Choose Your Adventure: Exploring Irish Crannóga Through Oral History, Memory, Public
History and Archaeology

by

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Abstract

The public conception of Irish archaeology stereotypically invokes ideas around the 'Celtic' or even the 'Viking' Irish past. A different way to view Irish history is through the 'crannog' and the idea of 'dwelling in the landscape'. Crannogs were some of Ireland's oldest houses and defensive structures in prehistoric times. In this essay, I discuss the design of a game centered on the archaeology of crannogs, to transport the player to the past. We cannot go back in time and inhabit a crannog, but via a game or playful *enchanting* experience we can explore and dwell within the ancient landscape. This experience in world building (Morgan, 2023)[1] allows us to explore the intersection of digital public history, historical consciousness, and Irish heritage/landscape, and offers suggestions for how public historians might employ similar approaches. Games can offer a new way to experience history and historical consciousness through gameplay. This MRE explores the creation of a GDD (Game Design Document) towards a game as an ideal medium for public history and player engagement to learn about the past.

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[1] Colleen Morgan, "Archaeology as Worldbuilding," Linkedin, April 6, 2023, https://www.linkedin.com/posts/colleenmorgan_caa-2023-colleen-morgan-activity-7102986481916362753-SFwF/.

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Introduction

This MRE focuses on historical empathy in gaming, and through applied game design, it offers

an example of a methodology for creating 'good history' through gaming. By 'good history' I

mean one that is historically grounded and informed. To that end, it documents the design

process for a game centered on Irish Prehistory that puts those principles into practice. The

resulting game (a few minutes of a playable prototype gameplay are available here[2]) can be

thought of as an act of public history since, through gameplay, the player will enact the

historiography represented. There is also a connection with the practices of oral history research

and digital humanities. Oral history allows for a more comprehensive view of history by

allowing stories to be at the forefront of the history being told, and folklore and myths have

influenced the re-telling of crannog stories. It is through the re-telling of these stories that we are

able to connect to the past. Nyhan and Flinn note the value of oral history is in the stories that are

being told and the connections formed from these oral accounts. A good narrative or story is

often at the heart of games that allows players to be captivated in the story.[3] Gaming allows

stories to come alive and interest players in a way that invokes a sensory richness beyond text.

Jenkins gestures towards this when he refers to games as "lively art," through his interest in the

creative ways games allow us to explore the world. For the Public Historian, this means that the

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[2] https://emeraldjane3.itch.io/aoife-and-the-crannog This prototype serves as proof of concept of what a visual novel style game can do.

[3] Julianne Nyhan and Andrew Flinn, "Why Oral History?" in *Computation and the Humanities Towards an Oral History of Digitial Humanities*, Springer, https://ocul-crl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_CRL/1ortgfo/cdi_openaire_primary_doi_22a583cf179974ca948ac4a3ad1e8d78.

narrative heart of games can engage the player in a way that is emotional and complex, in ways that other forms of media cannot.[4]

Historical Empathy | Putting this into practice

We might also call this 'historical empathy' which some have argued can be found in the act of playing games.[5] I draw particularly on the work of archaeologist Kisha Supernant, a Métis scholar who calls for a 'heart-centered' approach to archaeological work and its communication. By 'heart-centered,' Supernant means an approach that is dominated by the heart, one that is actively driven by emotion and feeling and empathy rather than a mechanical and methodological understanding of the past to which we are accustomed. Aligning well with other scholars like Boltz, the approach aims to address the role of empathy in creating effective engagement by roleplaying within videogames and the history told therein.[6] In contrast, Hartman, Tulloch, and Young, view empathy as an act of "stepping into the shoes and becoming one with the world."[7] It is through this embodied experience that we are able to inhabit different lives and stories in games. Similarly, Frendergen uses the idea of enchantment to understand landscape and

[4] Henry Jenkins, "Chapter 1: Games, the New Lively Art," in *The Wow Climax: Tracing the Emotional Impact of Popular Culture*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 33, ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/lib/oculcarleton-ebooks/detail.action?docID=865572.

[5] Shawn Graham, "Pulling Back the Curtain: Writing History Through Video Games," in *Web Writing: Why and How for Liberal Arts Teaching and Learning,* ed. Jack Dougherty and Tennyson O'Donnell (University of Michigan Press/Trinity College ePress edition, 2014), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv65sxgk.18.

[6] Liz Owens Boltz, "Chapter 8 Nervousness and Maybe Even Some Regret: Videogames and the Cognitive-Affective Model of Historical Empathy," in *Exploring the Cognitive, Social, Cultural, and Psychological Aspects of Gaming and Simulations*, ed. Brock Randall Dubbels (Hershey PA: IGI Global, 2019), 228, doi:10.4018/978-1-5225-7461-3.

[7] Abbie Hartman, Rowan Tulloch, and Helen Young, "Video Games as Public History: Archives, Empahty and Affinity," *The International Journal of Computer Game Research* Volume 21, issue 4 December 2021, Game Studies - Video Games as Public History: Archives, Empathy and Affinity.

otherworldly sites that are often underrepresented in history and archaeology.[8] Sara Perry,

Director of Research and Engagement at MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) contends,

drawing on Jane Bennet's work on the political philosophy of enchantment,[9] that enchantment

moves us to action. She argues that "emotive engagement...[can be] used to instigate ethically

minded action on the world."[10] Thus designing a game that activates the heart, and moves us to

enchantment, might lead us to different understandings of the past. *Aoife and the Crannog* is

designed to create an enchanting experience for the senses and change popular conceptions of

Irish archaeology. The MRE therefore, documents the process of design methodology to

demonstrate ways other scholars might design for enchantment in public history.

Gaming has become a way for players and creators to engage with history and form strong

relationships around certain games and fandoms:

> video games themselves evolve as a result of player engagement by eventually incorporating
> some of these extensions of gaming activity. Developers pick up on forum discussions, study
> the kinds of mods players seem to like, pay attention to the conversations gamers have with
> community managers, and observe how players instruct one another — drawing on these
> resources to alter games and create new ones.[11]

The evolution of gaming culture has allowed gaming to infiltrated people's hearts in various

ways through forums and other ways outside the typical gamespace. This MRE focuses on

historical empathy in gaming, the methodology of creating good history through gaming, and the

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[8] Christina Fredengren, "Unexpected Encounters with Deep Time Enchantment. Bog Bodies, Crannogs and 'Otherwordly' sites. The materializing powers of disjunctures in time," *World Archaeology*, 48:4, 482-499, (2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2016.1220327.

[9] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and* Ethics (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[10] Sara Perry, "The Enchantment of the Archaeological Record," *European Journal of Archaeology* 23 Vol 3 2019, 360.

[11] Shawna Kelly and Bonnie Nardi, "Playing with sustainability: Using video games to simulate futures of scarcity," First Monday, Volume 19, Number 5-5 May 2014, 43, https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/5259/3877 doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v19i5.5259.

design process of creating a game design document that can be used for public history. A focus on how games infiltrate hearts of gamers is crucial to understand the shift in history games as educational and immersive tools. The MRE is focused on explaining the process of designing a prototype digital game by providing a critically annotated game design document which lays out the historiographical, conceptual, and technical choices.

I activate these theories and perspectives through the use of the *Tuesday Visual Novel Engine*.[12] Many experiments in game-design created by historians or students use the *Twine* branching narrative engine (see Anastaisa Salter's work on using Twine and the possible applications it can be used for)[13]; there are many walkthroughs and academic discussions of using Twine in this way, since its affordances look like text-based essays that are familiar.[14] Twine prioritizes text, while a 'Visual Novel' prioritizes text *with* visual imagery *and* sounds. A visual novel is a particular style of text-based game that uses lush visuals as backgrounds (often containing clues) to convey rich emotional experiences. The genre is a staple of Japanese gaming where they are a variation of role-playing games; visual novels in North America are associated with romance and dating-simulators with imagery at the forefront to engage players. A visual novel has the ability to prioritize both text and images in a way that has the ability to transcend traditional academic writing. Through this application the player is immersed in the gameplay

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[12] Kirilllive, Tuesday Visual Novel Engine, Itch.io, September 20, 2020, Tuesday JS web visual novel engine (kirilllive.github.io).

[13] Stuart Moulthrop and Anastasia Salter, *Twining: Critical and Creative Approaches to Hypertext Narratives,* Amherst College Press, 2021, muse.jhu.edu/book/97430.

[14] Gabi Kirilloff, "Interactive Fiction in the Humanities Classroom: How to Create Interactive Text Games Using Twine," *Programming Historian*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.46430/phen0095.

world not only in visuals, but in soundscapes that actively transport the player into the narrative.[15]

     Aoife and the Crannog draws heavily from historical sources, archaeological reports, oral histories, folklore, and even epic poetry. Carefully curating these resources combined with a fictitious (yet historically grounded) story is the key to creating a well-balanced approach to designing a game. The creative aim is to produce a game that is both an enchanting story, but also aesthetically pleasing and creative that players will want to play to discover history on their own terms. [16]The game brings the lives of the peasantry and common class narratives alive. The game aims to bring the idea of community and friendship that is seen in the historical and archaeological record to the forefront, by allowing the player to connect with the characters in the game. The game offers a compelling approach because it is focused on the peasant class and not royal or elite narratives that often dominate the scholarship on crannogs. By focusing on the peasantry class, a new presentation of history can emerge that allows the everyday life of common people to prevail. Players will be able to empathize more with these characters because they will be more relatable than a royal narrative. This choice offers a different view of history that situates the crannog in a non-elite landscape much like Fredengren does in her work.[17] The archaeology present in *Aoife and the Crannog* will offer a way to dwell in the landscape and rediscover what life was like on a crannog. Crannogs will be discussed further down in more detail, but most were considered elite structures. However, it is unlikely that all of these

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[15] Shawn Graham, "The Sound of Data (a gentle introduction to sonification for historians)," *Programming Historian* 5 (2016), https://doi.org/10.46430/phen0057.

[16] Please see Appendix A for the GDD of *Aoife and the Crannog* for it will be referred to throughout.

[17] Christina Fredengren, "Poor People's Crannogs," *Archaeology Ireland* Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter, 2001): 24, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20562537.

structures were linked to elite classes.[18] A crannog is an artificial dwelling usually circular in nature built in the water often associated with medieval inhabitancy, though there is archaeological evidence to suggest these structures were inhabited as early as the neolithic period. The name crannog comes from the Irish crann or crann-óg meaning young tree and is often understood as a reference to the sheer amount of timber that was used to build these structures.[19] The archaeological record indicates that smaller crannogs can be viewed as non-elite structures and often contain less noteworthy finds. There are fewer finds since they are less elaborate than the ones linked in the historical record to elites, such as the the Kings of Brega.[20] Archaeological excavations have uncovered an array of artifacts that exemplify the role of the inhabitants that allow community, artistry, and craftmanship to appear in the archaeological record. Crannogs have been excavated and the findings include: pottery, animal bones, pottery shards, canoes, and various other artifacts that emerge as reminders of what was part of the daily life on a crannog. See Figure 1 for a map of the crannogs in Ireland that have been recorded.

