

Module 1, Part A

Irish Archaeological and Heritage Websites

INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome to Module 1 of *Irish Heritage on the Web*. In this lecture, we will be discussing the different websites and online resources available in the preparation of lessons on Irish archaeology and heritage.

The Internet can be a powerful resource tool for researching heritage and archaeology, if one knows how to use it properly. As with most subjects, there are many valuable sources online, and it is useful to become familiar with the ones that contain well-researched information. Bear in mind, there are no limits to the Internet, and no restrictions on who may publish. Alongside reputable academic authors, one might find outdated theories or strange and mistaken ideas about the past. Learning the difference between reliable websites and ones that may be less accurate or useful is critical. This lecture will point you towards some very helpful resources, and hopefully show what reliable websites should be like.

Contents:

[1. DATABASES](#)

[2. MUSEUM AND LIBRARY WEBSITES](#)

[3. UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES](#)

[4. RESEARCH PROJECTS](#)

[5. MAPS AND TEXTS](#)

[6. GENERAL WEBSITES – HOW TO ASSESS THEM](#)

[7. MISCELLANEOUS LINKS AND FURTHER SITES OF INTEREST](#)

DATABASES

One of the most important sources of information in archaeology comes from the practice of excavation. This is when archaeologists literally dig up the past. They acquire a license to excavate, do a survey of the area, and then begin a specialised process of systematically digging up a site, and recording their findings. Many people will be familiar with this process, perhaps having seen an excavation on television, or having

heard about the findings of a group of archaeologists digging a site in preparation for a new building project or road. The reports of these excavations are entered into a large database, and fortunately, a lot of this information is available online, through the Database of Irish Excavation Reports. This website contains thousands of excavation reports, and includes what monuments and artefacts were found at a given site. Its search function means it is easy to navigate, and results can be narrowed down by a number of filters.

You can find the website at:
www.excavations.ie

The site allows users to search for the information they want, or just browse the database. In the snapshot below, I have opened the database search page, and looked for all reports from Co. Clare that contain the words 'Bronze Age'.



excavations.ie
DATABASE OF IRISH EXCAVATION REPORTS

Home
Browse the Database
Search the Database
Guidelines for Authors
Contact Details
Links

See below for Search Tips

Year

County

Site No.

Site Name

Site Type

Report Text Contains

Author

Grid Reference

Sites and Monuments Record No.

Excavation Licence No.

This search will give a list of results, as shown below:



- [Home](#)
- [Browse the Database](#)
- [Search the Database](#)
- [Guidelines for Authors](#)
- [Contact Details](#)
- [Links](#)

Search Results:

Records 1 to 20 from 37

- [1988:04. Gragan West](#)
Bronze Age/Early Christian Settlement
- [1994:018. Knocknalappa](#)
Late Bronze Age lakeside platform
- [1995:019. Mooghaun South](#)
Trivallate hillfort
- [1995:020. Parknabinnia](#)
Habitation
- [1996:031. Knocknalappa](#)
Bronze Age lake settlements
- [1996:033. Latoon South](#)
Post-medieval enclosure and field systems
- [1997:020. DRUMCULLAUN](#)
Post row
- [1998:053. CLARE 153, ROUGHAN HILL, PARKNABINNIA](#)
Court tomb
- [1999:035. BALLYCONNELY](#)
Middle/Late Bronze Age cemetery and ritual site

If I click on the first result in the list, it will give me the report on that site, including when the site was excavated, its excavation license number, and who directed the excavation:



The header features two small images on the left: a site plan and a photograph of an excavation. To the right, the text 'excavations.ie' is displayed in a large, white, sans-serif font, with 'DATABASE OF IRISH EXCAVATION REPORTS' in a smaller font below it.

