridges the chronological gap, and

also the perceived stylistic gap, between the tower-houses of the late middle ages and the Georgian country houses of the 1700s and early 1800s. Taking Munster's corpus houses as its point of departure, this paper will attempt a more sensitive architectural contextualisation of these buildings, as well as an evaluation of how they articulated the values and worldviews of contemporary elite culture.

Colin Rynne lectures in early modern and industrial archaeology in the Department of Archaeology, University College Cork and will be presenting a paper on the social archaeology of iron-working in seventeenth century Munster. During the seventeenth century, Irish ironmasters were obliged to provide, in varying degrees, accommodation, land and a basic social infrastructure for their skilled workers. These latter measures were largely an inducement to attract the requisite personnel from English - and even European - iron-working regions to settle in Ireland, and by this means relatively large immigrant communities were to become temporarily settled throughout the island. This same settlement pattern was to be continued in the nineteenth century in key Irish extractive industries, where again English and Welsh mining specialists were to be housed in what were often self-sufficient industrial communities. This paper proposes a social archaeology for early modern iron-working settlements in south Munster, with special emphasis on the degree to which they might have been socially exclusive.

Audrey Horning of the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester offers her thoughts on memory, materiality and

the mutability of settlement in the Plantation period. Understandings of rural and urban settlement during the plantation period have long focused upon the abundance of documentary and cartographic sources on English and Scottish settlement, and the dearth of information on rural Gaelic land use. Archaeological data, however, not only has the potential to reverse this imbalance, but also to challenge assumptions about the transient character of Gaelic life and the presumed predictability of English and Scottish approaches to land use and town development. Archaeological case studies from the north and west of Ireland are discussed in reference to the broader context of British expansion in the Atlantic world, prompting a reconsideration of the impact of colonial texts on historical memories of plantation (and by extension upon research agendas).

Toby Barnard of the Faculty of History, in Hertford College, Oxford will conclude the conference with his talk entitled *The final phase of plantation? 1670-1740*. It is generally agreed that the pace of official plantation slackened after the seismic upheavals of the 1650s. Although there were fresh confiscations thereafter, notably in the 1690s, these involved smaller acreages and did not stimulate comprehensive schemes of the type seen earlier in Munster, Ulster and across the country during the period of the Cromwellian interregnum. Nevertheless, there was continuing emigration from Scotland into Ulster. In addition, both the state and individual landlords were still keen to encourage immigrants with scarce aptitudes, such as proficiency in the textile industry. As a result, Protestant refugees from the Low Countries and France and (finally) the Palatines from the Rhineland were encouraged to

settle in Ireland. Also, a number of proprietors connected the well-being of their estates and improvement of their incomes with the creation and growth of towns. Accordingly, this paper will concentrate on the motives behind, principal characteristics and impact of these late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century ventures. In particular, the schemes of the Percevals, earls of Egmont, for their holdings centred on north Cork will be considered in detail. They shed light on thinking about plantations, and the ways in which it may have changed.

It is envisaged that this conference will provide an ideal forum for academics, students and members of the general public to exchange and receive valuable insights into one of the most profound periods for the development of modern Irish society. In order to achieve this, the conference organisers have gratefully received sponsorship from the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, the Heritage Council and the Faculty of Arts and Celtic Studies in UCC. For further information, please contact:

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Centre for the Study of Rural Ireland undertakes new project in Co. Donegal

By Professor Charles Orser

After conducting annual excavations in counties Roscommon and Sligo from 1994 to 2005, the Rural Lifeways Project of the Centre for the Study of Rural Ireland at Illinois State University has developed a long-term

program in County Donegal. The project is co-directed by Professor Charles E. Orser, Jr., Illinois State University, and Dr. Stephen A. Brighton, University of Maryland.

The goal of the new project remains focused on the investigation of the material dimensions of daily life in rural Ireland in the post-medieval period. To date, we have collected a sizable database from six house sites (five in Roscommon and one in Sligo) and one elite dwelling (Tanzfort House at the Coopershill Estate, Sligo). Funding for the research has been variously provided by the Heritage Council, the Famine Commemorative Commission, the National Committee for Archaeology, The Center for Field Research, and Illinois State University. Several journal articles, four senior thesis, three master's theses, and two doctoral dissertations have presented analyses of the excavated materials. A full-length book treatment of the Ballykilcline excavations in County Roscommon is being published by Wordwell.

