



CAHERCONNELL ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD SCHOOL

1. OVERVIEW

Caherconnell is a small territory located in the heart of the Burren region of western Ireland. The place takes its name from the largest archaeological monument in the territory - 'Caherconnell' or the caher of someone called Conall. A caher is a form of monument known as a ringfort, an enclosed farmstead. This example is bigger than most ringforts and was built in the 10th century AD by a high-status, possibly 'royal' family (those that ruled the area). It continued in use right through to the start of the 17th century, with each phase of occupation (and one pre-occupation burial phase) producing houses and associated features, and plentiful artefacts of stone, bone, antler, clay, glass, amber, iron, lead, bronze and gold.



Amazing as this site is, it is far from the only archaeology of interest at Caherconnell. Three other stone cahers or ringforts (at least one of which is earlier in date), a probable Late Bronze Age burial mound, two Bronze Age boulder burials, house sites of as-yet unknown date, an ancient field system, and a prehistoric house are all part of the archaeological landscape at Caherconnell.

Archaeological Director: Dr. Michelle Comber

Assistant Director: Dr. Noel McCarthy

Business Director: Mr. Sean Davoren

Business Manager: Ms. Claire Collins

Accreditation: National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI, Galway)

Session length: 2, 4, or 6 weeks

Module topics: Archaeological excavation

Mode of learning: field-based participation, supporting lectures, supplementary field trips

Module credits: 6 ECTS / 3 US credits per 2-week session/module

Assessments: [only for those requiring academic credit] field journal, quiz (MCQ), assignments.

Staff / Student ratio: 1:5

Field-School Aims

The Caherconnell Archaeology Field School was established as a partnership between the local community and the academic sector, specifically the Davoren family who own Caherconnell and Dr. Michelle Comber of the Department of Archaeology at NUI, Galway. The Davoren family once ran a famous law school in this region in medieval times, and are now continuing this role as education providers. Dr. Michelle Comber is a research-active archaeologist at the nearby university, and specialises in landscape archaeology and the archaeology of the first two millennia AD.

The School aims to:

- Provide excellent training for those interested in archaeological excavation and survey
- Address questions of national significance for Irish archaeology
- Explore topics of international relevance
- Enhance co-operation between the local community and academic researchers
- Develop and test methods of heritage management within a living rural community



In partnership with the National University of Ireland in Galway, we provide the very best archaeological education as well as a cultural experience that sees students interact with the local population on a daily basis.

Why Choose the Caherconnell Archaeology Field School?

- Excavate Monday to Friday, and explore and learn at the weekend.
- Experience the large quantity and high quality of the artefacts being uncovered.
- Participate in the excavation of sites of huge significance to Irish archaeology.
- Explore material culture, history, economic, political and social structure.
 - Learn the highest standards of archaeological practice.
 - Acquire skills you can use anywhere in the world.
- To ensure the best training and experience possible, we limit our group sizes to 20.
 - Our pupil teacher ratio is 5 to 1.
 - Experience all of this in a safe, controlled environment.
- Take in the stunning Irish landscape of the Burren and the Wild Atlantic Way.

2. MODULE SYLLABI

The Caherconnell Archaeology Field School currently offers 3 different modules. All applicants are eligible for the Introduction to Archaeological Excavation module. Entry into the Intermediate and Advanced Archaeological Excavation modules depends on previous levels of excavation experience. Please see www.caherconnell.com/archaeology and '3. Practical Information' below for 2021 dates of each module.

SS103 Introduction to Archaeological Excavation



Module Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students will:

- understand the organisation and daily running of an archaeological excavation
- have acquired basic skills of archaeological excavation and recording
- be familiar with primary post-excavation techniques
- possess the basic skills necessary to work on archaeological excavations

Module Outline

This intensive module is designed to provide students with their first taste of archaeological excavation. It will explain the varied methods used by archaeologists to excavate different types of site, whilst providing practical experience of at least one of those methods in the field. The module will also train students in a number of basic necessary skills, including: grid establishment and use, trowelling techniques, artefact recovery and recording, sampling methodology, context recording, planning and photography. This will be achieved through on-site talks and lectures, physical demonstrations, and hands-on experience.

