Season 3 of the Swords Castle: Digging History community dig has been up and running since August, 18 2017 and continues until September 6. As part of the dig a trench, Trench 9 was positioned to find the missing wall of the East Tower, but instead the remains of at least three burials have been uncovered there.

Speaking about the discovery Christine Baker, Fingal's Community Archaeologist said 'It is not the first time that burials have been uncovered at Swords Castle, however the depth, just a few inches below the ground surface, is surprising. We know from previous works that an 11th century burial ground was here before Swords Castle was built. Indeed we have found isolated human bones, which we have dated to this period, during Seasons 1 and 2 of our Swords Castle: Digging History project. But to find burials that haven't been totally removed by the old orchard or subsequent works so close to the surface is very unusual'.

The burials have been disturbed by tree roots and given their position and condition, they will not survive reburial. Therefore in agreement with the statutory authorities, the National Museum of Ireland and the National Monuments Service, the burials will be excavated.

‘An important element of the archaeology project has been Finding Fanning's Burials*, which were excavated in 1971 and have since disappeared. We now have an opportunity to solve the questions that have remained unanswered for over forty years’ said excavation director, Christine Baker. ‘By excavating, analysing and scientifically dating these remains we will be able to find out more about the people who were buried here and when they were buried. The find has generated a lot of excitement among the volunteers on site but everyone is very respectful that these are remains and
they will be excavated in an appropriate manner. They will then be sent our osteoarchaeologist Dr Linda Lynch for analysis.

ENDS

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Further information:

**Finding Fanning's Burials:** In 1971 Tom Fanning uncovered skeletons which have since disappeared. We want to see if we can find them-and to date them. Are they the same date as those found under the Gatehouse? Why was the castle built over a graveyard? Where they men or women? Are they the remains of the Dutch settlers who were given the ruined castle in the 1580s or the result of the battles of 1641 or possibly Famine burials as Fanning suggested or do they belong to the 11th century? These are just some of the questions we hope to answer.

**Swords Castle: Digging History 2015-2017:** The main aim of the community excavation is to engage people-locals and tourists alike-with their National Monument, Swords Castle in a unique way; to generate a sense of connection and pride of place and to provide an opportunity to join a real archaeological excavation-something on the bucket-list of many of last year's participants.

The community dig is also a research dig. Many knowledge gaps were identified in the Swords Castle Conservation Plan and we are endeavouring to fill those gaps with the help of the local community.

**Community Archaeologist.**

Fingal County Council is leading the way nationally in employing a full time local authority Community Archaeologist in partnership with the Heritage Council. Christine Baker is a Fingal archaeologist (Skerries specifically!) who has designed and manages the Swords Castle: Digging History project. She recently completed the Bremore Castle Big Dig 2017 and is developing a community archaeology strategy for Fingal. Christine Baker is also the author of *Antiquities of old Fingal.*