



Group for the Study of

IRISH HISTORIC SETTLEMENT

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ARTICLES

Late medieval gaelic surveys of counties mayo and sligo

It is generally accepted (and correctly so) that our medieval Gaelic forebears were oblivious to the wonders of cartography. In other words, they knew nothing about maps. But their neighbours in Britain and on the European continent were not much more advanced at the time — witness the very crude attempts at producing a representation of the known world which we possess from the medieval period (such as the famous late 13th-century *Mappa Mundi* in Hereford Cathedral).

It is a fairly small step from mention of medieval Gaelic ignorance of maps to the assertion that the Irish, either in medieval or early modern times, did not possess any land-surveys comparable to those of neighbouring nations. Before tackling this point, it is only right that we should acknowledge our indebtedness to the diligent compilers of various English surveys of Ireland (in whole or in part), particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries. Grabbing Irish land they may have been, but they usually did a good job of describing the most desirable pieces of Irish real-estate!

For reasons of space, I can only mention very briefly the most significant of these English surveys relating to the west of Ireland. The earliest is the *Composition Book of Connaught* dating from 1585; this was edited in 1936 by A.M. Freeman.

Next comes the so-called '*Strafford Inquisition*' of 1635 carried out on the orders of Sir Thomas Wentworth (later Earl of Strafford); the portion relating to Co. Mayo was edited in 1958 by William O'Sullivan from a manuscript copy of the late 17th century. The only surviving material from the inquisition of Co. Sligo, preserved in Harleian MS 2048 in the British Library, was edited, partially and not altogether accurately, by W. G. Wood-Martin in his great *History of Sligo* (1882-92).

As Mayo was in that part of Ireland (Connacht) then being equated with Hell, most of the county escaped the attentions of

the Cromwellians surveyors. It does not feature on Sir William Petty's famous *Down Survey* maps — apart from Tirawley which appears as one of the barony maps in the series entitled *Hibernia Regnum*. Co. Sligo, however, was covered by the *Down Survey* and also by the so-called 'Census of 1659' (actually a survey drawn up in 1660 in relation to the Poll Tax first imposed in that year). The minutely-detailed *Civil Survey* — dating, like the *Down Survey*, from the mid-1650s — does not in its surviving form cover any Connacht county. Although it originally extended to 27 Irish counties, accounts of only nine counties now survive in full (four in Leinster, three in Ulster and two in Munster), together with fragments from three or four others. Although missing from the *Down Survey*, Mayo appears on a less detailed map in Petty's *Atlas* (a work more formally entitled *Hiberniae Delineatio*); although engraved in the mid-1660s, the *Atlas* was not published for another twenty years. Much of the details, on the Mayo map at least, may well derive from the now-lost maps accompanying the *Strafford Survey*. Mayo was also covered by another 17th-century survey (or series of surveys), the results of which are to be found in the *Book of Survey and Distribution*. An edition of this fascinating window on the 17th-century Mayo was published by Robert Simington. The *BSD*'s great importance is that it enables us to trace the various changes in land-ownership in the county, townland by townland, in the course of that turbulent century, particularly as a result of the Cromwellian and Williamite forfeitures.

All of the surveys I have listed are divided up by barony and sometimes even by parish, which greatly facilitates the work of identifying placenames cited. There are other sources, however, which contain very valuable information, albeit arranged in a more haphazard manner. The most notable of these are the *Fiants* of the Tudor Sovereigns, from Henry VIII to Elizabeth; the *Chancery Inquisitions* and the *Calendars of Patent Rolls*, most particularly those from the reign of James I. To give an idea of the scope of some of these sources, one may note that the *Fiants*, stretching for a period of some eighty years from the early 1520s, record the names of an estimated 120,000 people, making them 'a virtual *Who's Who* of 16th-century Ireland'.

To the question of whether there are any comparable Gaelic surveys the blunt answer is 'No!' — if we choose to emphasise the word 'comparable'. But there are significant surveys in Irish (or in Irish with a thin Latin veneer) stretching all the way from the early post-Patrician period down to the 17th-century. The word Patrician prompts us to look at one of the earliest accounts we have to the saint other than those penned by himself. This is the *Collectanea* of the late 7th-century Tirawley bishop Tirechán — the man who is entitled to be considered 'the first Mayo writer'. (Or at least the first 'Mayo writer' — if one may be pardoned the anachronism — whose name is known to us, since, prior to him, we have the anonymous individuals who carved cryptic inscriptions in Ogam on some nine pillar-stones in the north-east and south-east of what is now Co. Mayo.)

Tirechán, writing a Latin text, albeit one heavily influenced by Irish, some time about the years 670-80, gives the names of some dozens of places and peoples or tribes (about 50 in all) said to have been visited or otherwise contacted by Patrick during a *clockwise* tour of the country. (The direction of the itinerary is significant — it was considered lucky to follow the course of the sun.) Many of the names preserved by Tirechán are now difficult to identify or locate with certainty, but this should not surprise us, when we consider that some 1300 years have elapsed since they were recorded. There is a small measure of assistance to be had from a redaction of Tirechán's work incorporated in the Old Irish *Tripartite Life* of St. Patrick, which was compiled perhaps two centuries after the time of the Tirawley bishop; at least some of the names in the later work are rather more recognisable or less impenetrable.

Considering the island as a whole, we find that there are interesting lists of names, marking out the boundaries of various tribal territories, in the Leinster genealogies preserved in the pre-Norman corpus of Irish genealogical material. Another still more detailed catalogue or inventory is to be found in a late medieval genealogical tract on a people called the *Corca Laighe*. These were based largely in what became, in the 12th-century, the diocese of Ross. The tract has recently been subjected to an exemplary analysis by Professor Donnachadh Ó Corráin, in a study which lays many of the groundrules for future analyses of similar texts. And there are indeed similar texts just waiting to be noted and studied. Here I will briefly draw attention to just a couple of these:

The first is a work entitled *Críchad an Chaoille* (meaning 'the delimitation of the boundaries of An Chaoille') which its principal editor declares to be an account of 'the topography of ancient Fermoy'. In fact, the area covered comprises not merely the barony of that name but also the neighbouring and smaller barony of Condons and Clangibbon; together they make up the north-eastern corner of Co. Cork. The tract is preserved in two late medieval Irish manuscripts, but its date of composition is uncertain. Its editor, Canon Patrick Power, thought it antedated the beginning of the 12th century and even hints (p. 5) that it may be 'of no later date than 10th. century.' He is undeterred by the fact that the language of the tract is Early Modern Irish (that is, post-1200 or thereabouts), as he thinks that 'each successive scribe or redactor would naturally transliterate more or less to forms and manner of his own period'. The tract strikes me as probably belonging to the later medieval period, although the compiler may have used materials a good deal earlier than that. The tract comprises a catalogue of the ten tuatha or subterritories into which the territory known as An Chaoille was anciently divided, together with the ruling-family of each tuath and the other families settled in each — a total of 118 families. The boundaries of each tuath are set out in detail and the place (frequently representing a present-day townland) with which each family was associated is indicated — in all, some 180 placenames. Canon Power claimed that this tract 'is a document of unique character and scope', being 'an intensive study of a single petty principedom'. It is a work crying out for a modern re-

edition and a thorough analysis to set it in its proper context.

The next work I will mention briefly is a record of a legal dispute over the ownership of land which occurred in the year 1561 and in which the celebrated Leinster legal family of Ó Deoráin became involved as arbitrators. It occurs on a page formerly left blank in a famous Irish law manuscript, TCD 1337 (H.3.18). It names twenty different individuals and 25 placenames, only one of which (cited on six different occasions) seems possible to identify with a measure of certainty: this is *Cloch Naidhe/Natighe* which appears to me to represent the townland of Cloghna near Carlow town. (I readily admit that there are alternative suggestions; one which has held sway until recently — being in Fr. Edmund Hogan's great *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, or dictionary of Gaelic placenames — maintains that the disputed land was in Co. Westmeath, while K.W. Nicholls of UCC, is strongly of the opinion that it was in and around the parish of Ferns, Co. Wexford, but I maintain that the case for Co. Carlow is not to be dismissed out of hand). What is remarkable about the document is the high proportion of placenames which seem impossible to identify, as they are apparently otherwise unattested. (The *Onomasticon* can only suggest an identification for one name, Kenneth Nicholls for two, and myself for one — albeit, in my case, a name which is, as already mentioned, cited no fewer than six times.) This goes to show just how much we are at the mercy of chance when it comes to the survival of placenames — in one area, a fair number of names may survive relatively unchanged for more than a millennium, while in another a whole slice of toponymy which has been recorded not all that long ago simply disappears without trace.

I must also mention, however briefly, the two well-known 'topographical poems' of the 14th and 15th centuries. The first of these is a work of 916 lines relating to the provinces of Meath, Ulster, Connacht and Leinster composed by the celebrated Connacht poet and scholar Seaán Mór Ó Dubhagáin, who died in the monastery of Rinn Dúin (Randoon), Co. Roscommon — on Lough Ree — in 1372. The second is a little shorter, containing 792 lines; treating of Leinster (again) and Munster, it is the work of one Giolla na Naomh Ó hUidhrin who died in 1420. The poems comprise a list of the Gaelic lordships of later medieval Ireland, together with the name of the ruling family of each. It is assumed that the reader, or listener, will know where each territory is located, and that there is therefore no need to give any specific detail, or even any general indication, of this. One other interesting feature is the way in which the Norman presence in later medieval Ireland is utterly ignored, as if it had never happened. What we get is the ideal situation from a Gaelic point of view — with no complicating external factors.

Returning to north Connacht, there is an especially interesting Gaelic survey which relates to Cos. Mayo and Sligo. It is a tract on the population-group (or dynasty) known as Uí Fhiachrach and is preserved in the great west Sligo manuscript called the *Book of Lecan* which was compiled largely between the years 1397 and 1418 by one of the learned family of Mac Fir Bhisigh at Lackan, near Enniscrone. The precise date of the tract is difficult to establish, but there is reason to believe that it was put together during the second half of the 14th century, probably following the expulsion of the Norman de Berminghams from Tireragh by Domhnall Cléireach Ó Dubhda in the year 1371; the expulsion was the culmination of a long campaign waged by Domhnall's father, the long-lived Sein-Bhríán Ó Dubhda. In the wake of this event, Clann Fhir Bhisigh apparently followed their lordly patrons eastwards across Killala Bay and established a seat of learning at Lackan, where they remained until early in the second half of the 17th century.

It is noteworthy that a very short and spare version of the Uí Fhiachrach tract, preserved in that other great Co. Sligo manuscript, the *Book of Ballymote* (compiled about the year

1390), is attributed to one Flann, and it has been suggested that the original of the text may have been the work of the celebrated scholar Flann Mainistrech, who was attached to the monastery of Monasterboice, Co. Louth, and died as early as 1056. Whether or not such a suggestion has any basis in fact, it is clear that somebody — no doubt the great scribe and scholar and principal compiler of the Book of Lecan, Giolla Íosa Mac Fir Bhisigh — took that earlier tract and greatly expanded and reorganised it.

In the course of preparatory work for a new edition of the text, I have divided the tract, for convenience, into more than 300 sections. The initial portion consists of an account of the purported origins of Uí Fhiachrach, reputedly descendants of one Fiachra Foltsnáchach, an older brother of the famous (supposedly 5th-century) 'high king' Niall of the Nine Hostages. It includes a version of the legend of the death of Dath Í, son of Fiachra, a king of Tara said to have been killed on a continental expedition in 445. This is followed by various other legends as well as by detailed genealogies of the many families who claimed to be affiliated to Uí Fhiachrach. The final 100 or so sections of the text consist of the kind of survey already mentioned. It lists the various subdivisions within the territory of Uí Fhiachrach and the ruling or predominant family or families in each. In all, the text contains just under 220 placenames and about 190 surnames or family-names. As to the distribution of these, the first 90 or so placenames are located in the barony of Carra and the neighbouring part of the barony of Kilmaine, in south Mayo, the next 40 or so are in the barony of Tirawley, in north Mayo, and the remainder — about 85 — are in Co. Sligo, all in the barony of Tireragh.

We should also note that the aforementioned Giolla Íosa composed a lengthy poem (of some 900 lines or 224 quatrains) which bears a striking resemblance to the so-called 'topographical poems' of Ó Dubhagáin and Ó hUidhrin — although it is a great deal more detailed than either of those. This work, which is actually more a genealogical than a topographical poem, contains information very similar to that found in the prose survey just described. The poem is dated 1417 — the year in which it was unveiled, as a kind of inauguration-ode for Tadhg Riabhach Ó Dowd who succeeded his brother Ruaidhri as king or chieftain of Uí Fhiachrach. It is possible however, that the poem might have been around for some time before being pressed into service to praise the succession of Tadhg Riabhach in 1417. It is worth noting that there are some interesting, if slight, discrepancies between the information contained in the poem and that given in the prose survey: for instance, the poem does not contain quite as many placenames as does the prose — it has about 170 (and about 190 surnames and family-names) — and the form of some names, both of places and families, differs as between the two texts. A closer, and more detailed, comparative study of the prose text and of the poem may either establish or demolish my suggestion as to their respective ages.

A later recension of the aforementioned prose text occurs in the great *Book of Genealogies* compiled by Dubhaltach, another member of Clann Fhir Bhisigh, in Galway about the year 1650. Dubhaltach, though not a direct descendant of Giolla Íosa's, clearly had access to interesting material preserved in the library of Clann Fhir Bhisigh at Lackan, for his text differs in numerous — mainly minor but sometimes apparently significant — ways from the version preserved in the Book of Lecan. These differences would seem to suggest, not carelessness on the part of a later copyist but deliberate and intelligent emendation. (Dubhaltach's text forms the basis of an edition produced more than a century and a half ago by the great pioneering scholar, John O'Donovan, in his monumental *Genealogies, Tribes and Customs of HyFiachrach*, 1844; it must be said, however, that while O'Donovan's topographical and other notes and his commentary are invaluable, the way in which the text is handled by the editor leaves a good deal to be desired.)

There is a log of analytical work still to be done on the three texts just referred to (the prose text of c. 1400, the poem of 1417 and the mid-17th century recension of the prose text), but I will risk making a couple of observations which may provoke some further thoughts on the subject.

1) Firstly, for reasons that are unclear, fewer of the names from all three texts relating to the barony of Carra and contiguous territories seem to have survived or to be at present identifiable than is the case with the northern baronies of Tirawley and Tireragh. I can think of no good reason why this should be so.

2) Secondly, as Professor Tomás Ó Concheanainn pointed out to me some years ago when he was engaged on a re-edition (as yet unpublished) of Giolla Íosa's great poem, the poet's itinerary in the course of the poem mirrors that of Patrick in the account of Tirechán and the Tripartite Life: it goes clockwise from south-east Mayo to north-west, from there to north-east Mayo and on into Co. Sligo. One wonders was this a conscious imitation, or merely dictated by the old Irish desire always to move *deiseal* (clockwise)?