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[18] Fredengren, "Poor People's Crannogs,"24- 25.

[19] Nancy Edwards, "Chapter 3: Other Settlement Types," in *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland,* ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 38.

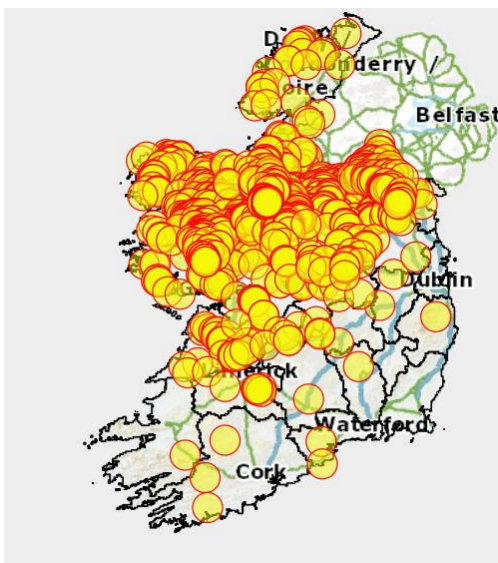[20]Fredengren, "Poor People's Crannogs," 24.

Figure 1: Map of Irish crannogs via Historic Environment Viewer managed by the

Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government of Ireland, at

https://heritagedata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0c9eb9575b54408

1b0d296436d8f60f8. Accessed April 5, 2024.

The unknown is often enticing to players and exploring or virtually dwelling in a crannog

is an effective way to inhabit history and space. Fredengren's scholarship on crannogs and

'otherwordly' sites illuminates the importance of archaeology and the meaning we can discern

from these sites: "…archaeological material undergoes cycles of burial, discovery, preservation

and decay: working as material memory where past and present are entangled in each other in

various ways."[21] As Fredengren points out, archaeology contributes a great deal to our

understanding of history especially crannogs throughout time. It is inside these crannogs and

waterlogged environments that heritage and history can be found. By looking at the material

culture that has survived, it is possible to see the role archaeology plays in bringing history to the

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[21] Fredengren, "Unexpected Encounters," 487.

present.[22] These items are often well preserved and can tell stories that are unexpected.

Fredengren's work is pivotal because she connects the excavation of a crannog at Lough Gara

with oral history interviews about the site and its situation as an example of deep time in the

local community; for Fredengren, it was not just about the crannog as archaeological evidence

for the past but also as evidence for the intrusion of the past into the present as recounted through

oral history work she conducted with the local community about the site and the connections

they felt there.[23] Fredengren's use of oral history, folklore, and archaeology to explore these

'otherwordly' sites allowed her to inhabit and understand their meaning.[24] This is ultimately what

Aoife and the Crannog aims to do as well.

      The inherent strangeness of a crannog lies in its construction.[25] Oftentimes, the creation

of these structures involved carrying wood across land and water which is a monumental task.[26]

The fact that crannogs are artificially constructed in the middle of bodies of water is quite

indicative of the political landscape of the time. It is well known that there were various warring

tribes or kings that fought for power in medieval Ireland, and often, these crannogs were built as

another layer of protection against attacks. These structures offered an advantage since they were

harder to get to; one either had to use a boat, or risk being seen crossing the walkway that

connected the crannog to land. These sites had a perimeter palisade which served to protect the

crannog further from attack.[27] The structures themselves vary in size, construction, and depth

inside the bodies of water in which they were constructed. These structures are sometimes

completely waterlogged when found, and it is that inherent issue that has contributed to these

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[22] Ibid., 484.
[23] Ibid., 487.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 488.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Edwards, "Chapter 3: Other Settlement Types," 39.

structures being under-analyzed or often forgotten. The conditions to excavate a submerged structure is often more labor intensive than a site on land, which adds to the difficulty in excavating these often submerged or sunken in mud sites.[28] Crannogs served as homesteads, defensive structures, as food storage, and sites to house animals. In fact, these crannogs serve as an ideal study for history because of their versatile nature. The archaeology present at these sites is telling and intriguing and often allows historians and archaeologists to reflect on the purposes of crannogs and the implications of these dwellings.

Folding Time

Additionally, Fredengren investigated the potentials of crannogs as they relate to time, memory, community, and landscape:

> The crannogs could, then, in a material sense, exemplify the physical folding of time: where features from different periods would become merged with each other during periods of re-use and abandonment of the site. Features dating to the Bronze Age become folded together with Early Medieval practices on some sites, for example. They show the layering of time, but the sequencing is interrupted, cut and re-started, where features, material and practices in later periods on occasion knot with materials and practices in earlier periods. Crannogs could be seen as black holes in time, where there is no change and which people returned to over thousands of years.[29]

This idea of folding time is fascinating and offers a way of dealing with the five millenia of time where crannogs were part of the landscape. For Fredengren, the folding-of-time visible at a crannog is one of the chief drivers of enchantment and the encounter with deep time in the present. For a video game designer, a certain amount of creativity can be afforded, the game can be less concerned with visual fidelity to a certain time period and more concerned with generating a sensibility that fits well with the affordances of a video game. Storytelling is often

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[28] Edwards, "Chapter 3: Other Settlement Types," 38-39.
[29] Fredengren, "Unexpected Encounters with Deep Time," 489.

non-linear and can use other timelines to tell and create immersive stories through non-linear

pathways. Thus, the designer can draw upon archaeological field reports and folklore to capture

the heart of a crannog and what it meant for the community who interacted with them.

Game Studies and Public History

The field of game studies is expansive and includes the work of many prominent scholars

that incorporate history into their own games. As Coltrain and Ramsay have argued, the value of

games lies in their rules and structure that humanistic theories employ to understand the world.[30]

Kee et al. made roughly the same argument when they claimed that to play a game well is to

perform the same kind of thinking that characterizes good history.[31] It is through this medium, a

non-typical paper-based approach, that players can learn through gaming. It is through the act of

doing or *playing* that players feel connected and are able to learn. Coltrain and Ramsay note, "a

reader is unlikely to understand the drudgery of a historical trade like blacksmithing from a

description alone, a game can provide a player with a virtual hammer to pound for dozens of tries

until simulated fatigue sets in."[32] In Coltrain and Ramsay's view, history is about *experience*.

Additionally, the work of Hiriat takes a very pragmatic view of video game design and its

relationship to history education. Hiriat designed a prototype of a game set in Anglo-Saxon

Britain and used the game to teach students about life in Anglo-Saxon England (in the U.K. this

often denotes the time-period) and then analyzed their engagement and understanding pre- and

post- gameplay and their assumptions about Anglo-Saxon Britain to see if they could be changed

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[30] James Coltrain and Stephen Ramsay,"Can Video Games Be Humanities Scholarship?" in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019*, edited by Matthew K Gold and Lauren F. Klein, 36- 45, (University of Minnesota Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvg251hk.6.

[31] Kevin Kee et al., "Towards a Theory of Good History Through Gaming," Canadian Historical Review 90, 2, 2009, DOI:10.1353/can.0.0164.

[32] Coltrain and Ramsay, "Can Video Games Be Humanities Scholarship," 42.

after playing the game.[33] Hiriat asked: "to what extent do we wish emotion to become part of historical understanding? What do we gain by letting ourselves feel for or empathise immediately and deeply with particular people, events, or situations from the past?"[34] Hiriat found that after playing the game, the students had a more informed and educated idea of what life in Anglo-Saxon Britan entailed and found that it was a beneficial and unique way to teach history within the constraints of the national curriculum. Hiriat's research allowed for a deeper understanding of what constitutes a game and how much emotion goes into both developing and playing the game and how this impacts the storyline. These questions are vital in understanding the paths this MRE has undertaken.

Similarly, other well-known games like *Assassins Creed*,[35] *Oregon Trail*,[36] and *Carmen Sandiago*[37] have been trailblazing the way for informational and educational games. Indie games have also used the success to create historically driven games that are not only fun but are engrossing for players. Games like *Pilgrim's Path,*[38] *Close to the Sun*[39] and a great deal of others have taken creative liberties yet have included historical characters and stories that often intrigue players and make the experience one of learning and fun. Other scholars have analyzed games and gameplay in depth and have discerned that games are quite complex in nature and cannot simply be analyzed based on narrative alone. They need to be examined on all fronts. It is not

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[33] Juan Hiriat, "How to Be a 'Good' Anglo-Saxon: Designing and Using Historical Video Games in Primary Schools," in *Communicating the Past in the Digital Age: Proceedings of the International Conference on Digital Methods in Teaching and Learning in Archaeology* (12th-13th October 2018), edited by Sebastian Hageneur, 141-52, Ubiquity Press, 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11cvx4t.16.

[34] Hiriat, "How to Be a 'Good' Anglo-Saxon, 1.

[35] Tim Bogenn, Kenny Sims, Michael Owen, and Games Prima, 2018*, Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, Rocklin, CA: Prima Games.

[36] Don Rawitsch, Bill Heinemann, and Paul Dillenberger, 1971*, The Oregon Trail*, Northfield, MI: MECC.

[37] Gene Portwood, Mark Iscaro, Dane Bigham, Lauren Elliott, 1985, *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego*?, San Diego, CA: Broderbund and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

[38] Exit Studio, 2023, *Pilgrim's Path*, Leiria, Portugal: Exit Studio.

