Reimagining the Black Friary: Recent Approaches to Seeing Beyond Modern Activities at the Dominican Friary, Trim, Co Meath, Republic of Ireland

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Problem: Geophysically surveying a site with severe modern disturbance

Solution: Taking a small-scale (high-resolution), multi-method approach

Introduction

Archaeological and forensic investigations often include non-invasive searches for buried remains. Geophysical survey, however, is hindered by modern rubbish, ferrous objects, clay soils, and waterlogged areas. This study was a multi-method (ground-penetrating radar, electromagnetic induction, and magnetic), multi-phase survey of unexcavated areas of the Black Friary (see Shine et al. 2016; Green 2015, 2016). Past-medieval quarrying of the site produced a thick (c. 40-60 cm) rubble layer which is over lain by ferrous contamination from modern dumping.

Methods

The multi-method, higher resolution surveys delineated (Fig. 3):

- Possible town wall remains and/or the foundation trench (See Shine et al. 2016)
- Possible burials within the cemetery boundary
- A well or similar access to groundwater and a possible associated paleochannel/stream
- Modern disturbances

Results

A distinct decline in data quality directly correlated to traverse spacing (demonstrated in Figs. 4-5). In this case, modern disturbance is essential to acquire high resolution data. This research suggests a 0.10m traverse interval and 0.02m sampling interval achieve ideal resolution (particularly for burials). GPR proved most successful in terms of feature detection, depth of investigation, and data quality.

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References


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