3) Thirdly (and this is a point which has long intrigued me), there seems a degree of uncertainty — especially in the prose text — about the form of some of the placenames mentioned, particularly in Tireragh. For example, the townland now rendered Ardnaglass occurs in both the prose text and in the poem as *Ardan Glas*, whereas in Dubhaltach's mid-17th century recension it takes the more expected form (and one attested since the later 16th century) of *Ard na nGlas*. As it is difficult to see one form evolving naturally into the other, one looks for an alternative explanation. Perhaps *Ard na nGlas* represents the original form and the other is accordingly a mistake? But why, you may ask, would Giolla Íosa have made such an elementary error? One possible answer (which I here advance very tentatively indeed) might derive from the recent history of the area as it appeared to Giolla Íosa. Perhaps he was not all that familiar with at least some of the toponymy of Tireragh! After all, remember that this was recently-conquered territory — wrested from the Norman de Berminghams no more than a generation earlier — and so the new Gaelic rulers and their mandarin-class of official poet-historians might not yet have become altogether *au fait* with every nook and cranny of this 'new found land'.

A related thought is that the reason for the composition, or more particularly the elaboration, of at least the Tireragh section of the Uí Fhiachrach tract may also lie in this new conquest. It could arguably have been put together as a kind of charter of Uí Fhiachrach ownership of the territory. In other words, the places which it is suggested the various named families held from time immemorial may instead have been places in which they had been newly planted. And so, rather than the tract being a record of age-old traditions, we may well be witnessing in it an attempted creation of just 'traditions'. This might account for the utter absence of the Normans from the tract — just as they are omitted from the Topographical Poems. This has previously been taken as an indication that the poems (and likewise, presumably, the tract) must antedate the 12th-century Norman 'invasion'. However, we may not need to go this far. It is much more likely that, rather than the Normans not having yet arrived when the tract was first composed, they had indeed come and conquered but had recently been expelled again, and so — in accordance with the old adage that history is generally written by the victors — we here see them, having lost their territory, now in the process of being written out of history.

In O'Donovan's edition of the tract, identifications are offered for up to two-thirds of the placenames. In a fairly small number of cases he is mistaken, but what is remarkable is not that he got some of them wrong, but he got so many of them right! Since commencing work on the text, I have been able to identify a number of other names — mostly with the

assistance of the 16th and 17th-century surveys mentioned earlier (Inquisitions, Book of Survey and Distribution, etc.). One of the drawbacks of this survey of Uí Fhiachrach, compared with later English ones, such as the BSD, is that while it mentions a particular place in relation to a particular family, it gives no indication of the amount of land involved in each case. We have, therefore, no way of knowing if a place, whose name still survives as that of a modern townland, occupied even approximately the same acreage six centuries ago, or what kind of boundary or fence would have marked off the various owners from one another? On the other hand, even with the degree of uncertainty already alluded to about certain name-forms, the placenames occurring in the tract are almost certainly much closer to the correct originals than would any forms occurring in later surveys written in either English or Latin.

A little over a century and a half after the last dateable portion of the Book of Lecan was penned, another Irish text was compiled in north Connacht. This is preserved in an interesting and indeed unique manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin (TCD MS F.4.13). Part of its uniqueness derives from the fact that it contains what purports to be a series of colour portraits of various members of the great Hiberno-Norman family, the lower MacWilliam Burkes (Cann Uilliam Íochtair), who dominated north Connacht throughout the later middle ages: there are pictures of nine de Burgo lords, beginning with Riocard Mór who died in 1243. The contents comprise an Irish prose text (to be considered presently in more detail), a purported genealogical history, in Latin, of the de Burgos in the 13th and 14th centuries, and two lengthy praise-poems in Irish composed by members of the celebrated bardic family of Ó hUiginn. The opening texts (or perhaps the manuscript as a whole?) bear the general title *'Historia et Genealogia Familiae de Burgo'*.

A aforementioned opening prose text takes the form of a rental in Irish which catalogues in great detail all the lands from which the Lower Mac William claimed rent and services in the newly-established county of Mayo. The date of the tract's compilation is given at one point as 1578, at a time when Sir Seaán mac Oilbhéaruis was chieftain of Clann Uilliam Íochtair (he died in 1580), but material continued to be added down to the year 1599. On the third folio of the manuscript is a suggestive item, immediately following a statement to the effect that Mac William was entitled to a 'defence rent' of five marks from the territory of O Dowd in Tireragh: this is the signature of 'O Dowd, that is, Cathal Dubh'. This was the 'chief of his name' or 'captain of his nation' (to employ English usage of the period): a nephew of Tadhg Riabhach O Dowd, chief of the family, who died in 1580, he appears to have preceded as chieftain Tadhg Riabhach's son, Dathi Ruadh, who was slain by an Elizabethan soldier in 1594. The occurrence in the midst of this Burke rental of the name of the chief of the O Dowds is especially interesting. Cathal Dubh was a direct descendant of that Tadhg Riabhach, for whom Giolla Íosa Mac Fir Bhisigh's great inauguration-poem of 1417 was composed, and his appearance as a mere rent-payer to the Burkes is an eloquent testimony to the family's decline in status and power vis-a-vis the now all-powerful Norman family of de Burgo. The situation is all the more poignant, given the complete absence (as noted above) of any trace of the Normans from the Uí Fhiachrach tract compiled less than two centuries earlier.

Cathal Dubh O Dowd's signature is witnessed by 'An Cosnaidhe Óg Mac an Bhreitheamhnaigh, judge [breitheamh] to Mac Muiris' — a member of a hereditary legal family whose surname is now generally anglicised Judge in Mayo and Brehony in Sligo. The family gave name to the townland of Ballynabrehon (called locally Ballybrehony), just north of Claremorris, and the location of that townland is noteworthy, given that Mac an Bhreitheamhnaigh served Mac Muiris — the Norman family (now anglicised Morris and Fitzmaurice — apparently a branch of the Prendergasts) which gave name to

the town of Claremorris and to the barony in which it lies, Clanmorris.

The toponymic content of the rental is what is of most interest in the present context. It contains a total of 134 placenames on which I will comment presently. The text has not hitherto attracted much scholarly attention, although it has been thrice edited, in whole or in part. Most of the Irish portion is given, in translation, by Hubert Thomas Knox in his celebrated *History of the County of Mayo to the Close of the Sixteenth Century* (1908) pp. 352-6. Knox also puts forward suggested identifications (most of them rather vague) of between forty and fifty of the Mayo placenames occurring in the text. An edition (with translation) of the prose works was produced by the Celtic scholar Standish Hayes O'Grady and published in 1929. The text is reasonably accurate, but the editor's apparent aversion to the use of capital letters, in all but a tiny number of names, makes it quite difficult to read. Another edition, of both the prose and poetry, by Professor Tomas Ó Raghallaigh of UCG, appeared under the title *'Seanchus na mBúrcach'* in 1926-29. Ó Raghallaigh's edition, though rather more accessible than O'Grady's, is still unsatisfactory as he took the liberty of standardizing the orthography, and his rendering of several of the placenames is deeply flawed. Neither of these later editors paid much attention to the task of identifying the placenames. We therefore still await a proper edition of this very interesting and unjustly neglected tract.

I have done some preliminary work on the tract which may eventually lead to an edition. This work relates particularly to the placenames occurring in the *Seanchas* — a total of 134 Mayo names, as mentioned above, rather surprisingly, a high proportion of those names (about 84%) are fairly readily identifiable. Of the 134, no fewer than 89 are the names of townlands and/or parishes, while more than twenty others can be identified with the aid of 17th-century sources, such as 'Strafford', the BSD and so on. Three are names of baronies and other territories. This leaves only about twenty names which are unidentified or particularly doubtful. The distribution of identifiable names is as follows: 54 in the barony of Kilmaine, in the south of the county, 8 in the barony of Burrishoole, in the west, and 48 in the barony of Tirawley in the north. It would be a worthwhile exercise to plot all the readily identifiable names in this list and in the earlier Uí Fhiachrach tract on a map and compare the result to the present-day townland-pattern.

When we come to assess the significance of the foregoing Gaelic surveys — particularly the Uí Fhiachrach tract and the *Seanchas Búrcach* — we find that their principal value would seem to lie in the way they can be used, not in isolation, but in conjunction with other surveys in Latin and English. They can help to give us a fuller diachronic picture of the areas covered, to further our knowledge of patterns of landownership, of various aspects of the toponymy and of the history of particular families in late medieval Mayo and Sligo. In fact, it is rather surprising how rarely the whole gamut of such evidence has been used to build up this type of picture. One of the pioneers of such an approach was the Meath priest, Celtic scholar and local historian, Paul Walsh (who died in 1941). His intelligent use of a wide range of English, Latin and Irish surveys in tandem demonstrated their great potential in furnishing a key to a better understanding of all three types of text. One of the few to follow in his footsteps is Kenneth Nicholls of UCC. (I can claim to have made some modest attempts to take a leaf out of both of their books — in an article in the journal *Celtica* in 1990 I furnished detailed notes on nineteen placenames from north Roscommon which occur in a colophon in Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh's Book of Genealogies, and in these I made extensive use of the Fiants of Elizabeth, the Chancery Inquisitions for Co. Roscommon, the Calendar of Patent Rolls of James I, the so-called 'Census of 1659', the BSD for Co. Roscommon, the Registry of Deeds,

etc.). In relation to Co. Mayo, there is another source which can be of enormous value and should not be too readily dismissed because of its relative lateness. This is the magnificent *Map of the Maritime County of Mayo* surveyed by the young Scottish engineer William Bald between the years 1809 and 1816. It contains some 5,000 placenames, many of which do not occur on the maps of the Ordnance Survey but which do occur in some of the surveys, English, Latin and Irish, referred to above.

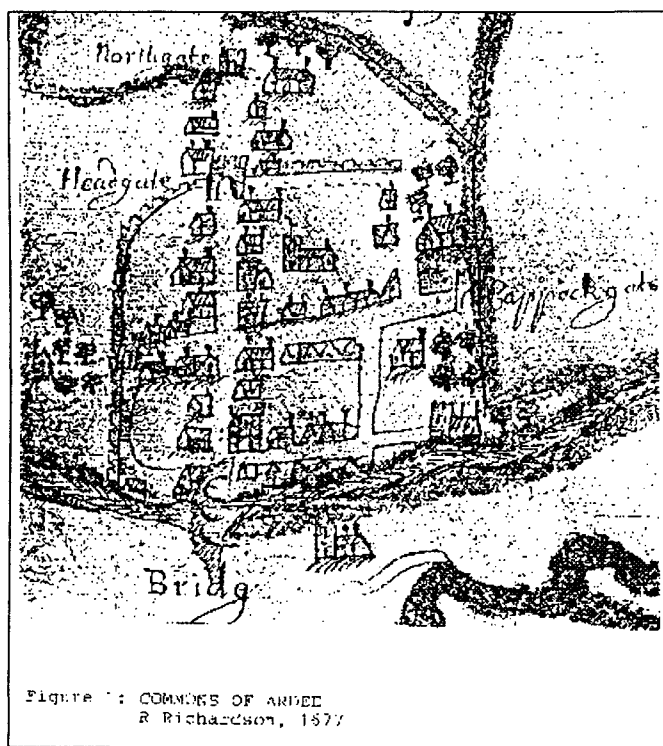
To sum up briefly, then, all kinds of sources are grist to the historian's and toponymist's mill and, in relation to counties Mayo and Sligo, the *Uí Fhiachrach* tract, dating (probably) from the later 14th century, and the *Seanchas Búrcach* of two centuries later are among the more valuable and under-utilised sources of the type just mentioned. Although I have given only the merest taste of what they contain, I hope I have helped to place them in context and to have convinced the reader that — at the very least — they are deserving of further study.

NOLLAIG Ó MURAILE,
THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST.

[An expanded version of this paper was read to the annual conference of the *Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement* in Westport, Co. Mayo on 11th May 1996]

ARDEE: A CASE STUDY IN MEDIEVAL COMPOSITE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Recent research has revealed that the majority of English medieval towns plans are composite in nature, and developed from a sequence of phased development increments, rather than from a single unitary ideal.¹ In this paper the concept of composite development, in the Irish context, is explored by means of an investigation into the topographical development of Anglo-Norman Ardee. The morphogenesis of Ardee will first be established from the available documentary, cartographic and physical research



resources. This will be followed by an examination of the town's topographical development through the technique of plan-analysis: a methodology pioneered by Conzen² and developed by Slater,³ which is particularly suitable to interpreting urban plan development, particularly where documentary sources are scarce or absent.

Morphogenesis

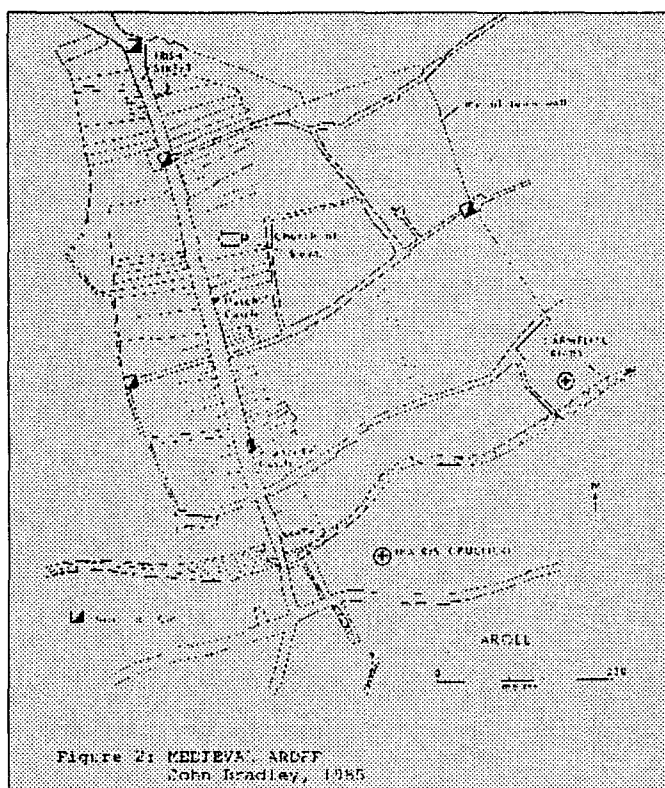
The town of Ardee is situated on the north bank of the River Dee in County Meath, about fifteen miles north of Drogheda. The Gaelic name of the area, *Atha Ferdia*, is derived from *Ferdia's Ford* and refers to a pre-Norman river crossing. The area came into the control of an Anglo-Norman, Gilbert Pipard, in the late twelfth century through a land grant from Prince John;⁴ and between this period and his departure for the Crusades in 1192,⁵ Pipard erected a motte on the south bank of the Dee: about three-quarters of a mile downstream of the town.⁶ Two medieval references relate directly to the town's foundation: the parish church of St Mary was operating by 1191⁷ and a pontage grant was issued in 1306 for the rebuilding of the town bridge.⁸ These two references point to the fact that, by the close of the thirteenth century, the Anglo-Norman town of Ardee - complete with parish church and town bridge - was a physical presence.

