DigIt

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Editorial

What an exciting and transformative 6 months for *Dig It*! Our Journal simultaneously became peer-reviewed, international, and larger – including more pages and including more people into the editorial process.

It has been an ever rewarding experience, and I look forward to holding in my hands the printed Journal with 7 research papers from authors in 5 countries; 2 field reports; 2 conference and website reviews; 1 interview with a veteran of archaeology; and a friendly 'hello' from a fellow archaeology student journal from Buffalo, US.

I would like to extend the warmest 'thank you' to my three congenial fellow editors Jordan Ralph, Antoinette Hennessey and Matthew Ebbs for their drive, motivation, ingenious ideas and hard work. To the authors for trusting us with their papers and spending days and nights improving them. To the permanent review panel consisting of Rhiannon Agutter, Amy Batchelor, Robert DeWet-Jones, Anna Foroozani, Simon Munt, Dianne Riley, Zoe Robinson, Fiona Shanahan, Rhiannon Stammers, Isabel Wheeler for their gentle language editing. To the anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback. To ArchSoc for their financial, organisational and emotional support.

Dig It intends to provide opportunities for professional development to young researchers who wish to familiarise themselves with the different roles in the publishing process, from writing over editing and layouting through to reviewing. As it turns out, the greatest learning experience was probably had by us editors, after all – and we would like to thank everybody else involved in the Journal for allowing us to transform an idea sketched in December 2013, through trial and error and hard work, into something to be proud of. With the mouse still dizzy from the final layouting work, we are looking forward to the next challenge that will be *Dig It* Volume 2, Issue 2.

Jana Rogasch

Editor, *Dig It*: The Journal of the Flinders Archaeological Society

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President's Address

I would firstly like to say welcome to our new and continuing members for 2014. We look forward to delivering an outstanding service of both professional development and social networking to our Society's members. I would like to thank the 2013 committee for their efforts in providing a great network for both students and professionals. ArchSoc continues to be the largest and most active student archaeological society in Australia, a feat that has been recognised by other institutions around the country.

A number of ArchSoc and Departmental events have kept our Society busy throughout the start of the year. These events include the Digger's Shield cricket match against the Paleontology Society, the National Archaeology Student Conference (NASC) hosted at Flinders University, the Ruth and Vincent Megaw Annual Lecture in Archaeology and Art, presented by Professor Emeritus Brian Fagan, and recently, the maritime-themed annual pub crawl. We are hoping to run a field exercise later in the year, details to be advised. ArchSoc activities are displayed on the notice board outside HUMN 112 and details are sent out via our mailing list <archsoc@flinders.edu.au> so keep an eye out for future events.

As some of our returning members may notice, *Dig It* has now become a peer-reviewed journal. As our membership has grown this year, we are also gaining a number of international readers and contributors. The editorial team welcomes your contributions for future issues of *Dig It*. I would encourage our members to publish here where many of your fellow peers can read up on what other members are conducting research on.

Now in our 22nd year of existence, the Flinders Archaeological Society will continue to flourish, bringing out the best in our members for the industry of tomorrow. Get involved when you can! We are always looking for volunteers to lend a hand, generate new ideas, help run social events and professional development opportunities, or simply come along and show some support. I hope to see all of you around some time on campus or at one of our many events. Don't forget to follow us on Twitter (@FlindersArchSoc), like our Facebook page, and follow our blog (http://flindersarchsoc.org).

Bradley Guadagnin

President, Flinders Archaeological Society 2014

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Adelaide city at dusk. Photograph: Andrew Wilkinson, 2014

The Dead Beneath the Floor:

The use of space for burial in the Dominican Blackfriary, Trim, Co. Meath, Ireland

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Abstract

This paper examines the results of archaeological excavations within Irish Dominican Priories, specifically evidence for burial practice. It focuses on the use of space for burial within the Medieval Dominican Blackfriary in Trim, Co. Meath, using preliminary data accumulated over four field seasons (2010–2013), excavated by the Irish Archaeological Field School (IAFS).

Sixty-six burials have been identified at Blackfriary in the nave and cloisters of the church. Within a relatively confined area of the nave, two apparently discreet zones of use have been identified, characterized by varying burial patterns. To the west, burials consist of fully articulated, extended inhumations moderately spaced out. Less than a meter to the east, fully articulated extended inhumations are tightly packed, overlapping, and overlain by a dense deposit (30–50cm) of disarticulated human bone. This paper examines the skeletal remains in the context of their location and associations, considering the location of the burial in relation to the friaries layout, evidence of standing structures, and other burials. Data from other Dominican friaries is used as a comparison. Finally, the paper discusses contemporary social contexts which may explain the variations observed.

Introduction

Every time we walk across the floor of a church, it is unlikely that we are thinking about the bodies beneath it. In areas with a medieval past, however, chances are very likely that they are there. Sometimes, attention is drawn to them by way of a slab on the floor, a tomb in the wall, or the presence of a crypt beneath the church, but sometimes the presence of the resting dead is more subtle. As time goes on, the dead can be forgotten, leaving it to archaeology to rediscover the individuals who were buried beneath the church and attempt to reconstruct their history.

This paper will focus on burial data from the site of the Dominican Blackfriary in Trim, Ireland. This archaeological site is a research excavation conducted by the Irish Archaeological Field School (IAFS) and key members Finola O'Carroll (principle investigator and head of the excavation) and Dr. Rachel Scott (principle bioarchaeologist, of DePaul University). Excavations have run consecutively since 2010, and the author has been present at each field season, initially as the field school's first student in 2010, then as a trainee supervisor during the 2011–2013 field seasons. The project outlined in this paper was initially conducted based on the excavation work through 2012 as part of the author's undergraduate thesis, and has been expanded to include material from the 2013 field season. All research has been conducted with the permission of IAFS, Finola O'Carroll, and Dr. Rachel Scott. Photographs and documents, where not the author's own, have been reproduced with the same permission.

Specifically, this paper will focus on the use of space for burial within the nave of the friary. These burials are not currently marked with any of the identifiers listed above, so it is up to archaeology and historical research to determine the significance of their presence. With the data, I will: situate the burials with respect to the internal structures of the church; discuss the relationship of the burials to their space; and attempt to understand any patterns (if present). In order to establish context, this paper provides a background of the town; excavation history of the site; information regarding church archaeology; social attitudes of the time period towards death; and finally, comparative data.

This essay represents one of the few reports concerning excavations within Irish Dominican Priories. As this is an ongoing project, the emphasis of this paper is on: a basic understanding of the intricacies surrounding the politics of burial practices in Medieval Trim, to offer hypotheses to explain potential burial trends, and to provide areas of focus for the upcoming 2014 season so that we can continue to improve upon concepts discussed here.