[39] Roberto Semprebene, 2019, *Close to the Sun*, Storm in a Teacup and Wired Productions.

just about the story being presented, but the way the game makes the player feel, especially how this changes the game for and by the player's interactions. Nguyen's work is an exploration of gaming and what it truly means to be a player of a game and the agency we can possess by playing the game.[40] Nguyen's scholarship paves the way for a new mode of thinking, one that empowers not only the player but the creator of a new form of agency one where discovery is key. Games allow players to adopt the temporary identity of a historian. Playing the game is a way for new experiences to be unlocked and new art to be created, it also opens new artistic exploration that players typically do not consider when playing a game.[41]

Curating a Game Design Document

A Game Design Document (GDD) is a document that details how a game will be designed and developed—it is a blueprint, if you will, that shows the critical (and historiographically) informed choices that guide the creation of the game. It lays out the design of the gameworld and the gameplay therein including artwork, sound, aesthetics, essentially everything that works together to create an appealing game.[42] A GDD is essential because it shows how the game should be played and why certain actions are included in the game. Anyone should be able to pick up the GDD and be able to follow the narrative, mechanics, and visuals to understand what the game is about and how the player will experience the game.[43] Usually, these documents are worked on by multiple game designers before a game prototype is ever created, but that is a luxury not available to this particular project. There are also online workspaces for creating a GDD that can help aid in the visualization and creation process. In fact, I consulted one of these

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[40] C. Thi Nguyen, *Games: Agency as Art* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).
[41] Nguyen, *Games: Agency as Art*, 3.
[42] Aoibhe Conway, "Game Design Document," Open Library, Pressbooks, 2021, Game Design Document – Game Design & Development 2021 (pressbooks.pub).
[43] Conway, "Game Design Document."

called Milanote that allows for an array of options to create a visual working game design document that prioritizes the aesthetic feel I wanted to portray in my game.[44] This is a tool that implements a variety of resources to achieve a comprehensive stylized mood board complete with different boards to customize at will. The GDD I created on Milanote will be included in Appendix A under the Artwork section.[45] It is not a fully complete GDD, but it gives a general idea of the game elements present and the visual style I wished to create including color swatches, images, maps, and stylized crannogs. Essentially, each board is clickable and takes you to the next board. There are three main boards: Concept, Level Design, and Character Design. Within these main boards there are nested boards that show more in depth thinking and creation of the game. These nested boards include: brainstorm, game mood board, game world building, level design, and game character. This software could also be used in future projects by scholars as a way to implement video game design in public history.

Part of the process includes thinking about the ideal game what it would look like, feel like, and the emotions that would be taken on by players inside the game space. The visual storytelling elements of the GDD make it visually appealing for the players and contribute to the historical empathy players can feel through gameplay. This is crucial because a good well-rounded game should include design elements that are visually appealing and entertaining for the player. Aesthetics were a vital part of the process because oftentimes it is easier to engage with a story that has appealing visuals along with a captivating narrative. For a historian, a game design document is a work of scholarship that might be unfamiliar. However, in familiar terms, it can be likened to the function a timeline provides. This function helps keep the history ordered and

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[44] "Plan your next video game," Milanote, 2024, Game design software - Milanote.
[45] The online version may be viewed on the Milanote platform. Hurley, Danielle, *Aoife and the Crannog,* Milanote, https://app.milanote.com/1RQp3D1GHzCm5a?p=vOWOXqaQbMc.

structured, making the emergent experience clear. As historians, we often create characters we think represent the most authentic version of history, but that is not always the best course of action. Sometimes the narrative of the game is more important than the historical accuracy of what the game is trying to portray. Simply being immersed inside the gameworld and engaging through learning is enough to shape minds.

To teach good history, we need to think about the type of research questions and the perspective a historian or archaeologist would take and incorporate them into the gameworld. One such game called *Evolving Planet* by Rubio-Campillo et al., explored one of these questions.[46] The game focused on the collapse of society using evolution and discovery to discern the reasons as to why this happened.[47] Furthermore, the scholarship by Rubio-Campillo et al., aimed to expand the typical video game depiction of archaeology by exposing players to more than just digging in the dirt, which most players recognize.[48] Rubio-Campillo's team designed a science-fiction game centered around xenoarchaeology where the process of doing archaeology was at the forefront of the game.[49] In the spirit of this approach, *Aoife and the Crannog* undertakes a similar feat by telling stories and histories that are not well known and using archaeology and history to create a historically centered narrative game. The GDD will include certain sections to convey aesthetics, history, and ideal gameplay for a public history/educational game that might not appear on typical game design documents. The GDD in question is designed such that the resulting game will immerse the player inside a crannog and expose them to what

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[46] Xavier Rubio-Campillo, Jorge Caro Saiz, Gullem H. Pongiluppi, Guillem Laborda Cabo and David Ramos Garcia, "Explaining Archaeological Research with Video Games, in *The Interactive Past. Archaeology, heritage & video games*, A.A. Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke, C. E. Boom, K.H.J. & A. Politopoulis, 2017, Leiden: Sidestone Press,156, Rubio_Campillo_et_al._2017_Explaining_archaeological_research_with_video_games.pdf (ed.ac.uk)
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

life was like inside a village in ancient and medieval Ireland. The game is designed to be an exploration or strategy narrative novel that immerses the player in Irish history, myth, legend, and the unknown. Price and Burton pinpointed the research questions many archaeologists set out to answer.[50] Namely, Price and Burton want to know about past inhabitants and the purposes behind certain actions and decisions in the world.[51] Inside the game, the player will become archaeologists and historians by exploring the gameworld and learning the skills needed to become an active learner.

Other scholars have also created videogames to aid in learning and promote engagement with the past. One such scholar, Klaassen focuses a great deal of his time on historical gaming, even creating a few games himself and implementing them into lesson plans and challenging students to design their own historical based games.[52] Klaassen also uses the idea of curating an exhibit as an ideal process of designing a game. To narrow the focus, a GDD can prioritize desired elements for the game.[53] Klaassen brings this idea forward as an ideal way to design a game, by focusing on only a few core elements it is easier for a game to tell a story. This approach is an integral part of my own process. This is vital because designing a game can be a challenging task, especially for a public historian. We are not trained video game designers, but we aim to tell stories and histories that are forgotten.

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[50] T. Douglas Price and James H. Burton, "What Archaeologists Want To Know," in *An Introduction to Archaeological Chemistry,* 1st ed, (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2011), 25. https://ocul-crl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_CRL/hgdufh/alma991022686559505153.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Frank Klaassen, "Game Development in a Senior Seminar," in Robert Houghton, editor. *Teaching the Middle Ages through Modern Games: Using, Modding and Creating Games for Education and Impact* (Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2022), 229-246, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110712032-011.

[53] Klaassen, "Game Development in a Senior Seminar," 238.

Aoife and the Crannog follows in the footsteps of other public history projects like the visual novel, *Ako: A Test of Loyalty,* in which you play as a young samurai in Japan in 1701. In this game, you are at the heart of the 47 ronin, a controversial event in Japanese history, where you have to decide "between family and honor either go into impoverished exile with your mother and sister who will need your help to survive, or join your fellow masterless samurai in a quixotic quest to avenge the death of your dishonored lord."[54] The game uses a visual novel style with a choose your own adventure approach in which a player makes decisions that influences the game usually through dialogue. This project was the first of many developed by the *Epoch: History Games Initiative* research team at University of Texas at Austin. For her honors Humanities Thesis Haley Price collaborated with *Epoch* to create another game in 2021, about the Italian Renaissance, in fifteenth century Florence, and the Medici family.[55] These games set the precedent for what a public history game should entail with interactive and immersive dialogue, aesthetics, and gameplay that allow the player to truly experience events in history they otherwise would have a challenging time grasping without the use of gaming. In fact, Clulow, who supervised the projects above, contends that the act of starting a DH project is often the hardest part and that we will never have all the skills, but to go ahead and begin anyways.[56] DH is forever changing and evolving, so to create something within a digital space is crucial to advance scholarship.[57]

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[54] Alex Aragon, Ashley Gelato, Michael Rader and Izellah Wang, Adam Clulow, "Ako: A Test of Loyalty," Epoch, University of Texas at Austin, Itch.io, 2020, https://epochutaustin.itch.io/ako-a-test-of-loyalty.

[55] Haley Price, "The Pazzi Conspiracy: An Educational Video Game," Epoch: University of Texas at Austin, Itch.io, 2021. https://haleyrp1803.itch.io/the-pazzi-conspiracy.

[56] Adam Clulow, "DH in an Online World: Building a Digital Humanities Portfolio for the Classroom," Notevenpast.org, February 5, 2021. https://notevenpast.org/dh-in-an-online-world-building-a-digital-humanities-portfolio-for-the-classroom/.

[57] Ibid.

Another key to the development of *Aoife and the Crannog* was deciding what kind of characters should be included. One of the most informative and useful pieces consulted was by Ciesla who analyzes game development as it pertains to visual novel games and the tools necessary to achieve an ideal game.[58] The scholarship highlights different themes found within popular games and even provides a blueprint for how games should be developed including a step-by-step guide to developing characters, best practices for game development, quests, and even playability, and how well the game holds up and gauges the level of interest for players.[59] One of the most useful sections in the scholarship detailed the mechanics of the game including what kind of protagonist or antagonist the game would take. The work lays out Carl Jung's twelve-character archetypes. These archetypes are often used to explain heroic endeavors and the paths many myths and stories follow. Additionally, creating these archetypes can be tied to the process of using fiction or imagination for research purposes as Helden and Witcher address.[60] They argue that these two concepts can work together and that they do not necessarily blur the lines of what is real and what is fiction.[61] The one that seemed most fitting for a game focused on archaeology was The Explorer. These explorers are driven by adventure and are not content to wait around, they want to be the ones to discover the next new thing. The section notes that examples of such a character include Indiana Jones which is fitting for an exploration game.[62] This is key because *Aoife and the Crannog* is an exploratory game designed to do just that. Aoife

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[58] Robert Ciesla, *Game Development with Ren'Py Introduction to Visual Novel Games Using Ren'Py, TyranoBuilder, and Twine,* 1st ed. (Berkeley, CA: Apress, 2019).

[59] Robert Ciesla, *"Chapter 1: Stories and How to Craft Them,"* in *Game Development with Ren'Py Introduction to Visual Novel Games Using Ren'Py TyranoBuilder and Twine*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: CA Apress, 2019).

[60] Daniël van Halden and Robert Witcher, eds. *Researching the Archaeological Past through Imagined Narratives: A Necessary Fiction* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 2.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ciesla, *"Chapter 1: Stories."*

has quests to complete, archaeology and history to discover, and people to meet along the way that advance her storyline.

Similarly, cryptographic narratives in video games also fit this theme of discovery and uncovering of secrets. Indie games have developed this cryptography element to interest fans and keep them immersed in the gameworld. You do not need to discover all the clues to finish or even enjoy the game, but they are often there to provide more information and represent the "lore" of the gameworld that keep players engaged.[63] Cryptography allows the elements to work together to create an ideal game. Paklons and Tratsaert note, "applying this narrative structure to the interactive medium of video games allows that player to become the detective and to bring together all the disparate plot points, hidden as narrative codes through the gameplay and game world, while creating her own meaningful narrative."[64] *Aoife and the Crannog* is a discovery game, but it is also part detective story since players will work to discover the secrets of the crannog and the village therein and draw their own conclusions about what life was like. The game elements work together to create an ideal space where the player is actively engaged and one where choices drive the narrative structure. In this way, players are actively working towards unearthing history and learning by *playing* or *doing* history.