Today, Ardee contains an interesting range of medieval architectural features including: fragments of the town wall, remnants of Cappock Gate, traces of the parish church, a ruined college building, two urban tower houses, and the sites of two religious houses.⁹ As well as these, the foundations of the town's North Gate were revealed by road excavations in 1927 - but regrettably covered over.¹⁰

The earliest map to depict medieval Ardee is a small-scale sketch in the Down Survey of 1657. The street pattern of the town is sketchy, but the defensive walls and gate houses of the town are clearly indicated. Internally, what appear to be four ecclesiastical buildings, and an equal number of urban tower houses, are depicted. Despite the vagueness of the map, the image portrayed by the cartographer is clearly one of a fortified town of some substance, as it existed in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Robert Richardson's map of 1677, offers a more detailed view of late medieval Ardee. This map shows the town consisting of a substantial square-shaped settlement, positioned on the north bank of the River Dee (Fig.1). Internally, the plan consists of a principal street laid out on an axis with the town bridge, as well as a pair of intersecting perpendicular cross streets. The map also shows a series of secondary streets, particularly in the south-eastern quadrant of the town. Within the matrix, the position of the town's main public buildings are shown: the parish church on the east side of the main axis; the College immediately east of the church; the Carmelite friary in the extreme south-eastern corner of the town; a mill directly east of the bridge; and a range of domestic buildings lining the principal streets. Two extra-mural buildings are also shown: the friary of the *Fratres Cruciferi* on the south bank of the Dee; and a tower house directly west of the town. The town defences are also indicated and consist of a continuous crenellated wall with three defended gate houses, and an open aspect to the river. Immediately north of the walled town, Irish Street is shown as an extra-mural suburb: un-walled, but provided with a level of security by its own gate house.

The survival of Ardee's medieval features and the availability of the 1677 map has meant that there is general agreement on the morphology of medieval Ardee. This has allowed Bradley to produce a re-constructed map of the Anglo-Norman town and this is re-produced in Figure 2. Bradley's map echoes closely the details of the Richardson map and highlights the main morphological features: the medieval street pattern, the surviving medieval fabric, the circuit of the town wall, the



position of the town gates, the suburb, and the relationship of the town with the river.

Plan-Units

The map of Ardee illustrated in Figure 3 is based on the 1835, 1910 and 1990 Ordnance Survey maps. It reflects the form of medieval Ardee as suggested by Bradley, but also includes details of a system of now vanished lanes on the east side of the main axis. The map also highlights Plan-Units 1 to 5 into which the town plan can be divided. Plan-Unit 1 is focused on the central axis of Market Street, which is closed on the north by Head Gate and, on the south, by the junction with Ash Walk/Lambs Lane. The unit is bounded on the north, partially by the site of Market Square/Yard and partially by the line of Markethouse Lane. On the west side of Head Gate, the boundary has been partially obliterated by the Market House development - possibly in the eighteenth century; while to the east, the remains of the intramural passage, indicated on the Richardson map, runs directly eastwards until it changes course in the form of Black Ridge. The eastern boundary of the unit can be traced in the line of the plot tails which stretch from Markethouse Lane southwards to Lambs Lane. About half the extent of this eastern boundary is made up of College Lane, which runs directly behind the parish church precinct. The southern boundary of the unit lies along Ash Walk and Lambs Lane which intersects and crosses the southern end of Market Street. The western boundary of the unit follows the course of the western plot tails in a continuous line which stretches from Ash Walk northwards as far as the Market Yard. The southern section of this boundary is clearly the line of the western town wall depicted in the Richardson map, but, near the northern corner, the clarity vanishes as the boundary dissolves into the fabric of the Market Square complex. In the Richardson map, this north-western corner of the town is shown as a wide arc bending towards Head Gate, and what is perhaps the remnants of this curved line can be partially identified in both the 1835 and 1910 Ordnance Survey maps.

Internally Plan-Unit 1 consists of a series of plots fronting both sides of Market Street, which in the 1838 map are shown stretching from the street frontage to back boundary lines of the unit. The continuity of the plot pattern is interrupted by

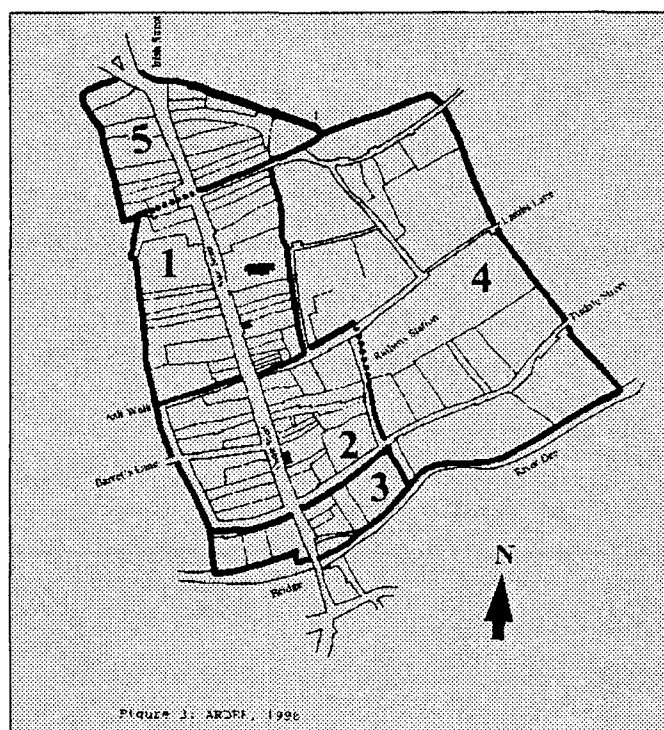
the parish church on the east - although the latter fits into the block depth; and by both the Market House complex and the formal gardens belonging to Ardee House, on the west. Immediately west of the latter, what appears to be the remnants of the town's sixteenth century earthen bastion are still to be seen.

Plan-Unit 2 is located immediately south of Unit 1, and is focused on the Castle Street length of the main street axis. The unit differs from Plan-Unit 1 in three areas: scale, internal arrangement and boundary definition. The unit is shorter along the main street axis, but extends further eastwards than Plan-Unit 1. In its original form, the unit was enclosed on all four sides by a continuous street. This feature shows up only in the 1835 Ordnance Survey map, where it can be seen that Ash Walk and Lambs Lane form the northern boundary, and Tisdale Street forms the southern limit. The western intramural passage forms the third boundary and, in the east, a now partially vanished lane made up the fourth. This lane is clearly indicated on the 1835 Ordnance Survey map but only its southern length appears on the 1910 map. It would appear that the northern section of the lane disappeared with the building of the town's railway station in the nineteenth century. Despite its partial destruction, the laneway was undoubtedly an important route in the medieval period. This can be deduced from the 1677 map, where the route is emphasised, while College Lane, which runs behind the parish church, (Plan-Unit 1), is not even shown.

Internally Plan-Unit 2 was divided into quadrants by Barret's Lane, which ran westwards from Castle Street; and an unnamed, and now disappeared lane, which ran from Castle Street westwards as far as the old station lane. The 1835 Ordnance Survey map shows the lane, but it had been closed and built over by the time of the publication of the 1910 map - although the course can still be traced from the adjoining property boundaries. The 1835 map also shows a series of plots flanking both sides of Castle Street, aligned perpendicular to the main axis in a similar manner to Plan-Unit 1. Plan-Unit 2, extends further east than Unit 1 and this suggests that the original intention was to create extra plots fronting on to both Lambs Lane and Tisdale Street, with the now disappeared east/west lane providing a rear access. Whether these plots were in fact ever created is now difficult to ascertain, as the 1835 map shows the area in field strips.

Plan-Unit 3 is located south of Plan-Unit 2, and is, in effect, the continuation of the line of the Market Street/Castle Street axis southwards to link directly with the bridge over the Dee. The northern boundary of the unit consists of the east/west line of Tisdale Street. The eastern boundary is not clearly defined and is assumed to follow the line of the Plan-Unit 2 boundary eastwards as far the river. The Dee forms the southern boundary of the unit; and, on the west, the continuation of the town wall to the river forms the western perimeter. Internally, Plan-Unit 3 differs from the two previous units in that the plots shown on the 1835 map are considerably wider than before. Also, the orientation of the plot series is different. In Plan-Units 1 and 2, they are arranged on an east/west alignment, while in Plan-Unit 3 the plots lie in the opposite direction: perpendicular to the river.

Plan-Unit 4 consists of the extensive underdeveloped area of Ardee located between the plot tails on the eastern side of the Market Street/Castle Street/Bridge Street axis, and the line of the eastern town wall, identified on the Ordnance Survey map. The area stretches the full length of the town from Markethouse Lane in the north, to the River Dee in the south. Within this area the 1835 map shows an irregular grid of roads: the eastward continuation of Lambs Lane and Tisdale Street, as well as Black Ridge, Old Chapel Lane, and College Lane. Despite the extent of the area and street network, there is no evidence for any plot development, and the entire area is shown in agricultural use on the 1835 Ordnance Survey map. The 1910 map shows only a modest change in the area



produced by the construction of the town's nineteenth century railway station just south of Lambs lane.

The final plan-unit arranged along the main axis of the town is Plan-Unit 5: the suburb of Irish Street. The northern boundary of the unit terminates in the widening of Irish Street into a small irregular triangle, after which the course of the road veers north-west into a larger triangular space. The precise northern boundary line is indistinct, but, in the 1835 Ordnance Survey map, it is indicated as following the line of the property boundaries on either side of the triangular spaces. On the east side of the unit, the boundary follows a south-western diagonal course to meet Markethouse Lane near its junction with Old Chapel Lane. The southern boundary of the unit is formed by Markethouse Lane, and the western extension of that line - partially incorporated into the Market Square complex. In the west, the boundary stretches unequivocally northwards from the line of the earthen fortifications, along the tails of the western plots, to meet the northern boundary in a right-angled corner. The 1835 map shows a continuous series of plots fronting the west side of Irish Street, while, on the far side of the road, a row of cottages is shown backing directly onto an open field.

Plan-Analysis

Taken as a group, the variation in the plan-units of Ardee, coupled with their inter-relationship, point to a phased plan development process. The difficulty is in establishing the precise chronology of that process. In other words, is it possible to determine the historical sequence associated with the development of medieval Ardee? The evidence, sparse though it is, would suggest that Plan-Unit 1 was the first sector of Ardee to be laid out. One of the earliest dates associated with the town is a reference to the parish church in 1197, only twelve years after Pipard received his land grant. This would suggest that the high area of ground around the parish church precinct saw the laying out of Market Street and its associated burgages. Why this particular site was selected for the new settlement is not clear. The high ground is a consideration, but was it the deciding factor - lying, as it does, so far north of the river? Is it possible that St Mary's church occupies the site of the pre-colonial ecclesiastical foundation? There is a single reference to a pre-colonial monastery at Ardee,¹¹ but no clue as to its topographical form or location.

Another possible influence in the site selection process was the ford which gave the area its name. The 1926 Ordnance Survey map shows the ford about seven hundred feet upstream of the bridge, and Thomas acknowledges the possibility that this was the site of the original ford.¹² In the event that the ford existed in this up-river location, it is suggested that Pipard consciously chose the location of the new bridge because it lay nearer to his motte, and presumably - at that period - the site offered the most appropriate point at which to span the river: in terms of medieval bridge building technology. The river divides at this point to form a small island, but this may not have always been the case. Furthermore, the choice of the down-river site would have allowed the ford to continue in use during the bridge building period. Following the opening of the bridge, the main axis of the new settlement was set out perpendicular to the river. Undoubtedly, the new river crossing would have greatly assisted Pipard in his quest to seek settlers for his new town. The new bridge would have had the effect of diverting traffic away from the ford, to the safer and dryer river crossing, through the new town; where the church - either on a fresh or established site - would have acted as a hub for the new settlement.

Plan-Unit 2 was the second phase in the plan-development of Ardee. The socio-economic events which prompted the extension are not totally clear. Nevertheless, the historical evidence is sufficient to offer a possible explanation. Despite their initial involvement in the foundation of Ardee, the Pipard family connection with the new settlement was not long-lived. In 1192 Gilbert Pipard died on the Crusades and the ownership of the town passed to his brother Peter.¹³ Peter's successors lacked either the acumen, or the interest, of the early family members, and by 1302 ownership of the town had been surrendered to the Crown.¹⁴ In this regard it is worth noting Gwynn's view that the town functioned only as a 'manorial vill' throughout the thirteenth century until taken into the hands of the Crown.¹⁵ This would suggest that the responsibility for the laying out of Plan-Unit 2 emanated from a fourteenth century Royal attempt to increase the rent-roll from the town. A further inference of Royal interest and involvement in the affairs of Ardee can be drawn from the pontage grant issued around the same period: 1305.¹⁶ As well as this, the geometric block arrangement and street pattern of the unit display the hand of a surveyor experienced in town planning.

The date when the infilling of the land between Tisdale Street and the north bank of the Dee, (Plan-Unit 3) took place is unknown. Equally uncertain is the date when work on Plan-Unit 4, the large-scale eastern fringe development, first began. The 1677 map shows this large area located inside the circuit of the town walls, but with a comparatively low intensity of development, in relation to the western zone. Unfortunately, the period during which this doubling of the town lands took place remains an enigma. A date for the creation of the Irish Street suburb (Plan-Unit 5) is also uncertain. The 1677 map shows the area clearly outside the town wall, but with its own outer gate: North Gate. The suburb may have had its origins in a sequence of piecemeal developments flanking the northern approach road to the town immediately outside of Head Gate. Later on, it developed sufficiently to warrant the construction of the outer North Gate, in a period when town defences were still a consideration - perhaps in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.

The final element in the completion of medieval Ardee was the construction of the town wall. Both the Down Survey and the Richardson map show that by the middle of the seventeenth century the enclosure was total, except for the river frontage. No mural towers seem to have been included and the number of gates is uncertain. Thomas suggests that a postern gate existed at the eastern end of Tisdale Street, and a bridge gate

existed at the southern end of the main axis,¹⁷ although neither of these are shown on the early town maps. In a physical sense, very little survives of Ardee's town wall: with the exception of the fragmented remains of Blind Gate and Cappock Gate. The northern wall followed a course perpendicular to the Market Street/Castle Street axis - partially along the line of Market - house lane. On the eastern side of the town, the wall followed the townland boundary southwards as far as the river. The section of the wall north of Cappock Gate was parallel to the main street axis; but south of this point, the angle of the course changed slightly - presumably to bring the Carmelite friary inside the enclosure. In the west, the line of the town wall traced the line of the plot tails between the north-western corner and the river, in a line parallel to the-Market Street/ Castle Street axis. The construction of the wall probably began in the period following the first known murage grant of c.1376, which refers to a stone wall.¹⁸ Thomas is of the opinion that other early murage grants may have been issued; but the last known grant - which seems to have been in perpetuity - was authorised in 1437.¹⁹ If the latter refers to the wall illustrated in the Down Survey and the Richardson's map, then the internal arrangement of the town, enclosed by the circuit of the enclosing wall, was probably finalised by the middle of the fifteenth century. The foundation date of the two religious houses offers little assistance in regard to the chronology of Ardee's physical development, as both were established in peripheral locations. The Fratres Cruciferi Hospital of St John the Baptist - on the south bank of the Dee - was introduced by Roger Pipard c.1207²⁰; and later in the century the Carmelite friary was founded with assistance from Ralph Pipard c.1272,²¹ in an extreme south-eastern position. Both houses lay initially outside the town, but as noted earlier, the latter was to have integrated into Plan-Unit 4 at a later period.

Conclusion

In the course of this paper two significant points have been highlighted. First, the usefulness of plan-analysis as a methodology for determining the form and pace of Irish medieval plan development has been demonstrated. Secondly, it has been revealed that, beneath the modest scale and simple linear form of Ardee, lies a five-stage chronological plan development sequence of extreme complexity. Thus, as most English medieval town plans were composite arrangements, so also was at least one contemporary Irish example: the Anglo-Norman town of Ardee.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE GREAT FAMINE: TIME FOR A BEGINNING?

