

Collaborative Doctoral Awards Studentship Competition (Project-led)



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

Project Title:	Feeding Medieval Carrickfergus- A Multi-proxy Study of Livestock Husbandry in a Frontier Town	
Project Summary:	The project will follow a multi-proxy approach that combines historical mapping, landscape survey, use of historical sources, zooarchaeology and multi-isotope analysis to provide a more nuanced understanding of the human-animal interactions that enabled the English town at Carrickfergus to operate within its Gaelic landscape. The information will provide valuable new socio-economic data on livestock husbandry in Carrickfergus and its hinterlands as well as explore the nature of interactions between the townsfolk and its Gaelic neighbours that can then be used in the visitor information experiences HED are intending to develop in conjunction with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.	
Institution:	Queen’s University Belfast	
Partner Organisation:	Historic Environment Division (HED), Department for Communities NI (DfC)	
Primary AHRC Subject Area:	Archaeology	
Creative Practice Component:	None	

For further information and to submit an expression of interest, please contact:			
Lead Supervisor:	Prof. Eileen Murphy	Email:	eileen.murphy@qub.ac.uk
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN:			DEADLINE Monday 6th January 2020

Project Description:
<p>Carrickfergus, located on the eastern coast of the north of Ireland, has been a town for over 800 years. Its rise to prominence started in AD 1177 when the Anglo-Norman adventurer John de Courcy commenced the construction of a major castle as part of his invasion strategy. Throughout the Anglo-Norman period it was a major military outpost, an urban settlement, and an ecclesiastical centre. By the mid-14th century the earldom of Ulster was in decline and the Anglo-Norman colony was forced to contract to Carrickfergus, its hinterland now controlled by the Gaelic lordship of the Clandeboye O’Neills (Clann Áeda Buide Ua Néill). Carrickfergus continued to function, however, and remained in contact via sea-lanes with the other Anglo-Norman areas along the eastern coast of Ireland and remained under English control throughout the Late Medieval period. While subject to occasional O’Neill attack, it continued to be a major trading centre, through the Tudor Nine Years War (1594-1603) and the subsequent Plantation of Ulster (1610), to the early 18th century when it became eclipsed by Belfast (Ó Baoill 2008).</p> <p>Carrickfergus has been intensively excavated by archaeologists over the past 50 years, and particularly during the 1990s. Collectively this work has yielded a substantial body of information about the town’s castle, defences, craftworking and trading activities. The vibrancy of the port in the 17th century is attested through evidence of imported pottery from England and continental Europe. Substantial zooarchaeological collections recovered during the various excavations have</p>

yielded insights concerning the meat diet of the townsfolk across the Medieval period (e.g. Murphy 2007; 2012), while evidence for the consumption of dogs may attest to the difficulties of life within a frontier town (Murphy and Ó Baoill 2000; Murphy 2001). Despite this rich array of zooarchaeological evidence, however, no synthetic study has been made of the town's Medieval livestock economy. How did the townsfolk get the meat they consumed? Did the hostile nature of the hinterland mean they had to become self-sufficient, maintaining their own herds within their territory, despite its heavily contracted extent at times? Alternatively, was there a degree of cooperation with the Gaelic population living on the O'Neill lands surrounding the town? The proposed project would seek to investigate the livestock husbandry and economic practices that enabled Carrickfergus to function throughout the Medieval period.

The importance of Medieval Carrickfergus has meant the town has been well mapped and it boasts the earliest map of any town in Ulster, dating to AD 1560, as well as a Royal Irish Academy historic town atlas (Robinson 1986) and these maps will enable an interrogation of the town's potential in terms of livestock husbandry. The mapping aspect of the project will also be extended to the uplands surrounding Carrickfergus since recent archaeological survey and excavation has identified the existence of a previously unrecognised type of monument in the uplands of south Antrim – a class of large sub-circular enclosures, with diameters up to about 100m, often with internal houses. Radiocarbon dating of such a site excavated at Slievenacloy, Co. Antrim, indicate its use during the Medieval period (McSparron 2019), while a parallel site excavated during the 1980s at Tildarg, Co. Antrim, dated to the 12-14th centuries (Brannon 1984). Recent landscape research has demonstrated the existence of at least a further six such sites in the Antrim uplands (Hughes 2018). The identification of these monuments as upland cattle enclosures finds support in the historical sources; Clandeboye was known to be good cattle country with extensive grazing lands capable of feeding thousands of animals (Edwards 2005, 482). Is it the case that the inhabitants of Carrickfergus were trading with local Gaelic cattle barons for their livestock?