Understanding Trim

Located 40km to the northwest of Dublin, on the banks of the river Boyne, Trim has been described as a dual-purpose town, serving both as "caput of a rich and extensive lordship and as a fortified market town with extensive mercantile connections and its own independent administration" (Potterton 2005:67). Although archaeological evidence shows that there was pre-Norman activity, including a monastery founded by St. Loman beneath the medieval St. Patrick's Church, it was established as an Anglo-Norman town in 1172 by Hugh de Lacy. During its peak, Trim was a major center of activity. The town itself was walled, with five gates controlling traffic in and out of the city. A medieval bridge still spans the Boyne, connecting the two halves of the town. Other features of Trim included a mint within the castle, at least two fortified houses, a medieval suburb, a leper hospital (outside of the town walls), a frankhouse, a guildhouse, a water mill, three religious institutions, and two religious houses and the Cathedral in Newtown Trim, 2km to the east along the Boyne.

Of the three religious institutes – Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian – only the Dominican house was located outside of the town walls. It is this house which is the focus of this paper. The Blackfriary, as it is now known, was founded in 1263 by the Lord of Trim at the time, Geoffrey de Geneville, who retired to the order in his later life. This particular institution was the seventeenth Dominican house established in Ireland, and the third largest overall. Following the general practice of the order in Ireland, it was located immediately outside of the town walls, near the Athboy gate just north of the town. The friars at Trim held seventy-two acres at the time of the Dissolution, and the friary was said to have contained the following features: a belfry, a chapter house, a dormitory, a hall, three chambers, a kitchen, a pantry, a stable, cloisters, gardens, an orchard, and a cemetery (Potterton 2005:325). During the height of its occupancy in

the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Blackfriary was a site of importance, both generally for the town and for the ecclesiastical history of Ireland. Potterton (2005:354) notes that this, along with the Augustinian and Franciscan friars, "played a highly significant role in the medieval town, treating the sick, looking after the poor and attending to the spiritual needs of the townspeople". Apart from these daily tasks, the Blackfriary in Trim held three meetings of the Dominican chapter, in the years 1285, 1300, and 1315.

Activities at the church declined, however, in the fifteenth century as Trim began to go through a period of economic loss, probably as a result of other major cities, such as Dublin, increasing as economic centers. Potterton (2005) notes that the decline continued at the friary over the following centuries. During the eighteenth century, the Blackfriary entered its ultimate descent into disrepair. Bishop Burke, writing in 1756, noted "a few years before that the walls of the house and chapel gave evidence of their original magnificence" but on his return, he had found that "the stones were sold and carried away to other buildings, so that on visiting the place he found scarcely any ruins" (Conwell 1878:141). By 1795, the ruins had been recorded as "a few remaining heaps of old wall … of a castle or some other building" (Potterton 2005:330). This destruction was the result of a housing boom in Trim, and stones were sold and quarried from the derelict Blackfriary, far easier than quarrying new stone. In 1837 the OS map showed the location of the friary as a small section of ruins. The site remained unoccupied, and in 2005, Potterton (2005:330) recorded that "six small mounds of masonry are all that remain above ground of the original structure. One of the chunks of masonry incorporates what

seems to be a rounded arch, and this may have been part of a spiral staircase". This is how the site remained until the start of excavations in 2010.

Excavation history

Initial survey work was conducted in June and July 1988 by Professor William J. Kennedy of Florida Atlantic University. Kennedy conducted a geophysical survey consisting of soil resistivity, proton magnetometry surveys, and low altitude, infra-red aerial photography. The survey results showed subsurface features, identified and outlined by Kennedy as foundations of the kitchen, cloisters, living quarters, refractory, tower, chancel and entrance. While excavations were proposed, they were not undertaken due to logistical reasons, and the site was left as it was. (Potterton 2005:331; Seaver *et al.* 2009:295).

In 2008, resurfacing and drainage works exposed human remains along a back lane that abuts the Blackfriary site. This event led to the excavation of a circular well, four burials in various stages of completion, and disarticulated human remains representing at least 12 individuals. The two nearly complete burials (1 and 2) both showed indications of trauma. The excavated area, lying to the southwest corner of the Blackfriary site, is thought to be within the limits of the friary's cemetery, and possibly represent its expansion. Further monitoring of the pavement construction showed that the graveyard cemetery most likely extended as far south as the town wall, but did not extend to the west and northwest of the friary buildings. The eastern extent of the graveyard cemetery is unknown and unexcavated. Because this excavation was only undertaken due to the supervision of construction, no further explorations were made, and this
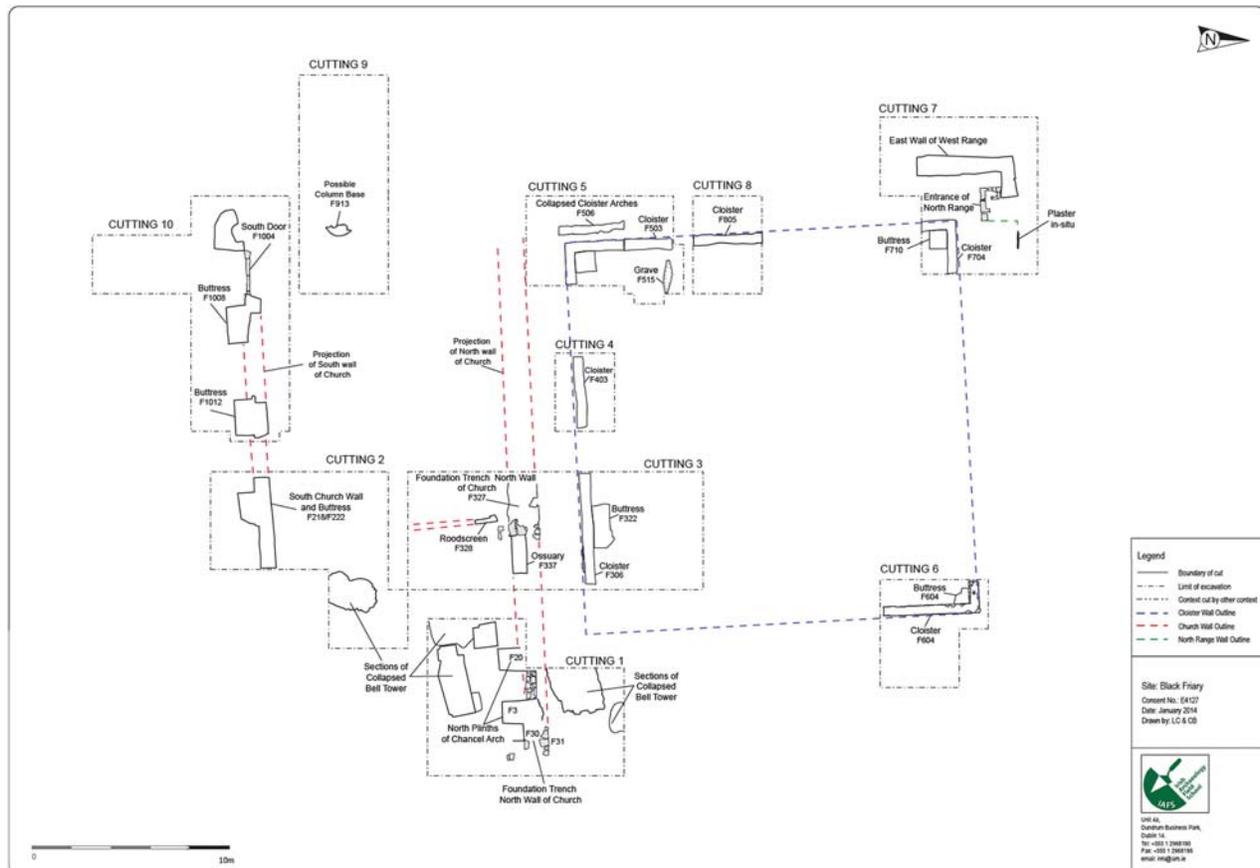

Figure 1: A map of site showing the cuttings and various structures (IAFS 2014)

section of the site was paved over (Seaver *et al.* 2009:295).

