

EARLY MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT (EMAP)
Report 3.1

The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP) Project Progress Report 2009



Aidan O'Sullivan & Finbar McCormick
with

Conor McDermott, Robert Sands, Thomas Kerr, Lorcan Harney,
Jonathan Kinsella, Matt Seaver and Robert O'Hara

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Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research
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The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP):

Project Progress Report 2009

By

Aidan O'Sullivan and Finbar McCormick
(EMAP Principal Investigators)

With

Conor McDermott, Robert Sands, Thomas Kerr, Lorcan Harney,
Jonathan Kinsella, Matt Seaver and Robert O'Hara

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1. Introduction

The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP) is an INSTAR-funded research consortium (Heritage Council INSTAR Project Ref: 16703), operating to an established 3-year research project design. EMAP aims to research the evidence from early medieval archaeological excavations in Ireland, publish a series of books and papers and support PhD/MA academic qualifications for professional archaeologists and other researchers. In brief, EMAP's original project design established 3 key aims and 2 main research questions;

- EMAP aims to investigate and analyse the history, character and results of early medieval archaeological excavations in Ireland (1930-2005) to enable new understandings of the landscapes, settlements and economy of early medieval Ireland, AD 400-1100.
- EMAP aims to publish a series of books, peer-reviewed papers and to make available a website with an online database of early medieval sites to help transform unpublished 'data into knowledge' and to support all researchers investigating this iconic period in Ireland's past.
- EMAP aims to establish and promote collaborative research and graduate training links between the university and commercial archaeological sector, with partnerships between UCD School of Archaeology, Scholl of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, QUB; CRDS, ACS, Archer Heritage Ltd., MGL and is linking with state sector archaeological institutions (e.g. National Monuments Section and EHS).

EMAP's two key research questions are:

1) What are the character, scale and range of early medieval archaeological evidence excavated by archaeologists, with particular emphasis on the major period of discovery between 1970-2008?

2) Using excavated early medieval archaeological evidence, can we explore how the peoples of early medieval Ireland used their landscapes, dwellings and material culture to effect and negotiate profound social, ideological and economic changes during the period AD 400-1200?

2. EMAP's Achievements in 2009

EMAP's previous achievements have been outlined in previous project reports, all of which are publicly accessible and can be downloaded at ww.emap.ie. EMAP was re-established in July 2009, following unavoidable delays in establishing INSTAR funding. This report therefore accounts for project progress and key deliverables in the period July-December 2009.

EMAP's original application in November 2008 aimed to progress the project into its second year, with a 12 month work schedule leading to the preparation of a book on early medieval settlement archaeology, to be entitled *Early Medieval Settlements and Dwellings: Archaeological Excavations 1930-2008*. Following a reduction in the overall government funding for the INSTAR programme in Spring 2009, a revised programme of work was requested and submitted in May 2009. This revised work schedule envisaged EMAP staff working on this major work of synthesis; however, EMAP staff would prepare a Gazetteer of Site Summaries with site plans and other images for volume 2, with an intention to complete the volume 1 of text and interpretation in 2010 with further funding. It was also intended to support enrolment by PhD/MA students in year 2 of their graduate studies.

In summary, EMAP's key achievements in 2009 have included the following;

1. Significant progress on all aspects of EMAP data collation, analysis and report writing, as envisaged in the revised schedule of work (discussed in this EMAP Report 3.1)
2. EMAP has worked on a significant work of synthesis, to be entitled ***Early Medieval dwellings and settlements in Ireland, AD 400-1100*** to which end it has completed vol. 2 (site gazetteer), preparatory to writing a vol. 1 text and interpretation in 2010 (presented here as EMAP report 3.2).
3. EMAP's has prepared a second, edited and updated version of its major ***A bibliography of early medieval archaeology in Ireland*** (EMAP report 3.3).
4. EMAP has completely revised the texts and completed edits for a monograph entitled ***Early Medieval Ireland: Archaeological Excavations 1930-2004*** which will be published by the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin in Autumn 2010 (here presented as EMAP report 3.4).
5. EMAP has further supported its **PhD scholarship** for Matt Seaver (CRDS) and its **MA scholarship** Rob O'Hara (Archer Heritage Ltd) (with progress on these studies detailed with this EMAP report 3.1).
6. EMAP staff and scholars have given **public lectures at several international and national conferences** and have also published several **peer-review standard journal papers** (detailed here in EMAP report 3.1).
7. **EMAP database** has been re-designed and updated, preparatory to its online publication as a research resource for the general public and academic scholars.
8. **EMAP website (www.emap.ie)** itself has been maintained and updated to provide a research resource for the general public and academic scholars.

3. EMAP Staff, Meetings and Project Administration

EMAP was re-established in July 2009. Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan (UCD) and Dr. Finbar McCormick (QUB) were the Project Principal Investigators and have directed the project throughout the year.

Mr Conor McDermott (UCD) was the EMAP Project Manager, and has progressed and monitored a Research Account based in UCD Finances. Dr. Rob Sands has supervised ongoing aspects of ICT and website development, particularly the ongoing work of Mikie O'Sullivan. EMAP's project partners in Archer Heritage Ltd (following the departure of MA candidate Rob O'Hara from ACS to Archer Heritage) and CRDS (Steve Mandal, Finola O'Carroll, and PhD candidate Matt Seaver also progressed with graduate studies, both under the supervision of Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan.