- Home
- Browse the Database**
- Search the Database
- Guidelines for Authors
- Contact Details
- Links

Clare
1988:04
Gragan West
Bronze Age/Early Christian Settlement
M200018

The site lies c.5 miles SSW of Ballyvaughn just below the summit of Corkskrew hill. It was first noted by the present landowner during clearance of hazel scrub in the early 1980s. At that time the site consisted of a roughly circular mound of material, 22.50m in diameter and about 1m in maximum height.

During subsequent development at the farm the western half of the mound was levelled (and harrowed) and an outbuilding erected in the SW sector. In addition a farm track now bisects the site north/south and a modern drystone wall runs through the southern half. In the course of this work one valve of a two-part stone axe-mould, part of a stone mortar and an iron pick were recovered as well as an iron slag and animal bone. In more recent years the erection of a shelter belt on the south side of the modern drystone wall yielded a spindle whorl and tracked stones.

This is an example of a very useful website, that can be used to research all archaeological sites and monuments from a given period in time, and particularly, from a local area.

EXERCISE

Take a minute from reading, and complete this exercise.

Go to <http://www.excavations.ie/>

Find an excavation report from the medieval period in your own county

MUSEUM AND LIBRARY WEBSITES

Another resource that can be of great use is a museum website. Irish counties and cities often have museums, which house artefacts that come from the area. Some of these museum websites have limited resources, and simply offer basic information on their collections and opening hours. Others, such as the Hunt Museum, the Limerick City Museum, or the Clare County Museum, offer spectacular resources for online research.

To take the Limerick City Museum website as an example, we find that it too has a search function, and one can search the entire collection, and view photographs and read about artefacts.

<http://www.limerick.ie/citymuseum/>

You can search the collections under a number of criteria, including keywords, time period or object category. In this instance, I again searched for all Bronze Age items in the collection. I am presented with a list of objects in the museum that date to this period:



Figure, female head, ceramic, red, hollow. Greek, from an Attic vase, probably C.6th BC

0000.0445 Name:Vase Category:Container Type:
image\0000\00000445.jpg



Spearhead. Bronze, socketed with lunate openings in the blade and peg-holes in the socket. Late Bronze Age. River Shannon near Athlone, Co Westmeath. Re-discovered in attic of City Library at Pery Square during re-roofing, 1984. Ref JRSAI 1875

0000.3547 Name:Spearhead Category:Weapon Type:
image\0000\00003547.jpg



Axe, socketed bronze, Ballynanty, Limerick

1986.0150 Name:Axe, bronze Category:Tools and Equipment Type:
image\1986\19860150.jpg



Axe, socketed bronze, miniature, Ballynanty, Limerick

1986.0151 Name:Axe, bronze Category:Tools and Equipment Type:
image\1986\19860151.jpg

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#)

Clicking on the second item in the list, a bronze spearhead, brings up this page, where I can view the object, and learn a little more about it:

Spearhead

Object Category:Weapon



Spearhead. Bronze, socketed with lunate openings in the blade and peg-holes in the socket. Late Bronze Age. River Shannon near Athlone, Co Westmeath. Re-discovered in attic of City Library at Pery Square during re-roofing, 1984. Ref JRSAI 1875

Spearhead. Bronze, socketed with lunate openings in the blade and peg-holes in the socket. Late Bronze Age. River Shannon near Athlone, Co Westmeath.

<u>Date</u>		<u>Other Info</u>	
Period:	Bronze Age	Inv.No.:	0000.3547
Early:	-2000	Dynasty:	
Late:	-800	Maker:	
Century:			

Not all county museums are as useful, but many provide at least some basic information, and contain relevant pictures. They will often also provide a list of events, lectures and open days, which are undoubtedly of use to teachers planning to visit these museums, or to interested students.

EXERCISE

Take a minute from reading, and complete this exercise.