Introduction to Domestic Irish Archaeology and Crannogs

A crannog is a man-made round structure or dwelling made of stone, timber, and soil. These structures are usually built on an artificial island. These structures were common in Ireland, and it has been estimated that at one time there were 2,000 in Ireland, predominately in the northern

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[63] Ana Paklons and An-Sofie Tratsaert, "The cryptographic narrative in video games: the player as detective," In *Mediating Vulnerability*: *Comparative Approaches and Questions of Genre*, edited by Anneleen Masschelein, Florian Mussgnug, and Jennifer Rushworth, 168, UCL Press, 2021, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1nnwhjt.14.
[64] Paklons and Tratsaert, "The cryptographic narrative," 169.

part of the country.[65] They were often used as defensive structures, storage, living spaces, and even housed animals and valuable goods. O'Sullivan and Downey also note the different uses of crannogs and how they were also used for burials, route markers, and other purposes we do not fully understand in today's context.[66] The uncertainty of the use and purpose of these crannogs is an interesting thing of note and provides multiple storylines for a game. The fact that these structures were used for such a long time in Ireland is important because even though they were long part of the Irish landscape, their very ubiquity makes them, in a way, invisible. This allows a glimpse into a part of history that is often forgotten which can be quite attractive for players to discover a part of history they are unfamiliar with.

Consequently, crannogs have existed for quite some time in Ireland, from the late Bronze age all the way up to the medieval period which provides a long history of habitation and potential for storytelling. These spaces provide the perfect case study for a game since they are spaces that are often not noted in history, which allows a glimpse into the hidden stories and lives of past inhabitants. Cavers has reflected on crannogs in his work by looking at the significance of the structures and the material culture that has been unearthed at these ancient sites.[67] The structures were vital to survival and housed an array of artifacts that can tell us a great deal about medieval life. One such excavation was at a site called Drumclay in 2012 by Bermingham and Moore who are both wetland archaeologists.[68] This excavation was significant because it

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[65] Muiris O'Sullivan and Liam Downey, "Crannogs," *Archaeology Ireland* 19, no. 4 (2005): 34-36. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20559101.

[66] Muiris O'Sullivan and Liam Downey, "Crannogs," 3.

[67] Graeme Cavers, "Chapter 7 Crannogs as Buildings: The Evolution of Interpretation 1882-2011," in Lake Dwellings After Robert Munro, Proceedings from the Munro International Seminar:, ed. M.S. Midgley and J. Sanders, The Lake Dwellings of Europe 22nd and 23rd October 2010, University of Edinburgh, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 170.

[68] Nóra Bermingham, Caitriona Moore, John O'Keeffe, Maybelline Gormley, and J.D.J. O'Keeffe, " DRUMCLAY: A MOST SURPRISING CRANNOG," *Archaeology Ireland* 27, no. 2 (2013): http://www.jstor.org/stable/41982483.

unearthed a substantial number of houses, artifacts, and different samplings of organic material

that allowed for a glimpse into medieval life.[69] Bermingham and Moore note, "more than 30

houses once stood on Drumclay crannog."[70] Among the artifacts discovered inside the crannog

include:

> Mundane and high-status objects feature, including a small quantity of fine metalwork and glass items. A single gold ring, the only definite gold artefact from the site, was found within the substructure of a workshop area. Finely made dress-pins, amber beads and parts of blue glass bangles, glass beads and pieces of several lignite-type bracelets suggest that Drumclay's inhabitants were of high rank or status…A rare example of a wooden gaming board, an item associated with kings in early documentary sources, was found in an area of the crannog peppered with wooden gaming pieces.[71]

These artifacts provide an example of the types of material goods that inhabitants of these spaces

were accustomed to. This crannog might not be the typical crannog for the time, but it shows that

elites also lived in these spaces. In fact, there has been some debate about the status of people

who inhabited these crannogs. Some sources only mention elite classes living there, yet that

would not have been the case for most people of the time. Fredengren states there were

documented crannogs that were clearly royal, "but there were thousands of other crannogs for

which there are no documentary references. It is most unlikely that the success story of the

'royal' crannog applies to all of them."[72] This is crucial to note because these non-royal crannogs

are seldom mentioned which only heightens the need to bring them to the public's attention.

Inside these non-royal crannogs, the artifacts differ greatly from those in elite crannogs, There

were no more colorful beads, fancy artifacts, or luxury items.[73] In fact, most of the items found

were quite ordinary such as, "bone pins and needles, as well as some iron objects, a knife and a

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[69] Bermingham, "DRUMCLAY," 38-40.
[70] Ibid, 38.
[71] Ibid, 39.
[72] Fredengren, "Poor People's Crannogs," 24-25.
[73] Fredengren, "Poor People's Crannogs," 24.

probably head of a ring-pin. There were also fragments of lignite bracelets and a comb, indicating that the inhabitants cared about their appearance."[74] These artifacts point towards a humbler upbringing and serve as an ideal case study for the GDD.

Additionally, another central aspect of exploring these structures is rooted in the historical study of landscape and the origin and evolution of crannogs over time. Environmental storytelling is at the heart of this game design. In fact, the history and heritage of Irish landscapes are crucial to understanding how crannogs fit into the historical narrative. Duffy's work draws on the significance of landscape studies in the "tangible, material physical space of fact and artifact."[75] Duffy investigates the historical landscape of Ireland throughout the centuries by focusing on the landscape itself be that through environment sites, cultural, and natural sites. The work also pays homage to the visualization of the landscape that can be found in paintings, writing, and folklore that better help historians and locals understand the historical environment and landscape of Ireland. Often, Ireland is thought of for its Viking or Celtic past and other aspects often get overlooked. This idea of landscape is crucial to the GDD and studying history because it allows a unique way to approach the history by looking at the physical spaces and the ways in which societies view their landscape. That being said, landscapes are often differentiated between elite and ordinary landscapes, and it is often through this distinction that history has tended to focus on the elite. Elite landscapes are often characterized by the "so-called high art, for instance, in painting or literature, [which portrays] the landscapes and culture of elites and is still a dominant discourse."[76] In contrast, ordinary landscapes honor the plights of ordinary

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[74] Fredengren, "Poor People's Crannogs," 24.
[75] Patrick J. Duffy, "Introducing Landscape," in *Exploring The History and Heritage of Irish Landscapes*, ed. Mary Ann Lyons (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press LTD, 2007), 17.
[76] Duffy, "Introducing Landscape," 20.

people who worked and inhabited the landscape and represented everyday life.[77] It is through this ordinary landscape that the GDD can shine through since crannogs are not often explored in history because they represent such an ordinary part of life. *Aoife and the Crannog* also takes the perspective of a peasant woman which is a different way to approach history that strays away from the great man theory. By focusing on ordinary people and landscapes the game can educate the player on a part of history that is often not touched, enriching their understanding of the time, landscapes, and culture.

Narrative of the GDD

Aoife and the Crannog draws heavily on archaeology and folklore. Folklore offers a unique insight into history and provides a mythical telling of the past. The detailed collection housed at University College Dublin's Digital Library serves as an excellent resource for the reconstruction of crannogs. It allows a glimpse into the past, reveling how generations of people viewed and understood crannogs, and the myths and stories surrounding them.[78] In fact, a great deal can be discerned from these primary accounts, particularly the vastness and the stories behind these places that have been forgotten and fallen into disarray. The accounts offer a glimpse into local history of crannogs and provide a blueprint for understanding commemoration and public memory of these historical sites.

Aoife and the Crannog is a story about Aoife (pronounced ee+fa), a young peasant woman who takes us through her village on a crannog in the rural landscape of Ireland and the interactions and discoveries she makes there. The game is heavily influenced by the situation in

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[77] Duffy, "Introducing Landscape," 21.

[78] Crannog in The Schools' Manuscript Collection, University College Dublin, National Folklore Collection UCD.https://doi.org/10.7925/drs1.duchas_5077559

twelfth century Ireland: a few centuries after the Viking settlements, at the cusp of the Anglo-Norman invasion, and the changes that took place in the Irish landscape, family life, and traditions. The introduction of new religion also heavily changed the landscape and ideologies of Ireland. At one time, names in Ireland were followed by the word "moccu," to denote tribal affiliation, but sense of tribe declined once invasions began and identity became obscured.[79]Additionally, early Irish names were limited for females with just over 300 options while males had 3,000 options. It was quite common for female names to be borrowed from other languages, folklore, and legends.[80] In fact, the name Aoife is linked to strength and power most notably the historical figure of Aoife MacMurrough, the daughter of King Dermot of Leinster, who was married to the Norman conqueror Richard de Clare Strongbow. Aoife represented the strength of Irish royalty. On the other hand, the traditional name of Aoife is tied with a tragic Irish legend of a warrior queen in the story of Cuchulainn of the Ulster Cycle (stories rich in Irish legend and heroes), in which her son is killed, and she is transformed into a crane and ultimately killed.[81] Nonetheless, the name Aoife was chosen for the protagonist to represent strength and serve as a unique way to introduce the history of Ireland through name. By forcing the player to become Aoife, I am creating a fixed narrative of what life would have been like for females living in the medieval period, but in doing so I have granted Aoife other rights she would not typically have had for the time period. Her use of swords and typical "unbecoming" roles for women make her narrative anachronistic and afford her agency.

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[79] Peiraeus Public Library, "Ireland (Hibernia) Early Medieval Period: 400-1200 A.D.," PeiraeusPublicLibary.com, November 30, 2009, https://www.peiraeuspubliclibrary.com/names/medievalnames/early_med_eire.html.
[80] Iain Zaczek, *The book of Irish names: the origins and meanings of over 150 names for children*, InternetArchive.org (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2000), 1-127, https://archive.org/details/bookofirishnames0000zacz_s0x9/page/n1/mode/1up.
[81] Zaczek, "The book of Irish names," 62.

The game chooses to grant agency to Aoife in a way that is not historically verifiable. In this way, the player gets to play both sides of history (male and female roles) and does not have to worry about choosing a character to play, they are given one with the agency to assume both roles and learn. It is through this agency at the player is allowed to learn new skills, historical knowledge, and immerse themselves in the past. The player is learning alongside the character as Aoife takes up her next quest to prove she is not merely just a peasant girl. The player's choices influence the game and the history told within. *Aoife and the Crannog* will serve as an ideal digital humanities and public history model for doing history by enticing players to learn and engage with history in a digital world. Figure 2 shows how the GDD is laid out in the simplest terms, but within each of these sections are other elements working together to create the ideal game. Biscop et al. content that typical gamespaces have hypersexualized women leading to intense male protagonists and violence in gameplay.[82] While it is true Aoife has been AI generated to be feminine, attractive, and appealing, it can be said that this is an act of performance as Butler's framework contends.[83] Gender performativity does not have to be confined to the set social expectations.[84] Video games afford freedom of choice in a number of ways allowing players to enact in spaces that may not be readily available to them. Players can take on new identities and inhabit these spaces in non-traditional gendered ways. Aoife as a protagonist is able to adhere to both "genders" in a way that sets her apart from other games set in the medieval period. Female characters in medieval games, often take stereotypical roles of tavern keepers, bar maids, general housekeepers and are often not seen in other roles.