In 2010, the site was opened for fieldwork under the supervision of archaeologist Finola O'Carroll, director of the Irish Archaeological Field School (IAFS). A geophysical survey and topographical survey were conducted in conjunction with excavations in order to reveal the subsurface structures. The results of the topographical survey showed a greater degree of detail than the survey conducted in 1988 (see Figure 2 in the data section). To date, a total of 10 cuttings have been opened, exposing features pertaining to various elements of the cloister, church, and domestic ranges. A majority of the findings have been in relation to the western portion of the church (the nave) and the cloister, cloister garth, and ambulatory. Architectural features are both *in situ*[1] structures and fragmentary as rubble. Burials and disarticulated human bones (DHB[2]) have been exposed in the nave of the church, the cloister, and the ambulatory of the cloister. Ongoing excavations are expected to continue to reveal these features.

Church archaeology

When excavating a church, especially one that has no surviving above-ground structures, knowing the various features and components of a church is important. The layouts of medieval churches in Ireland are known from existing churches and previous archaeological studies of medieval British and European religious architecture. The interior of the medieval church is divided into two separate sections: the chancel (the eastern end of the church which seats the clergy and the choir and contains the altar) and the nave (the western end of the church for the laity). In some churches, there is an additional feature separating the two sections: the transept. When present, this feature is a north-south aisle which gives the church the impression of a cross. The two spaces formed by the transept on the north and south side of the church often contained other alters or places of prayer. Dominican churches tended to be linear, sometimes with the later additions of a side aisle to the nave and a transept on one side only of the crossing tower.

Associated with the church, when it is part of a conventional setting, is the cloister. Located towards the center of the monastery, with the buildings planned around it, the cloister garth was an open area used for various activities by the monks, including education, traveling between buildings, and reflective walking. Typically, the center of the cloister was ringed by a covered walkway or ambulatory which allowed activities to continue with protection from weather. In some traditions, the cloister was used to separate the kitchen – with its various aromas – from the church, placing them directly across the open courtyard from one another.

Churches, throughout the course of their usage, went through periodic modifications. They expanded, they were renovated, and most importantly, they changed with the times. Most churches, according to Rodwell (2005), started as a single or two-celled building consisting of the nave and chancel. Over time, as funding increases, the building was added to or expanded, usually by extending the chancel eastwards or the nave westwards. It is important to remember that during initial

or subsequent construction periods, medieval builders were not likely to obtain perfection; walls may not be a consistent thickness, or even meet at right angles. Floors – which were often compacted earth, gravel, or mortar – may slope across the length or width of the church anywhere from a few centimeters to half a meter in height difference due to the uneven ground on which the church was built. These continuity differences, when unknown to the archaeologist, can prove challenging and frustrating; therefore, they are important to keep in mind during an excavation (Rodwell 2005).

Medieval attitude toward death

Why did the townspeople bury their dead beneath the church in the first place? In practice, many of the attitudes towards death in Medieval Europe stemmed from Catholic Christian beliefs towards death. The Christian teachings, which put death and heaven as the ultimate salvation and goal, strongly influenced attitudes towards the body and soul. The Christian view of the afterlife held a 'covenant' between the living and the dead – the living, by praying for the souls of the dead, could help advance their way through Purgatory to salvation. Thus, individuals arranged to have their physical bodies and meta-physical souls cared for after their death in an effort to guarantee their reunion at some point in the afterlife. This meant they were willing to pay a fee for the security of this promise. Often times, this was done through the practice of almsgiving. Almsgiving was essentially an obligation – giving the friars money was an indirect way to ensure that their souls would be prayed for and their time in Purgatory would be short. This established an "abiding link between the friars and their patrons", which, according to Ó Clabaigh (2012:107) was the "most valued service that the friars performed for their benefactors". Therefore, in a sense, death became marketable.

In effect, death became strategic. The position of an individual's final interment had to be both one of humility (as was only Christian) and one of accessibility. Over time, it became a way to assert specific loyalties; for instance: familial, territorial, or imperial. Where the body was placed expressed something of importance. Burial inside churches originated with the interment saints, whose position within the church would help the laity in life. As time progressed, from around the beginning of the thirteenth century, the more privileged laity began being interred inside of churches, in imitation of the practices associated with saints. Monastic and cathedral churches were the first to bury the privileged laity within their walls once they realized that they could benefit "materially from the possession of an influential church" (Binski 1996:57).

Further, Binski (1996:57) states that "burial was in effect tied up with various forms of endowment. As a result…an important and competitive economy grew up around bodies, extending that which had previously grown up around relics of saints". Rodwell (2005) similarly notes that before the later medieval period, there were few graves dug within the churches. Any graves that did exist "occupied the most favoured positions" within the chapel, as close to the altar as was possible (Rodwell 2005:174). Often, these burials, when excavated, show evidence of intercutting one another through various levels of usage. As the churches learned they could profit from charging wealthy parishioners for burial within their walls, they fueled the 'business' of death, increasing the demand for high-status church burials. This privilege had first been granted to the Benedictines, closely followed by the

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[1] *In situ refers to the discovery of an artefact or ecofact in its originally deposited position. Tumbled stones, for instance, are not considered to be 'in situ'.*

[2] *The term 'disarticulated human burial' and its abbreviation DHB will be used interchangeably.*

Cistercians in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and finally the Dominicans and Franciscans who dominated the burial 'industry'. Originally, the Dominican General Chapter of 1250 in London made the decision that their churches were not to be used for burials, but according to Binski (1996:58), this "restriction was short lived: by the fourteenth century…the friars had become notoriously greedy in their pursuit of the bodies of the new urban elite".