Go to the Clare Museum Website collections page:

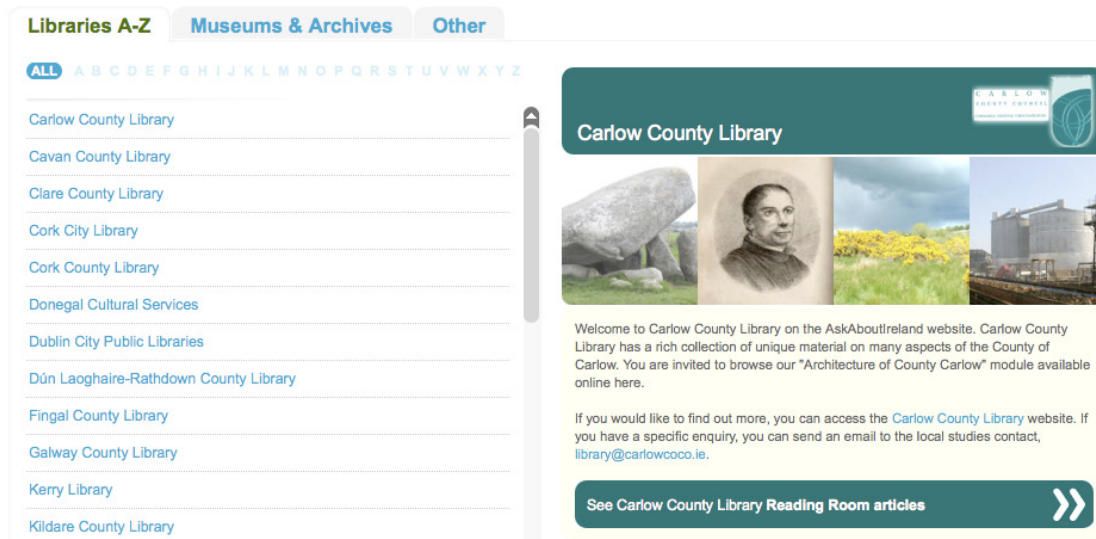
<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum/projects/collections.htm>

Go to the Neolithic Collection in the list, and look at an image of a polished stone axe head.

The *Ask About Ireland* section of the ENFO website is a compilation of many different county library and museum websites.

<http://www.askaboutireland.ie/libraries/>

It searches and compiles, amongst other things, the local history section of the libraries throughout the country. The collection of reading room articles is greatly useful for doing research.



The screenshot shows the 'Libraries A-Z' section of the AskAboutIreland website. It features a navigation bar with 'Libraries A-Z', 'Museums & Archives', and 'Other'. Below the navigation bar is a list of county libraries, including Carlow County Library, Cavan County Library, Clare County Library, Cork City Library, Cork County Library, Donegal Cultural Services, Dublin City Public Libraries, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Library, Fingal County Library, Galway County Library, Kerry Library, and Kildare County Library. To the right of the list is a featured section for Carlow County Library, which includes a header, a grid of images (a stone, a portrait, a field, and a building), and a text box with a welcome message and contact information. A button at the bottom of the featured section reads 'See Carlow County Library Reading Room articles' with a double arrow icon.

It even has a particular section aimed at primary school children.

Ask about Ireland

Search GO

• About Us • Links • Contact Us

Reading Room Learning Zone Libraries ENFO

Primary Students

Discover lots of information and activities to help you in history and geography. Each class group has its own area. Have fun!

Select your class or activity:

[« Back](#)

[Environment »](#)

[History »](#)

[Geography »](#)

[Science »](#)



Secondary Students

Explore a range of information, maps, images and games which will support your studies across a variety of subjects.

Take a look!