Until recently, few historians dwelt long on the theme of the Great Famine, while some of those who did (notably Cecil Woodham-Smith) were frequently ostracised for doing so. Although the silence of the historians has ended in the last fifteen to twenty years, particularly with the work of Cormac Ó Gráda, Joel Mokyr and Mary Daly, and more recently with the emergence of the growing mini-industry associated with the 150th anniversary commemorations, little work has ever been done on the Famine from an archaeological perspective. This is partly due to the recent nature of the event - most archaeologists in Ireland have concentrated on the country's prehistory and, in more recent years, its Early Christian and medieval periods. Indeed, the county archaeological surveys and inventories were intended, at their inception, to concentrate on archaeological sites pre-dating 1700 AD. Moreover, the former reticence of the historians in examining the Famine had left a void in historical scholarship that would not have helped spark an interest in the disaster's archaeological dimension.

With so much work done, and still to be done, on the history of the Famine, one might ask what contribution to our knowledge of the event could be made by archaeology? Primarily, archaeological research could provide new images of the Famine. Most of the contemporary illustrations of the Famine that are known today derive from the pages of *The Illustrated London News* and are used over and over again. These illustrations (what might be called the mid-nineteenth century equivalent of today's 'ubiquitous billboard stereotypes

of Third World children¹), need to be bolstered by other images that could be supplied by archaeological survey and excavation. Mass graves, workhouses, fever hospitals, soup kitchens, public and private relief schemes, and abandoned villages are among the types of site that could be investigated by archaeologists and which could supply new images of Famine conditions from architectural surveys and site plans to drawings and photographs of contexts and artefacts (not to mention the museum displays of the finds themselves). What follows is a non-exhaustive survey, from an archaeological perspective, of the mainly historical literature pertaining to these site types as they existed, for the most part, in southern and eastern parts of the country.

Famine graves

If excavated, mass graves could supply more accurate data on the immediate causes of mortality - whether by outright starvation, or by disease aggravated by malnutrition - as well as information on the way people were interred in these communal burials. The mortality level of a particular locality might also be determined more accurately since historical records such as the 1851 census are thought to under-represent the number of those who died, while others give conflicting information.² In particular, many still-born babies and the deaths of young, un-baptised, infants probably went un-recorded. Moreover, many unborn (and therefore undocumented) babies also presumably perished along with their sick or starving mothers. The deaths of older children and adults might likewise have gone unrecorded in communities decimated by mortality and emigration but where no parish records were kept until the 1850s. More intriguing, perhaps, are the mysterious moonlit burials of workhouse inmates who had succumbed to fever at Glenties, County Donegal, in February 1848, their corpses being interred with the presence of 'neither friend nor clergyman'. The grave digger did not even have 'any line from any person to certify that the deceased parties had died in the poor house'.³

The bodies of some of those workhouse inmates who had the misfortune to pass away in the vicinity of a school of anatomy, however, may have endured a lengthy delay before burial (which was not in any workhouse graveyard either). In 1832, the Anatomy Act allowed paupers' bodies to be used for dissection and medical teaching. Prior to this act, only the cadavers of executed criminals could legally be used for dissection, although the variable supply from this source was clandestinely supported by a widespread industry in graverobbing.⁴ The requisition, whether legal or not, of paupers' bodies is a fact that should be borne in mind when determining the minimum number of burials in a graveyard or mass grave of the famine period.

As commemorative projects got underway in 1995, some known Famine graves were cleared of undergrowth. One, known as *Reilig na tSléibhe* ('The Mountain Graveyard'), had been opened during the Famine on a hill above Dungarvan, County Waterford, for the interment of the dead from the town's workhouse, when all the other local graveyards were full. A number of undecorated and uninscribed stone slabs were found to delineate this temporary graveyard.⁵ Such graveyards became necessary because the traditional ones were becoming grossly over-used. For example, the graveyard around the medieval church at Kilbarry, near Waterford city, was chosen to take the city's workhouse dead when its own burial plot became exhausted late in 1846. However, by mid-February 1847, a local newspaper reported that this graveyard had become 'so overcrowded that the coffins in many instances are only a few inches under the surface'.⁶ A similar story was reported for Kilkenny workhouse in January 1847 - when the inmates there were buried, 'the lid of the coffin was only half on with the body exposed and [that] the graves were very shallow'.⁷ In County Cork, the number of dead in March

and April 1847 was so great that the notorious sliding coffins came to replace individual ones. The sliding (or 'slip bottom') coffin was designed as a re-usable box to transport the dead to the graveyard where the body was dropped into the grave by sliding open the coffin's base.⁸ Folkloric sources recall the use of this type of coffin for the workhouse dead at New Ross, County Wexford, in 1847.⁹ Shallow burials without coffins were noted in Schull, County Cork, in February 1847, and were expected to become a source of disease once the corpses began to decompose with the arrival of warm weather.¹⁰ Although no cemetery or mass grave dating to the Famine has yet been fully excavated, part of a probable famine burial plot in County Limerick underwent trial trenching in 1990 and produced an east-west oriented burial in a shallow grave, another possible grave lying alongside it.¹¹ In April 1996, the remains of six coffins were dug up by workmen on a building site in Derry, close to a former workhouse that opened in 1840. They have been initially interpreted as the burials of either workhouse inmates or of the victims of a tragic maritime disaster in which seventy-two people suffocated aboard the paddle steamer *Londonderry* in 1848.¹²

Many of the dead had to wait some time before they were buried, as indicated by contemporary reports of corpses lying on the road or in peasant cabins in Schull, County Cork, and Dungarvan, County Waterford, during February and March of 1847.¹³ Delayed burial exposed the corpses to predation by cats, dogs and rats, while the latter are said to have fed on the not quite dead as well.¹⁴ That many graves dug during the Famine were shallow suggests the likelihood that dogs occasionally dug up corpses and fed upon them, an age old problem.¹⁵ Presumably, the skeletal remains of some of the people buried in famine graves would bear physical evidence of such predation.

Workhouses

Many workhouses still survive today, some of them run down, as at Lismore (County Waterford), others still in use as hospitals such as St Joseph's, Dungarvan (County Waterford), or Fermoy hospital in County Cork.¹⁶ These were set up by the government as a refuge of last resort for paupers from 1838 (when the Irish Poor Law act was passed) until their dissolution (in the Irish Free State) in 1923.¹⁷ In the words of Christine Kinealy:

The workhouse buildings embodied the poor law ethos: while on the one hand they were to be the medium for the provision of relief, they were simultaneously to be administered so as to deter all but the really destitute from applying to them. Their architect was directed to make them uniform, cheap, durable, and unattractive. Life within them was to reinforce this external drabness, while order, classification, discipline and a monotonous diet were considered necessary to limit their appeal. The central poor law commissioners believed that only a rigid adherence to these principles would make the workhouse an efficient 'test' of destitution.¹⁸

Stark conditions and strict discipline were not the only fate of many workhouse inmates. High death tolls were reported in workhouses around the country during the Famine, particularly in March and April 1847, with some areas worse effected than others - 3,909 persons are reported to have died in the workhouse of Skibbereen Union, County Cork, between 1842 and 1851.¹⁹ Mortality was usually a result of disease, the workhouse acting as a hotbed of contagion. In February 1847, the workhouse at Dungarvan, County Waterford, 'became more like a hospital with people attending for both medical and poor relief' due to the widespread occurrence of fever and dysentery.²⁰

Although intended to be uniform, there was considerable variation in the application of the Poor Law by the local guardians. Such variations included the giving of beef to

inmates of the Lismore (County Waterford) workhouse at Christmas, while those in Waterford city were given snuff or tobacco.²¹ Such variation might also, then, be expected in the architecture of workhouses, and indeed, the Waterford workhouse is a case in point. Here, the guardians built special wards to accommodate extra-marital children and their mothers and for women suffering from venereal disease.²² Other kinds of workhouse adjustments included the enlargement of the workhouse infirmary at Belfast, the addition of 'sleeping galleries' and an extension in the men's yard at Lismore, an extension incorporating a hospital at Waterford, and the use of 'a ton of broken glass [...] for the top of the workhouse wall at Dungarvan "to keep paupers in and keep out vagrants"'.²³ At the New Ross workhouse, the idiot wards were put to use as a (somewhat overcrowded) fever hospital in late 1846. Meanwhile, the original fever hospital in the workhouse was catering for 130 patients though only built to accommodate 100.²⁴

Severe overcrowding was a major problem in most workhouses around the country and was not alleviated until Poor Law Commissioners directed local guardians to obtain additional workhouse accommodation in December 1846.²⁵ As a result of this directive, a wide range of buildings were bought or rented to act as auxiliary workhouses. These included stores at Dungarvan and Lismore, and a barracks at Tallow, all in County Waterford; a Presentation Convent, a tanyard, a malthouse, four stores and two 'unspecified buildings' in Waterford city; and 'three small timber sheds' at Skibbereen, County Cork.²⁶ Land for building new workhouse buildings was also purchased, such as the plot of ground acquired next to the New Ross Market House in 1848.²⁷ Conditions within these buildings varied, as indicated by the unusual presence of gas lighting in one auxiliary workhouse in Waterford. This workhouse was connected to the city's gas main, allowing its women inmates to more safely and cheaply work after dark than would have been the case had candles been used.²⁸ Gas lighting first appeared on the bridge crossing the River Suir at Waterford in 1816.²⁹

Living conditions, made bad by overcrowding, were also negatively effected by the poor construction quality of some of the workhouses. The dormitories and other rooms in the Lismore, County Waterford, workhouse suffered from flooding by rainwater in February 1846, a problem that does not seem to have been satisfactorily dealt with as late as May 1850 when the dampness of its hospital walls reached the bedding of the patients.³⁰ The workhouse at Glenties, County Donegal, was damaged by a 'hurricane' in January 1847 when 'great quantities of slates, tiles, lead and metal [sic] pipes [were] blown off the building which consequently became flooded by rainwater'.³¹ While Bantry's wards were 'clean and orderly', bad odours were a major problem in the workhouses at Ballyshannon (County Donegal), Cork city, Dunmanway (County Cork), and Lismore (County Waterford). These were due to generally bad sanitation throughout the buildings as well as poor ventilation and unswept or badly-made sewers and drains. There was also 'medical concern' over the construction of the hospital extension at the Waterford workhouse in 1847, as it was being built on the site of a cesspit.³² Archaeological excavation of workhouse latrines, where possible, might provide data on diet, parasitic and other infections and the medicines used to treat them (indicated, perhaps, by the presence of medicine bottles and medical apparatus).³³ Discarded medical apparatus might include items such as the 'cupping machine', purchased by Waterford workhouse in 1848/49, for drawing blood.³⁴

Documentary records already indicate the variety of menus between the different workhouses in Ireland, especially by 1848 when 'local conditions rather than edicts from headquarters dictated the menu'.³⁵ In some areas, however, the paupers might have to go without food for a day or more

due to the absence of cash or credit with which to obtain it. This situation occurred at the workhouse in Ballina, County Mayo, in late June/early July 1847 when it owed £6,000 in unpaid bills. The paupers at the workhouse of Bantry, County Cork, received only one meal a day in early February 1847 due to a lack of funds, and, when supplies of milk were scarce the following April, little whey could be offered the inmates. No food could be offered by the end of the following May when the guardians had become temporarily bankrupt.³⁶ Of the range of foodstuffs used to feed the inmates, the workhouse at Lismore, County Waterford, offered oatmeal, bread and gruel from December 1845, adopting maize as an alternative to oats for breakfast in April 1846. In 1847, cabbage, rye and turnips came to be cultivated along with peas and beans in the workhouse garden, and when milk became relatively scarce in the winter of 1847-8, molasses was obtained instead.³⁷ Many workhouses, however, seemed to rely on a stirabout of Indian meal mixed with oatmeal, while others, such as that at Cashel, County Tipperary, served only Indian meal.³⁸ Meat was occasionally offered to workhouse inmates, but usually only to patients in the hospital. Unfortunately, the quality of the meat was not always good. In February 1850, the meat acquired for Lismore's inmates was so bad that the workhouse master was compelled to resign, while the beef used in the soup cooked at the Waterford workhouse in March 1848 was found to be derived from cheap cuts that contained more bone than flesh.³⁹ The standard of the irregular supply of meat to the workhouse in Bantry was also so bad that the medical officer there refused to give it to any of his patients.⁴⁰ The experience at Lurgan, County Armagh, was no better, the inmates being served 'sour bread and putrid broth made of rotten beef'.⁴¹ Differences also existed between workhouses in the types of medical diets prescribed for inmates. While dysentery patients were fed only 'coarse brown bread and thin porridge' at Dunmanway, County Cork, in April 1847, fever sufferers at New Ross, County Wexford, were prescribed (in late 1847 and early 1848) high quantities of spirits, porter and wine!⁴² Inmates were occasionally able to smuggle food into the workhouse, though the illicit ingestion of salt herrings at Bantry in April 1847 only made infirmary patients who ate them even more ill.⁴³ There may have been many similar instances of food having been smuggled into a workhouse, but having gone undetected, they were therefore undocumented. Any cesspit contents and other refuse excavated at a workhouse site might add more information on foodstuffs (including smuggled items) consumed at an individual workhouse in the form of animal bones and seeds or other plant macrofossil remains, while the types of beverages imbibed might be indicated by different kinds of glass and earthenware bottles or the presence of beer casks.