Thus, death in the medieval period became a contract between wealthy individuals who wanted to demonstrate their status by being buried within the church and churches who received status and money by having the bodies of wealthy individuals buried within their walls. Prior to the eighteenth century, burial within the church was "a privilege enjoyed by the clergy and a few notable lay folk, mainly gentry, but pressure for indoor burial subsequently became intense" Rodwell (2005:174). Eventually, merchants, farmers, physicians and many others – whole families, including babies – were able to buy their way into burial within the churches. In order to accommodate the various levels of wealth within society, the clergy charged for burials based on their location *within* the church. Ó Clabaigh (2012:109) notes that "in death as in life, a strict social hierarchy reigned and governed the positioning of graves within friary churches and precincts". This meant that the 'favored' positions by the altar were more expensive, and those on the fringes cheaper. This is recorded in a witty epitaph from the time period, cited by Rodwell (1996:174): "Here lie I by the chancel door,/Here lie I because I'm poor./The further in, the more you'll pay,/Here lie I, as warm as they". Aristocratic patrons received favorable burial positions by the altar, like the saints, and non-aristocratic patrons were usually buried in the nave and transept of the church (Ó Clabaigh 2012:109).

During the course of burial, it was not uncommon to disturb a burial already occupying that space, especially since earlier burials were not typically interred within a coffin. Binski (1996:55) notes that "once a body had been buried and had decomposed to the point of defleshing, it was normal to exhume it and to store the bones in a charnel house". Byrne (2006:91) suggests that the charnel vault itself was sometimes located beneath the church, much like the burials. Rodwell (2005) remarks that investigations can sometimes reveal a significant number of interments in one location. In these instances, the disarticulated bones – which can comprise up to 50% of the archaeological record (Rodwell 2005) – were often placed on top of the fresh burial, thus establishing a cyclical burial pattern. Current research is being undertaken by PhD student Jenny Crangle (Sheffield University) examining the post-depositional practice and treatment of medieval human remains which may highlight these and other practices; it is hoped this research will provide more information useful to the Blackfriary project in the future.

Comparative data

Out of the 41 Medieval Dominican Friaries in Ireland, only thirteen (including the Blackfriary in Trim) have been excavated. Of the twelve friaries (excluding Trim), two were reported to have not fully exposed or excavated any discovered burials; two focused on burials within the cemetery; and reports for the final eight were requested but unavailable. For this reason, two excavation reports from Medieval Dominican Friaries in England – Guildford and Beverely – were used, and are briefly summarized here. As the Order most likely originated from

England, and because both sites are Dominican in nature, it is argued that comparison is logical, although any differences may reflect different community practices.

The Dominican friary in Guildford, Surrey, was established in 1275 and operational until 1538. Two separate excavations took place, the first in 1973 and again the second in 1978. These excavations uncovered "walls and floors from several periods" (Poulton and Woods 1984:micro fiche p.17). Skeletal remains were found during both seasons, but more heavily encountered in the 1978 season, which focused on the nave of the church. In total, 113 burials were retrieved from the friary: 42 in the cemetery, 41 in the nave, and 30 listed as "residual". Within the nave, the graves mostly conformed to a standard pattern. Each had a visible grave cut, and the average size of the burial was 0.75m in depth and width, and 2m in length. Typically, "the interment was placed on the bottom of the grave-cut which was then backfilled with fairly clean sand. This sand [was] mixed with variable quantities of stones, floor tiles and bones from earlier burials" (Poulton and Woods 1984: micro fiche p.61). The burials were then broken down into five subsections: Group A conformed to the above description; Group B conformed, with the addition of a wooden coffin; Group C had a slight difference in composition; Group D was similar to B, with the exception that the coffin had collapsed and introduced a new fill; and Group E had distinctive, similar backfills differing from the standard backfill by having higher quantities of mortar, chalk lumps and clay mixed in with the sand.

Only five graves at Guildford were listed as "exceptional" for not conforming to the above subsections. One of these exceptions included burial within a lead coffin (which could denote a high status burial), while the other four were variations of disturbed graves, most likely robbed due to the presence of a lead coffin. Overall, there was a "remarkable degree of homogeneity throughout the site" (Poulton and Woods 1984: micro fiche p.119). The majority of the individuals were identified as male or probably male, and the burials identified as female were mostly restricted to the nave. Some unique skeletal traits were discovered, such as the 25th vertebrae present in Burial 24; however, evidence for trauma and disease was low. Regarding the position of burials, the authors note that "interment within the conventional church is likely to have been more desirable than burial in the cemetery. There is a strong supposition that this was the prerogative of the richer and more influential members of society" (Poulton and Woods 1984:68). The archaeological evidence supporting this lies in the more elaborate detail of those burials located in the nave of the church. Also, burials within the church were more likely to be interred with a coffin, which has been suggested as an additional sign of wealth. Burials within the cemetery are thought to be 'less distinguished'. Graves in the cloister, being predominantly male, are thought to have been the final resting place for the monks.

The Dominican friary in Beverly, Yorkshire, was established in 1240 and dissolved in 1539. Archaeological investigations in 1963 and 1989 indicated the overall dimensions of the original church nave to be approximately 6.6 meters wide and 25 meters long (internally). This was considered by the authors to be an average size. A south aisle was added later. The choir, to the east, was 21 meters long and 7 meters wide. While the south wall of the choir lined up directly with the nave, the north wall extended one meter to the north beyond the northern wall of the nave. Whether this was intentional or was the result of expansion is

unknown.

Burials within the choir included a brick lined tomb for what is suspected to be one individual, and a possible grave slab. The brick lined tomb appeared to have been disturbed, possibly for the retrieval of a lead coffin. Four unlined grave cuts were identified within the choir. A second, larger tomb (larger than 0.88m) was partially exposed in an area suspected to be a chantry chapel, and likely belonged to either a family or a wealthy individual. Several other burials had been located and identified in the east end of the church, but were not excavated because they were not threatened by on-going development. The author reports that "previous limited investigations of the west end of the nave have shown burials in coffins within the church [fifteen total], and burials apparently without coffins in the cloister" (Foreman 1996:240)

Records from the previous excavation show that the twelve burials excavated included a mix of adult males and females, juveniles, and one infant. The small sample records little indication of disease, with the exception of periodontal disease in the more elderly individuals. The report states that "the density of the burials and clear indications of new graves cutting into old demonstrate the overcrowding of the area as a burial ground". Foreman (1996) notes that "bequests to the friars, some specifically linked to burial within the church are recorded from 1311 and reached a peak c.1391–1410". Some of these names include John de Holme who desired to be buried within the church in 1421, and Thomas Hilton, who specifically requested to be buried "just inside the south door" by the stoup.

Data from the Blackfriary

The topographical survey conducted in 2010 revealed subsurface structures in the plot of ground known to contain the Blackfriary in Trim, Ireland. The basic image, when examined in conjunction with plans of other known Dominican friaries hints at the location of the church and cloister (Figure 2).

Excavations have thus far corroborated the initial assumptions of the church layout based on the topographical survey. The northeast, northwest, and southwest corners of the cloister have all been exposed with in situ architecture (see Cuttings 5, 6, and 7 in Figure 1). A portion of the southern (Cuttings 3, 4, 5) and western (Cuttings 5, 8) walls of the cloister has also been exposed, along with repurposed arches from the cloister arcade used as a pathway along the western boundary of the cloister (Cutting 8). Fragments of architectural columns and column bases have been discovered near the remains of the walls.