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[82] Kilian Biscop, Steven Malliet, and Alexander Dhoest, "Subversive Ludic Performance: An Analysis of Gender and Sexuality Performance in Digital Games," *DiGeSt Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies Vol. 6, No. 2, Sexuality, politics and digital media infrastructures: Challenges for diversity (2019), 25,* *https://doi.org/10.11116/digest.6.2.2.*
[83] Biscop et al, "Subversive Ludic Performance," 27.
[84] Biscop et al, "Subversive Ludic Performance," 26.

Even though Aoife is a peasant in the game, she still has agency over her life and demands to be trained in combat and does not wish to be taken care of. Her character is strong willed and determined to explore the landscape of Ireland and is not content to stay inside her village or adhere to traditional roles for women.[85] It is through this exploration of time and gender roles that Aoife can discover all aspects of village life. She is not confined to any one role, but assumes all roles to live inside the village. Players will be able to explore traditional roles for both males and females as she navigates history. Aoife will face many challenges as she takes on untraditional female roles. It is up to the player to make these decisions on how she handles the dangers within the community; consequences for each decision will be based on social or cultural expectations of female behavior.

The Discovery Genre: Archaeogaming

Aoife and the Crannog is a discovery game that allows the player to unearth history, by playing and interacting with the narrative presented and learning in the process. This act of doing or playing is essential to public history by allowing players their own agency and the chance to learn in a different medium than traditional written histories.[86] The primary sources that have been consulted include Irish crannog stories that have been collected from oral histories, folklore, and archaeological field reports (see primary development resources appendix) to create a GDD that is immersive and historically relevant.[87] The game is aimed at undergraduate and university students, and anyone interested in learning more about Irish history and landscapes that are not often examined. The game would aim to be accessible to all players as a way of

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[85] Aidan O'Sullivan and Triona Nicholl, "Early medieval settlement enclousures in Ireland," 63.

[86] Xavier Rubio-Campillo et al., "Explaining Archaeological Research with Video Games,"157.

[87] Crannog in The School's Manuscript Collection, University College Dublin, National Folklore Collection UCD, https://doi.org/10.7925/drs1.duchas_5077559.

learning through non-traditional means. The GDD might appeal more to females based on the design choices since the game artwork resembles a cozier game space than male players might not be used to. However, the game will be accessible to everyone regardless of the game design or female protagonist. The young coming of age story might resonate more with the female audience, but it still serves to be useful for anyone. Growing up is a daunting task, no matter what time period you are from, and this game explores some of the responsibilities that come with ageing. *Aoife and the Crannog* is not an elaborate *Assassin Creed* game with immaculate attention to detail, but it is a game focused on narrative exploration, immersion, and learning. Through gameplay players will be able to become archaeologists or historians by discovering and unearthing history as they progress, adding a newfound sense of knowledge they might not have had beforehand. Additionally, it could be placed inside a museum as a more public exhibit or display for visitors to interact and engage with history. Even more, the game can serve to revive public interest in archaeology and history because of the deep focus on archaeology that has been ingrained in the game.

Andrew Reinhard's book *Archaeogaming: an introduction to archaeology in and of video games,* sets the stage for the role of archaeology in and around video game discourse.[88] Reinhard defines archaeogaming as:

> The archaeology both in and of digital games. Archaeology is the study of the ancient and recent human past through material remains in pursuit of a broad and comprehensive understanding of human culture. In archaeogaming, archaeology is not used as an analogy or metaphor for a certain kind of analysis... digital games are archaeological sites, landscapes, and artifacts, and the game-spaces held within those media can also be understood archaeologically as digital built environments containing their own material culture.[89]

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[88] Andrew Reinhard, "Introduction," in *Archaeogaming: An Introduction to Archaeology in and of Video Games* (New York: Berghahan Books, 2018), 1.
[89] Reinhard, "Introduction," 2.

Reinhard even details five themes that appear in archaeogaming and how they fit into the historical and archaeological field of scholarship.[90] Archaeogaming has gained traction as an academic field in recent years and has allowed historians and archaeologists to come together and reflect on digital and analog games. Games like *Lara Croft's Tomb Raider* and *Indiana Jones* allow the player to take on a more archaeological role. The protagonists allow the player the sense of exploration and discovery that is not always present in games. Raiding tombs is all fun and games until you must seriously consider the ramifications of this behavior in real life. Nonetheless, the games are valuable to archaeology because they use symbols and stories to create worlds the typical player can only dream about. They allow the player to become an archaeologist of sorts and that is an exciting idea that allows players to interact with an environment they otherwise would not have access to in the real world. Archaeogaming in this sense is the act of studying the scenarios present in these games and assessing their historical accuracy and comparing how players interact with said history.[91]

Another way to look at archaeogaming, is to look at the games themselves as archaeological sites. This notion might be surprising, but in all reality, it is a simple and effective way to think about games.[92] Reinhard elaborates by stating, "digital games are archaeological sites, landscapes, and artifacts, and the game-spaces held within those media can also be understood archaeologically as digital built environments containing their own material culture."[93] Take Tomb Raider for example, places might stand out to the player that appear in real life, making it easy for the player to identify where they are in the world or in history, but are subsequently

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[90] Reinhard, "Introduction," 3.
[91] Reinhard, "Introduction," 1-2.
[92] Ibid., 2.
[93] Ibid.

different in the game space for several reasons. The digital built environment is different from

the typical sense of the word and often it has some distinct elements that could be attributed to

historical analysis. A better definition by Reinhard appears to clear this up in which he states:

> There is no difference between the archaeology of the digital and the non-digital. The concepts of formation processes of the archaeological record and the methodological approaches to them are the same. Sites, like artifacts, have a history of use that continues form their origin into the present day. Sites are never not used, although they may exist in stasis until (re)-discovery.[94]

Video games can be analyzed in all their forms just like a traditional archaeological site. The

game itself is the site and as such can be studied for the gameplay, gameworld, and historical

elements found within. Therefore, the GDD will serve as an artifact itself and the gameworld

represented lends itself well to an archaeogaming analysis. Not only is the crannog significant in

history, it is crucial in the gamespace and adds another layer to archaeogaming. The player

inhabits the crannog and in the process unearths the secrets of the archaeological site through

gameplay adding to the archaeogaming experience.

Conclusion

Games serve as an ideal way to do "good history" by immersing the player in the historical

narrative that is often hard to embody in a typical academic paper. Through these immersive

elements, games can transcend traditional papers by captivating the player within the gameworld

and allowing them to explore history under the guise of play.[95] This playful immersion is at the

heart of doing *good* history and *Aoife and the Crannog* serves as an example of the power of

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[94] Andrew Reinhard, "Chapter 3: Video Games as Archaeological Sites," in *Archaeogaming: an introduction to archaeology in and of video games* (New York: Berghahan Books, 2018), 90.
[95] Coltrain and Ramsay, "Can Video Games Be Humanities Scholarship," 41-42.

enchantment and sense of being lost in the mystical landscape. The GDD contributes to the field of public history by taking an obscure historical topic to life through an appealing visual novel game. By creating an accessible narrative on crannogs, it is possible to engage the public and create a unique and alluring gameworld that is capable of building bonds of community and empathy. Aoife and the Crannog could serve as a case study for a future public historian or archaeologist looking to create their own game. Additionally, once I find time to complete the online version, it may be analyzed by archaeogamers. Ultimately, the game stands as a testament to the field of D.H. and aims to challenge the traditional research paper format by offering an immersive game to foster engagement.

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Appendix A: A Game Design Document (GDD)

Game Synopsis

Irish Crannog in an artistic style that pays homage to Celtic roots, imagined using A.I.

Image generated using DALLE3.

Name of the game: *Aoife and the Crannog*

Developer: Danielle Hurley

Art Design: Cozy, archaeological, and historical video game aesthetic meets DALLE-3 and Microsoft Copilot A.I. generation

Genre: Discovery, Archaeogaming, Strategy

Game Influences

- **Lara Croft Tomb Raider (1996-present Original Developer Core Design)**
- Medium: (Video Game)
    - *Tomb Raider* is a well-known game with the protagonist Lara Croft being a British archaeologist who makes her way around the globe obtaining artifacts and exploring. The exploration, attention to detail, and protagonist as archaeologist are all appealing aspects of the game despite critics of the game. At the end of the day, *Tomb Raider* provides interesting storylines with action and adventure to keep players engaged. Additionally, some of the core mechanics of the game are useful for my own project such as the base camp in which Lara has the chance to level up at the end of the day by picking skills she has acquired the skill points for during the day.
- **Close to the Sun (2019 Storm in a Teacup)**
    - Medium: (Video Game)
    - *Close to the Sun* is an indie game that is visually appealing with horror elements woven throughout that make gameplay intense, yet important. This game is unique in the way it portrays a fictionalized yet historically grounded world. The protagonist Rose progresses through the ship known as the Helios trying to locate her sister Ada. An event has happened, and unbeknownst to you, you are in the center of a rift in time. The game is quite captivating because you do not know what has happened, it is only as you progress and collect letters, artifacts, and examine parts of the ship that you learn the truth. Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla have broken time and as Ada you must correct the errors and try and save your sister aboard this ghost ship. These same mechanics of discovery are present in *Aoife and the Crannog.*
- **Stardew Valley (2016 Eric Barone ConcernedApe)**
    - Medium: (Video Game)
    - *Stardew Valley* is a simulation game where players are able to own a farm and interact with locals, raise animals, and even give gifts to the townspeople. The game allows the player to discover hidden letters, objects, and places as the game progresses. In the spirit of this, I also aim to include secrets that are only discovered through playing the game. I also wanted to include a gift aspect inside the game. In *Stardew Valley*, you are able to gift the townspeople with items, but you do not always know what they like. Sometimes it is just a wild guess and if they don't like it they will be sure to let you know and it will also harm your chances of becoming friends. However, if you explore the town and uncover hidden artifacts/letters you are able to piece together information on all the townspeople and are able to give them gifts they actually want to receive. My game will follow a similar mode of discovery.

Developers' Intention Statement:

Aoife and the Crannog is an immersive and pedagogical game that explores the rich history of Irish crannogs or ancient dwellings built on artificial islands or lakes during the prehistoric and medieval period. This game aims to demonstrate the power of gaming as an effective tool for public history. Players will embark on a captivating journey through time, archaeology, and crannogs themselves to discern what life was like in ancient and medieval Ireland. This game offers a pedagogical approach to history by allowing players to immerse themselves in history and learn through exploring. The game also implements Irish language to promote an immersive experience.