[Science & Technology »](#)

[Sport »](#)

[Music & Art »](#)

[Geography of Ireland »](#)

[History of Ireland »](#)

[Buildings & Structures »](#)

[Language & Literature »](#)

[Games & 3D Tours »](#)

[Digital Books »](#)



UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

A further source type that is of great use is the website of college archaeology or history departments. These often contain articles and resources that are of use when researching archaeology, history or heritage. Some, such as the UCD School of Archaeology website, have pages specifically aimed at schools:



University College Dublin
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath

UCD MAIN MENU

› [College of Arts & Celtic Studies](#)
[Home](#)

UCD School of Archaeology

› [Home](#)
› [Undergraduate Programmes](#)
› [Information for Schools](#)
› [Postgraduate Programmes](#)
› [Programme Offices](#)
› [Staff](#)
› [Research](#)
› [News](#)
› [Links](#)
› [Trowel](#)
› [Contact](#)
› [Site Map](#)
› [School History](#)
› [Archaeology Society](#)
› [Further Information & Resources](#)

UCD School of Archaeology

Scoil na Seandálaíochta UCD

Welcome to UCD School of Archaeology's Web Pages for Schools

Archaeology is both an interesting and rewarding subject of study and over the coming months we will be adding some links and resources to these pages that we hope will be of use to schools.

Transition Year Programme

The School of Archaeology, University College Dublin, has instituted a scheme to facilitate work experience for transition year students. We will be providing one week of practical archaeological experience and directed research based in the School of Archaeology.

Our first transition year programme was successfully held from Monday 23rd to Friday 27th of March 2009. [Read more about this year's programme >>](#)

This programme is designed to host between four and eight transition year students for one week in University College Dublin. The students will work in small groups closely supervised by School of Archaeology staff or doctoral researchers. The groups will rotate activities in the middle of the week and on the Wednesday there will be a guided excursion to the National Museum of Ireland or an alternative suitable venue.

The selected students will be covered by UCD's Health & Safety and insurance policies while undertaking work experience. UCD School of Archaeology cannot provide transport or accommodation and students are responsible for getting to and from the university.

Others provide many documents for download, which can be of great use when researching these subjects.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Government backed research projects, such as the Discovery Programme, are a good source of information. Their website contains a number of reports and documents available for download.

<http://www.discoveryprogramme.ie/>

Another such group is the National Roads Authority. As part of their road building work they carry out many archaeological excavations. Their website is full of valuable information on recent excavations, and has accessible and vivid content.

<http://www.nra.ie/Archaeology/>

They also publish a magazine, Seanda, which is available for download from their website.



NRA
National Roads Authority
An tUdarás um Bóithre Náisiúnta

- Home
- About Us
- Road Scheme Activity
- Network Management
- Public Private Partnership
- Environment
- Archaeology**
- News
- Archaeology Seminar 2008
- Archaeology Seminar 2007
- WAC-6
- Best of NRA Discoveries
- N25 Waterford Bypass - Woodstown
- M3 Clonee-North of Kells
- National Monument at Lismullin
- Code of Practice
- NRA Archaeologists