In July 2009, the following EMAP research staff appointments were made.

- Mr Lorcan Harney was re-employed as a research archaeologist at UCD School of Archaeology.
- Mr Jonathan Kinsella was employed as a research archaeologist at UCD School of Archaeology.
- Dr Thomas Kerr was re-employed as a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, QUB.

An initial series of email consultations and a meeting between Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan and Dr. Finbar McCormick in June 2009 lead to the re-establishment of EMAP after a 5-month hiatus (due to INSTAR 2009 funding delays).

Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan and Dr. Finbar McCormick previously had a meeting and discussions in January 2009 with Ruth Hegarty of the RIA to progress plans for publication of INSTAR-EMAP's first monograph *Early Medieval Ireland: Archaeological Excavations 1930-2004*.

The first EMAP project 2009 meeting was held in Dublin in mid-July 2009, with a plan of research for 2009 re-established. Meeting attendees were Aidan O'Sullivan (UCD), Thomas Kerr (QUB), Jonathan Kinsella (UCD) and Lorcan Harney (UCD). The meeting reviewed the INSTAR project and established agreements on project research and writing. Further EMAP meetings to monitor and discuss progress were held in Dublin in mid-August, mid-September and early December 2009. Most EMAP communications have been by regular phone calls and email between staff and P.I.s, a deliberate choice as reduced funding prevented travel expenses within the project.

EMAP project staff have also met regularly both within UCD (O'Sullivan, McDermott, Sands, Harney, Kinsella) and QUB (McCormick and Kerr), typically once a week, to discuss ongoing research and report preparation. Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan has had monthly meetings and regular email discussions with Matt Seaver and Rob O'Hara to progress their graduate studies. The EMAP P.I.s have also maintained constant contact with Archer Heritage and CRDS and have established some contacts with other commercial archaeological companies and interested parties, particularly internationally.

4. Early Medieval Dwellings and Settlements in Ireland, AD 400-1100. Vol 2 site gazetteer for a projected 2 volume monograph

- EMAP's main focus in 2009 has involved research and writing towards the completion of a significant work of synthesis, to be entitled **O'Sullivan, A., McCormick, F., Kerr, T., Harney, L. and Kinsella *Early Medieval dwellings and settlements in Ireland, AD 400-1100***, to which end it has completed vol. 2 (site gazetteer), preparatory to writing a vol. 1 text and interpretation in 2010 (vol. 2 presented here as EMAP report 3.2)
- In 2009, EMAP staff worked primarily on Vol. 2., to be submitted as a report to INSTAR. This gazetteer volume now comprises c.250 Site Summaries. Each site summary (see Appendix 2 below) provides key information in concise form, including the **Site name and County**; the **Type** of site (e.g. 'Early Medieval Settlement Enclosure') the **National Grid Reference**, the **SMR No.**, the **Excavation Licence No.**, the **Excavation Duration/Year** (months and years when the excavation was carried out) and finally the **Site Director**, which information is usually but not always linked to the Licence itself. The site summary then provides a concise, focused site description providing information on location, site dimensions, phasing and general chronology, site activities implied by various features and finds. All available radiocarbon dates are then provided, in raw and calibrated form, in a table (a key resource for all researchers), before a bibliography of previous publications or unpublished reports is listed. Both previously published sites (e.g. Garranes, Co. Cork) and unpublished sites (e.g. Aghadegan, Co. Longford) are given, when the director has given permission for the reports to be consulted.
- EMAP's research methodology towards the completion of Vol. 2 draft progressed in this fashion;

- July 2009: EMAP team established a list of what they regarded as the key early medieval settlements and dwellings to be summarised for Vol. 2, largely based on a detailed review of the original EMAP database for 1930-2004 and a review of additional publications, reports and the personal knowledge or previous research of EMAP members (e.g. Kerr on Ulster, Kinsella on NRA schemes, O'Sullivan on crannogs, etc). EMAP staff were then allocated responsibilities for preparation of each site summary, largely on a county-by-county basis to maximise efficiency and production of reports. Thomas Kerr in QUB acted as co-ordinator of the preparation of site summaries, ensuring close version control (e.g. top copies) and adherence to timetables.
- July-August 2009: EMAP staff researched early medieval dwellings and settlements in previous published sources (journals, books, etc) and identified likely unpublished reports held in National Monuments Service, DoEHLG and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Contacts were made with staff of DoEHLG and NIEA to arrange to review these, with particular support from Mr Ed Bourke of NMS and staff in NIEA.
- August-October 2009: EMAP staff gathered reports in PDF formats from NMS, from several archaeological companies and from individual site directors. EMAP staff also contacted individual site directors and companies by email, letter and phone to request permission to read unpublished reports in NMS/NIEA to seek permissions to use reports in EMAP's research. It is striking that despite a severe economic downturn, site directors and companies were enormously supportive of the project and all site directors contacted gave full permissions to consult the reports. In a few cases, it was impossible to contact site directors (due to staff redundancies in many companies). Occasionally, the only resource that could be utilised were the brief summaries given in Excavations.ie
- July-September 2009: EMAP staff drafted Site Summaries and have completed c.250 examples. These then required editing. Site plans, cross sections and other key illustrations were scanned from books, papers and unpublished reports and inserted in relevant locations in the Gazetteer.
- This Gazetteer of Early Medieval Settlements is already a substantial and very valuable research report and has been a significant update and ambitious expansion of the existing EMAP research on early medieval excavations in Ireland. It itself, it could be regarded as a significant research resource – such a task has never been attempted for early medieval Ireland before (and equally for other periods with less archaeological evidence or data). It has now been prepared to advanced draft standard for submission to INSTAR in December 2009, but it is envisaged that with further funding it can be edited and brought to publication standard by December 2010.
- Finally, the Gazetteer of Early Medieval Settlements should be regarded as the first step in a major research programme. In 2010, if funding can be secured, EMAP will progress with the writing of a synthesis of the archaeology of early medieval settlement in Ireland. As can be seen from Appendix 1 below, this would aim to produce a 2 vol. publication (text and gazetteer) work that discusses the physical character, social organisation and chronology of settlement and dwelling practices in Ireland, in their European contexts. This could be regarded as key contribution by EMAP to our understanding of early medieval society in Ireland and beyond.