The overarching goal of the project is to reconstruct traditional lifeways in the Irish countryside using archaeological evidence as a primary source. At the same time, however, because the research design is conceptualized as an exercise in anthropological historical archaeology, its methodology is inherently multidisciplinary. The anthropological perspective is designed to use all pertinent and available information, which includes historical, folkloric, geographic, and oral sources.

The immediate focus of the research in Donegal centers on the region in and around Glenveagh National Park. Collaborating in the project is the University of Maryland's Center for

Heritage Research, as well as doctoral students at UCD and Brown University. We are also working closely with the Donegal County Museum, Letterkenny, and are also greatly benefiting from the assistance of Joe Gallagher, the County Heritage Officer; Joe Gatins, the Regional Manager of Glenveagh National Park; and local historians May McClintock and Tom Sweeney.

The initial research will concentrate on Glenveagh Cottage, a structure known for its association with the murder of one of John George Adair's land stewards near there. Adair is infamous in Donegal, and indeed Irish, history because of his harsh treatment of his tenants and his eviction of hundreds of them in 1861. Adair lived for a short time in Glenveagh Cottage before the completion of his ostentatious castle on Lough Veagh. The Sweeneys lived in the Cottage before Adair, and family lore maintains that the history of the Cottage extends much deeper into history. In fact, family members have reported that a "castle" was once built near the Cottage.

Minimal historical research thus indicates that at least six historic periods may be identified at the Cottage: First, the Mac Sweeney clanship (c.1360 – c.1610), the Mac Sweeney tenancy (c.1610 – c.1825), post-Mac Sweeney/pre-Adair (c. 1825 – late 1850s), Adair (late 1850s-1925), post-Adair (1925–1983), and National Park (1983–present). An important element of the archaeological research will be to refine this rough chronology and to try to determine whether archaeological components of each phase can be identified. The long duration of settlement at the property suggests that the archaeological investigations will be complex.

The Cottage is today in ruins, having been destroyed in 1966. It sits alongside a much-used hiking trail through the Park and appears as a collection of grass-covered low walls. A series of depressions suggests the presence of numerous subsurface features. Old roadbeds can be observed running up the adjacent mountain. The property may be developed as an educational resource to help interpret the Park's history to visitors. As a result, the project also has a strong public history component.

We conducted initial research at the Cottage in 2005 using a grant from the Heritage Council. Kevin Barton, of Landscape and Geophysical Services and Sligo IT, conducted topographical, magnetic susceptibility, and electrical resistance surveys of the area. His detailed surveys indicated the presence of several anomalies that constitute areas of great archaeological interest. The present plan is to conduct our annual field school in historical archaeology at the Cottage during the summer of 2006.



Glenveagh Cottage

The archaeology at the Cottage will be combined with a larger effort to contextualize the entire cultural and landscape history of the Glenveagh / Derryveagh area. This area has an extremely rich potential for post-medieval archaeology because it includes the ruined cabins of the

evicted tenants, a lead mine, a school house, and several other sites that can be the subject of archaeological attention.

A larger research question, to be addressed at the Cottage and elsewhere, focuses on consumption, artifact availability, and consumerism. I have argued in two of my books that people living throughout the world were decreasingly isolated after about AD 1500. In both *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World* (Plenum, 1996) and *Race and Practice in Archaeological Interpretation* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), I have used network theory in conjunction with consumer theory to show that the expansion of the global market increasingly homogenized the world's material culture, even in cases where the recipients of the new objects rejected other elements of the foreign culture. Prior research in Roscommon and Sligo has provided clear evidence that tenant farmers in this region obtained mass-produced and globally marketed objects in great numbers and in extensive variety. Research reported in *Race and Practice in Archaeological Interpretation* also documents the increased availability of English ceramics in Ireland during the early nineteenth century.