Search: --Quick Links-- Google™ Custom Search

You are here: > Home > Archaeology > Seanda - NRA Archaeology Magazine

Seanda NRA archaeology magazine

seanda
seanda
seanda

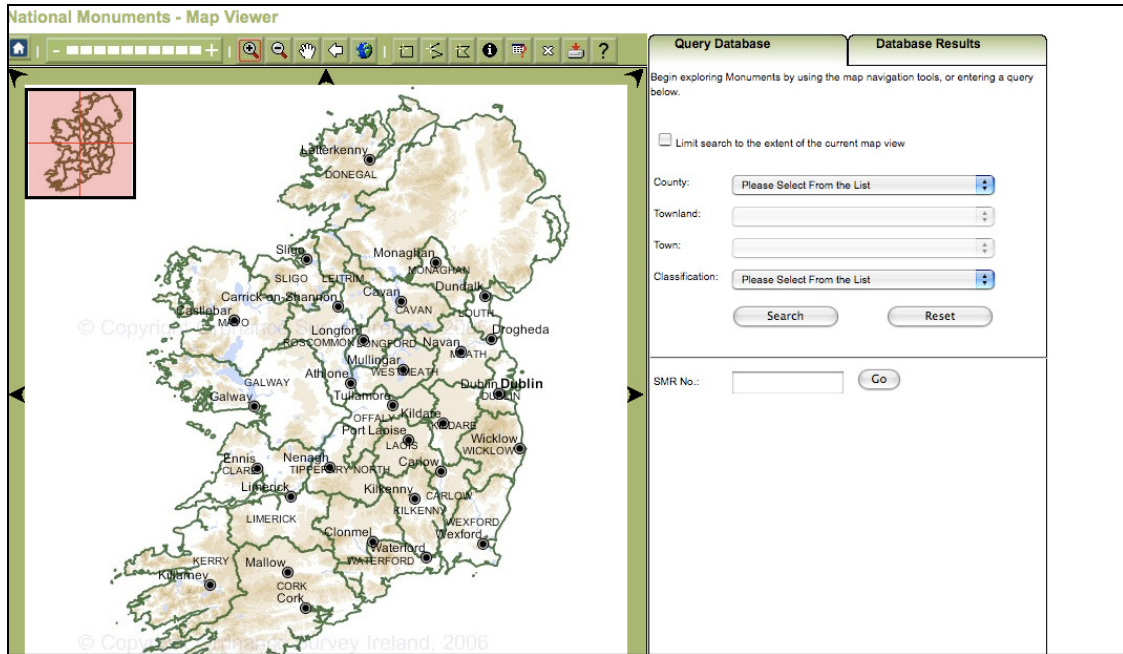
Seanda is an exciting new initiative of the NRA Archaeology Section and will be used to communicate the results of NRA-funded archaeological investigations undertaken as part of the national roads-building programme. It contains news items, notes and feature articles written by NRA archaeologists and guest writers from various archaeological consultancies and academic institutions. The contents have been written with a general readership firmly in mind. A number of helpful 'In brief' sections are included to explain widely used archaeological terms such as radiocarbon dating and osteoarchaeology, and the magazine also features a useful glossary. **Seanda** will be freely distributed to public libraries, post-primary schools, archaeology departments, archaeological and heritage societies and

MAPS AND TEXTS

Some websites offer interactive maps, where you can search for archaeological sites in a given area. These are generally user friendly and intuitive, and can reveal a great deal about what's in your area.

One such site is the national monuments map viewer. This is a mapping tool that allows users to explore the national archaeological monuments of Ireland.