Fever hospitals

Fever hospitals were set up mainly during 1847, as a direct response to the overcrowded conditions of the workhouse infirmaries, at a time when typhus was rampant, but these were a largely ephemeral service as were frequently the buildings in which they were located. While the Barracks at Tallow, County Waterford, were requisitioned as a fever hospital and auxiliary workhouse in May 1847, many other hospitals were merely temporary wooden sheds built (at least in theory) according to an official plan.⁴⁴ Four of these sheds were built in 1847-48 in Waterford Poor Law Union - two in Waterford (one was located in the grounds of the city's infirmary), and one each at Bunmahon and Kilmacthomas. There were also a number of other temporary hospitals in Waterford Union, though it is not certain whether they were operated directly from the workhouse.⁴⁵ The temporary nature of the sheds is shown by the closure, in 1848, of the establishments at Bunmahon and Kilmacthomas, while the Trustees of the Waterford City and County Infirmary gave over part of the hospital building to house cholera patients in 1849, provided that the workhouse guardians 'removed the abandoned and unsightly fever shed on their grounds'.⁴⁶

Another cholera hospital was located in Shandon House, near Dungarvan, County Waterford, between April and September 1849.⁴⁷ The life of the extra (unspecified) accommodation rented as a temporary fever hospital in Hall's Lane in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, came to an early end when its roof collapsed in two stages, four days apart, during heavy rain in January 1848.⁴⁸ Even more temporary were the military tents utilised for caring the sick in Schull, County Cork, in March of that year.⁴⁹ Similar tents were supplied in greater numbers to various locations around the country in late May and June of 1847. In relatively mild weather conditions, and with enough beds, these tents proved effective as hospitals because the air within them was fresher and fewer patients lay as close to each other as in more permanent establishments.⁵⁰

Soup kitchens

Another ephemeral service was the provision of soup kitchens which were operated by the government in the summer of 1847, as an alternative form of relief to the then closed public works schemes, although some local relief committees in Ulster⁵¹ had set up soup kitchens as early as November and December 1846. The kind of soup offered was extremely variable, partly because the Relief Commissioners thought that it entailed 'any food cooked in a boiler, and distributed in a liquid state, thick or thin, and whether composed of meat, fish, vegetables, grain or meal'.⁵² The Quakers also ran their own charitable soup kitchens around Ireland generally in 1847, but as early as November 1846 in Cork city.⁵³ At least one of the heavy cast-iron soup boilers used by the Quakers in Waterford survives on private premises in the city. These boilers were manufactured at the English Quaker Foundry in Coalbrookdale and as many as fifty-five of them were distributed by the Waterford Quaker Relief Committee alone to locations in Counties Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford. By early 1848, if not earlier, all of the boilers provided by the Waterford Quakers had ceased being used due to lack of funds.⁵⁴

Landlords also set up soup kitchens on their estates, including the Stronge family of Tynan Abbey in County Armagh and the Marquess of Waterford, who supplied £300 for the free distribution of soup on his County Londonderry property. Meat was an important component of Lord Waterford's recipe for the soup. Food other than soup might also be offered. The Leslie family of Castle Leslie, County Monaghan, offered strabout and turnips to anyone seeking food, serving it 'from a great cauldron set up in the courtyard' of their residence.⁵⁵

Public and private works

Many public works schemes, which were operated in 1846 and early 1847, involved the construction of roads, public paths and bridges.⁵⁶ For example, part of the post road running west from Donegal town underwent construction in November 1846.⁵⁷ By examination of contemporary records, such as newspaper reports of the meetings of local relief commissioners and the various editions of Ordnance Survey maps, many other individual public works projects can be identified. A graveyard and one important road in Waterford have already been identified as Famine constructions by this method.⁵⁸ Folklore and/or placename evidence, when used with caution, could be used to locate other examples of 'Famine roads', such as the *Bóthairín na déirce* in west Cork.⁵⁹ There were many other types of public works projects around the country. A 200 foot long stone pier, accompanied by a 500 foot long approach road and retaining wall, was built at Slade, County Wexford, in 1847-1848.⁶⁰ A harbour, begun in the 1820s as a private enterprise, was completed with public funds at Courtown, County Wexford, in 1847. This involved the construction of a fish curing station and a screw pile pier, though the latter was destroyed twenty-two years later in a storm.⁶¹ A four and a half mile stretch of a canal, projected to link Dungarvan with the River Blackwater, was built with

public works funding in County Waterford at a cost of £10,000.⁶² Railway construction also benefited from public works spending from October 1846, though Mary Daly states that 'only one company - the Waterford and Limerick railway company - took advantage of the provision'. However, other railway construction projects employed many people who might not otherwise have found work, including, for example, the Great Southern & Western line from Dublin to Cork, which was built 'through almost the entire length of Mallow union during the famine'.⁶³

Many landlords took advantage of the government's decision to extend loans for estate drainage schemes in October 1846.⁶⁴ For example, £11,700 was spent on drainage works on the Duke of Devonshire's Irish estate.⁶⁵ Even following the closure of public works throughout Ireland in March 1847, employment on drainage projects continued to be offered to some individuals looking for work on the Duke of Devonshire's Lismore estate, though this might only be for two or three weeks.⁶⁶ The need for pipes and tiles used in drainage projects in Gorey Barony, County Wexford, in 1847, brought about the establishment of a number of brick making concerns by local proprietors. Lord Courtown, for example, obtained a government loan of £7,900 with which he built brick making kilns and slated drying sheds on his estate. This factory survived as the Courtown Brick & Tile Works until its closure in 1972. The success of the drainage works on the Courtown estate contrasts with those in the Macamore district in the same barony, where 'the pipes were placed far too deep and the bore of the pipes was too small [thereby causing] the system to fail in a relatively short time'.⁶⁷ However, landlords were not the only persons responsible for carrying out private relief works. In County Waterford, a pier was built from locally-quarried rock at Ballinagoul, under the auspices of the Waterford Quaker Relief Committee, in late 1848/early 1849. This was accompanied by a shop for selling fishing equipment, while a fish curing house was set up at Helvick.⁶⁸

Many landlords around the country spent substantial sums providing employment on their estates that was not restricted to drainage works. At a cost of £1,500, the Earl Courtown had a new road built on his estate in County Wexford in 1846.⁶⁹ In County Cork, Sir George Colthurst was said to have spent £5,000 (equivalent to more than one year's rental), between 1846 and 1849, on 'buildings, drainage, fences, and roads on his Ballyvourney estate', while Viscount Midleton expended 'at least £20,000, or about one year's income from all of [his] estates, [...] for improvements between 1845 and 1848; more than half of this large sum [being] devoted to the building of a sea wall and esplanade at Ringmeen'.⁷⁰ The Duke of Devonshire's expenditure on estate works and repairs amounted to £52,000, with a further £4,500 granted to tenants for farm improvements from 1845 to 1852.⁷¹ The Stronge family of Tynan Abbey, County Armagh, also offered employment to anyone applying for it.⁷²

Abandoned settlements

Although many landlords provided relief in the form of estate works, others took the opportunity afforded by the Famine to clear their estates of smallholders, especially those holding plots valued at under £4. Such smallholders were exempted in 1843 from paying rates, the responsibility for which devolved upon their landlords. This situation was exacerbated by declining rentals after 1845 and by the passing of An Act to Make Further Provision for the Relief of the Destitute Poor in Ireland (10 Vic. cap. 31), in June 1847. This act contained a feature known as the Quarter Acre, or Gregory, Clause, which disallowed any occupier with more than a quarter of an acre of land to receive either indoor or outdoor relief. Thus, many smallholders were encouraged to surrender their holdings to their landlords in order to claim relief.⁷³ Thousands of tenants were cleared from entire estates in Clare, Kerry and Mayo, where they were encouraged to give up their holdings voluntarily in return for (often trifling) compensation and/or

financial assistance to emigrate. The tenants also frequently assisted in the destruction of their own houses.⁷⁴

Many villages virtually ceased to exist following either mass eviction, emigration or high levels of mortality (or a combination of all three factors). Villages affected in this way include Liscananoun, County Galway, which declined from 114 houses (688 people) in 1841 to 46 houses (257 people) in 1851, while Kilmacthomas, in County Waterford, was described in October 1847, by a contemporary local newspaper, 'as the once busy, prosperous and wealthy village, now turned to pauper haunts, and charnel houses'.⁷⁵ Numerous individual dwellings, whether in towns and villages or scattered throughout the countryside, disappeared during the Famine. For example, in County Clare, *the percentage living in the type 4 houses - the bothán scóir - dropped from 56 per cent of the population in 1841 to 31 per cent in 1851*.¹⁷ *739 one roomed cabins disappeared and this was more than three-quarters of all such houses. This process has continued and the only bothán scóir extant is the one in the Bunratty Folk Park*.⁷⁶

Little archaeological work has been carried out on this type of structure, although the ruins of a 7m by 6m *bothán* built of rough masonry were surveyed in 1986 at Glencurrane, County Limerick.⁷⁷ Their rarity today may account for the apparent absence of the *bothán* in the barony of Nethercross, County Dublin, which was surveyed for its vernacular architecture in 1987-88.⁷⁸ Conditions in such houses could be appalling, as Quakers representing their Cork Relief Committee found in the Slieve Grine uplands of west Waterford in January 1847. One dwelling they visited contained a family of six 'without furniture, utensils for cooking, straw to lie on [...] and without food'.⁷⁹ Even worse, perhaps, were the cabins in Erris (Ballina Union) which, in 1847, were described as being cut out of the living bog, the walls of the bog forming two or three sides; entrances were so low that it was necessary to crawl in on all fours, and the height inside - four to eight feet - made it almost impossible to stand upright. Floor space was usually from seven to ten feet square, but James Hack Tuke measured many which were less. Large families, sometimes of more than eight persons, lived in these 'human burrows'.⁸⁰

Abandoned villages, where they survive, either as a 'ghost town' or as subsurface features in an area of pastureland, can offer information on Famine (and pre-Famine) settlements, such as their layout or street pattern, details of their domestic architecture and information on living conditions within them. Already, some archaeological work has occurred in this area, including a survey of "The deserted village" at Slievemore (Toir) on Achill Island, in County Mayo, and a research project which has identified, by surface examination and phosphate analysis, the homesteads of three tenant families that lived on the Mahon estate at Gorttoose (near Strokestown House), County Roscommon.⁸¹ Slievemore, though abandoned as a permanent settlement, remained in use for booleying as late as 1940.⁸² In the summer of 1996, excavations were due to be carried out of 'the Murray clachan, one of the settlements that made up Gorttoose village' in order to 'clear up a long-standing mystery - namely, just how badly off were the Gorttoose tenants?' (the tenants had been forcibly evicted from their holdings in 1847 by their landlord, Major Denis Mahon). During these excavations, particular attention would be paid to compiling 'a catalog of the peasants' material culture - the hearths, pottery, and other artifacts they used in their daily lives' in what the excavator considers to be the 'first-ever excavation of an Irish peasant community'.⁸³

Conclusion

In 1989, Cormac Ó Gráda had, from a historian's perspective, emphasised 'the lack of Irish research on the Famine' - particularly 'the paucity of regional studies'.⁸⁴ Perhaps, with the recent advent of historical studies on the subject in Ireland, archaeological research will be able to add new

dimensions to various aspects of our knowledge of the Famine. Museums, such as the Strokestown Famine Museum in County Roscommon, which currently suffer from 'the relative dearth of illustrative material left by the social catastrophe' of the famine,⁸⁵ could become important repositories of artefacts recovered from archaeological excavations. With another four years or so of commemorations to go, there should be ample opportunity for archaeology to contribute to the growing body of Famine studies.

Notes

- ¹Cormac Ó Gráda (1995) 'The Great Famine and today's famines', in Cathal Póirtéir (ed.) *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork & Dublin: Radio Telefís Éireann/Mercier Press), pp. 248-58 (p. 249).
- ²Joel Mokyr (1985) *Why Ireland starved: a quantitative and analytical history of the Irish economy, 1800-1850* (second edition; London: George Allen and Unwin), p. 264; Patrick Hickey (1993) 'Famine, mortality and emigration: a profile of six parishes in the Poor Law Union of Skibbereen, 1846-7' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G Buttimer (eds) *Cork history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin: Geography Publications), pp. 873-918; Thomas Gregory Fewer (1995) 'Famine mortality in south Kilkenny: a parochial microcosm', in *Old Kilkenny Review* 47, pp. 44-57 (p. 46).
- ³Jonathan Bardon (1992) *A history of Ulster* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press), p. 290.
- ⁴See Ruth Richardson (1988) *Death, dissection and the destitute* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).
- ⁵William Fraher (1995) 'The Dungarvan disturbances of 1846 and sequels', in Des Cowman and Donald Brady (eds) *The Famine in Waterford 1845-1850: Teachta na bprátaí dubha* (Dublin: Geography Publications in association with Waterford County Council), pp. 137-52 (p. 150).
- ⁶Rita Byrne (1995) 'The workhouse in Waterford city, 1847-49', in Cowman and Brady, *The Famine in Waterford*, pp. 119-36 (p. 123).
- ⁷Michael O'Dwyer (1995) 'The Famine in Kilkenny as reported in the Kilkenny Journal newspaper September 1845-March 1848', in *Old Kilkenny Review* 47 pp. 114-26 (p. 123).
- ⁸Hickey, 'Famine, mortality and emigration', p. 888.
- ⁹Anna Kinsella (1995) *County Wexford in the famine years 1845-1849* (Enniscorthy: Duffry Press), p. 55.
- ¹⁰Cecil Woodham-Smith (1962) *The great hunger* (London: Hamish Hamilton), p. 182.
- ¹¹Brian Hodkinson (1991) 'Stradbally North', in Isabel Bennett (ed.) *Excavations 1990: summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland* (Bray: Wordwell), p. 44.
- ¹²Anon. (1996) 'Derry coffins may date from sea disaster', in *The Irish Times*, 20 April 1996, p. 5, col. 7.
- ¹³James Donnelly (1975) *The land and the people of nineteenth century Cork: the rural economy and the land question* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul), p. 86; Fraher, 'The Dungarvan disturbances', p. 146.
- ¹⁴Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 86; Woodham-Smith, *The great hunger*, pp. 182-3. In the ongoing famine and civil war in Sudan, hyaena populations are rumoured to have increased as a result of 'the abundance of human corpses' (Laura Spinney [1996] 'Caught in the crossfire', in *New Scientist* 149[2015], 3 February, p. 52).
- ¹⁵Paul Barber (1988) *Vampires, burial and death: folklore and reality* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), pp. 125-6.
- ¹⁶Fraher, 'Dungarvan disturbances', p. 147; Helen Litton (1995) *The Irish famine: an illustrated history* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press), p. 35.
- ¹⁷Christine Kinealy (1992) 'The workhouse system in County Waterford, 1838-1923', in William Nolan, Thomas P. Power and Des Cowman (eds) *Waterford: history and society. Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin: Geography Publications), pp. 579-96 (pp. 580-1). Cf. Tom Nolan (1995) 'The Lismore Poor Law Union and the famine', in Cowman and Brady, *The Famine in Waterford*, pp. 101-18.
- ¹⁸Hickey, 'Famine, mortality and emigration', pp. 893, 911.
- ¹⁹Kinealy, 'Workhouse system in County Waterford', p. 585.
- ²⁰Kinealy, 'Workhouse system in County Waterford', p. 580.
- ²¹Bardon *A history of Ulster*, p. 292; Nolan, 'Lismore Poor Law Union', p. 105; Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', p. 119; and Fraher, 'Dungarvan