Audience:

This game is designed to be accessible to all and could be implemented in a classroom, exhibit, or museum as an ideal way to teach public history. The game could be played by anyone, but university students and teachers would be the ideal demographic to market to and this would allow the game to be shared and implemented in classroom settings. The game lends itself well to a female audience due to the cozy aesthetic, but anyone can play and enjoy the characters and storyline just as *Stardew Valley* has been embraced by all audiences.

Story:

Welcome to Glenmoore, a fictional village in ancient/medieval Ireland where you will explore crannóga, some of the first dwellings or structures in Ireland. These sites are said to be visited by fairy folk at night, and many visit these sites hoping to see them. The player will begin their journey as Aoife, a young peasant woman and begin the journey of exploration or uncovering of the past. This archaeological, environmental, and cryptographical game is focused on presenting the everyday life of an individual and often the extraordinary lengths they went through to defend their home and land from threats. This coming-of-age story allows the player to become a historian and archaeologist without knowing it. It is through the act of *playing* or *doing* that they will learn history. These structures built into the landscape have often been overlooked, so as a player you have the tools to uncover their secrets and the impact crannogs had on everyday life.

The player has agency over a few things inside the game by choosing which aspects of the village and crannog they want to explore, deciding what quests Aoife embarks on, and even learning more about ancient and medieval life which changes some of the gameplay depending on their choices.

Figure 2: GDD visualization of the elements found within

Objectives of the game:

1) **Explore the crannog through folklore, oral history, archaeology**
2) **Explore the nearby village and stories within**
3) **Immerse yourself in Aoife's world and learn the secrets of the crannog**
4) **Make choices to gain/lose points and learn new information**

Gameplay Mechanics Overview:

1) **Exploration, choices, and puzzle solving**
2) **Interaction with family, community, mythical beings**
3) **Narrative mechanics**

Gameplay Mechanics:

The game is played in third person as Aoife in which you explore your village and the surrounding area by embarking on quests and assuming gender fluid roles and responsibilities in history. The game uses explorer/archaeogaming, cryptography or detective story tropes to allow the player to have agency in the world by allowing them to branch out and decide the role the game will take. Aoife will interact with the community and her family and by doing so progress the game. Aoife is strong willed and will often put herself in situations that are not typical for a woman, yet she will not be at risk for a captivity narrative that so often plagues games and history. Aoife is a warrior at heart, even if she is a peasant, and will not be in any danger within the game. Quests will appear that allow the player to choose certain aspects of history they wish to engage with and this even allows the player to learn skills as Aoife. It is through this act of learning and engaging in the story as Aoife that creates a sense of historical empathy and understanding. Players will feel responsible for Aoife and the choices she must make along the way, offering the perfect mechanism to discover history by playing and going through the storyline. As the player progresses throughout the village, crannog, and history more choices will be presented along with clues or puzzles to aid in the discovery of history. Some of the choices

will be easier to make than others, but they are all vital to the progression of the story. These choices will be in a choose your own adventure style layout that is typically seen in the gaming creation platform *Twine*.

- For example, the player can make certain choices as to the skills they wish to level up, but they are limited in the ones they can choose so if they select ones that do not necessarily bode well together then Aoife might not be strong enough to keep exploring past her village and will never branch out. Choices matter. Much like the game *Until Dawn*,[96] certain choices could have dire consequences for Aoife. You might choose to eat certain foods without knowing the consequences and it could cause serious illness or death. You might think Aoife is strong enough and does not need to learn more swordsmanship skills, but then she is killed by a rival tribe.

- Much like *Lara Croft's Tomb Raider* the player will earn skill points throughout the day by completing quests or engaging with the local community. These skill points are then used at the end of the day when like Lara you return to your basecamp or in this case a crannog and prepare for the next day. The skills will all work to create a immersive gameworld and invest the player in the storyline. Aoife can learn swordsmanship, gathering skills, hunting skills, crafting skills, and even unlock mythical skills to see fairy folk or mythical beings that further the storyline. This will grant the player a sense of agency since they will be allowed to pick the skills to level up. See below for an idea of what the skills page would look like.
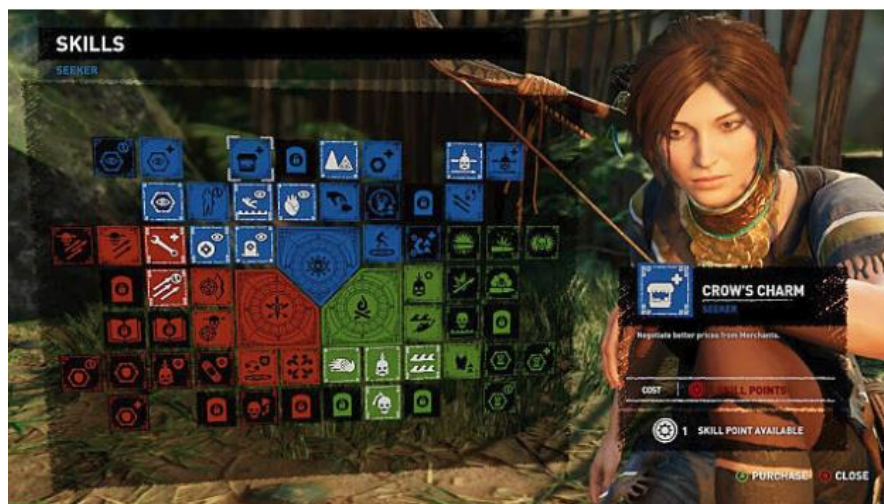

Image from *Shadow of the Tomb Raider* 2018 base camp. Eidos-Montreal and Square Enix

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[96] Supermassive Games, *Until Dawn*, Sony Computer Entertainment, Ps4, August 25, 2015.

Game Mechanic 2: Interaction with family, community, mythical beings

Aoife has a big brother named Fionn (Fin) who will constantly join Aoife on her adventures and help with various tasks throughout the game. By interacting with family members, community members, and mythical beings Aoife will be able to learn more about Irish history, traditions, and folklore of the world and of the crannogs themselves. Aoife will have choices to make each day, who to interact with, what quests to go on and complete often these quests cannot be accessed unless she interacts with the local village. It is through this interaction with the locals that Aoife learns and progresses through the game. Going on quests can give rewards and more skill points to level up Aoife. Additionally, there is a point based system that depends on choices. If Aoife makes good choices she will gain points, if she makes poor ones she may lose points. The central objective is to gain new information about the crannog and the mythical beings that are said to visit the crannogs at night.

Main Characters:

Aoife (protagonist)

- Young woman with fiery red hair, green eyes, and a strong demeanor. She is not afraid of a challenge and likes to explore, solve puzzles, and get into trouble. She often does things deemed questionable for a young lady, but she does them anyways without remorse such as sword fighting with anyone willing to entertain her.
- Advantages: Clever, Strong, Curious, Swordsmanship, Gender Fluid Roles
- Disadvantages: Prone to wandering- often stays out past bedtime and gets into trouble or runs out of food while exploring, putting her in questionable positions. Advantages: Swordsmanship, Can make friends easily
- Disadvantages: Prideful despite being lower class, he will get into fights when challenged.

Cian (pronounced key+in) (Aoife and Fionn's father)

- Father to Aoife and Fionn he is the reason for Aoife and Fionn's temperament and adventrous souls. Cian has a large round belly, greying hair, and bright green eyes. He has always told his children grand tales and taught them to believe in the impossible. His

family always gets by despite their low status. They never want for anything, and find comfort in each other. Additionally, Cian is a skilled carver who can make just about anything out of wood. He also taught both of his children to wield a sword when they were big enough.

- Advantages: Woodcarver, Swordsmanship, Strong
- Disadvantages: Overweight and older, cannot walk for long distances, stamina low

Fiadh (fee+ah)(mother of Aoife and Fionn deceased)

- Mother to Aoife and Fionn, she died giving birth to Aoife. This could be why Aoife takes on skills not common for young woman she did not have her mother to guide her.
- Aoife's red hair comes from her mother.
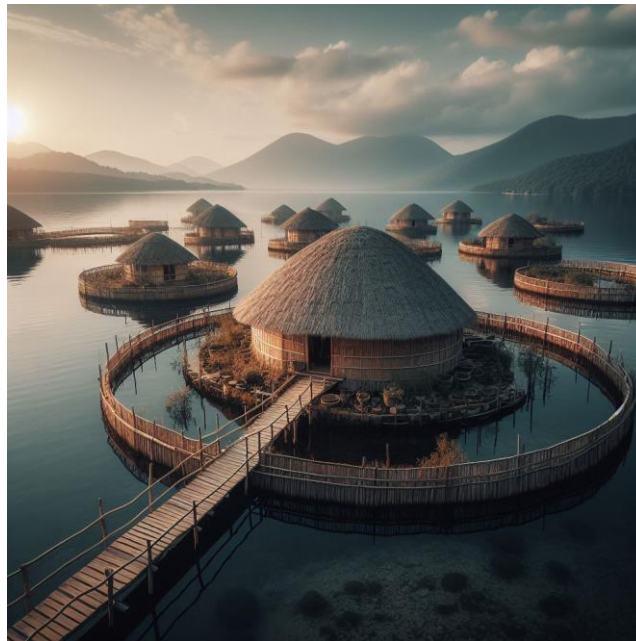
Locations:

Image of Glenmoore and all the crannogs within

Glenmoore is the fictional village Aoife's story takes place in. The village is home to a vast number of crannogs, history, and folklore. This is the primary location of the game and is often at the center of the game as a reoccurring location. The game shows the crannogs in the village and

Aoife's family crannog, creating the ideal central location of Glenmoore as a special place of community and warmth for her family.

Misthaven is the fictional mountain Aoife will journey to in order to learn more about the mythical beings who visit the crannogs on certain evenings. It is a mountain shrouded in myst year-round and is known for the strange stories villagers tell about the inhabitants of the mountain.

Aoife's Family Crannog is the crannog Aoife learns secrets, folklore, and interacts with her fellow villagers. This space allows her to interact with family, have daily meals, and find comfort and safety. The basecamp of the game will be the hearth that is located inside the crannog. This will be where Aoife will recharge and use the skill points she has accumulated during the day.

