Biographies

Brigid Clesham is a graduate of TCD and a professionally qualified archivist, who has worked for the National Library of Ireland and in the Archives and Special Collections section of the James Hardiman Library, NUI, Galway. Her research interests include genealogy, local history and landed estate records.

Dr Tracy Collins is a professional archaeologist, and co-director of Aegis Archaeology Ltd., with a special research interest in medieval female monasticism. She has published on the subject, and has directed archaeological excavations at St Catherine’s Old Abbey, Co. Limerick, arguably the best preserved later medieval Augustinian nunnery in the country.

Dr Rachel Moss is Associate Professor in the History of Art and Architecture at Trinity College Dublin, specialising in Irish medieval material culture. She was editor and principal author of Art and Architecture of Ireland. Volume 1: Medieval c. 400–1600AD (London, New Haven and Dublin, 2014).

Ragnhall Ó Floinn, MRIA, FSA is an archaeologist and was Director of the National Museum of Ireland (2013-2018). His research interests lie primarily in the archaeology and art history of medieval Ireland and his most recent book (co-authored with Stephen Harrison) is Viking Graves and Grave-Goods published in 2015.

Br Colmán Ó Clabaigh is a monk of Glenstal and a medievalist specialising in the history of monasticism in Late Medieval Ireland. With Martin Browne OSB, he co-edited Households of God: The Regular Canons and Canonesses of St Augustine and of Prémontré in Medieval Ireland (Dublin, 2019).

Dr Kieran O’Connor lectures in medieval archaeology at the National University of Ireland, Galway and has published widely on the subjects of castles, medieval rural settlement and high medieval Gaelic Ireland. He is currently English-language editor of Chateau Gaillard. His most recent major publication is a co-edited book, published by Geography Publications, on the history and archaeology of County Roscommon.

Robert Scott is a local historian, bookseller and author of Around and About Cong – a history of Cong and the Abbey.

Bookings

Conference open to anyone with an interest in History and in our Christian Heritage. Cost: €35 (incl. lunch).

Bookings: www.congabbeyconference.com
Introduction

Cong Abbey: Canons, Canonesses, Characters and Crosses is a weekend conference drawing on the expertise of archaeologists, art historians, archivists and historians to explore the rich heritage of Cong Abbey. The conference is hosted by the Cong Moytura Heritage Society and will take place in the Crossroads Community Centre, Cong over the weekend of the 19 - 21 August.

Cong Abbey is one of the best-preserved medieval monastic foundations in Ireland. Founded early in the twelfth-century by the O’Conor kings of Connacht for the Regular Canons of St Augustine as part of a wide-ranging reform of the Irish church, it remained the order’s Irish stronghold until the death of its last member, Abbot Patrick Prendergast, in 1829.

This weekend conference will explore the architectural, artistic, economic, pastoral and spiritual activities of both the Regular Canons and their female counterparts the Regular Canonesses, in Cong and its environs over a span of seven centuries. Building on recent research on the Augustinian Canons in Ireland, it will situate a much-loved local monument in its wider national and international context.

Speakers and Talks:

Friday, 19 August. Venue: Ryan’s Hotel
20.00: Marian McHugh – Introduction to the Conference
20.10: Robert Scott – An introduction to Cong Abbey
21.00: Music and Food

Saturday, 20 August
Venue: Crossroads Community Centre
09.00: Registration
10.00: Guest Speaker – Welcome Address and Official Opening
10.30: Dr Kieran O’Conor The history and archaeology of the O’Conors of Connacht in the twelfth century
11.20: Break for refreshments
11.35: Dr Rachel Moss A Palimpsest in Stone: the buildings of Cong Abbey
12.25: Raghall Ó Floinn Medieval Reliquaries from Galway and Mayo: The Cross of Cong and the relics of St Jarlath
13.15: Lunch
14.15: Br Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB Cong and the Canons: an abiding presence
15.05: Dr Tracy Collins Canonesses in Connacht
15.55: Break
16.10: Brigid Clesham A Colourful Character: George Macnemara of Cong, 1722–1760
16.50: Close
17.15: Scheduled visits to Cong Abbey with Robert Scott

Sunday, 21 August. Venue: Inishmaine Abbey
10.00: Buses from the Crossroads to Inishmaine
11.00: Mass and Tour of Inishmaine Abbey