disturbances', p. 149. ²²Kinsella, *County Wexford in the famine years*, p. 34. ²³Christine Kinealy, 'The role of the Poor Law during the famine', in Póirtéir (ed.) *The Great Irish Famine*, pp. 104-22 (p. 112); Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 94. ²⁴Nolan, 'Lismore Poor Law Union', pp. 105, 109; Fraher, 'Dungarvan disturbances', p. 146; Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', pp. 120-1; and Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 94. ²⁵Kinsella, *County Wexford in the famine years*, p. 66. ²⁶Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', p. 121. ²⁷Des Cowman (1992) 'Trade and society in Waterford City 1800-1840' in Power and Cowman (eds) *Waterford: history and society*, pp. 427-58 (p. 433). ²⁸Nolan, 'Lismore Poor Law Union', p. 104, 109. ²⁹Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, p. 287. ³⁰Bardon *A history of Ulster*, p. 294; Woodham-Smith, *The great hunger*, pp. 199-200; Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 95; Nolan, 'Lismore Poor Law Union', p. 104; Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', p. 120. ³¹However, the continuing long-term use of these latrines throughout the latter half of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries may have necessitated periodic emptyings of their contents. This was found to have been the case with an early nineteenth century earth closet excavated at an archaeological site in downtown Montréal, Canada, from which glass phials used mainly for prescription medicines were recovered (see Pauline Desjardins & Geneviève Duguay, *Pointe-à-Callière: From Ville-Marie to Montreal* [Sillery: Les éditions du Septentrion with Le Vieux-Port de Montréal], pp. 71, 79). A number of privy pits dating from 1895-1930 were similarly found to have been cleared of latrine deposits in archaeological excavations of certain properties on the edge of the Chinatown district of Phoenix, Arizona (see Paul G. Chace [1994] 'Overseas Chinese Research Group', in *The Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter* 27[3], pp. 14-16 [p. 15]). ³²Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', p. 130. ³³E. Margaret Crawford (1995) 'Food and famine', in Póirtéir (ed.), *The Great Irish Famine*, pp. 60-73 (pp. 69-71). ³⁴Woodham-Smith, *The great hunger*, pp. 312-13; Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 96. ³⁵Nolan, 'Lismore Poor Law Union', pp. 106-7. ³⁶Crawford, 'Food and famine', p. 70. ³⁷Nolan, 'Lismore Poor Law Union', p. 117; Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', p. 125. ³⁸Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 96. ³⁹Bardon *A history of Ulster*, p. 289. ⁴⁰Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 95. ⁴¹Nolan, 'The Lismore Poor Law Union', p. 109. An application was also made to the parish priest of Lismore, County Waterford, for the use of his barn as a temporary fever hospital in March 1847. ⁴²Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', p. 121-2. ⁴³Byrne, 'The workhouse in Waterford', p. 121, 123. ⁴⁴Fraher, 'The Dungarvan disturbances', p. 148. ⁴⁵Bardon *A history of Ulster*, p. 296. ⁴⁶Hickey, 'Famine, mortality and emigration', p. 887. ⁴⁷Woodham-Smith, *The great hunger*, pp. 201-2. ⁴⁸Bardon *A history of Ulster*, p. 285. ⁴⁹Crawford, 'Food and famine', p. 68. ⁵⁰Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 92-3. ⁵¹Joan Johnson (1995) 'The Quaker relief effort in Waterford', in Cowman and Brady, *The Famine in Waterford*, pp. 215-38 (pp. 220, 232). The surviving example is illustrated on p. 220. The Quakers also gave grants to help individuals run their own soup kitchens. ⁵²Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, pp. 286, 293. ⁵³Cormac Ó Gráda (1989) *The Great Irish Famine* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan), pp. 44-5; Mary E. Daly (1986) *The famine in Ireland* (Dublin: Dublin Historical Association), p. 74-82; Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (1972) *Ireland before the Famine 1798-1848* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan), pp. 209-14. ⁵⁴Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, p. 284. ⁵⁵Dermot Power (1995) 'Public works in Waterford 1846-47', in *Decies* 51, pp. 57-64 (p. 63). ⁵⁶Hickey, 'Famine, mortality and emigration', p. 888. ⁵⁷Kinsella, *County Wexford in the famine years*, p. 22. ⁵⁸Kinsella, *County Wexford in the famine years*, p. 62. ⁵⁹Fraher, 'Dungarvan disturbances', pp. 137, 151n. ⁶⁰Daly, *The famine in Ireland*, p. 77; Eugene Broderick (1995) 'The famine in Waterford as reported in the local newspapers', in Cowman and Brady, *The Famine in Waterford*, pp. 153-213 (p. 173); Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 123.

⁶¹Daly, *The famine in Ireland*, p. 77; Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine*, p. 214; Kinsella, *County Wexford in the famine years*, p. 44. ⁶²Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 109. ⁶³Thomas Gregory Fewer (1995) 'Poverty and patronage: responses to the famine on the Duke of Devonshire's Lismore estate', in Cowman and Brady, *The Famine in Waterford*, pp. 69-99 (pp. 83-5). ⁶⁴Kinsella, *County Wexford in the famine years*, p. 44. ⁶⁵Johnson, 'Quaker relief effort in Waterford', pp. 228-9. ⁶⁶Kinsella, *County Wexford in the famine years*, p. 26. ⁶⁷Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 109. ⁶⁸Donnelly, *Land and people*, p. 109; cf. Fewer, 'Poverty and patronage', pp. 72-6. ⁶⁹Bardon, *A history of Ulster*, p. 286. ⁷⁰Kinealy, 'The role of the Poor Law', pp. 108, 116. ⁷¹James S. Donnelly, Jr (1989) 'Landlords and tenants', in W. E. Vaughan (ed.) *A New History of Ireland. V: Ireland under the Union, 1801-70* (Oxford), pp. 332-49 (pp. 338-40); ⁷²Kevin Whelan (1995) 'Pre- and post-famine landscape change', in Póirtéir, *The Great Irish Famine*, pp. 19-33 (p. 28); Broderick, 'The famine in Waterford', p. 185. ⁷³Timothy P. O'Neill (1974) 'Clare and Irish poverty, 1815-1851', in *Studia Hibernica* 14, pp. 7-27 (p. 24). ⁷⁴Margaret Gowan (1988) *Three Irish Gas pipelines: new archaeological evidence in Munster* (Dublin: Wordwell Ltd - Academic Publications), pp. 146-7. It is stated that a number of *botháin* survived in County Limerick into the 1930s and 1940s. ⁷⁵Barry O'Reilly (1991) 'The vernacular architecture of north Co. Dublin', in *Archaeology Ireland* 5(2), pp. 24-6. ⁷⁶Johnson, 'Quaker relief effort in Waterford', p. 219. ⁷⁷Woodham-Smith, *The great hunger*, p. 311. ⁷⁸'Survey of "The deserted village", Slievemore (Toir), Achill Island, County Mayo', in Isabel Bennett (ed.) *Excavations 1992: summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland* (Bray: Wordwell), p. 63; Charles E. Orser, Jr (1994) 'Europe', in *The Society for Historical Archaeology Newsletter* 27(3), p. 33; and Charles E. Orser, Jr (1996) 'Can there be an archaeology of the Great Famine?', in Chris Morash and Richard Hayes, eds, *Fearful realities: new perspectives on the Famine* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, & Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press), pp. 77-89 (pp. 86-8). ⁷⁹Theresa McDonald (1990) 'Achill Island', in *Archaeology Ireland* 4(3), pp. 7-9 (p. 9). A map of Achill sites in this article shows the locations of a number of abandoned villages on the island. ⁸⁰Charles Orser (1996) 'Ireland before the Famine', ⁸¹Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine*, p. 59. ⁸²Peter Gray (1994) 'Strokestown Famine Museum', in *History Ireland* 2(2), 5-6.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF MAKING LANDSCAPES IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Landscape and settlement studies have traditionally focussed on a fairly broad canvas of patterns in the landscape - exhibited in such things as territorial and land divisions, field systems, urban/village morphologies, landed estates - all of them consequences of the settlement, occupation and organisation of the Irish landscape in the past. This spatial order has been seen as the product of a range of influences - some cultural, as in the 'nucleated-dispersed' debate, some political or economic, as exemplified in the seventeenth century plantations. Or they have been interpreted in terms of agents of change, an approach conceptually useful for understanding the process of landscape modification: 'agents of change' ranging from broad processes of socio-economic change, like colonisation or mercantilism, to the power brokers in society like landowners, estate agents or merchants. Other agencies, like the state in the 19th century, with its welfare, education, public works and land policies, may be seen as having had an important role in contributing to the landscape.

The ordinary inhabitants of the landscape were obviously the most important makers and builders of landscape. There is no doubt that the hedges and houses of the Irish countryside owe more to the exertions of its ordinary inhabitants than any number of grand conceptualisations of agents of change. The many books and articles invoking 'land and people' in their titles is reflective of this. Certainly, the disorderly and unregimented nature of many landscape modifications, like the amorphous farm clusters of the west and the irregular field patterns in many places, all attest the results of individual enterprise unguided by any overarching controlling hand.

But explanation must seek order from the fruits of individual enterprise. While the nuts and bolts of the landscape, represented by the houses, outhouses, lanes and hedgerows, were put together by ordinary individuals, the question to be asked is to what extent they were responding to outside or overall controls? Were there strictures, enticements and incentives, for example, of a larger order - be it 'the market' (and its various price cycles), the state (and its legislative regime), or the landowner (with his legal contracts)? In general, it seems to be agreed that in Ireland the estate owners were more concerned with the outbounds of their leasings - the townland boundaries; they left the internal arrangements of the farms and fields to the tenants. Or in many cases, in the 18th century, they simply abandoned large blocks of land by townland lease to middlemen and reneged on any involvement with landscape or settlement detail. Towards the end of the 18th century, many of these owners became more directly involved in the day-to-day running of the affairs of their properties.

In the poorer regions, where farms were small and poverty endemic, where the resources of the individual tenants were virtually nonexistent, the rudimentary settlement fabric of the rural landscape, in terms of enclosure, housing, planting, drainage, roads - all elements which are fundamental in the making of the landscape as we know it today - was defective, chaotic, squalid and, in development terms, inefficient. While there are legacies of many such landscapes today - part of the marginal regions concentrated in the west and forming the material scenery of Irish tourism - a lot of these pinched and impoverished places were swept away and renewed in the years immediately before and after the famine.

Although it is a truism that landscapes change slowly, that geographical inertia retards progress, that Evans's stage of the landscape is never cleared for the next act, it is useful to consider the impact and often the ubiquity of renewal in the landscape over the past couple of centuries. Anybody who thinks about the last twenty-five years cannot but be convinced of the extent of landscape transformation that has taken place over much of Ireland. Anybody who returns to some places after an absence of the last decade or two must be amazed at the extent of the change in the built and natural environment: in broad terms and in keeping with our 'agents of change' concept, this is due variously to the economic revival of agriculture, repopulation of countrysides, industrialisation and the EU. The material consequences have been individuals building in countrysides, what has been called the 'bungalisation' of the countryside, together with lawns, leyland cypress hedges and double garages - landscape renewal, taking place today within the parameters of a planning system which imposes its own standardisation of patterns on the landscape.

Go back a mere 150 years to see other renewals - the striping of fields, the ladder farms, the Congested Districts Board and Land Commission cottage works, the government investment in public works. Many estates came late into this, shocked into it by the events of the mid-nineteenth century. The owner of a 29,000 acre estate in Kerry boasted in 1880 of his role in the making of his landscape: that over the previous thirty years he had "built over eighty houses and offices, slated or tiled...made nearly twenty-three miles of road, built

nine bridges, made twenty three miles of fences [presumably roadside], thorough drained about 500 acres, and planted about 150 acres of of waste land".¹

Much of the housing and landscape texture which we have come to think of as very old is in fact relatively recent. Much of it is part of the last stages of the Europe-wide, and especially British, preoccupation with 'improvement'. The 'age of improvement' peaked in the later 18th century. But in Ireland the ripples of this movement only reached many places in the middle of the nineteenth century, when its potential economic returns were diminishing. Landowners, of necessity, were the principal channels of improving ideas - many of the great landowners like the Dukes of Leinster, Downshire, Devonshire, had been busily spreading the gospel of improvement from the middle of the 18th century. Many more, however, only got involved desultorily. Irish estate management was notoriously easy-going by English standards. Absenteeism, or distantly-owned properties, like crown or TCD estates, or smaller fragmented properties, which were the objects of recurring financial speculation, hampered the impetus for improvement, as Arthur Young frequently adverted to in his travels in Ireland. Lord Digby, who lived in Warwickshire, left his Geashill tenants "entirely to themselves; he took no further trouble and enquired little into the state of his property".² In this kind of situation, landscapes were impoverished, fragmented and subdivided, overpopulated, ruthlessly cultivated with potatoes, stubbleburnt, unfallowed and often waterlogged. These estates got a series of shocks in the early nineteenth century brought on by the collapse of agriculture after the European war and the growth of rent arrears. And the Poor Law, the inevitable consequence of the rising poverty which mismanagement had produced, really rattled the subdivided estates and landscapes, many of which were unwittingly staring into an abyss of catastrophe by the 1840s.

The hill-strewn landscape of the former Shirley estate in south Monaghan is today an attractive countryside with miles of whitethorn hedges, magical with blossom in May, an intricate lattice of laneways and country byroads, with small, generally two-storey, farmhouses sprinkled through the hills and tucked into the hillsides, their red oxide haysheds blending comfortably with the white walls and green fields. At least this was the picture up to the nineteen sixties. Nowadays, this settlement pattern is more often than not supplemented by a large spattering of bungalows with different colours and textures.

Much of the detail of this landscape was made in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Many of the older houses and farmbuildings were constructed and modified then, in a process of landscape renewal, which set about obliterating the marks of poverty which had been the result of the previous century of mismanagement. In the early 1840s, Shirley's 27,000 acres had an enormous population, with an average density of almost one person per acre. It had a huge burden of cottiers which had been allowed accumulate with little interference from the estate. A great many of the houses and cabins of its population were dark, damp and miserable structures. In an 1814 survey it generally emerges as a bleak and bare landscape. In the early 1840s, much of its countryside, today so well clothed in seemingly immemorial hedgerows, was hedgeless, treeless, worn out. When William Steuart Trench took over as agent on the estate in 1843, he reported on its squalor and poverty, with many tenants' houses having neither "windows, bedsteads, tables nor chairs". He indicted the estate for its failure to encourage improvements among its tenantry. In 1842, this estate with a annual rentroll of £23,000, had invested the princely sum of £16-14-11d in improvements on three houses - which contrasted with the thousands poured into the building and furnishing of the landlord's new mansion outside Carrickmacross.

Trench recommended a range of investments in improvements beginning with a mere 2% of the estate's income and rising each year to 10%. For example, "windows should be given to all proper well-conducted tenants, on condition that other improvements be made, one improvement will suggest another...you will seldom see a man who has his house and homestead decent who will leave his Land in weeds and neglect". The Estate Improvement Books which were kept from 1844, record the windows, chimneys, new houses and house extensions, gates, slates, drainage, trees and thorn quicks by the thousand, which were approved and granted to the tenants by the estate. In many ways they represent a day-by-day catalogue of the nuts and bolts of the landscape which we have inherited today, influenced to a significant extent by the improving principles of the estate administration.

There were detailed drawings for a variety of house types, ranging from a labourer's cottage to farmhouses, outoffices and a small farmyard layout. Doubtless, these were more aspirational than real, though they probably did form the basis for the comparatively small number of new houses which were built under the direction of the estate. In most cases, the estate assisted with contributions towards parts of improvements. Requests for lime to build a piggery, cowhouses or extensions were subject to the work being approved or carried out under the direction of one of the estate's officials. Generally each application was reviewed and unnecessary expense reduced to a minimum. In September 1845, for example, an application for lime to help build a house was reported on: "Nothing to be done in this case but to build a new house altogether. The old one cannot stand anytime..."

In all cases, the 'agriculturist' employed on the recommendation of Trench in 1844, visited the farms and inspected the premises. In true 'improving' spirit, tenants who were 'tidy', 'clean', 'industrious', 'tasty(sic), or improving, were particularly encouraged by premiums and grants. Unsightly houses were subject to particular attention, especially if they were on the roadside: one application in 1845 was reported as "one of the most miserable hovels on the estate, one part of it is totally down and the other part following it. I am sure it will not stand the winter". Cottier cabins were often found in roadside locations, much as traveller caravans today squat on the road margins where there is space to settle and ownership is unclear. It was noted of another house in 1845, that "it does not deserve the name of house, a dirty dark hole, with a large family huddled together. I do not know how they exist in it - 2½ acres...to be given 6 barrels of lime and when timber is to be had in Lough Fea a little to be given for roofing, 10s for expense of masonwork etc".

An application for timber to finish a roof was assessed: "this is a new built house. His former one was a miserable dirty hovel and a shame to see on the roadside". It was noted that James Conlon's application for windows and building lime in 1846 related to his "house on side of road..in excellent order but without windows or even a place for them". An application for assistance to move a house to a different part of a farm of four acres: " house small and old, built of mud in an inconvenient part of the land. It would be better where he wishes to build it. He has his farm in neat order. The fences are tidy and well quicked".