Artwork:

All of the artwork has currently been designed using A.I. from DALLE3 and Microsoft Copilot. The style has varied in theme, but generally the images are colorful, artistic, and aim to show a general idea of what would happen in each scene and provide historically significant themes. The use of DALLE was chosen instead of using images from other games because AI is able to capture and create the aesthetic feel I wanted for the game that is not found elsewhere. By using AI, I am able to produce the perfect prompt that create the scenes I wish to portray and tell DALLE3 and Microsoft Copilot exactly how to achieve the desired image I have conjured of Aofie's world. This technology is vital to capturing the heart of the game that other technology is not able to. I knew from the beginning that I was going to be using DALLE to create visually stunning pieces that would be crucial to the gameplay and immersion factor. Salvaggio's work carefully examines the benefits and dangers of using AI and the way training data needs to be

interrogated. Salvaggio states, "AI moves the image from a technology of remembering to a tool where the graveyard can become a playground for self-expression, where collective responsibility dissolves."[97] Although the price of using AI is sometimes morally or ethically high, it is often beneficial when used to convey a past we do not have concrete images of, ones that have not survived time. Crannogs serve as the perfect subject for AI depiction since what we know about their lives is due to archaeological excavation and folklore. It is through this folklore, imagery, and archaeological data that the AI models were able to scrape data to create the images seen below. Additionally, it is interesting to note that AI has generated Aoife to be attractive which is a choice the AI model created. My general prompt was: medieval Irish girl with fiery red hair, sword, and a crannog (see image 1 on page 46 for the output of this prompt). The other prompts followed similar fashions and produced similar results. It is neat to see how AI envisions not only the medieval landscape, but also the dress, and how it understands a crannog structure. I have a lot of failed prompts, but a great deal of ones that produced unique and intriguing images that were perfect for showcasing the ideal design I was aiming to achieve.

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[97] Eryk Salvaggio, "The Hypothetical Image The Aestheticization of Algorithmic Ideologies," Cybernetic Forests, November 12, 2023, The Hypothetical Image - by Eryk Salvaggio (substack.com).

This image depicts a picturesque crannog and the village community within.

This image also depicts a crannog and villagers but has a dreary atmosphere.

This is an image depicting some of the possible uses for the crannog.

This is another image depicting a crannog being used for food storage.

Image depicting Aoife with her sword and fiery red hair.

Image of Fionn inside a crannog.

Image of Misthaven, the mountain of the mystical beings more commonly known as fae or fairy.

The next section are screenshots of the **Milanote GDD process** that shows the visualization of the game that include color swatches, sound, an interactive map of crannogs, and AI generated images.

The screenshots are not as readable as I would have liked, but they are included so you have a general idea of the layout of Milanote and all that it has to offer.

They are easier to see if you click on the link in the footnote **here**.[98]

Simply click on the **nested boards** once you are inside in the link to view each section of the document. This tool is useful for historians and game designers alike to visualize the storyline and elements of a game. I will definitely be using it again for future game projects. It is helpful to visualize the branching narratives a lot of games take.

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[98] Hurley, Danielle. 2024, *Aoife and the Crannog design space*, Milanote, Aoife and the Crannog - Milanote.

Concept

Aoife and the Crannog is an immersive and pedagogical game that explores the rich history of Irish crannogs or ancient dwellings built on artificial islands or lakes during the prehistoric and medieval period. This game aims to demonstrate the power of gaming as an effective tool for public history. Players will embark on a captivating journey through time, archaeology, and crannogs themselves to discern what life was like in ancient and medieval Ireland. This game offers a pedagogical approach to history by allowing players to immerse themselves in history and learn through exploring.

Brainstorm

Game Moodboard

Depiction of an Irish crannog
From loughgaralakesandlegends.ie

Level design

Game World Building

Level Design

#7C5834	#034F2E
Old Copper	Sherwood Green

#910303	#4DDBDB	#2F6A33
Red Berry	Viking	Killarney

Map of Crannogs found in Ireland

Character design

Game Character

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6vfJDywgbubwqVE
Scottish Folk & Gaelic Singing

Irish Crannog in an archaeological field drawing style
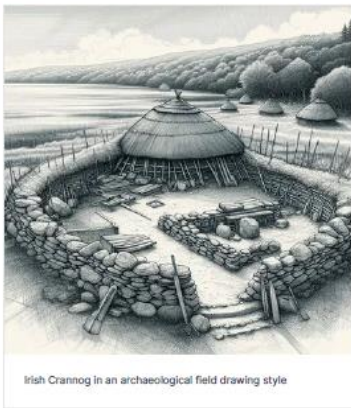
Aoife and her sword

Profile

Name: Aoife

Parents: Cian (father) Fiadh (mother, deceased)

Species: Human

Skills: Clever, Strong, Swordsmanship

Disadvantages: Prone to wandering- often stays out past bedtime and gets into trouble or runs out of food while exploring, putting her in questionable positions.

Backstory

- Aoife longs for adventure. She is a young woman with fiery red hair, green eyes, and a strong demeanor. She is not afraid of a challenge and likes to explore, solve puzzles, and get into trouble. She often does things deemed questionable for a young lady, but she does them anyways without remorse such as sword fighting with anyone willing to entertain her.

Chapter 1:

Explore the crannog, village of Glenmoore, and discover the history within. Interact with villagers and form friendships.

Reward: Learn the Secrets of the Crannog

Interact with villagers, explore the village, and the subsequent crannogs to discover the secrets.

Gain points for discovering all the items.

Challenge: Don't get caught stealing the artifacts/ examine and put away

Be fast, precise, and stealthy

Lose points for getting caught.

Start

Game starts at Aoife's family crannog

Make your way into the crannog and explore the artifacts found within

Gain points for examining artifacts, documents, and folklore within the crannog and throughout the village.

Opening scene of a crannog with blues, greens, tans and geometric elements

Portraits inside of letters
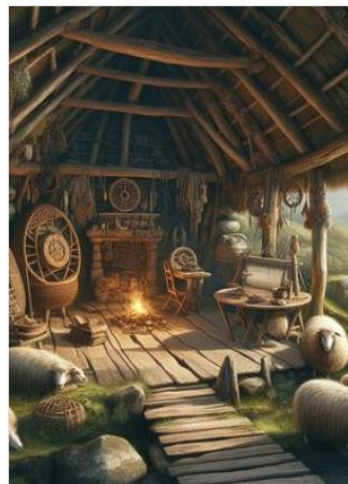
#0B5126
Dark Fern

#915F36
Potters Clay

#179687
Mountain Meadow

GDD: MRE

LEGENDS OF THE CRANNOG

1 BACKGROUND
2 STORY
3 GAMEPLAY
4 HISTORY
5 WORLD BUILDING

Fionn Aoife's brother

Protagonist: Aoife

Townsfolk
Aoife's family
Mythical beings

Characters

Glenmoore

Secret tunnels under town

Irish countryside

Setting

Synopsis

Aoife and the Crannog is an immersive and pedagogical game that explores the rich history of Irish crannogs or ancient dwellings built on artificial islands or lakes during the prehistoric and medieval period.

Faerie Folklore

Discover the secrets of the Crannog

Situation

Mythical Spaces

Themes

black and white image of crannog in an archaeological field report style

Cycle of Discovery, Burial, Decay, Re-discovery

Archaeology

Empathy

Geography

Various parts of Ireland- primarily south of Ulster.

Climate

Moderate to cool climate with temperamental weather prone to rain.

Resources

Fish, sheep, cattle, pig, fowl, handmade tools, jewelry.

Architecture

Irish crannogs- some of the first dwellings in Ireland. Made of wood, stone, straw.

Inhabitants

Villagers tended to be peasants, but they had the occasional visit from an elite member of a neighboring village/clan.

Social structure

Kings

Elites

Peasantry

Politics

Warring clans often struggle for power over the tribes of Ireland, and Various Kings fight for control, leading to an unstable world.

Religion

Medieval Ireland was religious. There is evidence of crannogs being used for religious sites.

Food

Meat, fish, vegetables, cereals and milk products. Sweet food is consumed in the form of berries, fruit and honey.

Sound:

All of these sounds work to immerse the player in the game and provide a whimsical and medieval feel. These sounds are free under the Pixabay content license or free under soundcloud terms of service. In the future, more sounds will be added, but these serve as a good starting point for the game aesthetic.

"Fairy Intro"[99]

"Myst Beach"[100]

"Celtic Positive Intro"[101]

"Through Sea"[102]

Historical Things of Note:

Family was an integral part of medieval daily life in Ireland and the bonds of kin were often key to dictating day to day operations including household chores, owning of property, and even economic endeavours.[103] Hearths and fire-places were often symbols of wealth, yet they were often found in crannogs.[104] Not only were these structures used for warmth, they were also used for cooking. In the above images, you can see the potential uses for the crannog as spaces for cooking, smoking fish, spaces for livestock, and even just general homesteads. These structures were quite dynamic and were not strictly confined to one function. All of these themes are present in the game as a way to create a deeper connection to the history and immersion for the player. Additionally, I wanted to stray away from the typical gender norms of the time and allow Aoife more agency in the gamespace. Some older law texts comment on the equipment women should own including a sieve for flour, kneading trough for dough, griddles, scales, buckets,

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[99] SergeQuadrado, "Fairy Intro" March 24, 2022, Pixabay, https://pixabay.com/sound-effects/fairy-intro-103880/.
[100] Pixabay, "Myst Beach,"July 11, 2022, Pixabay, https://pixabay.com/sound-effects/myst-beach-62335/.
[101] SergeQuadrado, "Celtic Positive Intro," March 24, 2022, Pixabay, https://pixabay.com/sound-effects/celtic-positive-intro-103881/.
[102] KiluaBoy, "Through Sea,"2020, Soundcloud, https://soundcloud.com/kilua-boy/through-sea.
[103] O'Sullivan and Nicholl, "Early medieval settlement enclousures in Ireland," 61.
[104] Ibid, 79.

dishes, cooking pots, and a variety of other items deemed necessary for women.[105] It is also of

interest that men and women during the medieval period were expected to perform some of the

same daily tasks or chores such as care of animals, working the fields, and other chores.[106] In this

way, Aoife can be found doing various chores and tasks throughout the game alongside her

brother Fionn as well as wielding a sword. The medieval Irish language will also appear

throughout the GDD in various places to attribute to the immersive historical element.[107] The

dictionary I have consulted has been published by the Royal Irish Academy.

Chapter 1:

Welcome Adventurer, you are about to embark on a journey through time and discover the mysterious spaces called crannogs.

- The player is introduced to Aoife, Fionn, and Cian and the village of Glenmoore. Glenmoore is a picturesque village complete with a number of crannogs that house various families, animals, goods, and serve as defensive structures.

- The game opens with an image of a round crannog complete with a wooden walkway and the sound of waves hitting the wooden beams supporting the crannog above the water. Aoife approaches the crannog with a newfound sense of wonder. Aoife admires the crannog made of birch, adler, and hazel trees (trees commonly used for the construction of crannogs).

- Aoife enters the crannog and is warmly welcomed by her father Cian. He is busy carving an elaborate crow out of wood. This carving pays homage to his best friend the crow he saved a few winters ago. The crow visits the crannog daily to drop off gifts to the family grateful to have been rescued from the bog a decade ago.