The lack of isolation represents an important element of the spread of the global marketplace. An inverse relationship exists between the increased availability of non-local objects and the degree of isolation: the increased presence of non-local objects indicates decreased isolation. As a result, any attempt to understand the spread of the global marketplace and capitalist ideology, in conjunction with increasing consumerism, should address isolation. Archaeology is well suited to such an examination because

of its material focus, and historical archaeologists are especially well situated to conduct such analyses because of their overt multidisciplinary approach and anthropological training.

Even though consumerism and globalization are perfect archaeological topics, archaeologists to date have not devoted a great deal of attention to isolation. Australia is one place, however, where archaeologists have shown a serious interest in isolation as a topic. For example, in 2001, archaeologists there held a session entitled 'The Archaeology of Isolation' at the annual conference of the Australian Archaeological Association. The presenters in the session examined various periods of history and different regions, but they all spoke about the importance of understanding isolation and social networks.

One paper of interest is Kevin Rains's study of the late nineteenth-century Chinese community of Cooktown in northern Queensland. The Chinese residents under study were immigrants, but there appears to be enough similarity with their circumstances and those faced by indigenous Irish tenant farmers to provide direction for future study. One major question for investigation is precisely what is meant by isolation. For example, when an outsider visited a region of the world in the past and declared it 'isolated', what does this designation actually mean? Did the outsider take into account the indigenous social networks that undoubtedly existed in the region? Men and women who had created and maintained an extensive network of relationships probably would not have viewed themselves as isolated.

With all of this in mind, the Derryveagh Mountains region of County Donegal presents a perfect

arena for the continuation of our project for at least three major reasons. First, it is a region that is not archaeologically well known for the post-medieval period. As a result, it provides ample opportunities for fieldwork. At the same time, however, the county has a rich and important cultural history that because of its cultural complexity and time depth may be accessible through the methods and the techniques of historical archaeological research and subsequent interpretation.

Second, Donegal is widely known as a region of the country that has retained many elements of traditional culture. Though much of this culture may be overly romanticized for tourist consumption, surviving examples of vernacular architecture suggest the longevity of tradition in the region as a whole.

Finally, the apparent isolation of the county, as stressed in visitors' comments and by tourist literature since the late eighteenth century, indicates that the county may provide abundant new information about the relationships between isolation, consumption, and material availability. Such information could constitute a case study both for one region of Ireland and for a broader examination as well.

Monuments of the kelp industry in Ulster islands.

By Wes Forsythe

The manufacture of kelp in Ireland from the seventeenth to early twentieth centuries provided alkali and later iodine for contemporary industries. It was an immensely important element of coastal economies in the period and notably for island communities, which were often impoverished and had

limited agricultural means. A recent survey of surviving kelp monuments in the north Ulster islands (off Antrim and Donegal) uncovered a range of sites including kilns, drying walls, storehouses and associated landing places. In Ireland kelp production was carried on predominantly along the western, northern and parts of the eastern coasts. Evidence of kelp production in Ulster has emerged from Strangford Lough, and the Antrim and Donegal coasts.

Origins and development of the kelp industry

While the reduction of seaweed to soda (sodium carbonate) may have ancient origins, its use in Ireland appears to date to no earlier than the seventeenth century (McErlean, 2002). Before this ashes (natural alkali) were produced from burnt wood (potash or pearl-ash), and the steady depletion of this resource in post-medieval Ireland, and indeed Europe, was a mitigating cause of the shift to an alternative (Clow and Clow, 1947: 297). Early references to kelp-making in England and France are associated chiefly with the glass-making industry, and c.1618 kelp is mentioned amongst the stock of a glass-house established by the 1st Earl of Cork at Ballynegeragh, Co. Waterford (Westropp, 1920: 25-30). A second industry with seventeenth-century origins to have a major effect on the Irish economy was linen manufacture and as early as 1707 statutes for the stimulation of the linen industry had been passed, which offered bounties for the preparation of kelp (Gill, 1964: 64). Production of kelp expanded throughout the 18th century as the linen industry expanded, but fell into crisis from cheap competition by the 1830s. New impetus was provided by the discovery of iodine and its applications in medicine and later photography. The

kelp industry, although more constricted, survived in the islands into the early 20th century.