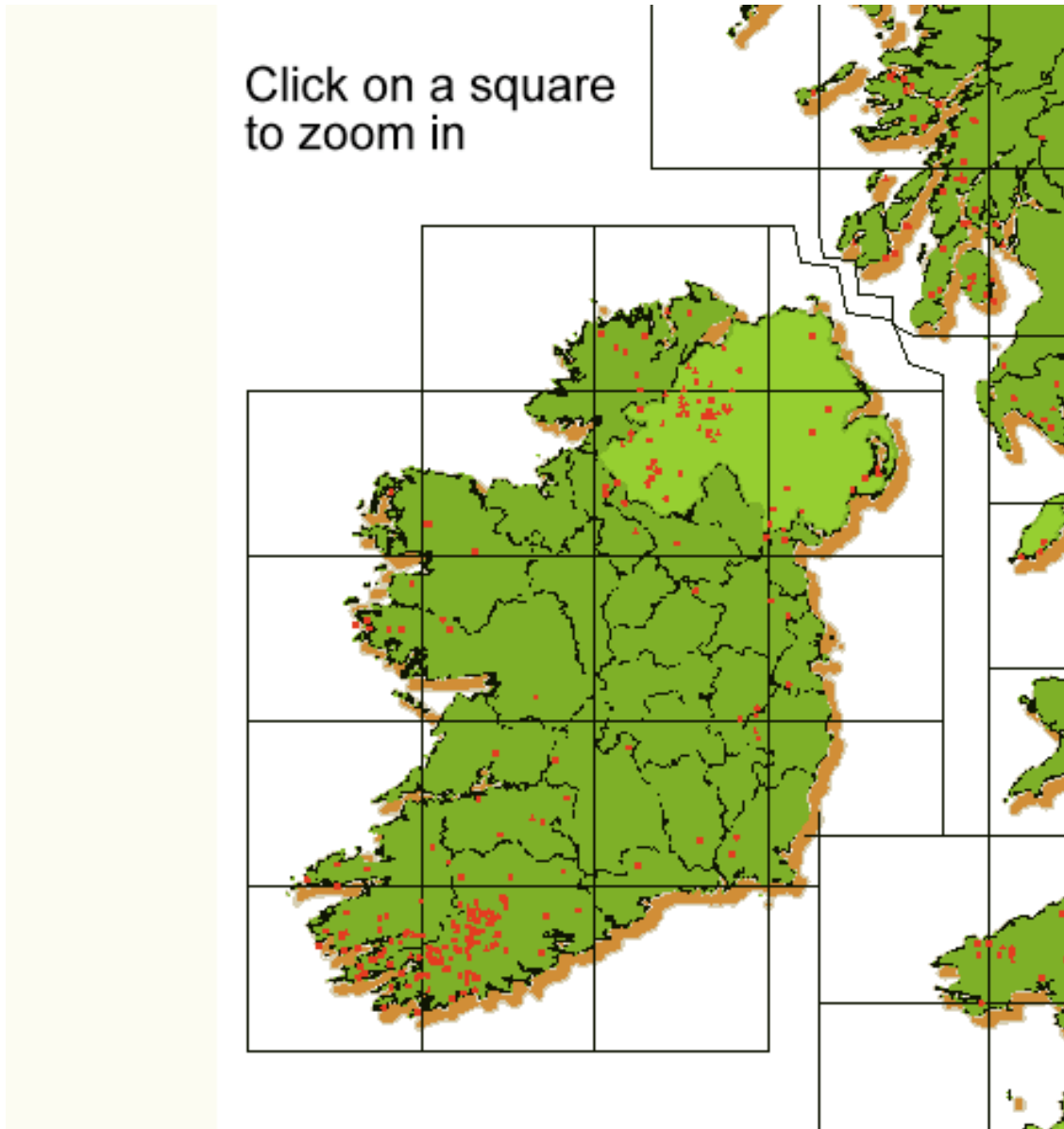
<http://www.archaeology.ie/smrmappviewer/mapviewer.aspx>



Simply clicking on the map will zoom on a given area, and reveal the monuments. Alternatively, you can use the search form on the right.

Another, similar website, allows users to search for megalithic monuments in all of Europe, including Ireland. This specific monument type is typically prehistoric in age, and comes in the form of large stone structures, such as tombs or standing stones.

<http://www.megalithic.co.uk/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=13>



Further mapping resources are discussed in greater detail in Section B of this module.

There are a number of valuable resources online, in the form of texts and manuscripts. One example is the CELT project, an online database of early Irish texts in Irish, Latin and English. Many of these come with full translations, and have useful bibliographies.

<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/>



CELT

Corpus of Electronic Texts



[Home](#) [About](#) [News](#) [FAQ](#) [Published](#) [Captured](#) [Search](#) [Languages](#) [Contact](#) [Resources](#) [People](#)