Four large plinth supports/buttresses have been exposed (Cuttings 2, 10), giving evidence for the southern boundary of the church. The southern door was located between the two western-most plinths, as seen through the still-remaining sandstone door stoop. The space between the middle two buttresses contained a secondary deposit of human remains neatly arranged, suggesting intentional use of the space as an ossuary. Evidence for northern wall of the church is provided in the form of two parallel in situ walls (Cutting 1) which would have run perpendicular to the northern wall, forming the base or plinths of an archway. Along the same line, to the west, the foundation trench of the wall has been exposed (Cutting 3), as well as a line of in situ architectural remains along what is considered to be a wall-tomb or ossuary
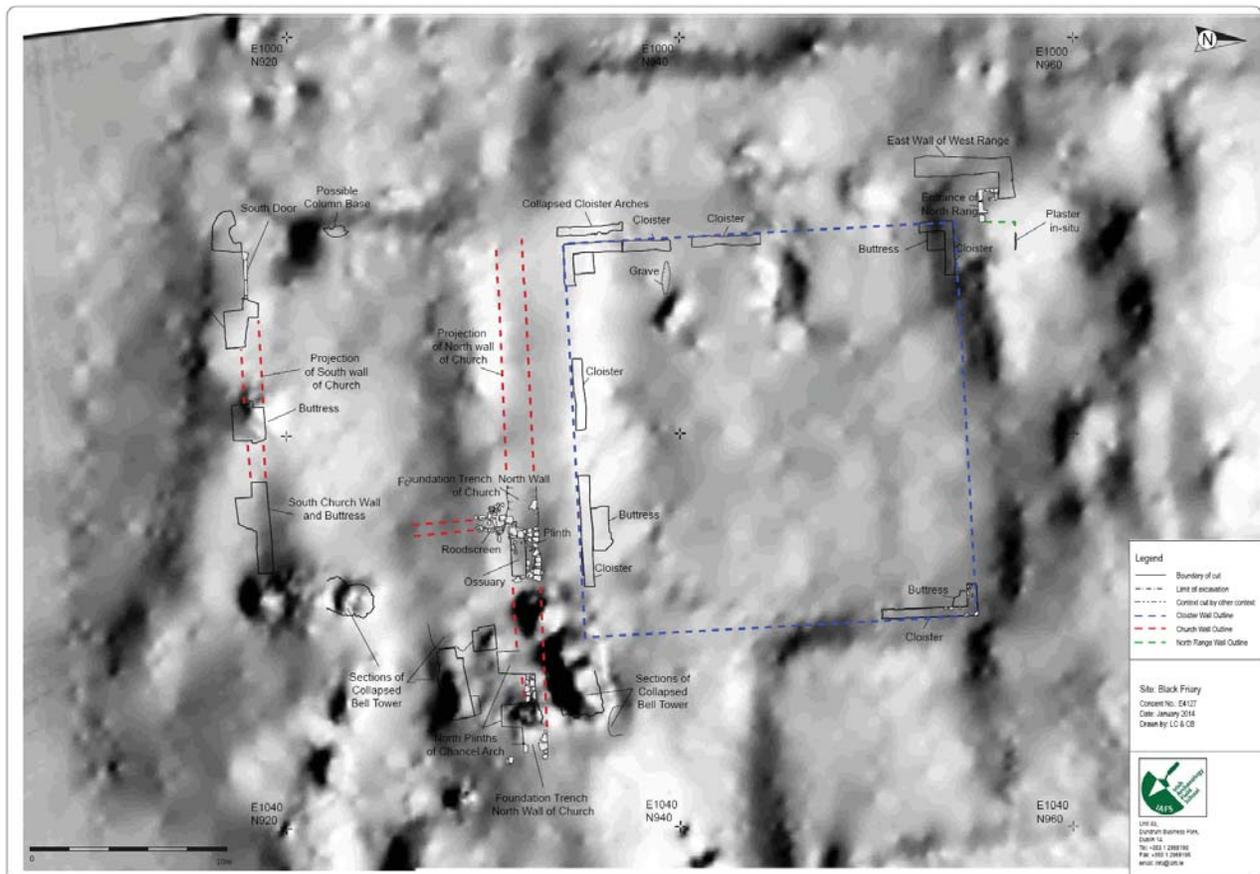

Figure 2: This image shows the results of the 2010 topographical survey overlain by the current salient features on site (IAFS 2014)

(Cutting 3). Several large pieces of collapsed architecture have been exposed (Cuttings 1, 2) and have architectural features suggesting that they were part of a wall, archway, and staircase, likely forming portions of the bell tower.

Human burials[3] have been found in all cuttings excepting 4 and 6, however, this section will focus primarily on the data from Cutting 3, which contains the bulk of the burials (72%, 48 of the 66 burials on site) on the site. Data from other cuttings will be briefly discussed in this section and the next in order to indicate types of burials or deposition of remains and burial patterns.

For organizational purposes, Cutting 3 was divided into eight grids, labeled A–H. Grids A, B, G, and H are all located within what is considered to be the nave of the church, which contains a majority (88%, 42 burials) of the burials. This section of the nave lies close to the chancel arch as indicated by the remains of the crossing tower in Cutting 1. Grids C, D, E, and F are all located within the ambulatory (walkway surrounding the cloister) and

the cloister itself. Due to the dense amount of material in grid H, this grid was subsequently broken down into six quadrants, labeled 1-6. The burials will be discussed in relationship to their grids, and specific burials will be highlighted where they are considered either typical examples, or 'outstanding'.

Burials in Grids A, B, G and H were all located beneath a thick layer of tumbled stones. Any fully articulated burials were oriented east-west with the skull located to the west. Burials are classified as infant, juvenile, sub-adult, adult, and unknown. A rudimentary sexing of the skeletons was completed on site, but a full examination of the bones will be undertaken by Dr. Rachel Scott. Levels (measurement indicating meters above sea level) were taken on the skull, pelvis, and feet (where possible) for each burial in order to compare the depth at which they were interred.