5. Bibliography of Early Medieval Archaeology in Ireland: Version 2

- EMAP's *Bibliography of early medieval archaeology in Ireland version 1* has already established itself as a major research, teaching and publication resource for Irish and international researchers, the academic and commercial community and the general public. It is available online at emap.ie and has already been extensively used by Irish and international archaeological community (with lecturers in several Irish Universities informing us that they use it in teaching; while Irish and British university PhD and MA and even BA students use it for term papers, chapters and undergraduate essays and projects).
- EMAP staff worked in Sept.-November 2009 to prepare a major revision of this, for the completion of a *Bibliography of early medieval archaeology in Ireland version 2*. This is a significant updating and re-editing of the previous version 1, including publications since and also a range of publications and reports that are included in the Site Gazetteer above.
- To complete this, EMAP staff has searched through a wide range of Irish and international journals, books, edited book and other publications, to extract relevant early medieval material.
- This EMAP bibliography currently comprises c.5,000 bibliographical entries. This will be made available online on emap.ie

6. Early Medieval Ireland: Archaeological Excavations 1930-2004 (Royal Irish Academy, 2010)

- EMAP staff completed in 2008 the major report; **O'Sullivan, A., McCormick, F., Kerr, T. and Harney, L. 2008 *Early Medieval Ireland: Archaeological Excavations 1930-2004***. This report was a substantial document and is available to download at emap.ie
- In Spring 2008, Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan and Dr. Finbar McCormick had a series of email contacts and a meeting with Ruth Hegarty, Senior Editor RIA, to agree on the submission of this report to the Royal Irish Academy for publication as a monograph.
- Between April-September 2009, Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan and Dr. Finbar McCormick have extensively re-written and edited this report, with assistance from Dr. Kerr and Mr Harney. The report is imminently ready for submission to the RIA with chapters on Early Medieval Settlement; Early Medieval Agriculture; Early Medieval Trade and Exchange; Early Medieval Crafts and Technology and the Early Medieval church and Early Medieval death and burial. The RIA recently announced the Autumn 2010 publication of this significant publication in their Books catalogue.

7. EMAP's Website/Early Medieval Archaeology Portal

EMAP's dedicated website (www.emap.ie) was put in place in August 2008 and has been developed since. The web site will be used for academic and public dissemination and as a future on-line repository for reports, bibliographies and data. However, the website emap.ie is ultimately intended to be more than just a web site and as part of the broader EMAP aims for 2009/2010, it will be developed as an **Early Medieval Archaeology Portal**, with this core set of aims:

- To identify, store and link to early medieval archaeological data and information currently contained in existing digital and paper archives.
- To gather and store sufficient data to allow these various resources to be more easily identified, collated and enumerated.
- To facilitate domain experts (i.e. EMAP researchers, other Irish archaeologists) in adding value to existing data.
- To identify and classify a wide range of bibliographic information (e.g. the EMAP bibliography) as an online resource
- To create a central digital hub for Early Medieval Research in Ireland.
- To enable dissemination to other researchers and interested members of the public.
- To establish mutually beneficial linkages with other major data sources in Irish archaeology (e.g. Archaeology.ie, Excavations.ie)

Phase 1 of the on-line manifestation of EMAP has been successfully implemented, a web site has been designed and domain name secured. An on-line database structure has been developed and on-line interfaces produced to allow multiple researchers to accumulate and add value to structured data.

Phase 2 work in 2009 has continued, albeit at a scaled down level due to funding cutbacks. The Phase 2 work has been done by Mikie O'Sullivan, a PHP and MySQL developer. The data model has been further reworked and new interface elements developed. Much of the effort has been focused on developing the backend structures to take the data in the light of the most recent work on the project. Beta testing has been undertaken on the base data already collected with some success. Broader issues of compatibility with other projects need to be assessed in the longer term but the approach taken has been to rationalise the basic data collected and to facilitate easier access to reports and bibliographic information that has already be collated within the bounds of the project. In many respects, the varied nature and broad vision of the project has made establishing precise requirements for the overall portal a challenge that has not yet been fully resolved, and our developer has done an excellent job of interpreting a very broad brief. However, this is the inevitable result of work in progress and the focus of the latest stage of EMAP funding toward publication has forced a greater clarity on longer-term requirements of any online presence. The output of this phase of the project will be crucial in taking the current prototype to the next level.

