COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Malachy Conway, The National Trust

A View of Belfast from the National Trust property of Divis & The Black Mountain
Queen Anne House Dig, 2008

Resistivity Survey results showing house and other features
Prepared by Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, QUB, 2007

Castle Ward, Co. Down

1755 1813

The excavation was advertised as part of Archaeology Days in NI & through media and other publicity including production of fliers and banners and road signs.

Excavation aim to 'ground truth' the survey results through a series of test trenches, with support from NIEA, Built Heritage.
Excavation ran for 15 days (Wednesday-Sunday) in June 2008 and attracted 43 volunteers. The project was supported by NT archaeologist and 3 archaeologists from Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (QUB), through funding by NIEA, Built Heritage. The volunteers were given on-site training in excavation and recording. Public access and tours were held throughout field work. The Downpatrick Branch of YAC was given a day on-site, where they excavated in separate trenches and were filmed and interviewed by local TV.
Engagement was one of the primary aims of this project, seeking to allow public to access and take part in current archaeological fieldwork and research. Two publications on the dig season followed in a local historical journal and also in an Ireland-wide popular magazine. Post-excavation analysis and report compilation was undertaken by Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, QUB.
Local schools take part in On-site education programme

YAC members recording a trench – parents lend a hand

Trenches reveal foundations of the post 1760s house wings

Two little boys 4 & 5yrs get some expert advice – parents were required to accompany their small children

Dig volunteers & visiting public ‘engage’ each other on site

Queen Anne House Dig, 2009

Castle Ward
Co. Down

All photos by M.Conway (NT)
Downhill Archaeological Project

Downhill Demesne lies on the North Londonderry Coast just West of Castlerock. A 3 year Survey & Research plan for 2009-2011 sought to engage Volunteers in the investigation & recording of the northern Yards, to study their structure, recover architectural material and artefacts & record/interpret the site for access by visitors.

The Bishop’s Palace was built mid 1770s-80s by Earl Bishop Frederick Hervey and though In ruins is Listed B+

Aerial view from north by Crawford, 2000

Palace from east - present

Palace from north-east by Green c.1900
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Diagram of the Palace from east showing
- East yard
- West yard
- Stables
- Stalls
- Kitchen
- Stabling
- Library
- Dining room
- Lounge
- Drawing room
- Bedroom
- Guest room
- The Clearwell

Ground plan of the Castle

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Downhill - Project Aims

• Record historic built fabric
• Clear vegetation and rubble within yards.
• Expose original surfaces (cobbled/flag floors etc)
• Excavate, recover and record portable materials
• Investigate function of Buildings including the Gas Plant
• Open public access to areas not previously available
• Permit public participation and viewing of archaeological works
• Report; site interpretation, notices, tours, lectures and visitor engagement

Palace ruin from southwest c.1970s
Downhill Project Timetable

- Undertake Remedial Works to permit safe working
- Archaeological Licence & Listed Building Consent
- Recruitment of dig volunteers
- Warden’s Bash, ‘site preparation’ for access
- Phase 1 field season August 2009
- Phase 1 Desk-based activities September-October 2009
Excavation ran for 19 days (Wednesday-Sunday) in August 2008 and attracted 14 volunteers. Volunteers were given on-site training in excavation and recording. Public access was permitted throughout, however a very wet August sometimes made engagement with public visitors difficult.

Around 75% of the East Yard was cleared of rubble and prepared for detailed recording. Architectural fragments were recovered & catalogued.
Monumental Surveys

Since 2006 Ulster Archaeology Society have surveyed 18 sites on NT NI Estate; field season is April-Oct and reports are compiled Nov-March. A Historic Buildings Survey Group is now planned.

Surveying a Court Tomb at Fair Head, Co. Antrim

Completed survey reports can be viewed on-line at http://quis.qub.ac.uk/uarcsoc/fieldsurveys.htm
NI Vision & Planning

Photograph courtesy of Dr Colin Breen, Centre for Maritime Archaeology University of Ulster, Coleraine – visioning plans are to facilitate community participation in future research excavations at Dunluce, Co. Antrim.
Northern Ireland Archaeology Forum

NIAF facilitates individuals & organisations to protect, study and promote the historic environment.

Visit - www.niaf.co.uk
**Chairman’s Welcome**

I would like to warmly welcome you to the first issue of In-Site, the newsletter of the Northern Ireland Archaeology Forum.

The Forum was formed in early 2006 as a loose association of individuals and organisations across the sector who were interested in furthering the promotion and study of the historic environment and especially of archaeology in Northern Ireland. In particular, we aimed to promote the wonderful archaeological resource - prehistoric, historic, industrial, military and more - to the general public and politicians and highlight some of the opportunities as well as challenges which face the historic landscape. Many of these challenges relate to funding issues and ensuring that the wider community is aware of the value, richness and modern relevance of the archaeological resource in Northern Ireland, within the context of the island of Ireland, Great Britain and the rest of Europe.

We want to foster greater understanding of this unique resource through education and discussion and to expand an appreciation of how the wonderful landscapes we see today have been brought about by thousands of years of human activity. We have an opportunity to use archaeology to help study our common past and bring greater community appreciation of our shared and diverse cultural heritage.

Archaeology has a relevance today which it has never had before - we can use the lessons from our past to help us tackle the problems facing our environment and society today. However, we must protect that past if we are to learn lessons from it. Northern Ireland has seen an unprecedented period of growth and development; we need to be able to prove our most significant archaeological resources wherever possible. Where this isn’t possible, we must encourage the dissemination of the results of archaeological mitigation work associated with development to the wider public and politicians, and engender new debates within the academic community.

In sum – we see an exciting time ahead of us, of opportunities, but also challenges, where an independent voice can make a real difference in helping to determine the way forward. We have an open and inclusive membership ethos – we look forward to working with you.

Dr Nick Whitehouse, QUB, Chair NIAF

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**NIEA/CAF EXCAVATION PROGRAMME**

2009 is the 400th Anniversary of the Ulster Plantation and to mark the occasion the NIAF is supporting a series of excavations at 17th Century sites across Northern Ireland. The work, carried out by QUB’s Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), aims to improve our understanding of these buildings and sites, allowing for better interpretation. The programme includes excavations at Blaundul House, Dunluce and Tully Castle, Salthygh Town, Castle Ward, Row Valley and Salthygh Town.

Although the majority of the sites are for research purposes, at Tully the work is being carried out in anticipation of conservation work to protect the castle vault. Trenches have been sunk to the rear of the castle, so for yielding a small number of finds. Although it is recorded that the castle was blitzed, scarring of state have been found below the turrets, perhaps indicating that these were better protected. Glass and window lead have also been found. Some of these digs are publicly accessible as part of the Archaeology Days programme. Visit: www.nienvironment.gov.uk/archaeology_days

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Membership of NIAF is free, and brings a range of benefits to the individuals and organisations who join.

- Receive copies of all publications (on paper or pdf) including a quarterly newsletter;
- Priority invitations to events and conferences organised by the Forum;
- The opportunity to promote your events and disseminate information to a wide readership;
- Develop contacts within the heritage sector and outreach to communities and other bodies;
- Receive support and advice on promotion of heritage and archaeology within communities, including schools educational programmes;
- Raise your particular site, area or interest within a wider context to our decision makers;
- Have your contact details listed on the NIAF website, which will be developed as a local point for information on the historic environment of Northern Ireland;
- Contribute to activities and help to promote heritage matters among local and national decision makers.

The Forum is funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, The Council for British Archaeology and the Heritage Council and is facilitated by Northern Ireland Environment Link.