

ABSTRACTS

Church and Settlement in Ireland: Landscape, Life and Legacy

A joint conference of **The Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement**
and the **American Conference of Irish Medieval Studies**

27 February–1 March 2015

Rhiannon Carey Bates

Department of History, Trinity College Dublin, Sunday, 1 March, 10:10

'The ecclesiastical landscape of later medieval Ireland: patterns of appointments to dioceses'

The ecclesiastical landscape of later medieval Ireland was blighted by the constant presence of a cultural and national divide. The Lordship status imposed on Ireland was approved by the Papacy, which introduced a conflicted church hierarchy made up of 'two nations'. Episcopal appointments were governed by three main factors: local interests – including those of the chapter, the Papacy, and the English Crown. From at least the thirteenth century it was standard for ecclesiastics to hold high offices within the administrative government. The Crown's policy was to provide loyal English officers with ecclesiastical and secular positions in Ireland which reinforced its authority. As a result, promotions to Irish bishoprics and archbishoprics became a means through which loyal servants could advance their career, regardless of the fact that canon law forbade clerics and bishops from holding secular offices. With these factors in mind, this paper will investigate provisions to Irish Sees, the determining factors at play and the coalescing of the interests of church and state. The paper will also evaluate the differences between the processes of episcopal appointments in Gaelic Irish regions and those in the English controlled areas.

Gill Boazman

Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, Saturday, 28 February, 10:50

'The fruitful marriage: a regional comparison of ecclesiastical and secular settlement in early medieval Ireland'

Although the concept of a close relationship of ecclesiastical and secular spheres has become a basic tenet of studies of early medieval Ireland, detailed analysis of the material manifestation of this is less common. This paper is a comparative consideration of settlement patterns, including all early medieval site-types, in three regional landscapes of Ireland: North Louth, Rathdown, Co. Dublin and Ross, Co. Cork. These are delineated by researched evidence of early medieval boundaries, embedding them in their contemporary context. Emphasis is on the varying nature of ecclesiastical landholding and its meaning for associated settlement. Settlement on ecclesiastical estates, the bounds of which are established from documentary evidence, is compared with settlement on kin-group land. An important theme is a discussion of the benefits to the donors of ecclesiastical land. It is suggested that as well as material gains there were less tangible returns whereby the social identity of insecure polities became predicated on, and projected through, the perceived power of their ecclesiastical foundations.

Anne-Julie Clemence Lafaye

Department of History, Trinity College Dublin, Sunday, 1 March, 9:30

'Mendicant orders in the towns and boroughs of Leinster: economy, urban development and social control'

In this paper I propose to discuss the process of settlement of the mendicant orders and the landscape context of their friaries in Ireland, in relation with the economic and political context of where they settled, with a focus on the towns and boroughs of Leinster. I will attempt to highlight any patterns that can be traced, and see how it might compare to what happened in other regions in Ireland, and elsewhere in Europe. I will also be looking at the location of the friaries within these settlements, at the foundation and development of the friary precincts and how it fitted in with the development of the towns concerned. This will hopefully help to better grasp the extent of the role and impact of the mendicant friaries on the urban landscape of medieval Ireland, in terms of strategies of urban and economic development and political and social control, within the broader context of the orders in medieval Europe. This paper will be based on research undertaken within the IRC funded project 'Monastic Ireland: landscape and settlement': www.tcd.ie/History_of_Art/research/monastic_ireland.php

Tracy Collins

Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, Saturday, 28 February, 16:10

'Isolated in the wilderness? An archaeological exploration of nunneries in the later medieval landscape of Ireland'

There is a popular perception that later medieval nunneries were deliberately located in liminal and isolated locations in the landscape, for protection from the outside world and to confine nuns to their nunneries. This opinion has yet to be critically evaluated for medieval nunneries in Ireland. This paper explores the siting and topography of later medieval nunneries and their relationships with other settlement forms such as towns, villages and other religious houses, to investigate if nunneries were in fact 'isolated in the wilderness'.

David Fleming

Department of History, University of Limerick, Sunday, 1 March, 11:50

'The mass rock and eighteenth-century religious practice: legacies and realities'

The 'mass rock' and 'hedge school' have become synonymous with the 'penal times' of eighteenth-century Ireland, at least in the popular imagination. Since at least the 1960s these physical manifestations or legacies of persecution have been challenged by scholars anxious to re-interpret the reality of the penal laws. But it would seem that the legacy of the mass rock is as compelling and as powerful as it ever was. This paper explores catholic religious practice in eighteenth-century Ireland and re-constructs how the 'mass rock' became such a potent symbol for the penal laws in the popular mind.