8. PhD and MA studies supported by INSTAR EMAP

INSTAR EMAP, working in partnership with two Irish archaeological companies is supporting graduate level qualifications for two high experienced site directors; Mr Matt Seaver MA and Mr Rob O'Hara, BA.

PhD Scholarship: Matt Seaver (CRDS Ltd)

Matt Seaver (CRDS) has already completed one year, and is now in his second year, of his PhD in UCD School of Archaeology on the subject of *Living with the dead: Early Medieval Cemetery/Settlements; ritual, role and landscape setting*. EMAP provided a buyout of CRDS company time to allow him to participate in the research and to be part of the project team. While INSTAR funding was allocated on a yearly basis it did not coincide with the academic year. Despite this it was possible to divide the funding into blocks and allocate it for the academic years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. EMAP INSTAR funds were used in 2009 to support CRDS to release him for his studies in the academic year 2009/2010.

It is well-known that the boom in early medieval excavation has led to the discovery of a complex range of Early Medieval sites incorporating both settlements and burials which had no previous archaeological trace above ground or known historical tradition. They do not have clearly identifiable church buildings and have a range of differing biographies and time spans. This PhD aims to investigate bounded early medieval settlements that contain burials that have been referred to by a range of commentators as *cemetery settlements* or *secular cemeteries*. This is one form of burial site, which has emerged into sharp focus during excavations resulting from development in the recent 'Celtic Tiger' period. There are many questions about how these sites worked in early medieval Ireland.

This research began in the summer of 2008, when discussions took place between the Early Medieval Archaeology Project and CRDS Ltd. to allow Matthew Seaver to undertake doctoral research as part of the overall programme. Mr Seaver made a PhD proposal that was considered and accepted by the academic council within the College of Arts and Celtic Studies, University College, Dublin to investigate the topic 'Living with the Dead in Early Medieval Ireland'. Registration in University College, Dublin took place in September 2008 with Aidan O'Sullivan as my supervisor. EMAP made contact with the Mapping Death Project in UCD School of History and Archives and Dr. Elva Johnston and Dr. Betty O'Brien have generously agreed to be on Mr Seaver's DSP (Doctoral Supervisory Panel), along with Dr. O'Sullivan and Prof. Gabriel Cooney.

Matt Seaver has already spent the last three years writing the site report and publications connected with excavations at Raystown, County Meath. This site, a complex cemetery and settlement, is central to the topic and the leap into taking this further has only been possible through EMAP. Mr Seaver's research will build on excavations at Raystown, County Meath and would look at the similarities and differences in biography, faunal assemblages, palaeoenvironmental data, landscape setting, regional roles of a range of different sites focussing on a number of study areas.

Matt Seaver has completed a large programme of background research and has submitted a co-authored article (with Aidan O'Sullivan) for publication in *Medieval Archaeology* (see publications below) and has now completed the first chapter of the doctoral study. This comprised a full literature review of the research topic along with a table of known sites, which meet the criteria of the study. He is currently working on compiling the comprehensive catalogue on each of the 35 sites examined to date. This will entail contacting all of the excavators and using preliminary and final reports to allow comparison of sites, including reports and data compiled by EMAP in 2009. It is aimed to complete this within the current academic year, 2009/2010.

Matt Seaver presented academic papers at the 'Mapping Death' conference in November 2009 and will also contribute to EMASS (Early Medieval Archaeological Student Symposium) which will take place in UCD, Dublin in 2010.

The remaining nine-ten chapters will be written subsequently. It was originally aimed to complete the overall doctoral study within a four-year period, as it is a part-time registration. The first three years of this programme were to be funded through the EMAP project. The overall research has also allowed focus during the publication period for Raystown, County Meath that will be published in 2010 as part of the National Roads Authority publication programme. While the EMAP work is a separate project it has allowed a comprehensive set of data to be gathered which will assist in the publication of this important site.

Matt Seaver is pleased to acknowledge that the EMAP team have been highly supportive of my work to date and there is considerable exchange of information between all members. Being part of EMAP allows greater access to the body of excavated evidence given that they have

already made many connections through the initial assessment of sites. It is his hope that funding would allow the continuation of his involvement with EMAP for an additional year. This would provide me with the springboard to complete the doctoral work and publish the results as an EMAP/INSTAR publication.

MA Scholarship: Rob O'Hara (Archer Heritage Ltd)

Rob O'Hara (Archer Heritage) will be completing in the academic year 2009/2010, the second and last year in his 2-year, part-time, MA in Archaeology at UCD School of Archaeology. In September 2009, Rob O'Hara re-enrolled in the 2-year, part-time, MA in Professional Archaeological Practice at UCD School of Archaeology. EMAP INSTAR funds were used to support Archer Heritage Planning to release him for his studies in 2009/2010, following his departure from ACS Ltd.

Mr O'Hara has completed in 2008/2009 a series of taught modules and will now be progressing to writing an MA thesis in 2009/2010. It is likely that his MA dissertation will be on an aspect of an early medieval sites or complex that he has excavated, possibly the Early Medieval settlement and landscape at Colp West, Co. Meath, although this has not been finalised. EMAP INSTAR funds were used support Archer Heritage Planning to release him for his studies in 2009/2010 to complete his MA.