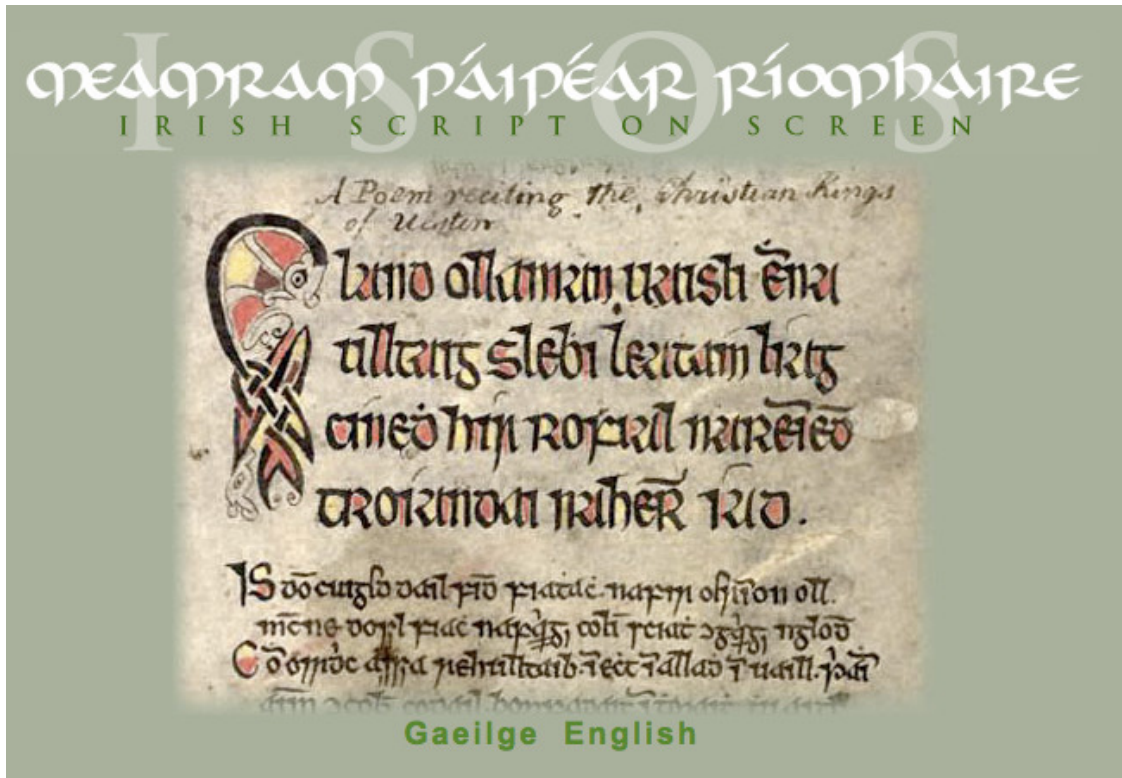
About Us

Mission Statement

To bring the wealth of Irish literary and historical culture (in Irish, Latin, Anglo-Norman French, and English) to the Internet in a rigorously scholarly and user-friendly project for the widest possible range of readers and researchers. CELT (the Corpus of Electronic Texts) caters for academic scholars, teachers, students, and the general public, all over the world. Texts are accompanied by introductions, background information, graphics, translations where possible, and scholarly bibliographies. CELT is integrated into the teaching and research community of UCC, and far beyond. It draws on the resources of that community and contributes to its work. UCC has charitable status, i.e. donations which help CELT continue its work can be made tax-effectively from Ireland and the USA (see [Donations webpage](#)).

The ISOS project is another website where one can view old manuscripts on screen. It can be found at:

<http://www.isos.dias.ie/>



The ORB is another useful website for medieval studies, containing links to articles, documents and sources. It has a section particularly for the non-specialist, containing links and articles for the general reader:

<http://www.the-orb.net/>

A similar site is the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, a valuable collection of medieval texts:

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>

EXERCISE

Go to the CELT website:

<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/>

Use the search function, and try to find the short but grisly tale entitled ‘The Death of Finn Mac Cumhail.’

Notice the bibliography supplied above the text. There are many versions and discussions on this theme, some of which can be found in local and county libraries, should you wish to do further research, or look for similar tales.

GENERAL WEBSITES – HOW TO ASSESS THEM

Of course, apart from these very specific websites, there are any number of others that contain information on archaeology and history. How does one tell which are reliable, and which might contain misleading information? One important marker of a reliable website is references. If the author of a website provides his or her sources of information, in the form of footnotes, endnotes or a bibliography, their information is more likely to be reliable than someone who just posts the information without context. This being said, the books, journals and other sources the author cites should be fairly reliable in and of themselves. A book by a university professor or a professional historian is less likely to contain misinformation than travel books or historical novels!