Practical Fieldwork Content

Site layout, cutting preparation, trowelling techniques, on-site sample processing, artefact recovery, feature excavation, the recording system, use of the automatic level, context sampling, excavation photography, context recording, section and profile drawing, plan drawing, equipment use, primary post-excavation procedures.

Available academic credits: 6 ECTS / 3 US credit hours

Who should apply: This module is ideal for beginners, for anyone with an interest in the past and archaeological excavation.

Duration: Two weeks, including middle Saturday.

Assessment (only for those seeking academic credit)

- Attendance at, and participation in, all scheduled fieldwork, field class and lectures
- Completion of a Learner's Journal (daily entries, Introduction and Conclusion, illustrations)

SS110 Intermediate Archaeological Excavation

Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students will:

- understand the organisation and daily running of an archaeological excavation
- have acquired intermediate skills of archaeological excavation and recording
- be familiar with primary post-excavation techniques
- possess the skills necessary to work on archaeological excavations worldwide at general operative or site-assistant level

Course Outline

This intensive module is designed to train students in intermediate-level skills of archaeological excavation. It will explain the varied methods used by archaeologists to excavate different types of site and provide experience in a number of necessary skills, including grid establishment and use, trowelling techniques, feature excavation, artefact recovery and recording, sampling methodology, context recording, and planning and photography, in addition to basic excavation responsibilities and team supervision. This will be achieved through on-site talks and lectures, physical demonstrations, and hands-on experience.

Practical Fieldwork Content

Site layout, cutting preparation, trowelling techniques, on-site sample processing, artefact recovery, feature excavation, the recording system, use of the automatic level, context sampling, excavation photography, context recording, section and profile drawing, plan drawing, equipment use, primary post-excavation procedures.

Available academic credits: 6 ECTS/ 3 US credit hours

Who should apply: This module is ideal for those with some experience of archaeological excavation, seeking to advance their skills.

Duration: Two weeks, including middle Saturday.

Assessment (for those seeking academic credit)

- Attendance at, and participation in, all scheduled fieldwork, field class and lectures
- Completion of a Learner's Journal (daily entries, Introduction and Conclusion, illustrations)
- Short quiz / multi-choice test

SS111 Advanced Archaeological Excavation

Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students will:

- Have experience of the organisation and daily running of an archaeological excavation
- have acquired advanced skills of archaeological excavation and recording
- be familiar with primary post-excavation techniques
- possess the skills necessary to work on archaeological excavations worldwide at site-assistant or supervisor level

Course Outline

This intensive module is designed to train students in advanced-level skills of archaeological excavation. It will provide experience of all the necessary excavation and primary post-excavation skills, in addition to excavation management, team supervision, trainee tuition, and interaction with the public. This will be achieved through on-site talks and lectures, physical demonstrations, and hands-on experience.

Practical Fieldwork Content

Site layout, cutting preparation, trowelling techniques, on-site sample processing, artefact recovery, feature excavation, the recording system, use of the automatic level, context sampling, excavation photography, context recording, section and profile drawing, plan drawing, equipment use, primary post-excavation procedures, excavation management, team supervision, trainee tuition, interaction with the public.

Available academic credits: 6 ECTS/ 3 US credit hours

Who should apply: This module is designed for those with substantial experience of archaeological excavation at general-operative and site-assistant level, seeking to advance their skills.

Duration: Two weeks, including middle Saturday.

Assessment (for those seeking academic credits)

- Attendance at, and participation in, all scheduled fieldwork, field class and lectures.
- Completion of a Learner's Journal (daily entries, Introduction and Conclusion, illustrations).

3. PRACTICAL INFORMATION



3.1 Module dates for 2021

6-Week Combined Course: SS103/SS110/SS111 (18 ECTS or 9US Credit Hours)
Monday 7th June – Friday 16th July 2021

4-Week Combined Course: SS103/SS110 (12 ECTS or 6US Credit Hours)
Monday 7th June – Friday 2nd July 2021
Monday 21st June – Friday 16th July 2021

2-Week Introduction to Archaeological Excavation: SS103 (6ECTS or 3US Credit Hours)
Monday 7th June – Friday 18th June 2021
Monday 21st June – Friday 2nd July 2021
Monday 5th July – Friday 16th July 2021

2-Week Intermediate Archaeological Excavation: SS110 (6ECTS or 3US Credit Hours)
Monday 7th June – Friday 18th June 2021
Monday 21st June – Friday 2nd July 2021
Monday 5th July – Friday 16th July 2021

3.2 Fees [and what they cover]

Unlike some other field schools, our fees include accommodation, prepared meals, and daily transport.