The main objective of the UCD MA is to provide professionals based in Ireland with an opportunity to develop their skill-base and practical skills in a structured and formal context. During 2008/2009, he partook of the following modules (and achieved *outstanding* academic results):

- ARCH 40020 Advanced archaeological fieldwork (Grade A-/Credits 10)
- ARCH 40060 Archiving and recording (Grade A-/ Credits 5)
- ARCH 40110 Fieldwork training methods (Grade A-/ Credits 2.5)
- ARCH 40120 Archaeology and the media (Grade A/ Credits 2.5)
- ARCH 40320 ICT for Archaeologists (Grade A-/ Credits 5)

The courses ARCH 40110 Fieldwork training methods and ARCH 40020 Advanced archaeological fieldwork enabled him to enhance existing skills and introduced him to other skills which he has not carried out regularly in a professional capacity. ARCH 40320 ICT for Archaeologists covered a number of computer programs which he had used professionally, but also to other programs with which he had no familiarity (particularly Microsoft Access and Photoshop), and the course was extremely useful in this respect. Subsequent to taking this module, he was engaged in a professional capacity to compile a database of archaeological sites for a Dublin Local Authority, and his knowledge of Access from the ICT course was of huge benefit to the completion of that database.

ARCH 40120 Archaeology and the Media introduced current media debates in relation to high profile archaeological projects such as the N25 Waterford Bypass, the M3 motorway and the proposed port development at Bremore. The course underlined the manner in which media deal with archaeology, their methods of fact collection and the importance of having a strategy for dissemination of information to media on high profile projects to avoid the 'Chinese Whispers' which can be put out by various interest groups.

ARCH 40060 Archiving and recording dealt with the proposed setting up of a central archive repository and the debates and implications surrounding it. Project work included providing a suitably structured archive for an excavation he had undertaken, which met the standards of the Dublin City Archaeological Archive of Dublin City Council.

In September 2009, Rob O'Hara enrolled in the 2nd year of the MA and EMAP INSTAR funds were used to support Archer Heritage Planning to release me for my studies in 2009/2010. In Year 2, he is taking the following modules:

- Extended Essay
- Archaeological Project Management
- Research & Thesis Skills
- Dissertation

Archaeological Project Management has introduced him to the research and academic side of archaeological project management, which is significantly different from project management in the commercial sector. Project material has included an introduction to archaeological research grant applications and the structuring and production of data structure reports. This is not an area where he had previous specific training, and this course has provided a background to his professional experience.

For his Extended Essay he is studying the Mesolithic-Neolithic Transition. He has benefited from the opportunity to read extensively on an important area of archaeological research, on a period in which he had little professional experience. This course has given a greater balance to his archaeological knowledge base, which in recent years has been exclusively in the medieval period.

Mr O'Hara's academic studies will continue in 2009/2010, to include an MA dissertation on an aspect of an early medieval site or complex that he has excavated. He has a number of options available to him and he has not yet decided the final MA topic. One potential contender is a paper dealing with a series of early medieval excavations, undertaken by himself and others, at Colp Co. Meath.

In conclusion, INSTAR EMAP funds have been hugely supportive of Rob O'Hara's career training and progression and it is an excellent example of commercial/academic archaeological collaboration, as called for in the original INSTAR literature.

MA in Archaeology dissertations completed using EMAP reports and data in 2009

EMAP's reports and data were also used by several MA in Archaeology students in UCD School of Archaeology as the basis for their original theses submitted in August 2009. In several cases, EMAP data provided the background data or interpretive approaches to further advance particular subjects, including Niamh Arthur's 'The enigma of the Viking longphort: a landscape archaeological perspective'; Sian Powderley's "Norse rural settlement in Ireland and its North Atlantic context" and Graham Harkness' "Identifying ethnicity in archaeology: a case study of Anglo-Saxon communities in Ireland". Any postgraduate students anywhere in the world is welcome to use EMAP's reports, bibliographies and data reports in their studies.

9. Public lectures and publications

Public lectures

EMAP team members have given a total of seven public lectures in 2009, all of which acknowledged the support of INSTAR and prominently displayed the Heritage Council logo on the opening PowerPoint slide.

*Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP) Report 3.1:
Report on Progress for 2009*

- Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan presented an invited paper entitled 'The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP) and Investigating Archaeological Excavations in Ireland, 1930–2004' at the *Archaeology of Early Medieval Wales in context conference organised by the Early Medieval Wales Archaeology Research Group 25th Anniversary Colloquium*, University of Bangor, Wales 25-26 April 2009.
- Dr. Finbar McCormick presented an invited paper on 'Faunal changes and economic change in early medieval Ireland, at the *Archaeology of Early Medieval Wales in context conference organised by the Early Medieval Wales Archaeology Research Group 25th Anniversary Colloquium*, University of Bangor, Wales, 25-26 April 2009.
- Lorcan Harney presented a paper entitled 'The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP): Investigating Dwelling and Settlement Archaeological Excavations, 1930-2008' at the *Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI) Current Research in Irish Archaeology* conference at Cork, 6-7 November 2009
- Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan and Jonathan Kinsella presented an invited paper entitled 'Living with a sacred landscape: Interpreting the early medieval archaeology of the Hill of Tara and its Environs' at the *Tara Symposium* at UCD 23-26 October 2009.
- Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan presented an invited paper entitled 'The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP): Some brief comments on archaeological excavations 1930-2008' at the *Mapping Death: People, Boundaries and Territories in Ireland 1st to 8th centuries AD conference* at the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Dublin 27-28 November 2009.
- Matt Seaver presented an invited paper entitled 'Living with the Dead: Some preliminary observations on settlement/cemeteries in Early Medieval Ireland' at the *Mapping Death: People, Boundaries and Territories in Ireland 1st to 8th centuries AD conference* Dublin 27-28 November 2009.
- Dr. Aidan O'Sullivan, Lorcan Harney and Jonathan Kinsella will present a paper entitled 'The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP): Digging into the data from early medieval excavations' at UCD School of Archaeology 2009 Research Seminar; *Culture, Environment and Change*, 10th December 2009