Take the following website as an example:

<http://www.iol.ie/~sec/sites.htm>

There’s nothing to suggest that this website is associated with any university, or government research institute. How can we tell if the information is going to be reliable? If you scan down to the bottom of the page, you will find a bibliography. It is obvious that the author has done research in this topic, as he/she is willing to show his/her sources.

Further Reading

Brindley, A. L. and Kilfeather, A. 1993 *Archaeological Inventory of County Carlow*. Dublin, The Stationery Office.

Buckley, V. 1990 *Burnt Offerings*. Dublin, Wordwell.

Cooney, G. 1983 Megalithic Tombs in their environmental setting: a settlement perspective, in T. Reeves Smith and F. Hammond (eds) *Landscape Archaeology in Ireland*, 179-191. Oxford, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 116.

Cooney, G. and Grogan, E. 1994 *Irish Prehistory: a Social Perspective*. Dublin, Wordwell.

de Valera, R. 1960 The Court Cairns of Ireland, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.* 60c, 9-140.

Herity, M. 1974. *Irish Passage Graves*. Dublin.

Herity, M. and Eogan, G. 1977 *Ireland in Prehistory*. London, Routledge.

Moore, M. 1996 *Archaeological Inventory of County Wexford*. Dublin, The Stationery Office.

The sources seem to be reliable, so it is more likely that the information in the website is reliable too.

EXERCISE

Here are two general websites that contain information on aspects of Neolithic (New Stone Age) Ireland.

www.wesleyjohnston.com/users/ireland/past/pre_norman_history/neolithic_age.html

and

<http://www.iol.ie/~plugin/stonecal.htm>

Based on the above information, which website do you think has the more trustworthy information?

Remember, Wikipedia can be a tempting shortcut when looking for information on a given topic, but at the end of the day it is not always reliable. It represents the common consensus on a subject, and does not always reflect the most scholarly or most up-to-date research. Articles can be useful, however, they provide a bibliography you can use for your own research, or if they have links to primary sources. Use with caution, or avoid altogether if better sources can be found.

MISCELLANEOUS LINKS AND FURTHER SITES OF INTEREST

Youtube contains some videos that can be of assistance in teaching. It can be difficult to separate the useful from the misleading. Here is a website cataloguing some Irish archaeological videos on Youtube.

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tbreen/youtube.html>

The National Archives of Ireland contain a section on genealogy, which allows users to search for census returns from 1911. At the moment it is limited to only a few counties, but over the coming months all the counties of Ireland will be added. This is of particular interest when researching family histories.

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/>

Finally, an author named Thaddeus Breen has compiled a vast collection of sites with particular relevance to Irish Heritage, Archaeology and History. This invaluable resource gives a brief explanation of each website, and often assessment its potential usefulness.

Irish Archaeology on the Internet:

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tbreen/links.html>

Irish Archaeology on the Internet

The exponential growth of the Internet makes it difficult to keep track of all the new sites, and the old sites which disappear. I would appreciate any [information](#) which would help keep the site up to date.

- [Introduction to Irish Archaeology](#)
- [Current research](#)
- [Guides to specific regions and individual sites](#)
- [Monuments](#)
- [Artifacts](#)
- [Industrial archaeology](#)
- [Excavations and other projects](#)
- [Universities](#)
- [Government institutions](#)
- [Museums](#)
- [Archaeological & Historical societies](#)
- [People](#)
- [Books and other publications](#)
- [Photographs, drawings and videos](#)
- [Conferences, summer schools, tours and other events](#)
- [Background information](#)
- [Mailing lists and newsgroups](#)
- [Other archaeological links](#)

The local interest section is so vast that it has its own separate webpage, divided up according to county:

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~tbreen/topographical.html>

It is clear from the above sites that the Internet can be of great assistance, if used correctly. Hopefully the above resources will help you to find information that is reliable and easily accessible. Try to avoid sites that are unreferenced, or unconnected to centres of learning. Good luck with your research, and have fun.