Kelp processing site, Rathlin Island

Production and monuments

The production and processing of kelp was broadly similar on all parts of the coast, taking place in the Spring. Seaweed was collected on the shore or from boats, before it was burnt it was spread out to dry. This drying process could have happened on wide, stony parts of the shore where pebbles and boulders extend above high water for some distance (for example Rathlin and Tory) without the need for any structures. However, on some parts of the shore, particularly Rathlin, the ground underfoot is rather wet and marshy, necessitating the building of drying walls. The first mention of these is the mid-nineteenth century, when kelp was hung on ‘walls or piles of stones’ (Gage, 1995: 73). The walls are good indicators of the presence of nearby kilns and they range in length from 2-25m. They are very roughly built of local dry stone boulders and sometimes augment natural bedrock

outcrops. The walls have no particular orientation and are inclined to meander across the terrace avoiding kilns. In Donegal no kelp drying walls were discovered, the seaweed may have been spread on the ground – the profusion of stony beaches and natural granite outcrops in the islands providing abundant suitable drying platforms. Another Donegal solution may have been the wrack-drying platforms especially evident in Tory and some of the Gweedore islands. More recently these have been used for drying weed prior to its use as manure. They would have been equally as suited to preparing weed for kelp processing.



Kelp burning kiln, Rathlin Island

The dry seaweed was then burnt in kilns to reduce it to kelp, a dirty and laborious job taking up to 24 hours. Upon cooling the molten kelp hardens to a very dense, heavy block. In order to extract the product from the kiln it had to be broken into smaller, manageable blocks sometimes

involving the removal of part of the kiln. Rathlin had a considerable interest in the kelp industry, and Catherine Gage records in the middle of the nineteenth century that up to 150 kilns were in operation on the island. Archaeological survey recorded 83 kilns on Rathlin. By contrast, the survival of kelp kilns is relatively poor in Donegal and many of the islands have no extant sites. Only fourteen sites were from Aranmore, Tory and Inishfree. It may be that some islands used a method described by Jameson (1799: 45) and Walker (1799: 14) in the west highlands of Scotland and Orkney, where a pit was dug in the sand for burning. On the island shores the kilns and drying walls are generally located within ten metres of the top of the beach and beyond any existing field boundaries. There are examples of both isolated kilns and concentrations of sites particularly along baylets where up to five kilns are situated surrounded by drying walls. Particularly good examples of intensive concentrations of kilns are found in Carravinally on Rathlin and on Ait Saoire on Tory.

The earliest account (1784) of kelp kilns on Rathlin mentions temporary kilns of loose stone being erected around a hole in the ground (Hamilton, 1839:15). Fifty-two years later Marshall (1836:18) gives a fuller description noting a hole 5x2-3ft (1.5x0.6-0.9m) and 2ft (0.6m) deep being made and lined with large stones. In form, Stevenson (1982: 43) notes '*rough and ready...grave-shaped*' kilns of big loose stones, and Boyd (1947: 13) describes 'a rude elliptical structure, formed of sods and stones'. The later descriptions certainly correspond with the majority of kiln sites surveyed and show the rectangular form survived into the late nineteenth century and twentieth

century. Recorded measurements of all the islands kilns taken during survey show that the sites generally fall within Marshall's and Murphy's nineteenth- and twentieth-century estimates. A small number of circular sites both in Rathlin and Donegal have been found that may indicate a different form of kiln construction. Circular or oval kilns were observed in Strangford Lough and were thought likely to have been associated with the earlier phase of kelp production (McErlean, 2002: 348). Walker (1799: 15) noted that Scottish kilns were generally 4ft (1.2m) diameter and nine inches (22cms) deep implying a circular tradition was in existence, and they have survived in Orkney to modern times (Fenton, 1978: 65; Thomson 1983: 34). These were not held in high regard by contemporary writers, Beaton (1799: 36) wrote, '*Some have been so absurd, as to dig a round hole in the earth, and line it with stone. But the soap-boiler and bleacher must suffer by this practise; as a kiln of this construction, by excluding the air, cannot raise a sufficient heat*'. Along the coasts of Ireland and Scotland, both rectangular and circular kilns appear to have been employed in the early and late phases of the kelp industry, with the rectangular form eventually eclipsing the circular in popularity.