All 2-week Courses

Course Fee: €2495 (6ECTS or 3US Credit Hours)

- Tuition
- Insurance
- Equipment
- Accommodation
- Transport to and from the site daily
- Breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch and dinner
- Guided Day trip around the Burren to visit some of the area's most famous sites.

4 Week Course

Course Fee: €4,250 (SS109/SS110 - 12 ECTS or 6US Credit Hours)

- Tuition
- Accommodation
- Insurance
- Equipment
- Transport to and from the site daily
- Breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch and dinner
- Day trip 1 - Guided Day trip around the Burren to visit some of the area's most famous sites.
- Day trip 2 – Visit to the Hunt Museum and Limerick Castle.

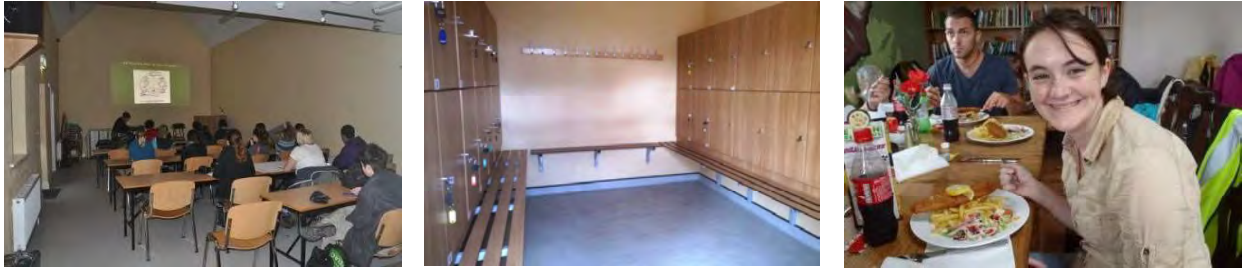
6 Week Course

Course Fee: €5,995 (SS109/SS110/SS112 - 18 ECTS or 9US Credit Hours)

- Tuition
- Accommodation
- Insurance
- Equipment
- Transport to and from the site daily
- Breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch and dinner
- Day trip 1- Guided Day trip around the Burren to visit some of the area's most famous sites.
- Day trip 2 – Visit to the Hunt Museum and Limerick Castle.

3.3 On-site Facilities

A purpose-built field school was opened at Caherconnell in 2012. It contains a lecture space, post-excavation lab, administrative office, storerooms, equipment room, and student lockers. The café of the on-site visitor centre provides daily snacks and lunch (included in fees).



Classroom, locker-room, eating lunch.

3.4 Accommodation

Accommodation for the Archaeology Field School is provided by White Family at The Hydro Hotel. The hotel is located in the heart of Lisdoonvarna in North Clare, Ireland's historic Spa town, world famous for its music and the home of the annual matchmaking festival every September. The Hydro offers a unique blend of friendly service and warm hospitality. The bright and airy reception area is an ideal place to relax, along with two cosy lounge areas. Students can enjoy a full Irish or Continental breakfast each morning before travelling to Caherconnell and a 3 course evening meal when they return to the Hydro every evening. Breakfast and evening meal are covered by your fees.

3.5 Things to Bring!

Work gloves: required for heavier tasks. Two pairs means you have a spare to wear if you want to wash the other ones!

Waterproofs: boots must be worn on site (no sandals or sneakers), a waterproof jacket and over-trousers are the key to a comfortable day outdoors if it rains, which it does occasionally in Ireland...

Change of shoes: bring a pair of sandals, flip-flops or trainers to wear to and from site and inside the School facilities. You will have a locker on site where you can leave work boots etc. overnight.

Medications: if you take medications for any reason, or have any allergies, please remember to bring your medications with you!