The 1990s faunal reports used modern zooarchaeological methodologies but this was not the case for early assemblages and these will be re-analysed and all zooarchaeological materials integrated. Samples of the main livestock species collected from across the Medieval period will be subject to multi-isotope analysis – sulphur ($\delta^{34}\text{S}$), oxygen ($\delta^{18}\text{O}$) and Strontium ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$) – to determine their place of origin. This multi-proxy approach combining historical mapping, landscape survey, use of historical sources, zooarchaeology and multiisotope analysis has the potential to provide a more nuanced understanding of the human-animal interactions that enabled the English town at Carrickfergus to operate within its Gaelic landscape. The information will provide valuable new socio-economic data on Carrickfergus and the interactions between the townsfolk and the hinterlands that can then be used in the visitor information experiences HED are intending to develop in conjunction with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

First Supervisor:	Prof Eileen Murphy	School/Department:	Archaeology & Palaeoecology, School of Natural & Built Environment
Second Supervisor:	Dr Colm Donnelly	School/Department:	Archaeology & Palaeoecology, School of Natural & Built Environment
Additional Advisor:	Dr Kate Britton	Organisation/Institution:	School of Geosciences, University of Aberdeen
Additional Advisor:	Mr Ruairi O Baoill	Organisation/Institution:	Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast

The student would be supported by an in-house supervisory team that combines expertise in zooarchaeology, medieval Ireland, landscape survey and the archaeology of Carrickfergus. Professor Eileen Murphy undertook the zooarchaeological analysis of the faunal remains recovered during excavations in the town throughout the 1990s (Murphy 2010; 2012). She has also been involved in numerous studies that have included the use of multiproxy stable isotope studies to address issues of past diet, health status and migration (e.g. Murphy et al. 2013; Svyatko et al. 2013; Taylor et al. 2018). Dr Colm Donnelly is a leading expert in Medieval Ireland and his research has focused particularly on Gaelic Ireland (e.g. Donnelly 2014; 2015). He has also undertaken excavations within Carrickfergus Castle. Ruairi O Baoill is the leading expert on Carrickfergus and was the director of the excavations that occurred there during the 1990s. He has written a general reader book on the archaeology of Carrickfergus (O Baoill 2008) and a major monograph on the excavations is due for publication next year. An additional member of the QUB supervisory team will be Dr Cormac McSparron who excavated the potential cattle enclosure at Slievenacloy and has undertaken field survey of further potential sites of this nature

(McSparron 2019). The QUB team can provide the student with guidance on all of these critical aspects of the proposed project. Dr Kate Britton from the School of Geosciences, University of Aberdeen, has agreed to be an external supervisor on the project. She has a track record of engaging in multi-proxy isotope research (e.g. Jones and Britton 2019; Pederzani and Britton 2019) and is currently leading a major project that is exploring diet in Medieval Scottish towns. Rhonda Robinson, HED, is a leading authority on historic maps and landscape archaeology and is also heavily involved in the strategic plans for Carrickfergus so she and her team can bring this expertise to the project.

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The student will be fully integrated into the research environment of the School of Natural and Built Environment at QUB as a member of the 'Cultural and Society' research cluster. The research environment for this project is excellent in terms of facilities, staff support and access to materials, space and opportunities in training and networking. The School of Natural and Built Environment is a focus for interdisciplinary research and collaboration between humanities, sciences and social sciences, and provides a dynamic venue for postgraduate work. The applicant's research will continue this interdisciplinary tradition.

Archaeology and Palaeoecology is very well equipped with all the facilities that the applicant will require in relation to the Medieval archaeological (extensive library resources; numerous staff with expertise in this period) components of the project. The applicant will be able to avail of our zooarchaeological reference collection as well as the radiocarbon dating and isotope facilities within the 14CHRONO Centre. They will also be able to take advantage of our digital archaeological equipment and expertise for the landscape components of the project. They will be working within the main centre of research on Irish archaeology in a UK institution and will be able to develop their knowledge of Irish archaeology more broadly through the establishment of connections with the staff of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork. They will also be able to undertake public engagement through involvement with the Centre for Community Archaeology, important activities since the dissemination of new knowledge about Carrickfergus is of great interest to the partner organisation, HED.

Archaeology and Palaeoecology run a high-profile seminar series of invited external speakers (suggested by staff and postgraduate students) that further promotes interdisciplinarity and scholarly debate. The vibrant postgraduate community have dedicated shared office spaces and a Common Room. In conjunction with postdoctoral researchers, they run an internal seminar series where staff and students present their research. Research presentations to the School are a compulsory part of postgraduate research training and development. Since the project focuses on Medieval livestock husbandry the student will also be encouraged to join the Medieval History group coordinated by academics in the School of History, Anthropology and Politics as well as the Institute of Irish Studies.