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[3] For the purposes of this excavation, a burial is denoted by the presence of a skull, whether the skull contains an articulated body or not.
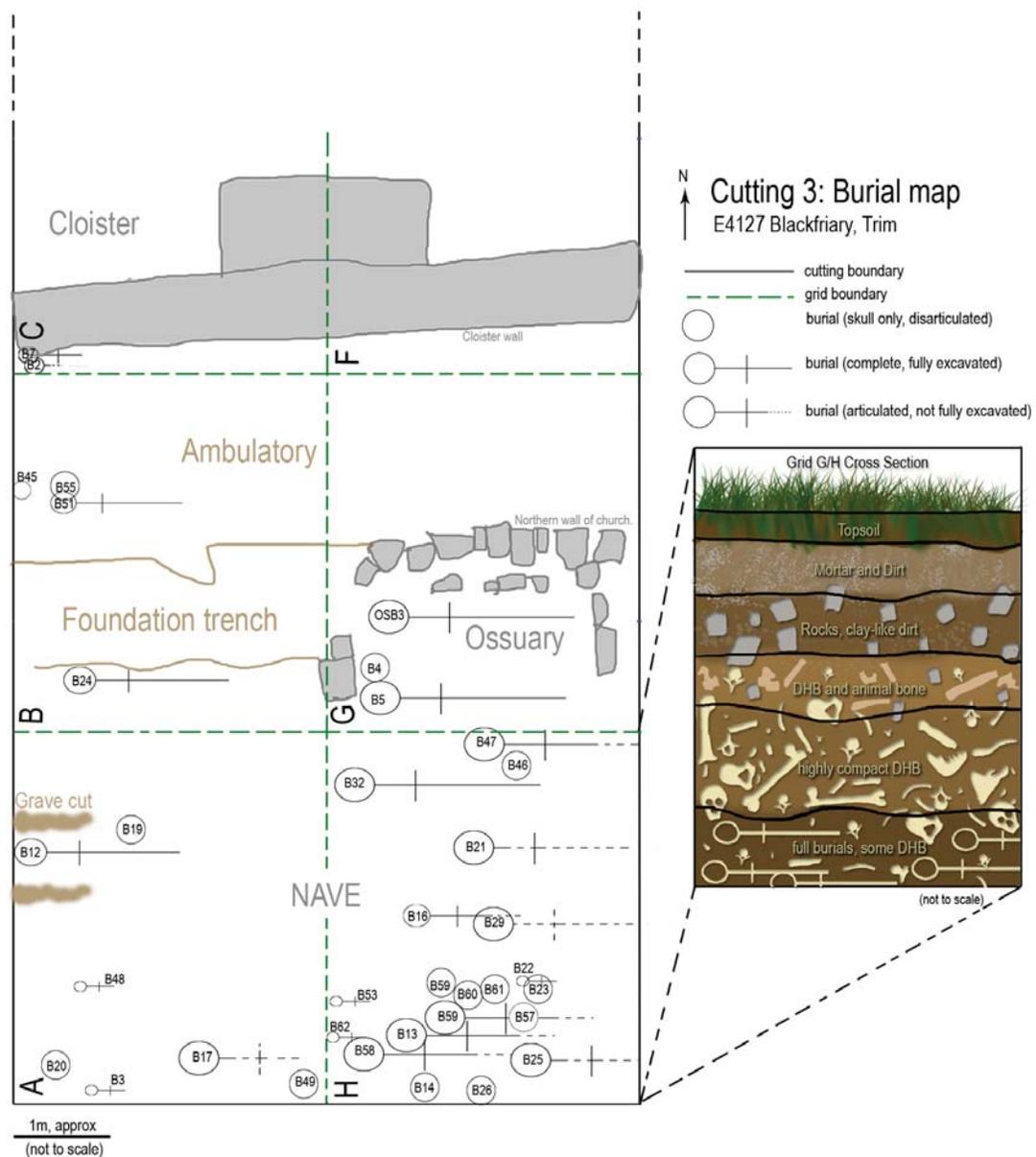

Figure 3: This image shows a general layout of the burials and salient features in Cutting 3, along with a generalized cross section of Grid G/H. Some burials are not shown; 1, 8, 9, and 15 are not visible due to location; 6, 10, 11, 30 and 31 do not have enough provenience information for this reconstruction

Grid A:

Located at the southwest corner of the cutting, this grid contained nine burials: 3, 11, 12, 17, 19, 20, 28, 48, and 49. Of these burials, three (burials 3, 48 (infant) and 12 (sub-adult)) were fully articulated and excavated. Burial 17 was a skull which was removed for preservation, but showed indications being fully articulated. The other three burials were disarticulated skulls with no indications of other bones. There were few instances of DHB throughout the grid. The soil was mostly dark brown and slightly sandy with inclusions of yellow clay in strips running west-east bordering burial 12 (upcast subsoil which formed the edge of the grave cut). Also, there was a change in soil approximately 75 centimeters wide, running north-south along the full length of the intersection of grids A/H and B/G.

Burial 12 (Figure 4) was a fully extended, supine burial, with its arms crossed across the chest. There was a distinct grave cut for this burial, which was bordered to the north and south by thick yellow clay. Epiphysial fusion was incomplete, indicating the individual was a sub-adult. This particular individual had 25 vertebrae instead of the more usual 24. A sondage dug towards the lower limbs revealed a humerus of a possibly articulated skeleton beneath. The humerus was removed, but the potential burial was not excavated (see drawing 3.38, sheet 38 in the IAFS records. Not provided).

Grid B:

This grid is located directly to the north of Grid A. Compositionally, the grid is the same in soil structure and presence of bones. There is limited DHB, and five burials (24, 31, 45, 51, and 55) with only two articulated skeletons – Burials 24 and 51. Burial 24 represents a fully articulated skeleton which was fully excavated. The skeleton was fully extended and supine. The epiphyses and pelvis had barely begun fusing, suggesting a juvenile individual.

Figure 4: Burial 12 situated in a grave cut. Note that skull was removed prior to complete exposure due to vandalism (IAFS 2012)

The arms were crossed low over the abdomen. A series of nails were discovered around the burial at equivalent depths, possibly suggesting the outline of a coffin. In the same area, approximately twenty centimeters above the burial, a coin was found dating to c. 1494. This skeleton was found in proximity to the anticipated northern wall of the church. The wall, however, had been dismantled to foundation level in the eighteenth century. A second burial is anticipated to be beneath Burial 24 due to the presence of bones located beneath the skeleton. Exploratory excavations have not taken place to confirm this (see drawing 3.42 in the IAFS records. Not provided.)

Grids C, D, E, and F:

These grids are located in the area making up the ambulatory and cloister. Some disarticulated human bones were found in the ambulatory mixed with animal bones. The human bones found mostly belonged to infants or toddlers. A total of six burials have been recorded in these grids (Burials 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 30), all of which were subadults (two juveniles, four infants). The burials in the cloister were located under several inches of soil with no rubble tumble on top. For the purposes of this paper, where the focus is on the use of space for burials in the nave, these ambulatory/cloister burials will not be discussed in greater detail in this report.

Grid G:

This grid is located to the east of grid B, separated by the apparent physical difference in soil that separates both A/H and B/G. At the northern end of the grid there is a line of in situ stones running on an east-west axis, anticipated to represent the northern wall of the nave (based on the fact that they fall in line with the in situ walls in Cutting 1). A smaller stretch of in situ stones at the eastern end of the grid (and cutting) abuts these stones a perpendicular angle. Another small line of stones – not suspected to be in situ – were found towards the western extent of the grid, also running perpendicular to the north wall. Another tumbled long stone was found running east-west immediately from the western line. These four lines of stones gave the appearance of a rectangular enclosure, although no true southern boundary has yet been excavated (see Figure 5).