3.6 Student Testimonials

Read what some of our past participants think:

“I signed up for the excavation at Caherconnell on a whim; I had to complete a Field School as a requirement for my Master’s Degree, and I had always wanted to see Ireland. I selected it out of a total of 4 Irish Archaeological Field Schools, because I thought that, from the description on the website, I would be getting the best experience there. I was not at all wrong, and the moment I stepped into the Hostel in Kilfenora, one of the best summers of my entire life began. The staff at Caherconnell felt like family at the end of the 6 weeks. The Hostel and the Pub felt like home by the second week, and it didn’t honestly feel like I was staying in a hostel at all; it was more like Mark and Orla Vaughan had welcomed us to stay in their home, which happened to have enough rooms for everyone. My time at Caherconnell shaped my outlook on archaeology, solidified my choice to focus on the archaeology of Ireland, shaped my upcoming Master’s Thesis, and most definitely changed my life. The excavation was some of the most fun I’ve had in archaeology, and Noel, Michelle, Claire, Pat, and Deanna have set the bar very high for the future dig teams I will be on, because they are Phenomenal. Not a day goes by that I don’t think about Caherconnell and Kilfenora, and I cannot wait to return.”

Ben Rideout – Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut



“I had been very curious if I wanted to do archaeological excavations as a part of my career path as an anthropologist. I had never travelled outside the United States by myself either. Once I arrived in Ireland, I had made some of the most treasured memories and friendships during my stay there. The instructors of the archaeological field school provided excellent education and were very approachable for any questions over the field school course itself. All of the staff at Caherconnell treated all of my friends and I like family, and took very good care of us.

After having this experience for the summer of 2016, I want to come back to learn more and excavate here again! I do recommend this field school to everyone. The friendships and experience made here will last a lifetime, as well as the opportunity to experience Irish history and culture with the weekend trips.”

Andrew Leung – University of Colorado, Denver

“While I had always found archaeology fascinating, somehow I had never dreamed of going on a dig myself. Then I learned about Caherconnell and knew I had to go. As I had never done archaeology before I wasn’t sure what to expect and was a little bit nervous: ‘Would I be under qualified? Would I mess up? Would I be accepted?’ Not once at Caherconnell did I feel that I was out of place or that I wasn’t exactly where I was supposed to be. The instructors and staff were helpful, patient, and above all excited to be sharing their vast knowledge and experience. On top of receiving an incredible education in one of the most beautiful places on earth, I also made life-long friends. This is an experience I would not trade for the world and can only hope that one day I will be lucky enough to return to what became my Irish home.”

Indrani Schelling – University of Utah, Salt Lake City

“The archaeological field school at Caherconnell quite possibly encompassed the best 6 weeks of my life.

I have always looked forward to my first archaeological excavation, and I cannot imagine a better place to experience that than at Caherconnell. Not only is the site and surrounding countryside absolutely breath-taking, but the instructors and site staff are brilliant, helpful, and kind.



The friendships made at Caherconnell are lasting and stretch across the globe. The skills taught through the field school can be carried on to wherever your path in archaeology may take you. Caherconnell, in its own special way, truly becomes like a second home.”

Autumn Melby – Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

“I had waited a life-time to go on an archaeological dig. The archaeological field school at Caherconnell more than fulfilled my dreams. I could not have had a better experience. The combination of class work and field work was perfect.

The field work covered a wide array of disciplines from learning how to map and grid the sections, to site sheets, to measurements and cleaning artifacts. The journal that we kept reinforced the information that we learned in the field.

The excitement that you feel when you uncover an artifact or feature is beyond belief! Everyone had their glory moments when they discovered something that had not seen the light of day for centuries.

The instructors were very knowledgeable and helpful. The facilities were extraordinary. The Caherconnell staff became a second family.

They even included some weekend day trips to other areas in the Burren region for students!

I would highly recommend this archaeological field school to anyone.”

Cheryll McCormick, University of Wisconsin, Madison

“I had a wonderful experience at Caherconnell Field School.

The staff provided excellent mentoring to new archaeologists, and even provided 1:1 teaching.

The site’s location is absolutely beautiful and rich with history.

You truly do make lasting friendships at this field school, even in the local community.

My experience at Caherconnell prompted the beginning of my pursuit to have a career as an archaeologist.

I am forever grateful for the wonderful experiences I have had.”

Deanna Bailey, Humboldt State University.