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Ryan Barland "digs" internship at the National Museum of Ireland

Summary: University of Minnesota, Morris senior Ryan Barland attended the 2007 Study Abroad May session, Dig Tusk, with UMM Professor of Art History Jimmy Schryver expecting to gain archaeological dig experience. Little did he know that he was on the verge of gaining much more.

(April 1, 2008)-University of Minnesota, Morris senior Ryan Barland attended the 2007 Study Abroad May session, Dig Tusk, with UMM Professor of Art History Jimmy Schryver expecting to gain archaeological dig experience. Little did he know that he was on the verge of gaining much more.

The course by Schryver and Dr. Niall Brady was part of a collaboration between UMM and the Irish [Discovery Programme](#). Barland and the other students carried out excavations and site surveys as part of the Medieval Rural Settlement Project or MRSP, run by Dr. Brady and his team, a project that will again involve UMM students this summer. In addition to the excavations at Tusk, the larger goal of the MRSP is to examine rural settlement and landscape in medieval Ireland.

While in Ireland, Barland met Eamonn (Ned) Kelly, the Keeper of Irish Antiquities at the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) in Dublin. They began talking about Barland's studies and his interests in museums, and by the end of the summer, Barland had applied for and been accepted to an internship at the NMI. "When I found out about the internship, things had to happen rather quickly, but my adviser and Tom McRoberts in the Study Abroad office at UMM made the process go quite smoothly." Of course, Dr. Brady and his team kept an eye on Barland once he arrived in Ireland.

The internship, which involved working 40 hours a week from September to December 2007, was very appropriate for Barland because his future ambitions include museum work. He commented that above all he "learned that work at a national museum is not all gallery openings and putting together exhibitions." His routine varied from day to day and he found himself completing a multitude of assignments, including transporting artifacts and testing display items as well as attending conferences and symposiums. His work included daily chores such as copying and filing, but also involved research that included determining the original find locations of various museum artifacts. The NMI is currently undertaking a project to identify the find spots of every object they have, which numbers over two million. The most interesting job he had was assisting with the production of an exhibition.

In his spare time, Barland researched the origins of museum objects, with the intent of triggering further archaeological digs. At 11 a.m. every day, all museum employees, including the director, would gather for tea and scones. Barland said this was the best part of the day because of the conversation that ensued: "I think I learned just as much during our conversations then as I did during the rest of the day." As is often the case in any institution, these conversations were where some of the most exciting work gets done.

It was his fourth visit to Europe and one of his best experiences there. Ryan actually lived in Ringsend, a neighborhood near the city center. He observed that Dublin, Ireland, is actually very similar to America in terms of culture and

environment. The weather was comfortable and the people were friendly, he added. In his experience, the Irish people were very laid back and humorous. They are “unbelievably helpful” he said.

An art history major and a history minor from Minneapolis, Barland will give a presentation about his experience—which he considers to be his best while at UMM—during the April 4 UMM Undergraduate Research Symposium. He recommends traveling abroad to all students.

Photo: Ryan Barland on site at Tulsk, County Roscommon

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