A large amount of DHB was found principally within these stone boundaries, but also in the immediate vicinity. The contained space was interpreted initially as an 'ossuary'. The dense DHB layer contained remains from multiple individuals, as observed by the multiple bones of the same type/side. Seven burials were located within grid G: OSB1[4], OSB2, OSB3, OSB4, Burial 4, Burial 5, and Burial 6. This set of burials included two fully articulated and excavated burials, the remainder were represented by intact skulls.

OSB 3 was a fully articulated, extended, supine burial located directly within and at the base of the ossuary. The skull was damaged from soil compression and weather conditions. The hands were positioned over the pelvis. Epiphysial fusion was complete, suggesting an adult. DHB covered the burial in its entirety and is located in bulk to the south of the burial as well as beneath the burial (minor inclusions). This burial is shown partially excavated in Figure 5. The soil beneath OSB3 was mostly sterile.

Burial 4, consisting of a complete skull and scapula, showed several indicators of trauma on the skull. Burial 5 was a fully

[4] The abbreviation OSB is used to denote an 'Ossuary burial' in which the burial was located in the remains of the ossuary in Grid G.

Figure 5: Burials OSB3 (right) and 5 (left) in partial stages of excavation. Note the amount of DHB surrounding both burials, as well as the line of stones to the north and east (IAFS 2012)

articulated and fully excavated burial located immediately south of OSB3/the ossuary. The body was supine and fully extended, although the right tibia, fibula and foot were not present. The arms were crossed at the pelvis. Epiphysial fusion suggests this burial was an adult. A shroud pin and stained glass fragments were found in association with this burial. DHB surrounded the burial in all directions. This burial is shown alongside OSB3 in Figure 5.

Grid H:

Located in the south east corner of the cutting (directly to the east of Grid A) this grid uncovered an abundance of DHB immediately to the east of the soil division between grids A and H. The remains were very compact with a high frequency of bone. Approximately twenty centimeters of DHB were removed from underneath the rubble layer. The uppermost portion had mixed human and animal bones. Similar to Grid G, the DHB contains remains from many individuals, as seen through the repetition of bones. To date, 21 burials have been identified, composing 44% of the total number of burials in Cutting 3 (Figure 6): Burials 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 32, 46, 47, 53, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, and 62. Of these, ten were articulated or expected to be articulated (due to time limits and complexity of the area, not all burials were fully excavated during the 2013 season).

The burials present contain a mix of adult and sub-adult remains, although a majority of the burials appear to be adult. The fully articulated burials in this area directly overlapped one another in many cases; for instance, the skull of Burial 29 being immediately below the right leg of Burial 16, or the 'stacked' burials 58, 13,

Figure 6: This image shows two burials (25 to the south, 21 to the north), surrounded by quantities of DHB. The lower limbs of Burial 16 can be seen to the north of Burial 21 (IAFS 2012)

and 59 (see Figure 7). Burial 32, located in quadrant three, immediately to the south of burial 5 in Grid G, was a fully articulated, fully extended, supine burial. The arms were placed alongside the body, as opposed to being crossed over it. The mandible of this individual showed evidence for sharp force trauma.

The rest of the site:

As mentioned previously, human remains have been found in a majority of the other cuttings, totaling 66 burials exposed over three field seasons. A summary follows. Cutting 1: two burials, both infant (27, 18). Cutting 2: four burials, three infant (40, 44, 52) and one adult cranium (50). Cutting 4: no burials identified. Cutting 5: One burial (42). Cutting 6: no burials identified. Cutting 7: one burial (33). Cutting 8: one burial, infant (34). Cutting 9: three burials (41, 43, 56). Cutting 10, uniquely, contained a secondary deposit of human remains laid out in an organized fashion between two of the foundation plinths (Figure 8). These remains were commingled DHB of multiple individuals, consisting of a variety of bone elements, including five skulls. One fully articulated burial (54) was present.

Situating the burials

Excavations in Cutting 3 show a distinct difference of burial types within the church. The starkest difference is in the sharp change between the fully extended, articulated, uncrowded burials of Grids A/B to the dense, cluttered, overlapping burials buried beneath layers of DHB in Grids G/H. Both areas are dimensionally equal and have been excavated to the same level, but the A/B grids have, combined, exposed and excavated 14 burials (only five of which are articulated/expected to be articulated) as compared to grids G/H which have exposed 28 burials (12 of which were articulated/expected to be articulated). While the individual patterns seen in each grid group are not uncommon, comparative data has yet to reveal a combination of these methods in a way similar to the Blackfriary. Guilford Friary, for instance, demonstrated a uniformity of burial not seen at the Blackfriary. Further research will continue to be undertaken, and future excavations of the nave will hopefully reveal more burials that continue current trends, as well as potential architectural structures which could provide an explanation for the differentiation seen currently. Some questions to consider are: Is there a physical barrier limiting the burials such as a rood screen (a current theory)? Was the church expanded to

the west? Was a wall tomb or family tomb present? Ó Clabaigh (2012:234) notes that within the nave, it was not uncommon to have "niches recessed into the walls with the burial vaults set into the foundation". This could be the feature seen bordering OSB3.

Burials in the four grids composing the nave (A/B/G/H) were all located under a thick rubble layer. According to Potterton (2005), the friary had been reduced to only slightly identifiable ruins in the late 1700s and complete ruins by the 1800s. Because of this, it is likely that all of the burials within the nave took place before this time period. The coin found approximately 20cm above burial 24 dated to c. 1494, suggesting that this particular burial was interred before that date. A shard of medieval pottery at a similar level gives further credence to this assumption. Unfortunately, no further dateable objects were discovered in these areas. It is likely that a majority of these burials are medieval in date and occurred before the monastery transferred to Donore in 1713, and some of them (such as burial 24) are more likely to have been interred before the first dissolution of the monastery in 1540.

Evidence from the 2013 field season shows that it is likely that the local community continued to use the grounds for burial in the periods during which the friary was not in use. To date, two infant burials – one in Cutting 1, the second in Cutting 2 – have been found above the rubble layer. Burial 44 (the infant in Cutting 2) was discovered with a lead shot in its cranium. Whether these are victims of infanticide – a practice not uncommon in eighteenth century Ireland (Kelly 1992) – is unknown, but their burial above the rubble layer does indicate that the community
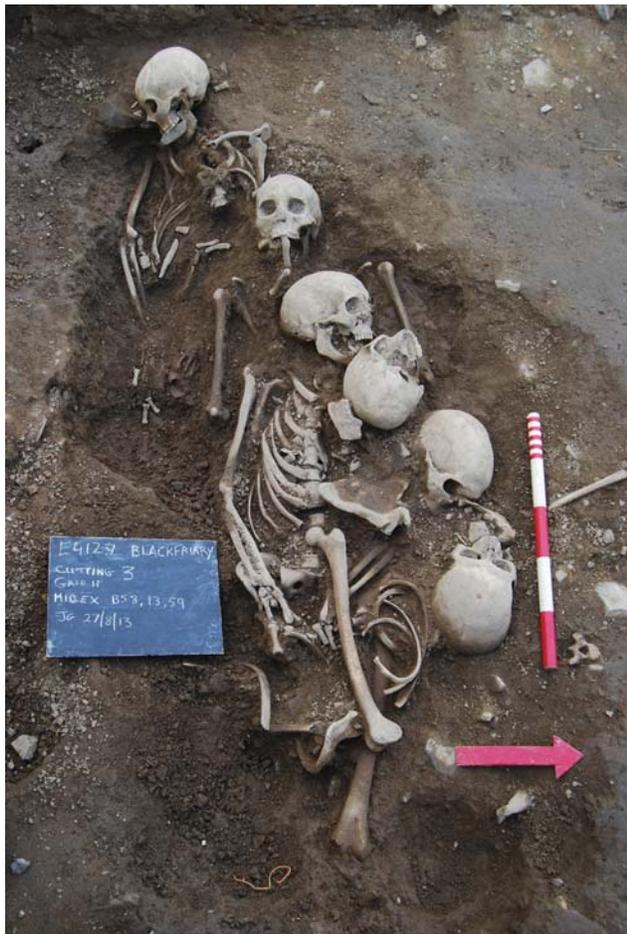
Figure 7: These burials, located in Grid H, demonstrate overlapping burial depositions as well as DHB (IAFS 2013)