Henry McCabe, on 12 acres in 1845, wanted boards to loft a kitchen and lime to plaster and rough cast. His house was described as "large, good, neatly built and clean. 'tis high enough for a loft. He has the rafters laid ready for the boards". In January 1845, another application for two windows and lime to build an extension - "house bad but clean, in great need of addition as a part of his children has to sleep in the cowhouse with the cattle. He has ten. The family are very

industrious living on a farm of 8 acres and paying the rent proves them to be so". Catherine McEneney wanted 3 windows and lime: "house but middling in much need of being thatched, street very dirty - 8 acres". The windows and lime were granted but the house must first be thatched by herself. The widow Ward wanted assistance to slate an addition she had built to her house. The extension was reported as "well done, the expense will be for timber and slates etc" calculated as "5 X 10 foot planks @£0-13-9; 12 cwt slates @£1-7-0; workmanship -£0-15-5; masonwork- £1-15-0; carriage 6s-0; total - £4-17-2. Another widow, in January 1846, wanted slates for a piggery. She was visited by the agriculturist and given the necessary directions, "by which it will be a very neat thing but the manner in which she was about to slate it would be a bad and useless house for pigs and would take three times the sum to do it".

In 1848, another tenant wanted a crow bar and sledge: "I inspected his farm...he had done a deal and improved it very much, levelled a deal of ditches, all by my advice. He needs a sledge and crow bar very much to enable him to finish his improvements, there are large stones he cannot manage without a crow and sledge". In July 1845, another tenant wanted assistance to drain a green bog: "this man is much injured by this drain, his potatoes and turf are nearly destroyed. By the sinking of about 27 perches of drain it would give him a fall that would enable him to drain it effectually... expense about 10d per perch".

On top of this constructive approach to landscape renewal, there was also a policy of encouragement of tenant emigration, especially cottier tenants, and the subsequent removal of abandoned cabins and consolidation of farms, all of which was a rationalisation of the landscape that was indirectly a response to the need to remove liabilities for Poor Law taxation. Many tenants received compensation for levelling old ditches as well as houses.

In 1844, more than one hundred windows were supplied by the estate - generally 'pairs of windows' were requested; fifty five tenants were given lime for building (usually extensions, outoffices, piers, whitewashing), usually amounting to four or five barrels. There were eleven grants of timber for building (for roofing mainly) and for two new houses. There were over 300 applications for improvements in 1845: 111 windows; 4 wooden gates; 14 iron gates; 101 quantities of lime. There were 25 grants of roofing timber; assistance with nine new houses; nine grants for engineering works, such as bridges, gulleys, arterial drainage; six grants for slates for roofing; 78 grants (unquantified) of thorn quicks for hedging. In 1846, there were 167 applications -> 40 for quicks; 25 for windows; 12 for wooden gates; 7 iron gates; 68 lime grants; 22 for roofing timber; 4 for engineering works and three for roof slates.

1847, the most depressed year of the famine, was marked by a significant decline in improvements. There were only 24 applications: five for quicks; five for wooden gates; one iron gate; 12 requests for lime, including six for lime "to do up the house" (possibly following fever); there was one new house and one request for slates. In 1848, applications rose again to 64: 22 for quicks, totalling 47,000 plus one application for three dozen poplars and a half dozen laburnums; 12 windows; fifteen wooden and five iron gates; fifteen lime grants and five grants of roofing timber.

By 1850, the agricultural recovery is reflected in the large increase in agricultural works, especially liming and drainage. 38,000 quicks were given to 12 tenants. There were fifty applications for lime for agriculture, averaging 60-100 barrels each. There were also applications for 23 windows, 20 gates; 33 grants of building lime, 30 for roofing timber. In 1851 the grants given out by the estate amounted to 32 windows, 35 wooden gates, 15 iron gates, 50 grants of building lime, 38 building timber, assistance with seven new houses, 93 grants

of lime for agriculture, 11 grants for agricultural drainage, two iron ploughs and two ladders, as well as 54,000 quicks to twenty tenants. And so on. Throughout the fifties and slowing down in the sixties, thousands of thorn quicks and hundreds of poplars, ash and other trees were granted, thousands of barrels of lime were given for agricultural improvement, thousands of perches of drains were constructed, as well as hundreds of windows, house extensions, gates and other improvements around the houses (the 'street') being funded.

In parts of Ireland, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, many estates, like Shirley's in Monaghan were actively involved in a range of improvements which helped to shape the modern countryside. A great deal of investment by estates went into their properties in the post famine period of agricultural prosperity. William Steuart Trench reports on just such a short and concerted period of landscape reorganisation on the Digby Geashill estate in Offaly in the 1850s. Combined with investment from the expanding incomes of the tenant farmers themselves, as well as the withdrawal from the landscape of hundreds of thousands of cottiers and small farms in the crisis years of the famine, this resulted in the emergence of much of the modern Irish landscape as we know it today.

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Extracts from the papers of the Shirley estate by permission of Major J E Shirley and the Deputy Keeper of Records, PRONI, Belfast.

1 J. S Donnelly, 'The Kenmare estates in nineteenth century,' *Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society Journal*, 1987, 15.

2 W S Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, London 1868, 313.

REVIEW ARTICLES

FRANK MITCHELL AND MICHAEL RYAN.
READING THE IRISH LANDSCAPE,
pp. 392, Dublin: Town House and Country House 1997,
IR£18.99 0-946172-54-4

Anyone who walks the Irish landscape to look at the shape and structure of settlement patterns cannot but be convinced of the symbiosis that exists between people and landscape through time. Uplands and lowlands, bogland and drumlins, river valleys and coasts all exhibit subtle interactions between man and land. *Reading the Irish Landscape* is an interpretation of the developing relationship between the environment and its occupation by society in the past in Ireland. Indeed in chapter 10 ('The future') it is very much a continuing relationship with discussion of, among other things, REPS, ENFO and tourism, all of which are responses to a new awareness of our place in our landscape and environment at the close of the twentieth century.

This is the third edition of this book, formerly published as *The Irish Landscape*, then as *The Shell Guide to Reading the Irish Landscape*. Its publishers this time claim it is a completely revised edition, with Michael Ryan on this occasion teaming up with Mitchell. Many people are obviously

interested in this succinct and readable approach to understanding the landscape, ranging from discussion of its rocky foundations and its ecological processes to its modification by people. The winning thing about it is the way one can dip into it anywhere and follow up particular themes, all of them of interest to students of landscape and settlement. One can, for example, look at methods of dating 'deposited' landscapes (p.35), soil development (p.162), raised bogs (p.148), early Irish neolithic culture (p.160), passage tombs (p.170), managing [neolithic] landscapes (184), Bronze age houses (218), markets of medieval Dublin (301). In one of the paragraphs on soils, Mitchell refers to leaching, enrichment and redeposition, the application of lime for the past 750 years, limekilns in the Irish countryside, farmyard manure and modern 'macerated manure or slurry', as important activities in the transformation of soils in Ireland. Another reason for the success of this book in the past has been its clarity and simplicity of writing style, a characteristic which continues with the new co-author. The new format is also superior to the two-column format of the last edition.

Readers of this journal will probably be more interested in the section of the book from the 'First Farmers' onwards - viz. the development of the humanised landscape. But it is equally true that many readers will also be fascinated by the way in which the physical/geological context of the cultural transformation of the landscape is established in the first half of the book. For many decades, Frank Mitchell has demonstrated an unerring capacity to put across the mysteries of the earth before man, as well as the secrets of the peopling of the unsettled land of Ireland from 8000 years ago, in an unpretentious scholarship that is probably somewhat old-fashioned in this narrow specialist age. This lack of disciplinary chauvinism is probably what makes the book so popular with non-specialist readers. His discussion of erosion in the Burren, for example, illustrates his easy style: "the limestone which has been scoured by later ice sheets lies naked at the surface without any protective mantle of clay and is being dissolved away at a rapid rate. One estimate suggests that the limestone surface is being lowered at a rate of 0.053 mm per annum. If this rate is projected backwards, it means that the surface was lowered by 53m in one million years and that a layer of limestone more than 1000m thick vanished during the last 25 million years....In parts of the Burren, field walls, which cannot be more than 5000 years old, were once built on a level rock surface. Now the walls stand on a shallow plinth of solid rock which is protected from solution....".

The first half of the book, while retaining the original layout, has been substantially re-written by Mitchell, with expanded and up-dated discussion and with many new illustrations. Following the collaboration with Michael Ryan, the second half has also been significantly expanded. Chapter 5 on the 'First Farmers' is a very good summary of our current understanding of society and landscape up to the Iron Age. Its self-explanatory sub-headings are a great improvement on the last edition, dealing with such topics as the neolithic way of life, forest clearance, migrations, farming, megalithic tombs, settlements and enclosure, animal husbandry, crafts and the growth of the bogs obstructing or encasing early society's signatures on the landscape. Chapter 6 is a new chapter covering the period 300-840 AD, in many ways a formative period in our landscape's story, in which among other things ring forts are examined as well as Christianity and the beginnings of its institutional imprint on the organisation and ownership of the landscape. The structure of this part of the book probably reflects Michael Ryan's academic background - with 141 pages devoted to the period up to the ninth century and 45 pages up to 1900. There is therefore a very rapid race through the last millennium when most of the recognisable visible features of our human landscape were laid down. Chapter 7 in fact survives unmodified from the last edition and chapters 9 and 10 are essentially new additions taking in environmental issues.

This revised edition is well up with the literature of the nineties: there are references, for example, to recent work by Richard Preece, some in process of being published, the Clare Island survey (1994), and lots of material on landscape archaeology such as Barry Raftery's *Pagan Celtic Ireland* (1994), David Sweetman's 1995 work on Irish fortified houses and John Bradley's *Walled towns in Ireland* (1995). This edition contains most of the original and many additional illustrations including many stunning colour photographs. It is perhaps a pity that the period of most relevance to our landscape legacy today, and much of the huge amount of work being done on the last three centuries, is largely ignored in the seventh chapter in this edition. This probably exposes the Achilles heel of the single-author approach to writing on such a broad canvas. However, its advantages far outweigh this deficiency and will no doubt ensure the popularity of this third edition.

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DAIBHÍ Ó CRÓINÍN, EARLY MEDIEVAL IRELAND 400-1200.

Longman History of Ireland series

(London and New York 1995),

379 pp., £15.99stg., 0-582-01565-0

The publication of a comprehensive survey of early medieval Ireland is such a rare event that any work on this topic is keenly awaited and, on appearance, open to the most rigorous scrutiny. Those works which withstand the test of time seem never to date and are monuments of their age and their discipline, as evidenced by works of the calibre of Eoin MacNeill's *Celtic Ireland*, J.F. Kenney's *The Sources for the early history of Ireland*, Kathleen Hughes's *The church in early Irish society* or F.J. Byrne's *Irish kings and high-kings*. Despite their faults and the need to update them, scholars continue to use them as essential text-books and reference points. Hence, any scholar who is willing to attempt to add to this rarefied list is not only submitting to the highly critical scrutiny of his or her peers, but also to the test of time. Daibhí Ó Cróinín is the most recent historian to seek to gain a place in this hallowed list. In his *Introduction* he states that his primary aim in writing this book "has been to present readers with a glimpse of what early medieval Ireland was like." He claims to have deliberately avoided the strictly chronological approach, "with its catalogue of dates and battles and obscure names, opting instead for a picture of early Irish society in all its aspects." A difficult, if not impossible task, for one author!

The book ranges over a very wide amount of material dealing with the advent of Christianity to Ireland, the politics of Ireland 400 - 800 A.D.: kings and kingship; land, settlement and economy; law, family and community; the early Irish church, its early development, the ecclesiastical controversies of the period, learning and the so-called 'Golden Age'; the Viking Age; and Ireland 1014 - 1200. Coverage of as extensive a series of topics as this inevitably reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the author's knowledge of the period and leads to serious omissions or mistakes. Ó Cróinín's own expertise in the field of Hiberno-Latin, and particularly his study of the Easter controversy and of the early Irish computus, provides the basis for the most secure chapters of the book, those dealing with the consolidation of the church, with learning and with the Golden Age (Chapters 6 - 8). It is possible that the author's own concentration on Hiberno-Latin sources in recent years caused him to undervalue the importance of vernacular sources. In his discussion of learning, little is said

about the significance of senchas, that vast amount of pseudo-historical and propaganda material compiled and preserved by the fili (poet) and the senchaid. This reluctance to exploit the sources available gives rise to considerable inadequacies elsewhere. Chapter 2 on 'Kingdoms, peoples and politics, AD 400 - 800', which in any survey of this nature is a pivotal subject, is a case in point. There is no discussion of the early kingship of Tara — or of its associated trappings of real or concocted high-kingship —, of the evolution of the kingdoms of the midlands (Brega and Mide) or of the most influential dynasty in early medieval Ireland, the Uí Néill. The early development of Munster receives very general notice, primarily on the basis that the sources are sparing and less reliable than for elsewhere. This received notion of the paucity of sources relating to Munster, and more so to Connacht, emanates from the reluctance of historians to exploit all texts at their disposal to the greatest extent possible. It might be surprising how much more could be extrapolated about these kingdoms and their population groups by detailed examination of genealogies (for example, the Laud genealogies and tribal histories), genealogical and pseudo-historical tracts (The Expulsion of the Déssi, Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde, The Story of the Finding of Cashel), or of Patrician documents (Muirchú, Tírechán and the *Vita Tripartita*).

The sections dealing with the later centuries, entitled 'The Viking Age' and 'Ireland 1014 - 1200', perpetuate old chronological divisions and attitudes of the discipline which historians have striven hard in the past three decades to change, relating to the degree of the Viking impact on Irish society, the importance of 1014 and the coming of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland. Had the author put aside these out-moded divisions and addressed the development of Irish society from c.900 to 1200, using the ideas touched on briefly in the final section of the book entitled 'Feudalization in Ireland c. 1000' as a backdrop, readers might have been confronted with a more innovative view of Ireland than has been presented. By stating in this section that changes came about in Irish society during the eleventh and twelfth centuries which might, with some justification, be described as a parallel to the feudal system that had evolved in England and on the continent, the author leaves the question unanswered, at least coherently, as to when these changes began to happen, and where and how they evolved.

For the archaeologist, historical geographer and student of settlement and economic history, the book is disappointing and it is clear that the writer is unaware of or unwilling to accept recent (and not so recent) developments in these areas. Land, settlement and economy are dealt with in a single chapter of less than 25 pages. Development within the period (c.400 - 1200) appears to be regarded as static and any chronological developments seem to be eschewed. What we know of the chronology and development of the ringfort alone shows that this is plainly not the case. Readers of this newsletter will be surprised at the absence of reference to the works of St Joseph, Graham, Barrett, Lynn and Stout on settlement patterns and ringforts, Leask, Hamlin and Harbison on architecture and sculpture. Recent surveys on aspects of the archaeology of the period by Edwards and Mytum and on art history suffer the same fate.

One of the greatest contributions to settlement history has been the publication over the past ten years or so of county surveys and inventories and it is unfortunate that the results of this work have not been given any notice. Ogham stones, for long the preserve of linguists, have in recent years been reclaimed by field archaeologists and their importance in identifying some of the earliest datable cemeteries (indeed the earliest datable early medieval sites of any kind) is only now being realised through the publication of these archaeological inventories.