Finbar McCormick

Department of Archaeology, Queen's University Belfast, Sunday, 1 March, 12:30

'Eighteenth century Catholic and Presbyterian churches'

A survey of 1731 records the presence of nearly nine hundred mass houses in Ireland. Few, if any, of these survive but it is clear from this survey and a later mid-eighteenth century source that the size and shape of these mass houses varied greatly. When more permanent churches began to be built in the latter decades of the century the "T"-shaped church emerged as one of the popular designs. This form differed radically from pre-reformation churches which in its most basic form was rectangular in shape, with the altar at the eastern short-walled end. More sophisticated forms employed transepts for extra altars and a choir to separate the clergy from the laity. The "T"-shape, which consisted essentially of three aisles facing the altar, is a radical departure from this. It is not a form used in Catholic continental Europe or in newly built Catholic churches in the New World. The form first emerges as a Presbyterian adaption of pre-reformation churches to suit their new liturgy where preaching took precedence over the celebration of communion. This contrasts significantly with Anglican churches where the pre-reformation form of church could be used with minimal change to overall design. It is likely that the Catholic "T"-shaped form and less common Catholic 'long walled' altar layout are direct copies from Presbyterian prototypes.

Paul MacCotter

University College Cork, Saturday, 28 February, 14:40

'Parishes origins in Ireland'

The origin of the parish in Ireland remains a subject in need of elucidation. In recent times the question has divided scholars into two schools, one believing that an entity with parochial features existed before the Anglo-Norman invasion, the second school (rooted firmly in Trinity's department of History) supporting the opposite conclusion. Both approaches have been marked by a high level of theorising and a low level of empirical research. This talk examines the pastoral care system of the early Irish Church and argues that an entity with parochial features emerged from this system in parallel with the development of the basic unit of area and population, the *tuath*, and that this early 'parish' served the population demarcated by the *tuath*. It is argued that parish development along mainstream European lines, while arriving with the Anglo-Normans, was partly built on this earlier *tuath*/parish partnership, whether one chooses to call this unit a pre- or proto-parish or better, *tuath*-parish.

Brian Ó Broin

Department of English, William Patterson University, NJ, Saturday, 28 February, 11:50

'Using aggregative statistical techniques to date Irish Saints' Lives'

Several approaches to dating saints' lives have been proposed, and most have utility. Many scholars, however, still persist in the belief that the lives are discrete unities, created at one moment and almost immediately corrupted through dissemination in multiple recensions. It seems much more likely that each life is a composite, consisting of an early kernel (if, indeed, the life is early) and accretions as the life went into circulation through multiple copies. This paper suggests that the lives can be statistically marked up subsection by subsection using multiple dating techniques and the resulting data analysed to identify the early kernel and later sections. The paper uses one Latin saint's life as an example of the technique and attempts to date it not as a unity but in sections.

Tomás Ó Carragáin,

Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, Saturday, 28 February, 10:10

‘Churches, cemeteries and social power in Early Medieval Ireland: case studies from Laois and Tipperary’

Early medieval churches were expressions of piety, religious and group identity, and places where both mundane interactions and life-changing events took place. In addition, they were places used by local elites for leveraging and maintaining power. They were not unique in this regard. Churches were components within centrifugal constellations of sites at which social power was exercised, constellations that also included other cemeteries, settlements, ritual foci and assembly sites. A landscape perspective is therefore crucial to an understanding of the social significance of early medieval church sites, and of their interactions, not only with the elite but with ordinary people. This paper explores these issues using examples from Laois and Tipperary. It forms part of the Making Christian Landscapes Project, which was funded by the Heritage Council through the INSTAR programme.

Colman Ó Clabaigh

Glenstal Abbey, Saturday, 28 February, 16:50

‘The East Wing: form and function in the eastern ranges of late medieval Irish religious houses’

The ruins of Ireland's abbeys and friaries constitute some of the most iconic remains of the country's medieval built heritage. This paper will supplement the work done on these buildings by archaeologists and art and architectural historians by examining the manner in which liturgy and ritual defined these spaces, particularly those of the east range (the sacristy, armarium, chapter house, calefactory, dormitory and garderobe). Drawing on liturgical ordinals and monastic customs known to have circulated in medieval Ireland, it will endeavour to present how these monastic spaces were conceived and created by their occupants who in turn were shaped by their environment.

Lahney Preston-Matto

Department of English, Adelphi University, NY, Saturday, 28 February, 12:30

‘Are you my brother?: Medieval Irish ecclesiastical fosterage’

Most noble children in Ireland were fostered with a family other than their natal one. They were sent from their home to a completely different location to learn how to become a valuable adult within the society: and, in the case of ecclesiastical fosterage, they might be sent to several different locations, or travel widely with their fosterer. Children, then, take on some of the same roles as relics, carried from one place to another to represent a specific familial identity and authority, while also winning new converts. This paper explores the transportability of children in Ireland, the function of children as representatives of two different *familiae*, and the typical relationship depicted between ecclesiastical foster-parent and child in medieval saint's lives.