likely continued to consider the grounds as sacred and use them for discreet burials even post dissolution or destruction. The possible ossuary in Cutting 10 has no date associated with it, but it is thought to have resulted from the dismantling of tombs by those quarrying the church and the need to dispose of the interred humans remains with a modicum of respect.

The continuation of the site as a burial ground, possibly up until the 19th or even the 20th centuries is a theme that is anticipated to be explored further in future field seasons.

Social status

One of the questions we must ask of the data is: who were the people buried at the Blackfriary? And why were they buried in such a differentiated manner? Poulton and Woods (1984) state that burials within the church at the Dominican priory of Guildford would have been more desirable than burials in the cemetery. According to Binski (1996:57), these practices would have started in the thirteenth century, around the time of the foundation of the Blackfriary, and would have been reserved for the more privileged laity. Over time, as burials within the church became slightly more common, status was indicated through the location within the church, use of coffins, and tombs. This being said, it is likely that any of the burials within the friary indicate some form of wealth on the part of the deceased, or their family, or indicated membership within the friary. The burials within Cutting 3 are likely to have been located at least ten meters from the altar area. Does this mean that they were less wealthy than other members of the community? Is there a change in wealth or status between the burials of Grids A/B versus Grids G/H? Unfortunately, we do not yet have any indication of the exact location of the altar, let alone burials surrounding the area. Perhaps with further excavations, we will be able to answer this question.

Possible evidence for wooden coffins has been found in the form of nails located in a similar context as burials. It is possible that these burials could represent wealthier individuals who were able to obtain a coffin. So far, no lead coffins have been found, although other priories, both Dominican and other, have been known to contain such burials. These may not have been available, affordable, or practical for residents of Trim; however, further excavations may yet reveal such coffins. As excavations progress, a comparison of the use and location of coffin-based interments may provide more information about the individuals buried; for instance, Foreman (1996) noticed that cloister burials

Figure 8: This image shows students working on the ossuary in Cutting 10, situated directly between two foundation buttresses (plinths) (IAFS 2013, photograph by Emma Lagan)

at Beverly did not use coffins and may have been the burials of monks.

The burial of OSB3 was clearly within a stone lined tomb, and, due to burial depth and lack of bones beneath it, is thought to be the original occupant. Based on the location of the tomb in regards to other architectural remains, it is thought that this tomb was built into the wall of the church. The stones making up the northern boundary of the tomb are therefore in part, the original wall of the church, whereas the stones forming the eastern boundary of the tomb would have been inserted specifically to line the tomb itself. This burial is very likely to have belonged to a wealthy individual. No grave goods were found in association with this burial (which is not unusual in the context of a Christian burial), so the assumption of wealth is based solely on the tomb type.

At least two burials – Burials 4 and 32, interred in relatively close proximity – are known to have trauma to the skull. Both burials have been analyzed by osteoarchaeologist Dr. Rachel Scott and determined to be male. Burial 4 displayed healed blunt force trauma and unhealed sharp force trauma to the cranium. Burial 5 displayed sharp force trauma, likely from a blade, on the mandible. Could these be warriors or soldiers? We know that one of the burials in the cemetery as uncovered in 2008 also displayed sharp and blunt force trauma; is there a reason Burials 4 and 32 were interred in the church as opposed to the cemetery with the other wounded skeleton?

While indication of status is present in the data set available, it is only available in generalizations. Clearly the individuals buried within the church had enough money to be placed there, but other information about them is extraordinarily limited. Does the 'charnel pit' making up most of Grids G/H represent a family tomb where multiple members of the same wealthy family were interred over time? Were the male burials with trauma warriors who died around the same time? Unfortunately, the lack of floor tiles, grave markers, or boundaries to date make these assumptions difficult to validate.

Conclusion

This paper set out to analyze the burials excavated in the nave of the Dominican Blackfriary in Trim, Ireland during the 2010-2013 field seasons. By examining the data set, comparing it to other known data sets, and analyzing it in the context of societal attitudes at the time period, I attempted to understand the burials present. The easiest, most viable conclusion to draw is that, because of their burial *within* the church, it is likely that these individuals had some form of wealth or status.

Explanations for the distinct division of burial types between A/B and G/H have been postulated, but remain inconclusive. Similarly, the burials were unable to be accurately dated due to a lack of grave goods, with the exception of one coin, making it difficult to determine the order of events that would have caused these burials to be interred. Their interment would have taken place prior to the collapse of the architecture, and potentially before the dissolution of the priory in 1540.

This paper represents one of the few studies regarding burials within a Dominican priory, and therefore offers the unique opportunity to learn more about burial practices—both standard and unique patterns, and will further knowledge about medieval burial practices. Further, between past and anticipated excavations, which are guaranteed to uncover more remains, there is a large sample size, making this a viable and interesting area of study. These remains will help paint a picture of the medieval and possibly post-medieval community of Trim, Ireland. As over a hundred previous excavations have taken place within Trim, results from this current excavation can add to existing knowledge and potentially fill in gaps in the information about the community and individuals who were an integral part of its daily life.

Rodwell (2005:38) stated that the history of most churches "may be compared to an iceberg: only the tip shows, and there is far more concealed from view". This is indeed the case for the Blackfriary, which now lies in ruins beneath the soil. Its entire story is in the process of being learned by the archaeologists who diligently excavate it, exposing new sections and adding to the story every year. The burials, and specifically their strategic placement within the church, help to restore a human presence to the site, painting a picture of the community of Trim.

IAFS and the community

The excavations at Blackfriary are conducted by the Irish Archaeological Field School, but are also considered to be part of the Blackfriary Community Archaeological Project. In this situation, we consider it important to involve the current, living community of Trim and keep them informed. Community members are welcome to visit site at any point, and Open Days and other public events are hosted over the summer. For more information, visit <www.iafs.ie>.

Acknowledgments

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