Publications

EMAP team members have published or completed the texts for a total of 2 books and 16 academic papers in 2009. These publications are either based on EMAP team members' own previous research, if completed prior to INSTAR funding, or are directly based on the work of EMAP during 2009. Some of the publications listed below were originally submitted to journals before INSTAR funding was secured, however as outlined below several forthcoming publications completed since will be clearly flagged as having been supported by the Heritage Council INSTAR EMAP research programme.

- Harney, L (2010) 'Pilgrimage, cross-slabs and the archaeology of medieval Glendalough, in L. Doran, C. Doherty and m. Kelly (eds) *The archaeology and history of Glendalough* (with acknowledgements to INSTAR).
- Kerr, T. R. (2009) The height of fashion - the distribution of platform raths in Northwest Ulster; (*Journal of Irish Archaeology*).

- Kerr, T. R. (ed.) (2008) *The Archaeology of Early Christianity in the North of Ireland* (Ann Hamlin). (BAR 460).
- Kerr, T. R., Swindles, G., & Plunkett, G. (2009). Making Hay while the Sun Shines? Socio-economic change, Cereal Production and Climatic Deterioration in Early Medieval Ireland. *Journal of Archaeological Science* (36), 2868-2874.
- Kinsella, J. (2010) 'A new Irish early medieval site type? Exploring the 'recent' archaeological evidence for non-circular enclosed settlement and burial sites' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (with acknowledgements to INSTAR).
- Linnane, S.J. and Kinsella, J., (2009) Military lords and defensive beginnings: a preliminary assessment of the social role of an impressive rath at Baronstown. In M.B. Deevy and D. Murphy (eds) *Places along the way: First findings on the M3*. NRA Monographs No. 5, Bray. 101-122.
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10. Conclusions

In conclusion, the Heritage Council INSTAR Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP) has in only 5 months (July-November 2009);

1. Brought to publication standard a monograph on early medieval archaeological excavation in Ireland, 1930-2004, to be published by the RIA in Autumn 2010.
2. Compiled a site gazetteer of early medieval settlement excavations further to the preparation of a second monograph, also to be submitted to the RIA.
3. Published or brought to submission standard a total of 16 academic papers, including several that will explicitly acknowledge the support of the INSTAR programme.
4. Prepared the largest bibliography of early medieval archaeology in Ireland ever prepared (5,000 references), thus creating a unique resource for all future research in this field.
5. Given 7 public and academic lectures.
6. Supported 2 PhD/MA students in their studies and provided resources for other postgraduate students in Ireland.

We propose that INSTAR EMAP has already made a highly significant contribution to our knowledge and understanding of this fascinating period in Ireland's past and with funding support in 2010 could significantly demonstrate the efficacy, impact and success of the INSTAR programme.

Appendix 1: Proposed Publication outline of *Early Medieval Dwellings and Settlements in Ireland, AD 400-1100*

Vol. 1 text and discussion to be written by December 2010;

Vol. 2 Gazetteer of Site Descriptions now completed for December 2009 (see EMAP Report 3.2 for site descriptions, tables of data, site plans and c14 dates and bibliographies

Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction
Aims and objectives of research
Recent trends in settlement and landscape archaeology
Early medieval settlement archaeology in northwest Europe: approaches and frameworks
Early medieval settlement archaeology in Britain and Ireland
EMAP and researching early medieval settlement excavations in Ireland, 1930-2009
Cultural, Geographical and chronological issues
Methodologies and theoretical approaches

Chapter 2. History of early medieval settlement archaeology in Ireland

Introduction
Earliest antiquarian excavations in 19th century
Impact of Harvard Archaeological Expedition, 1930s
Seán Ó Ríordáin's and Michael J. O'Kelly's excavations of early medieval settlements
Archaeological excavations in Northern Ireland, 1940s-1950s
Urban Archaeology and the discovery of Norse towns, 1980-2004
The 'Celtic Tiger' boom and early medieval settlement excavations, 1990-2009
The unpublished resource – what data do we have for early medieval settlement?