After the seaweed was reduced to kelp it could be transported to storehouses for export. Knowing that the alkali content dissolved on contact with water, kelp-burners endeavoured to keep both the seaweed and the finished product out of the rain. The best known site on Rathlin associated with the kelp trade is the storehouse in Church Bay (Marshall, 1836:18). Boats arriving at Rathlin would barter for kelp and the landlord would arrange transportation of the product from store to ship. In the Rosses, the old Rutland Island fishing

station stores were reused, and a number of smaller stores were constructed, some of which had weighing apparatus, the timber remains of which can still be seen.



Kelp house, Rathlin Island

Conclusion

The manufacture of kelp was an important economic resource for island communities along the northern seaboard of Ireland. Although these islands were often viewed as backward and peripheral they did not function in isolation from the Irish economy. Kelp production contributed directly to the booming linen industry in the eighteenth century and indeed islands such as Tory and Rathlin grew flax for this trade. They also shared in the effects of political and economic circumstances far beyond the shores of the islands, expressed both in fluctuations in the price of kelp and quantity exported.

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A Note on CHAT in Dublin 2005

By Franc Myles

The 3rd annual conference of the *Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory* group was brought to Dublin this November by Tadhg O'Keeffe. CHAT was convened in 2003 to 'provide opportunities for dialogue to develop among researchers in these fields: especially postgraduate researchers, junior academics and museums and archaeological professionals'. The themes for this year's gathering included *polite/vernacular culture*, *archaeologies of inequality*, and *neocolonialism* and or *postcolonialism*. Most of the papers appeared to address aspects of these issues.

According to the CHAT website, historical archaeology in the UK:

has seen new theoretical engagement in recent years. A diversity of theoretical perspectives has developed in this increasingly vibrant area of study, testing disciplinary boundaries: especially with history, social anthropology and material culture studies. Similarly, those working in 'contemporary archaeology' - including museums, professional archaeology or the media as well as archaeologists

studying the very recent past - have developed significant and distinctive bodies of theoretical practice, most notably in the study of collecting, relationships between heritage, politics and identity, and the presentation and field practice of archaeology.

What you're about to read can't claim to be a review of the conference; the intervention of the real world meant that the writer only caught the four papers presented on Friday afternoon and in an interesting deviation from the norm, the first two papers on Saturday and Sunday mornings. More critically, the closing remarks by Charles Orser and Matthew Johnson weren't heard and will hopefully be documented elsewhere. A secondary consideration relates to this writer's engagement with matters theoretical, at least when it comes to his chosen profession. But perhaps that will become clearer towards the end of this note...



CHAT conference logo

The conference kicked off with the news that Roy Keane had departed from Manchester United, perhaps introducing a populist touch to the proceedings. But that's perhaps being unfair as I for one come out of each of

the papers having learnt something, if not perhaps what the author had intended me to learn. John Ó Néill's opening paper for example brought us to *Le Mur de Fédérés*, the Communards' Wall in *Père Lachaise*, the site of the last battle of the Commune and the place of execution of several score of the Communards. Ó Néill took us through representations of the Bloody Week in 1871, focusing his sights on the wall at the exact location of the execution, or at least where the much-visited monument suggested it was.

While the archaeological evidence for the executions' happening at that spot is poor, the visual documentary evidence is often contradictory. For example, where are the bullet strikes? The ones on the wall several hundred meters away were apparently of a later vintage. Even the height of the ground in relation to the wall today is problematic. Has the level of the ground risen so much over the last 130 years or was the height of the wall exaggerated by those depicting the massacre?

Ó Néill was followed by Caitlin DeSilvey, who spoke about *ghost town polarities*, comparing the management of two Montana ghost towns with similar 19th century origins. One was a managed tourist destination, its decay arrested and its artefacts scripted and interpreted. The other had been abandoned to natural processes of decay and decomposition, its structures having eventually failed, its surviving artefactual evidence redeposited throughout the site or simply looted.