James G. Schryver,

Department of History of Art, University of Minnesota, Morris, MN, Saturday, 28 February, 9:30

‘Converting the land of the Irish: Saint Patrick, the Church, and the Irish landscape’

One often reads of the conversion and settlement of the land of Ireland, but what of the land, the actual earth, rock and soil, itself? What role did the purposeful settlement and conversion of specific areas of the Irish landscape play in the conversion of the church and its evolution through the early and late medieval periods? From the very beginning, St Patrick himself seems concerned to note his triumph over the palaces of the pagans at places like Tara and Navan. If we look at these episodes as examples of conversions of place or of landscape as opposed to conversions of people, what different view might this provide of his actions. Continuing forward in time, what might a landscape-centric view of the history of the Church during these periods tell us?

Geraldine Stout

National Monuments Service, Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, Sunday, 1 March, 10:50

‘Monastery to mansion: Tudor conversion of Irish Cistercian abbeys’

In the period after the Acts of Dissolution a great number of former Irish monasteries were converted to domestic use by leading Crown favourites who took advantage of their position to transform cloistral buildings into residential mansions. Amongst the privileged few was the Moore family, originally from Kent, in the south of England, who eventually became the owners of three dissolved Cistercian estates in Ireland, namely Mellifont Abbey, county Louth, Monasterevin, county Kildare and St Mary’s Abbey in Dublin. Sir Osborne Etchingham, an English soldier who had been Marshal of the army in Ireland, and his son Edward converted Dunbrody abbey, County Wexford, into a residence. Whilst, Thomas Agard, Vice-treasurer, between 1538 and 1557 adapted Bective abbey, County Meath into a distinguished fortified house. The reuse of these buildings and the process of adaptation in these case studies from counties Meath, Louth and Wexford combine to present a picture of settlement renewal rather than destruction at these sites.

Catherine Swift

Department of History, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Saturday, 28 February, 14:00

‘Killaloe – royal and ecclesiastical power bases on a merchant’s river’

From the later tenth through to the later twelfth centuries, Killaloe was a major centre of power on the western banks of the Shannon. It was a royal centre but also an episcopal one and as such it appears to have attracted an array of ancillary church sites and communities operating under a number of different structures. Although the combination of royal and ecclesiastical power in the one medieval settlement is a classic feature of European archaeology, this concatenation has not been studied extensively in Ireland although the possibilities of such conjunctions have been alluded to by geographers such as Brian Graham. In another vein, the historian Charles Doherty and, more recently, the numismatist, Michael Kenny and archaeologist John Sheehan, have drawn attention to the role of church communities in facilitating commercial trade. In this paper, I seek to explore the written evidence for the multiple activities and communities located at Killaloe and seek, in so far as possible, to draw out the implications for our understanding of what John Bradley has suggested may be an early example of a native borough from the pre-Norman era.

Marie Taylor

Department of History, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Saturday, 28 February, 15:10

'The Anglo-Norman settlement of county Limerick'

This paper examines the impact of the initial Anglo-Norman arrival in county Limerick and the evidence for the colonisation of Limerick being a three-stage process. The territorial organisation within the framework of the different stages of land grants will be outlined. The impact of feudalism on the territorial organisation of Anglo-Norman rural settlement landscape in county Limerick will be investigated and an analysis given of the subinfeudation process within the framework of the cantred and manor. The simultaneous development of the parochial system and the organisation of the manorial system will be examined. This led to the parish and manor frequently sharing boundaries. At the core of the manor were the juxtaposition of a manorial stronghold and the medieval parish church. Many of these locations developed into nucleated settlements some of which were granted borough status indicating their importance on the Anglo-Norman landscape.

Kevin Whelan

Keough Naughton Notre Dame Centre, Dublin, Friday, 27 February 2012, 20:00

'Church and settlement in Ireland in long-term perspective'

This illustrated lecture will adopt a *Longue Durée* approach look exploring the relationship between the church and settlement history on the island of Ireland from the early Medieval period to the present day. It will emphasise the necessity of incorporating religion into the heart of landscape history. It will also focus on regional patterns and the distinctive geographies of religious expression in the Irish landscape that emerged in the various periods. The lecture will also look at the architectural forms of churches, that emphasised longevity, unbroken continuity and aura. These buildings were experienced as sedimentations of charisma. These theologically – literate churches were a space for the gathered people of God, the *ecclesia*, the *pobal Dé*. Churches also anchored parishes, graveyards and settlements. In the Irish context, The Post-Reformation landscape is profoundly impacted by the Reformation rupture. This in turn is influenced by the great extraversion of Europe away from its Mediterranean inland sea to the Atlantic facade, as Europe gained an internal religious fracture to match its older eastern one where it confronted Islam. Ireland experienced not the Protestant Reformation but an English Protestant Reformation, imposed from outside and above by an intrusive and violent state, and inexorably linked to colonisation. The out-workings of this process created the distinctive trajectory of the Irish religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and shaped the contours of the devotional Revolution and the unusual symbiosis of church and state that emerged in post-imperial Ireland.