Chapter 3: Early medieval houses and households: the archaeology of buildings

Introduction
Houses and society: anthropological, archaeological and historical perspectives
Early medieval houses and buildings: materials, building practices and architecture
Early Medieval houses: character, form and dimensions
Temporality and cultural biographies of houses, chronology and change
Location, siting, contexts
Hearths, occupation floors, beds and other furnishings
Living, working and sleeping: artefactual and palaeoenvironmental evidence from houses
Ethnicity and architecture: 'Irish', Anglo-Saxon, Scottish and Norse building traditions
The use and ordering of space within houses and buildings
The collapse and abandonment of houses

Chapter 4: Early medieval settlements and dwelling spaces

Introduction
Early medieval dwelling enclosures: definitions and variable forms
Boundaries: Ditches, banks, walls and palisades
Farmyards, cobbling, pits, pathways and external hearths
Cultural biography of enclosures – dynamically changing spaces
Unenclosed settlements – shell middens, caves, houses in field systems
The emergence of unenclosed settlement in the early medieval period
Early medieval towns: questions of enclosure, dwellings and development

Chapter 5: Early medieval nucleated settlement and the emergence of towns

Introduction

The debate on the early medieval monastic town

The early medieval monastic enclosure, streets, pathways and industrial areas

Hiberno-Norse towns in Ireland: origins, location, siting and key characteristics

Hiberno-Norse: the physical layout and spatial organisation

Hiberno-Norse: streets, houses and plot boundaries

Hiberno-Norse: diet, economy and craft production

Ethnicity, gender and social identities in nucleated settlements

Future research agendas in urban archaeology

Do we have other nucleated settlements?

Chapter 6: Crafts, economy and industry on settlements

Introduction

Domestic life and work: archaeology, artefactual and palaeoenvironmental evidence

Crafts and industry: the rural and urban settlement contexts and evidence

Trade and exchange and the wider settlement world

Future research agendas

Chapter 7: Early medieval regional landscapes of settlement: continuities and transformations

Introduction

Social, economic and ideological organisation of settlement landscapes

Power, social hierarchy, centrality and marginality in the settlement landscape

Topographies, localities, territories and boundaries

Regional and local case studies (e.g. NW Ulster, E. Ireland, Midlands, West coast)

The early medieval settlement landscape in Ireland, across time AD 400-1100

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Future Research Agendas in early medieval settlement archaeology in Ireland, in its northwest European context

Vol. 2: Gazetteer of significant early medieval settlement excavations in Ireland, 1930-2009

Appendix 2: Example of a Site Gazetteer entry in proposed *Early Medieval Dwellings and Settlements in Ireland, AD 400-1100* publication (see EMAP report 3.2)

Aghadegnan, Co. Longford

Early Medieval Settlement Enclosure.

Grid Ref: **N13387688 (21338/27688)**

SMR No: **LF013-013**

Excavation Licence: **91E0055; 93E0048**

Excavation Duration/Year: **February – August 1991; April – June 1993.**

Site Director: **J. Carroll (J. Carroll & Co.).**

The site consisted of a large earthwork (61m in external diameter) set on a natural hillock in a boggy hinterland. Almost the whole of the area to be destroyed by the construction of a by-pass was archaeologically excavated, although the archaeological features in the interior of the enclosure had been severely damaged by later potato cultivation.

Excavation revealed a number of phases of enclosure on the site. The earliest phase included a roundhouse, defined by a double arc of post-holes (although these probably represent consecutive phases of single-post-built roundhouses). A radiocarbon date from this structure suggests an occupation date in the fourth to sixth century. This building was cut by a trench, approximately 0.90m in depth. This trench also cut through a clay horizon which sealed a small circular post-built structure, about 2.20m in diameter, which was interpreted as an animal pen. The trench enclosed an area similar in size to that formed by the earthwork, and stratigraphically pre-dated it. Radiocarbon dates supported this conclusion (see below). Patches of packing stones and re-deposited clays were interpreted as representing the post-holes for a wooden palisade associated with this trench.

The palisade-trench was later in-filled, but prior to the construction of the bank-and-ditched enclosure there appears to have been some iron-working activity on site. A series of post-holes outlined a circular structure which was associated with charcoal spreads, and may represent a workshop; and charcoal and iron slag were found in the upper fill of the earlier palisade trench. Radiocarbon dates from these contexts (see below) suggest a late-fifth/early-sixth century date for this phase of occupation. There is also evidence, in the form of a possible 'ore-roasting pit', charcoal and slag, for iron-working being carried on in the interior of the later banked-and-ditched enclosure.

There are no definite dates for the construction of the banked-and-ditched enclosure, although radiocarbon dates from bone under the bank, and wood from the ditch give some idea of its occupation (see below). Excavation revealed the ditch to be around 6.00m wide at the top, and, on average 1.60m deep. Although over 500 post-holes were discovered on site, no internal structures can be definitively associated with this phase on occupation. There was evidence for a roundhouse in the interior (approximately 5.60m in internal diameter) which may have been rebuilt at least once, but this structure could equally have been associated with the unenclosed settlement which existed pre-palisade trench.

A waterlogged area of the enclosure ditch revealed the evidence for wooden slats (one of which was radiocarbon dated to the seventh/eighth century), which may have functioned as a lining for the ditch, but series of stone-packed post-emplacements found in the ditch suggest that a more substantial feature, such as a revetment or fence may have been present.

Only a few finds were recovered from the site. A fragment of a cross-engraved stone was found in the lower layers of the bank (which would have been obtained from the upper layer of the ditch cut), and a possible iron-headed pin was found in a similar context in another cutting.

