

# Early Irish Ironworking

Brian Dolan

UCD School of Archaeology

PhD supervised by Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan and Dr. Helen Lewis



Brian.t.Dolan@ucd.ie



Experimental Furnace

## Research Questions

- Who produced and used iron in the early medieval period?
- How was iron produced?
- What was produced, where, and by who?
- Where was iron being smelted, forged, recycled and deposited?



Bog Ore deposit from Turraun, Co. Offaly

## Contribution

This project hopes to offer a new synthesis of Irish early medieval ironworking material, contributing to an understanding of the social context of technology in early Ireland

## Acknowledgements

This PhD research is being carried out within the UCD School of Archaeology with the kind support of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, a National University of Ireland Travelling Studentship, Marie Curie Early Stage Training funding and the Humanities Institute of Ireland.



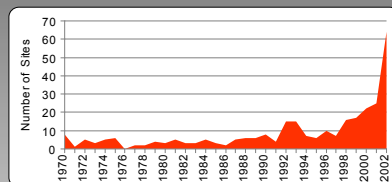
## Abstract

Iron is and was a key material in people's social lives. This PhD project will examine the role of iron technology in the perception and performance of social identity, its use and interpretation in daily life and its meaning in terms of early medieval ideologies.

Using a variety of methodologies combining traditional approaches with modern scientific analyses it will investigate the technological and social context of ironworking. Old and new data will be examined to provide insights into the role of ironworking technology in the perception and performance of social identity, its use and interpretation in daily life and its meaning in terms of early medieval ideologies.

## The Dataset

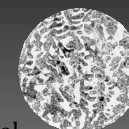
Scott's (1990) seminal and comprehensive *Early Irish Ironworking* identified 91 early medieval ironworking sites. However, almost two decades later the quantity and quality of new data has increased exponentially. Current work by UCD's EMAP Project has identified 293 potentially relevant sites up to 2002.



Specialist slag and metallurgical analysis of sites has become the norm and this combined with the quantity of new data has changed the nature of the evidence. Recently excavated sites have produced slag assemblages measured in tons, dwarfing anything previously known.

## Methodology

The project will combine a comprehensive database of relevant sites with contextual analysis of the material at various scales of working in the landscape. Case studies at regional, local and micro levels will examine every stage of the process of ironworking from creation to destruction. Slag and/or metallurgical analysis may be undertaken, where appropriate, in conjunction with University College London. Archaeological data will be compared with the historical sources and modern theoretical perspectives on the social role of technology will be considered.



## Further Reading

Scott, B. 1990 *Early Irish Ironworking*. Belfast, Ulster Museum.

## Contact

Please write your email in the space below if you would like more information about this project.