- Aoife is faced with a decision to explore the crannog in more depth or go to visit the village. If she chooses to explore the crannog, she can find hidden secrets and perhaps even encounter mythical beings. Her luck will determine whether she discovers all the clues inside her family's crannog and those of her neighbors. Aoife will do this by examining the objects (picking them up, looking through them, reading, etc.) these objects will provide valuable insight into daily life and history of the crannog. Items like

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[105] O'Sullivan and Nicholl, "Early medieval settlement enclousures in Ireland," 79.
[106] Ibid.
[107] eDIL 2019: *An Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language*, based on the Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1913-1976) (www.dil.ie 2019).

double sided bone combs, jewelry, axes, swords, and items of clothing can be examined to gain valuable information and history. (All items found in excavations of crannogs). It is through this act of cryptography, that allows the player will learn history and be immersed.

- o The only caveat is that she must be stealthy in order to avoid being labeled as a criminal for stealing the artifacts/secrets held within these spaces. If she is caught by the villagers, she will lose points.
- o There has been a problem of stealing in the village lately (and in historical sources) so you want to avoid being labeled as a thief. Additionally, you will learn more about Aoife's life and develop empathy by playing as her. You will learn more about her mother who died during childbirth, and learn about the health issues, risks, and challenges both women and men faced in their daily lives.

- If she chooses to explore the village, her brother Fionn will tag along and get into some trouble at the local tavern. Aoife will need to be fast on her feet and help her brother out of a sticky situation. In this scene, she must decide whether to help her brother by fighting their way out, making peace, or running away. Depending on the choices made, Aoife will gain or lose points and certain skill points will no longer be accessible to upgrade.
  - o Take for instance, Aoife decides to run, she may not get offered swordmanship as an upgrade until another vital scene compels her to turn toward swordplay. If she decides to make peace, she is able to learn more secrets about the crannogs and the whispered beings that are said to visit the crannogs and village at night. This will bring her one step closer to finding these beings herself. If she decides to fight alongside her brother, she will gain swordmanship skill points, but it will take longer for her to discover vital information from the villagers since fighting will likely lead to the injury of others and upset the locals.

- The sun begins to set as Aoife ends up back at the family crannog starving after her day. Once inside she helps her father prepare a meal of éicne[108] (salmon or fish) over the hearth as her brother cuts off pieces of arán[109] (bread) for their meal. Aoife takes brechtán[110] (butter, fat, ore relish spread) and smears it over her bread before adding the fish on top and eating it. Aoife fills her father in on the day she has had and asks to see the carving of the crow to see the progress he has made. Fionn depending on what choice was made by Aoife, will either join in on the conversation or pout over the fact his sister had to help bail him out of trouble.
  - o If the player stayed to explore the crannog, then they will have more points and should have discovered some vital information about crannog life. Aoife will have

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[108] eDIL s.v. éicne or dil.ie/19722.
[109] eDIL s.v. arán or dil.ie/3961.
[110] eDIL s.v. brechtán or dil.ie/6643

        more energy and will be able to turn into bed early and get more rest for the next
        day.

- o If the player went to the village, they will end up at the crannog accompanied by Fionn in various conditions based on what choice the player made. Fionn will either be injured or unscathed.

- As dinner finishes Aoife gets ready for bed by splashing some water on her face to wash off the day and brushes through her tangled hair with her bone comb.[111]
  - o Before bed, she heads to the crannog's hearth which serves as a basecamp to upgrade and use any skill points accumulated throughout the day. This will also give you access to see the different skills Aoife can learn if enough points are unlocked. This provides motivation for players to learn all the information they can daily and make correct choices to unlock more points.

- Aoife tells her family goodnight and makes herself as comfortable and warm as possible on the lower class bedding, essentially made of straw and earth before shutting her eyes.
  - o Aoife is suddenly awakened to a sound outside she cannot fully comprehend. Startled, she springs out of bed and makes her way outside. Once outside, she does not find anything amiss until she gets a chill down her spine. Maybe she will find out more tomorrow... She shakes her head and draws her shawl closer around her as she makes her way back inside and back to sleep, although it will not be a restful one.

Chapter 2:

- Aoife stretches and ménfadach[112] (yawns) as she awakens for the day. She dresses in a hurry and sweeps her hair out of her face before tending to the chores for the day alongside Fionn. The player will have simple choices in the morning regarding what to eat, what chores to do, and the interactions Aoife will have with her brother, father, and the villagers who pass by.
  - o Each choice will be important and will determine the energy levels Aoife will have throughout the day.
  - o For example: Tending to the sheep is easier than chopping down firewood and carrying it all the way back across the boardwalk and into the crannog. The player will need to make these decisions and hopefully think about the different factors that go into certain chores, though they will not have this insight and will just have to choose.
- It is midday and Aoife heads back to the crannog for an airigid[113] (snack) before heading back outside.

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[111] "Drumclay Crannog," Homepage, Eircom, last modified October 2014, http://homepage.eircom.net/~mickmongey/Drumclay.htm.

[112] eDIL s.v. ménfadach or dil.ie/31941.

[113] eDIL s.v. 1 airigid or dil.ie/2103.

- Aoife decides to go explore the village and interact with the community. Before she goes, she decides to bring a gift to her friend Aodh. It has been awhile since her last visit so she decides it is the perfect time.
    - The player must decide what kind of gift to bring Aodh. Namely, freshly caught fish, bread, berries, or some eggs. Aodh is allergic to one of the gifts, so it is a random choice, unless they visited the village the first day and learned information about the different villagers, Aodh included.
    - Aodh is allergic to fish. If you chose the fish and try to gift it to him, he will shake his head and say, "Aoife I am allergic, do you not remember?" Aoife will lose points for that choice since Aodh thought you were close friends, and a real friend would know he was allergic. If Aoife picks any of the other gifts, Aodh will be fine and Aoife will gain points and be able to talk to more villagers and gain knowledge.
- The rest of the day Aoife will spend exploring and trying to figure out if anyone else heard the strange noises last night and what they might mean.
- Aoife forms a plan to travel to Misthaven and learn the truth.

Chapter 3:

- Journey to Misthaven
    - Aoife decides to take her chances and visit Misthaven the eerie mountain shrouded in mystery where the mythical beings are said to live.
    - Aoife spends the morning preparing for her journey by gathering food and supplies. The player will have choices about what to bring on the journey which adds to the sense of agency and heightens the stakes depending on what Aoife has decided to bring (or not to bring) on the journey. Some of the food, gear, and provisions chosen will extend the length of time Aoife can stay out in the weather unprotected etc.
    - Aoife will travel high into the mountains where she will face the mystical beings which she soon learns are fairy (fae) folk.
- Aoife is face to face with the fae not knowing if they are good or evil or somewhere in between… The player will have to decide what course of action to take. To be nice to the beings or try to fight…
    - Kindness grants you points and allows you to potentially learn more about the beings and why they insist on visiting the crannogs at night. Aoife might ask questions such as: "What are they after?" and "Why are they visiting the crannog at night?"
        - The fae insist that these structures are dwellings they have grown fond of and wish to learn more about them, but are afraid of humans…
        - Aoife is left speechless, why would fae be interested in crannogs…the structure she has lived in her whole life… There was nothing special about a crannog as far as she could tell, most of the world lived in these structures and were confined to the daily chores a crannog required. Aoife did not understand why the beings were fascinated with the crannog. She

decides to push the question to understand the fascination the fae have with the structures.
- The fae smile in a slightly alarming fashion, revealing sharp teeth that scare Aoife. They insist the crannogs are an enchanting place that emit a frequency that draws them in.
- Aoife is still confused, but slightly scared of the fae now. She nods her head and seeks to leave the mountain.
  - Trying to fight the fae will end in loss of points and Aoife is not able to advance and learn the secrets of the crannog or why these mythical beings insist on being present in the landscape…. essentially this is a dire decision. Aoife will still be able to explore the village, but everything she learns will not help her in her quest for knowledge since she will not be able to revisit the mountain and learn the secrets within.
- Aoife leaves the mountain and heads back home still confused about what she has learned or not learnt depending on the choice made.
- As she enters the crannog, she is greeted by her father and her brother who are alarmed to see the look on her face.

  Fionn says, "What is wrong Aoife? You look as if you have seen an ainspirut,[114] (evil spirit)" as he rushes to her side a look of concern on his face.

  Her father leaves his newest carving by the hearth and stands to greet her, worry spreads across his face.

  Aoife says nothing unsure what she would even tell them. She has just spoken to a being that is not supposed to exist…

- Aoife has to decide what to tell her family. Pretend it did not happen and tell them a lie or fess up and tell them the truth.
  - Depending on the choice, Aoife's journey focused on the mythical will continue or end.

Chapter 4:

- If Aoife decided to stay on track with revealing the secrets of the mythical, she wakes up and once again enters the village with a newfound sense of purpose. She is adamant about discovering all there is to know about the beings of the mountain. She talks to every villager she can find and even asks about the other villages nearby and if there would be anyone she could go talk to.
  - She learns there are other villages nearby who have had similar experiences, and she vows to make the journey no matter how far. She might even recruit her brother for the next adventure.

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[114] eDIL s.v. ainspirut or [dil.ie/1536](dil.ie/1536)

- If Aoife decided to give up the endeavor, she spends the rest of the game doing chores, visiting friends she makes in the village, and trying to keep her brother out of trouble. Aoife stays close to the crannog after that and does not try to visit the mountain or even go outside if she hears a sound in the night. The smile of the fae was enough to scare her away. Nonetheless, she is content to stay in the crannog and enjoy her life of a commoner.

Chapter 5 (Ending):

- Depending on the choice made, Aoife will either stay in the crannog or decide to go on an adventure to many more villages to learn the truth about the beings. She will travel far with Fionn on foot building skills and knowledge as she traverses the rural landscape of Ireland.
  - Since Aoife will not be able to find a crannog/hearth daily, different places will serve as basecamp for her and her brother to craft items, cook, and regain their strength. These spaces such as taverns, caves, and firepits they construct along the way, will serve as reprieves from the day.
- Aoife will either live a cozy life exploring the crannog and village or go on another quest/adventure.

Object Interaction/Collection:

Throughout gameplay, Aoife is able to collect items to aid her on her journey such as food, plants, and objects to aid her in her pursuit of knowledge. There will also be a codex that keeps track of all the objects Aoife has interacted with. It will track the knowledge/secrets Aoife has learned much like the medieval manuscripts that were used to record songs, stories, history. This codex will allow Aoife to record her findings and leave comments in the margins that were typical of these documents.

Appendix B: Primary & Secondary Sources for GDD

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