There are, however, nuggets of information which Ó Cróinín has extracted from the written sources, principally the use of

saints' lives (principally in Latin) and, to a lesser, extent, the law tracts, particularly in the area of food, diet and agricultural practices.

In conclusion, it must be said that it is tempting to criticize a general survey of this type and to find fault with sections of particular interest to reviewers. In writing this book, "Ó Cróinín set himself a formidable task. Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learnt from his effort is that the next stage of development of the early history of Ireland, and of related disciplines (archaeology, historical geography, linguistics, literary criticism, onomastics), should involve genuine interdisciplinary studies which are either chronologically, regionally or thematically specific.

EDEL BHREATHNACH
DISCOVERY PROGRAMME

TERRY BARRY, ROBIN FRAME AND
KATHARINE SIMMS (eds)
**COLONY AND FRONTIER IN
MEDIEVAL IRELAND: ESSAYS
PRESENTED TO J.F. LYDON.**

Hambledon Press, 1995. xxvi + 262 pp.
£38.00 stg. 1-85285-122-8

In a publishing climate where titles of monographs or collections of essays titillate more often than they deliver, this volume has not only the merit of being quite honest about its contents but also of addressing the issues which characterised the scholarly work of the dedicatee. Just as it is hard to sum up the impact and influence of James Lydon on the study of medieval Ireland, it is equally hard to do justice to this large volume of thirteen essays which visit not only every corner of the Lordship but range beyond to Britain and to the Continent.

In many ways the tone of the entire volume is set by Seán Duffy's opening piece on John de Courcy, one of the boldest military adventurers ever to try his luck in Ireland. Conscious of the myth and of de Courcy's self-fashioning, Duffy, to borrow his own phrase 'scrapes away the gilded surface to see what tarnished metal may lie beneath'. What follows is an intense and detailed scrutiny of the sources of the romantic de Courcy story. The glamorous, penniless Somerset knight is probed and analysed to reveal a less swashbuckling but equally absorbing character - 'a man well-connected in the north of England, southern Scotland, and the Isle of Man'. Here is the linchpin of the first Ulster plantation, someone who, through careful planning and adroit reading of the political map of the north Irish Sea area, encouraged other men of Cumbria to embark on the colonisation of a promising but hostile region. This stripping down of de Courcy provides a useful reminder of the careful human calculation that goes into settlement choices.

Calculation is also at the heart of Brendan Smith's discussion of tenure and locality in North Leinster. This time it is the tricky arithmetic of loyalty and service which is under consideration. Like many of the contributors, Smith is not simply interested in tracing the intricacies of the English colony and the risks and effects of living on the frontier for its own sake, but is keenly aware of developments in Britain as well and is sensible of the need for comparison of experiences on both islands. Ireland was 'a tenants' market in which magnates competed for the service of those below them'. If men like de Courcy attracted others to Ireland, their tenants did not maintain exclusive links with their initial benefactor. Honorial lordship was weak both in north Leinster and

England in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries even if new land was available on one side of the Irish sea and less on the other. Ties of locality, of neighbourhood, of association were the ties that bound tenants in Louth as in Lincoln. The very conquest of Ireland and its consolidation was achieved 'by harnessing contemporary structures in England rather than by reviving outmoded ones'.

Perhaps the most tantalising of the divisions of medieval Ireland is that to be found in an institution which by its own confession prized unity almost above all. Katharine Simms is on magisterial form in her investigation of the regional and cultural frontiers of the Irish Church. This is elegant scholarship. It is absorbing, challenging, enlightening. Working off a map of *coarbs* and *erenaghs* (the fruit, one suspects, of a thousand laboriously compiled index cards), Simms offers a compelling interpretation of the fortunes and attitudes of Gaelic Irish churchmen from the trauma of the twelfth century reform to the trauma of the sixteenth century reformation, from one alliance of kings and reforming bishops to another. Despite the great strains brought about by the first reform and its radical transformation of structures, there was, it is argued, some continuity of outlook among the hereditary clerical families of Ireland. The true fracture came in the early modern period when both state sponsored reformation and international counter-reformation demanded complete transformation of attitude. This is surely a salutary warning to those who would seek to take refuge in woolly notions of a Celtic-Christianity stretching from the remote past into the nineteenth century and to the present.

The political history of medieval Ireland is something of a complicated mosaic. *Colony and Frontier* puts a good number of important tiles into place. It does so in a such a way that the result is not one of arid and sterile lists of dates and names but rather real material for the historical imagination. Helen Perros concentrates on the Shannon, the 'final frontier of the western world', on its allure and its potential as not only a regional but a national axis. We see the Shannon transformed from being a gateway for the Kings of Connacht to the rest of Ireland to becoming a besieged frontier. Not only does Perros effortlessly prove the value of considering a whole province at a time but she also offers a nuanced judgement of Cathal Croibhdhearg's efforts to recast his kingship in an Anglo-Norman mould.

Ciaran Parker, on the other hand, shifts his gaze to what he calls the 'internal frontier', that is to the fortunes and strategies of the Irish in county Waterford from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Most accounts of the Lordship feature a ritual nod in the direction of the Irish in areas of English settlement or concentrate almost entirely on grants of law or on the Church. What we have here is a more fully rounded account and it is important stuff. It comes as no surprise to see Irishmen advancing in the Church, but it is useful to know about their involvement in manorial management and in certain trades in the city of Waterford. Parker doesn't shrink away from the things that made his chosen locality unique - its distance from zones of conflict and the introduction and settlement of a section of the Uí Bhriain of Thomond by the third earl of Desmond - but he does point to the importance and the feasibility of establishing a much more complete picture of the standing of the Irish throughout the Lordship.

Robin Frame returns to his stomping ground of Leinster to scan the affairs of the Mic Mhurchadha along with the metropolitan concerns of the English Crown. Here are the erstwhile Gaelic rulers of Leinster making their way in the interstices of English colonial power. Here is a neat anatomy of the 'new equilibrium' of the fourteenth century, of the ambiguities, delicate balances and slippery decisions that made up the world of Art Caomhánach. This was a man whose identity and strategy was multilayered, rooted in the Gaelic world but married to the heiress of Narragh. A man

who looms as bogeyman in the official records but who behaves in the extraction of protection monies not entirely unlike Anglo-Irish magnates. This examination of Mic Mhurchadha is another vindication of Frame's theme of a Dublin government catching Irish leaders in 'a web of practical lordship' and a pleasure to read.

If the complex multidimensions and political structure of late mediaeval Ireland has left a mark on the Irish landscape then that mark has to be in the form of the tower house. In Terry Barry's map this island has had a chronic eruption of stone acne. Drawing on detailed postgraduate research in progress at TCD, Barry questions the assumption that the Anglo-Irish were first to build these smaller cheaper defensive centres. Instead he opens up the possibility of a multi-layered evolution for these almost ubiquitous structures. While (by his own admission) there is still plenty of work to be done, an understanding of the origins of the tower house would plug the supposed gap in castle building from the second quarter of the fourteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth century.

Only seven of thirteen essays have been noticed here (the poetic offering which follows the preface is passed over in silence) yet this is not to suggest that they are without interest or importance. Margaret Murphy, Philomena Connolly and Dorothy Johnston take a close look at the affairs of state and the functioning of English government in Ireland. Bernadette Williams dissects the 'Kilkenny Chronicle' and separates this composite work into its respective parts. Aoife Nic Ghiollamhaith examines from inside Gaelic Ireland the complex webs of alliance in a militarised society. Christine Meek ranges beyond the Irish frontiers to examine Irish men and Irish goods in medieval Lucca.

Two collections edited by James Lydon dominate the study and teaching of medieval Ireland - *England and Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (1985) and *The English in Medieval Ireland* (1984) Now a collection of essays dedicated to him looks set to become nearly as indispensable.

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RURAL IMAGES: ESTATE MAPS IN THE OLD AND NEW WORLDS.

Edited by David Buisseret,
University of Chicago Press,
1996, 184 pp. £43.95 stg.
0-226-07990-2

The Kenneth Nebenzahl lectures on the history of cartography are delivered every two or three years at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Typically each series consists of half a dozen lectures, with speakers drawn from both sides of the Atlantic, and the subject is usually some aspect of map-making in general — military, political, technological etc. — rather than the cartography of any particular region. Seven sets of the lectures have been published in book form, each a major contribution to scholarship.

'Estate maps in the old and new worlds', the theme of the ninth (1988) Nebenzahl series, is perhaps the most difficult assignment that the organisers have yet attempted. The intensive study of estate maps is a comparatively recent phenomenon, and much of it has been done peripherally to other kinds of historical interest and within relatively narrow territorial limits. Regional and local research of this kind is

not well suited to the Nebenzahl format, nor are its practitioners necessarily able or willing to accept engagements several thousand miles from home. In the event, five experts on large-scale map-making did get to Chicago. Their convenor, David Buisseret, on his home ground as a Newberry staff-member, was thoroughly competent to discuss the estate plans of North America as well as to provide an editorial top and tail when the lectures were published. Paul Harvey, a high authority on the transition from medieval to modern in every kind of cartography, spoke to good purpose on the early development of English estate maps and their value for agrarian history. Sarah Bendall summarised her exhaustive researches into the estate maps of Cambridgeshire, managing to introduce some valuable material not duplicated in the large book she was to publish on the same subject four years later. Barry Higman, author of many historical works on Jamaica, gave an exceptionally clear and detailed account of the island's estate maps and the geographical information he has been able to distil from them. A fifth topic, maps in the national archives of Mexico as studied by Ann M. Graham, has for some reason been omitted from the book. It will be seen that when it came to the point there was only one old-world country represented in the lectures, but luckily David Buisseret has saved the day with a specially-written essay on European estate maps which for English-speaking readers turns out to be the most original of the published chapters. Even so, at a rough estimate nearly seventy per cent of *Rural images* is devoted to two countries, England and Jamaica.

One more small island could have done little to redress the balance. All the same, the present reviewer should perhaps 'declare an interest', which is to have suffered the odium of declining a Nebenzahl invitation to lecture on the estate map in Ireland. Perhaps amends can be made by briefly giving an Irish slant to a few of the issues raised by Buisseret and his colleagues. First comes the perennial problem of definition. Both Buisseret and Harvey see estate maps as being made for 'general reference' and 'not for a particular occasion or for some closely defined purpose'. They also stipulate that such maps must depict the whole of an estate as opposed to any of its parts. An advantage of this restriction is to connect estate maps with the currently popular theme of the cartographic status symbol: the clearest visual expression of a proprietor's pride and self-conceit would be a single image displaying just how much land he owned. This is a telling argument in favour of Harvey's definition, because most estate maps are, as he says, 'reasonably flattering' — unlike the written surveys with which he often compares them.

Harvey can also claim to have history on his side. In sixteenth-century England the difference between special and general property maps is reinforced not just by chronology (the former accumulating by small increments from late medieval times, the latter appearing suddenly in the 1570s) but also by cartographic technique, the general maps of the 1570s being the first landowners' maps to carry a numerical statement of scale. Harvey's dating of the scaled property map finds some indirect support in Irish history, as can be seen by comparing the plantation surveys of the 1580s with those of the 1560s. Conceptually, however, his definition leaves several questions unanswered. The distinction between general and special maps is not always easy to sustain. For instance in eighteenth-century Ireland general maps were often made when a property changed hands, a kind of 'particular occasion' not mentioned in this book. Also, many surveys of Irish farms or townlands have all the look of an estate map, though presumably it was some 'closely-defined purpose' that prompted a landowner to map one of his townlands rather than another at any particular time. Strictly speaking our terminology should recognise this fact by distinguishing farm surveys from estate surveys, though few historians have bothered to do so either in these lectures or elsewhere. When the difference between whole and part is not especially relevant, the best definition of an estate map is probably in terms

of its originating agent and not much else. Perhaps we can accept the inelegant formula approved by David Fletcher, in a study too recent to be cited in this book: 'plans made for the purpose of inventorying, management or improvement of an estate' (*The emergence of estate maps: Christ Church, Oxford 1600-1840*, Oxford Press, 1995, pp. 1-2).

Why do estates need mapping and why was this necessity recognised so much earlier in some countries than others? *Rural images* identifies several predisposing conditions: an adequate surveying technology; large units of land ownership; a 'lively market in land'; a profit-making approach to agriculture; an absence of war and civil strife. Irish readers are unlikely to disagree, though up to now, it must be admitted, such explanations have remained largely hypothetical: in this book, for example, a comparison on page 109 of surviving estate maps with the incidence of slavery (a surrogate for farm size) in the eastern United States is the only approach to any kind of statistical correlation. More seriously, the hypotheses can sometimes be seen almost at a glance to have failed, as where in Germany east of the Elbe the above-mentioned conditions were fulfilled without producing any cartographic results. At this point (p. 22) it becomes hard to avoid that ubiquitous vogue-word of the 1990s, 'map-consciousness'. Before taking up an attitude to this expression we may ask whether it can accommodate pictures as well as maps. Certainly 'picture consciousness' would come in useful to explain the beautiful bird's-eye views or *Landtafeln* which Buisseret shows to have been popular in the duchies and margravates of late sixteenth-century Germany but which were obviously irrelevant to the wildness of the contemporary Irish landscape.

Both map and picture consciousness look dangerously like a historical version of the 'phlogiston' postulated by early students of chemistry. A scientifically-minded historian would prefer people to have some more specific reason for drawing maps than a spontaneously-arising mental state. Nevertheless, once such a reason has presented itself, cartographic habits may certainly spread by a process of psychological transference from one milieu to another — in sixteenth-century England as viewed by Harvey, for example, from military science to the art of statesmanship and thence to the business of property management. (The resemblance between state and estate would be obvious enough even if the English language did not call attention to it.) Here, too, contemporary Ireland tells its own story. In the old English community of the Pale a condition of total map-unconsciousness appears to have prevailed throughout the sixteenth century and beyond. Among the new English of the reconquest, experience in continental Europe or America would seem to have acted as a cartographic stimulus. In seventeenth-century Ireland, more notoriously, it was the government's surveys of confiscated land that inspired the growth of large-scale estate cartography.

In this connection the case of plantation Ireland assumes an added significance for Buisseret's analysis. One reason why some landowners do not commission maps, he tells us (p. 4), may be that maps have already been provided by other agencies and notably by the government. Clearly this argument must be used with care, though we may accept that in many countries the large-scale official surveys of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did eventually displace the private surveyor. Here the *Nebenzahl* writers can appeal (in their updated footnotes if not in their main texts) to Roger Kain and Elizabeth Baigent's remarkably wide-ranging panorama, *The cadastral map in the service of the state* (Chicago, 1992). As it happens, these two authors have little to say about Ireland, where many estate 'surveys' were produced by enlarging, augmenting and redecorating the six-inch Ordnance maps — a point that Buisseret might usefully have found room for on page 23. But in general the comprehensiveness achieved by Kain and Baigent makes one uncomfortably aware of how much research remains to be done on private land surveyors and their work: the truth is that in the 1990s, as in 1988, estate maps are not yet ready for a world-wide historical survey. However, this authoritative and

abundantly illustrated book will do very well to be going on with.

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GROUP STUDY OF IRISH HISTORIC SETTLEMENT

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