

The Big Dig Evaluation

The following outlines the success of the Community Archaeology Dig at Ballyaghagan with regards community participation and public interest levels. A full archaeological report outlining the findings from the excavation work is being undertaken by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork at QUB and is expected to be completed early 2012. This report will be circulated when it is available.

Project	Community Archaeology Dig at Ballyaghagan 17 th – 28 th October 2011
Officer responsible for monitoring	Lizzy Pinkerton re school groups Harry Welsh re archaeological dig
Aims & objectives	To undertake a community archaeological dig and general survey at Ballyhagan Cashel, cave Hill Country Park engaging & inspiring schools and community groups.
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No of visits to schools, groups etc 8 groups booked in – 4 local schools, 4 local communities (2 adults, 2 youth), a total of 140 people. However due to bad weather one group of 15 cancelled. Gave 5 pre visit talks, 1 post visit talk still to be done ▪ Level of enquiries/response from general public Approximately 15 phone call enquiries and e-mails were received to the BHP office, however during the dig on average over 600 people per day followed the events of the dig of the BHP Facebook site. To date over 790 people have looked at the pictures of what has been found. Over the course of the event there was a total of 12385 impressions on the Facebook dig posts. There were approximately 6 other groups who enquired about booking sessions after all sessions were booked up. ▪ No of people at dig As well as the 125 people who attended the pre booked sessions it is estimated that there was approximately 180 people who came along on the general open day despite the weather. In addition it is estimated that 160 members of the general public visited the site throughout the fortnight of the dig. In total it is estimated that over 460 people visited the dig. ▪ Media coverage A press release went out to 33 different newspaper, TV and radio media groups. Difficult to know who all covered the story, but are aware that the Newsletter, Irish News, Andersonstown News, Community Telegraph and Newtownabbey Times did run the story. Radio Ulster's Evening Extra, Good Morning Ulster and BBC's Your Place and Mine all did on site interviews. A film crew from BBC's Under the Radar team filmed an Irish speaking school for a programme due to go out in Jan 2012. On the final day of the dig ITV's Day Break also came along to film the team.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in knowledge and understanding of the heritage of the Belfast Hills. During the pre visit talks a number of baseline questions were asked to gauge people’s knowledge of the heritage of the Belfast Hills. This revealed how little people knew about how long people had been living in the Belfast Area, what a cashel is or what life was like during the early Christian period. Pre site visits to groups, on site talks & information sheets, opportunities for everyone to talk to the archaeologists on site, has resulted in a much greater knowledge and understanding of the Ballyaghagan cashel. During the open day we met a wide range of people including some young people who were interested in a career in archaeology. This ranged from the 12 yr old who said the dig was the best day of his life and something he didn’t expect to be able to do until he went to university, to the A level student who joined the survey team for the day, to a young man who had applied to do archaeology at Queens so appreciated meeting some of the QUB student volunteers as asking them questions about their experiences.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow interest levels to be gauged and various forms of communication tried to see which would be the most successful. Facebook proved to be a very successful way of keeping people up to date about the dig, however as Facebook is for 18yrs + it meant that any of the young people who took part could not access the pages unless via a parents account. We consequently put a range of the pictures on the BHP website and sent a link to all the groups.
Volunteer time	<p>37 days x Ulster Archaeology Society Members 19 days x QUB final year students/graduates 9 days x Adrian McAleenan</p> <p>Total days = 65</p>
Any changes?	<p>It is difficult to pick a time of year in Northern Ireland where it does not rain, however earlier in the year may have been less cold. Offset against this is a risk that during the long light nights people might interfere with the dig site. It would be good to run any future events for longer to enable more groups to come along. A number of schools applied who had two classes that they wanted to bring along, however due to restrictions of sessions we minimised this to one group per school, this resulted in one school dropping out. Provision of sessions for individuals to book as opposed to just groups would be worth considering.</p>
Any future recommendations?	<p>One of the groups wanted to put on an exhibition relating to their experiences at the dig – follow this up and provide assistance as</p>