DeSilvey pointed out that where one town was seen as a model example of preservation and presentation, the other, more authentic ghost town was perceived by the state heritage body as

a planning problem requiring mitigation. This issue has parallels in Ireland where our islands are beginning to see increasing levels of tourism and some re-population. One has only to think of deserted houses on islands such as Inishmurray, Shark or more immediately, the Great Blasket and the acceleration of their decay brought on by the increased numbers of small craft along the western coast. Both Ó Néill and DeSilvey delivered papers which were instructive, informative and based on fieldwork, in the former's case, fieldwork after a fashion. Moreover, they were intelligible and free of the jargon that's become a mainstay of theoretical discourse. Things were looking good.

They were followed by Colin Breen, whose paper left this writer confused, although his opening comments had been encouraging. Breen initially declared himself a 'theoretical Luddite' but went on to argue for a new political engagement, turning away from the tired and discredited nationalist arguments towards a class-based analysis. So, nothing new there then. His slides were excellent but this writer was puzzled by the backgrounds, where the slides sat over a red and black screen with a large, hand-drawn upper case A in the centre. An immediate question concerns the absence of a circle or an O around the A, indicating the organisation that's crucial to libertarian forms of political activity. Perhaps only those who were really attentive noticed a slide flashed up for less than a second, with the words *Globalise Resistance*. This is a front organisation set up by the Leninist Socialist Workers Party, attempting to attract newcomers to the anti-capitalist cause who would otherwise gravitate towards less totalitarian forms of organisation.

Admittedly, this detail may have been noted only by those with a particular interest or knowledge of current trends in political activism. If Breen is advocating a non-hierarchical and grassroots founded engagement, with a sustained level of confrontational non-violent direct action, he will unfortunately find few takers within the stratified world of archaeology.

Laura McAtackney's paper on *subversion and the institutions of equality* dealt with her work at Long Kesh. Here again was a presentation based on solid fieldwork, which by referencing scholars such as Scott and Buchli, contextualised her findings within a theoretical framework which didn't require a prior knowledge of the *lingua franca* of theory. This writer was especially taken with the architectural interventions brought about by changing political circumstances and the artefactual evidence, some of it held by what appears to be a private museum of material relating to the *Northern Ireland Prison Service*.

On the Saturday morning Kirsty Owen presented her research on the interpretation of church graffiti. Where Breen's abstract promised (and fortunately didn't deliver) a dense verbose theoretical discourse, Owen's abstract suggested a less theoretical and far more straightforward paper 'readdressing the contribution of graffiti to our understanding of historical change against the influence of contemporary perceptions of graffiti as vandalism'. Unfortunately, all this readdressing left the writer none the wiser; her argument was lost behind a discourse in the language common to those who engage daily with matters of theory as a central tenet of their professional lives, a language which, quite frankly, alienates others.

Tadhg O’Keeffe stepped in to fill a gap opened by the non-arrival of three of the advertised participants. His paper reflected on the World Trade Centre and on the practice of historical archaeology after 9/11. He offered an account of the annihilation of several American Indian sites and the destruction of the artefactual assemblage of the Five Points excavation (with the exception of several sherds on loan to the Catholic Church). He then moved onto what he admitted was less firm ground, trying to establish how 9/11 touched upon our business as archaeologists. He finished by echoing Breen’s call for more of a political engagement from the historical archaeology community, framed in an anti-war context. Again, this was couched in a language which if delivered from a political soapbox would have the audience voting with their feet.

But why? The subsequent discussion was held on the assumption that the audience was ‘of the left’ and eager to engage in this undefined activism. Is it a safe assumption that a gathering of academics and post-graduate students, mostly from the United States and the UK constitute such a homogenous grouping? But perhaps there’s a more fundamental problem here; what exactly does all this have to do with our daily practice as archaeologists? Does an emphasis on theory and vague attempts at political engagement not actually muddy the waters, rather than helping us re-evaluate and sharpen our critical objectivity as researchers and scholars? What does this say about the way we disseminate the results of our work to the public and to our peers?