	<p>required. Encourage other groups to consider what they could do.</p> <p>A very worth while exercise which should be rolled out on other sites in the Belfast Hills.</p> <p>With regards publicity in with multi funders and partners involved send out press release to all and have a date for responses back clearly outlined.</p>
Who involved?	<p>NIEA Built Heritage, Belfast City Council, QUB field archaeology team, QUB students, Ulster Archaeological Society, plus the various groups and members of the general public who took part.</p>
Feedback obtained	<p>A questionnaire was circulated to groups that took part in the dig. Most of these groups heard about the event through a letter of invitation sent out by BHP. The information provision prior to the event was assessed to be excellent. Those who took up the offer of a pre event talk felt that it was very useful and informative, really engaging the pupils and heightening their excitement about the dig.</p> <p>Comments about the dig itself include – fabulous, excellent, very informative, the variety and content of on-site activities was excellent, all the staff enthused us with their interest and dedication to the task, original and exciting event. They found the practical hands on digging experience very rewarding and enlightening. Also had very positive feedback from the parents of the children who went on the dig.</p> <p>One group commented that the free transport was an added bonus and really appreciated.</p> <p>Groups felt that they learnt a lot about how previous generations lived, about archaeology, geographical history, the beauty of our own hills.</p> <p>“The event was organised brilliantly and pitched at the right level for the children. I could not praise it higher”.</p> <p>One suggested improvement was that although all the pictures and finds were daily up loaded onto facebook, the children are too young to access facebook so missed out on seeing that, so perhaps could put the pictures somewhere else as well. Pictures have subsequently been posted on the BHP website so accessible to all.</p>
Publicity	<p>E-mail invitation sent to local Councillors, MLAs, Belfast Hills Friends Group, BHP Board members</p> <p>Press release regarding the dig – known to be in the Newsletter, Irish News, Andersonstown News, Newtownabbey Times and Community Telegraph</p> <p>Information on BHP website, ebullition, facebook & twitter pages</p> <p>Details passed onto 57 partner websites/social media pages</p> <p>Radio interviews with Your Place and Mine, Good Morning Ulster and Evening Extra.</p> <p>TV coverage by ITV’s day Break and BBC’s Under the Radar</p>



Pre site visit to one of the groups



QUB Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork team hard at work despite the weather!



We dug....



We surveyed....



We learnt more about archaeology....



We had a great time!!!



Some of the finds:



Pottery



Flints



An inscribed stone



Broken bits from a clay pipe

Background questions for Groups

Name of group?	Age group?	Ethnic background?	Any Disabilities?	Religious background?	What Gender?
Hazelwood Integrated Primary School	8-10 yrs	White	No	Mix	Mixed group
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	9-11 yrs	White	No	Catholic	Mixed group
Ben Madigan Prep	10 yrs	White	No	Protestant	Mixed group
Our Lady's Primary School	10 yrs	White	No	Catholic	Female
Ligoniel Improvement Association/Boys Model	15 yrs	White	No	Protestant	Male
Duncarin Community Centre after school club	8-16 yrs	White	No	Mix	Mixed group
Ben Madigan Women's Institute	50-60 yrs	White	No	Mix	Female
Cave Hill Conservation Campaign	30-70 yrs	White	No	Mix	Mixed group

1. You have ever been to Cave Hill Country Park?

Generally about 70% of the group had been before, however almost none of them had been to the cashel or even knew it existed.

2. You are aware of any historic sites at Cave Hill?

There was generally a good response to this question with people knowing about McArts Fort/Napoleons nose, the Caves and the plane crashes during WW2.

3. Have you ever been involved in an archaeology dig before?

Only one boy had (his mum was an archaeologist), no one else had been to a dig. About 60% had seen time team on TV which is what their expectations were based on.

4. How long do you think people have been living in Belfast and in the Belfast Hills?

Answers range widely from 100 years to 1 million years indicating that they did not know.

5. Does anyone know what a cashel is?

Prior to the talk no one knew what a cashel was. The quiz at the end suggested everyone knew by the time the talk was finished!

6. The site we are looking at is early Christian (500AD – 1177 AD) = 1500 years ago approx. How do you think people lived then?

Groups were not very sure about this. There was a general understanding that there was no electricity so no TV (some suggested that therefore life must have been rather boring), making life very hard.