The public was brought into the debate the following morning, with two papers on the colonial/post-colonial

debate segued together; the first, by the editor of this publication, and the second by a fellow committee member of IPMAG. Prior to the first paper, those of us early birds at the gate were confronted with a real time discourse on contested historical spaces as we tried to gain entry into the conference venue past a security guard on the gate. Perhaps I should have taken the hint.

Audrey Horning’s paper revisited the apparent necessity for a ‘theoretically-informed, contextually-rich and socially-relevant Irish historical archaeology’. Her core argument revolved around popular perceptions of what we do and perhaps how we do it. She discussed some of the findings of her excavation in a deserted village on Achill Island, looking in particular at tea cup sherds from a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century context. From this emerged a number of points: that the popular local perception that the village was depopulated with malign intent during the Famine was demonstrated to be false; that the inhabitants of the village consumed tea from commercially manufactured tea cups from furthest Staffordshire; and that the assemblage of the *National Museum of Country Life* completely misrepresents the material culture of nineteenth-century rural Ireland, celebrating as it does on the local, the vernacular, the home-made.

James Lyttleton continued in a similar vein, initially looking at and considering the historiography of the colonial archaeology of the country and reminding us how bad it all was before the formation of IPMAG. As was the case with Horning’s paper, undermining the argument for a more theoretically formulated examination was a reliance on a language which is all too often spoken at gatherings such as this and prevalent in the literature

which is beginning to nudge other, perhaps more useful volumes off our bookshelves.

Debates on the post-colonial condition were all the rage in other disciplines throughout the 1980s and '90s and it is difficult to see the relevance of revisiting them today, even through the prism of post-medieval archaeology. On this island it is still sometimes the case that those of us working in the commercial sector have to justify our particular affinity with this period. The sheer abundance of material presents problems not only with collection policies on site, but with post-excavation storage and ultimately analysis and eventual dissemination. So much is being excavated and surveyed, but how much of it is in the domain of accessible grey literature, let alone published?

And perhaps here is the core of the problem. The raw data that's collected is just not getting out there; those who collect it haven't the time or the budgets to go much further than their statutory responsibilities as licensed archaeologists. Those who could use the data can't get it and are happy instead to weave theory from the data they do possess with strands from other social sciences.

The ascendancy of the abstract over the real and tangible is increasingly problematic, for it detracts from these crucial issues. The use of jargon is needlessly reductive. It only serves to dumb down what we do, suggesting there's a perceived need to hide solid scholarship behind a formulaic, needlessly complicated and ultimately sterile verbal performance. It is certainly not the language of inclusion. That's not to say there's not a place for theory in our practice. Whether we like it or not, we all apply some sort of

theoretical framework on what we do. What's missing on this island is a proper engagement with material culture and perhaps the onus is on the fieldworker to expedite the dissemination of our raw data. However, while clients and sometimes colleagues often just don't get the point, it is the public, and the communities within which we operate who can identify with the presence of the recent past and the structural remains evident in our trenches. Perhaps it is more in this direction we should concentrate our efforts.

Upcoming events and news

Plans for the 2007 IPMAG conference, to be held April 28-29 in Rathmullan, Co. Donegal, are underway, with a theme designed to reflect the 400th anniversary of the Flight of the Earls. Stay tuned for the call for papers and further information.

IPMAG is proud to announce the imminent publication of papers from the inaugural conference in 2001 through Wordwell Press. We also are well on schedule to publish a volume as part of the Society for Post Medieval Archaeology monograph incorporating contributions from the joint 2004 IPMAG/ SPMA meeting with the Society for Post medieval Archaeology. Further details to be posted on the IPMAG website.

www.science.ulster.ac/crg/ipmag.html

The 2005-2006 IPMAG committee includes chairperson Ruairí Ó Baoill, Secretary Audrey Horning, Treasurer Paul Logue, Website Manager Wes Forsythe, Membership Secretary Rosanne Meenan, and members Nick Brannon, Tracy Collins, Frank Coyne, Richard Clutterbuck, James Lyttleton, and Franc Myles.