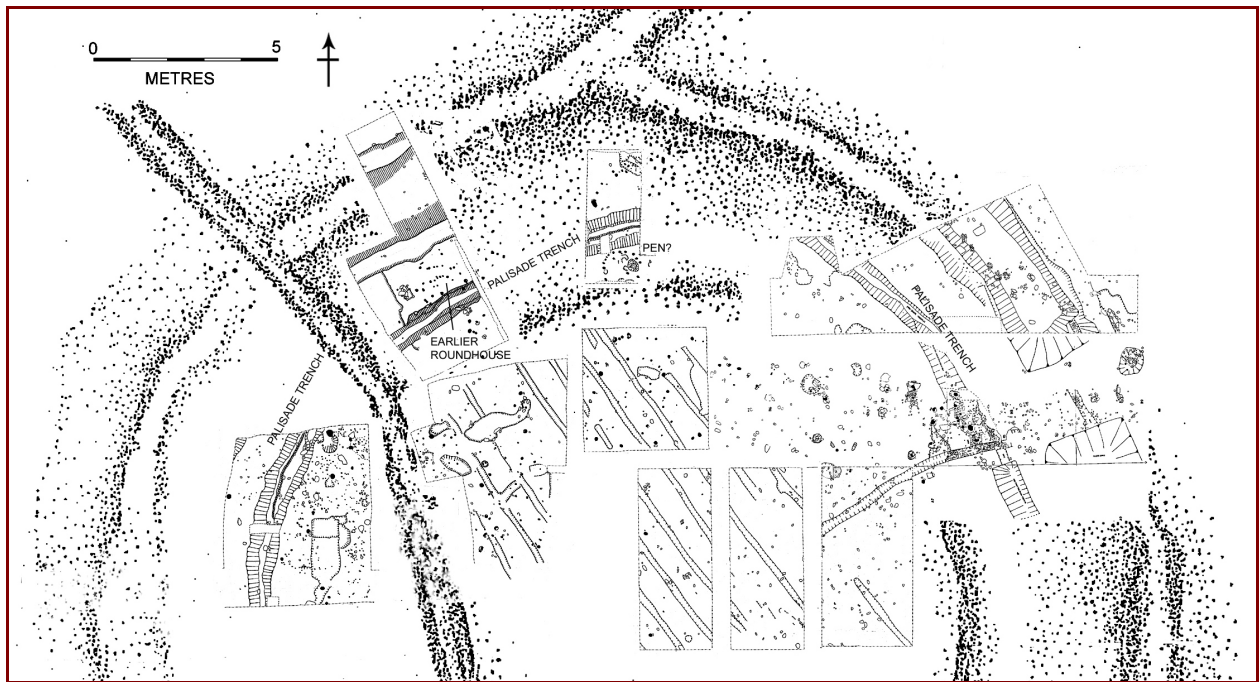


Fig. 1: Excavated areas at Aghadegnan, Co. Longford (after Carroll 1991 & 1993)

Radiocarbon Dates:

(PJ Reimer, MGL Baillie, E Bard, A Bayliss, JW Beck, C Bertrand, PG Blackwell, CE Buck, G Burr, KB Cutler, PE Damon, RL Edwards, RG Fairbanks, M Friedrich, TP Guilderson, KA Hughen, B Kromer, FG McCormac, S Manning, C Bronk Ramsey, RW Reimer, S Remmele, JR Southon, M Stuiver, S Talamo, FW Taylor, J van der Plicht, and CE Weyhenmeyer (2004), *Radiocarbon* 46:1029-1058).

Sample No.	Context	¹⁴ C Date	Cal. 2 Σ
UB-3451	Bone from basal layer of bank	1421 \pm 32 BP	A.D. 577-661.
UB-3452	Charcoal from iron working in enclosure interior	1073 \pm 45 BP	A.D. 877-1033.
UB-3453	Charcoal from post-hole in enclosure interior	516 \pm 32 BP	A.D. 1324-1345; A.D. 1393-1444.
UB-3454	Charcoal from iron-working area on top of palisade trench fill	1551 \pm 33 BP	A.D. 425-580.
UB-3455	Charcoal from burning near iron-working area on top of palisade trench fill	1475 \pm 21 BP	A.D. 552-637.
UB-3456	Charcoal at ditch edge	1289 \pm 32 BP	A.D. 659-778.
UB-3458	Wooden slat from ditch 'revetment'	1270 \pm 21 BP	A.D. 676-776.
UB-3459	Charcoal from iron-working area on top of palisade trench fill	1552 \pm 49 BP	A.D. 410-606.
UB-3461	Charcoal from house cut by palisade trench	1597 \pm 71 BP	A.D. 259-285; A.D. 288-292; A.D. 322-607.
UB-3468	Bone from base of	1191 \pm 30 BP	A.D. 720-741;

	ditch		A.D. 769-897; A.D. 922-943.
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Appendix 3: EMAP Research Portal and ICT Developments

By
Mikie O'Sullivan and Robert Sands

Summary:

This is a report detailing the work done on the EMAP Research Portal as well as the work left to do. It provides detailed information about what each section is for and how it works.

Content:

The research portal is in the advanced stages of the development, the work currently being performed includes the reassessment of requirements and modification of the system to meet them. The main components of the system are all but complete having only a number minor adjustments required before usage can begin. This report will detail the work complete as well as including images of the site presentation.

emap
EARLY MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

Search
Site Map

Home | About EMAP | Reports | News | Wiki

Login:
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Password:

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News:
[EMAP.ie New](#)
[Website is Live](#)

Introduction

The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP) is an INSTAR-funded research consortium investigating and analysing the history and character of archaeological excavations of early medieval sites in Ireland, with the aim of creating new understandings of the societies, landscapes and settlements of the peoples of Ireland, AD 400-1170.

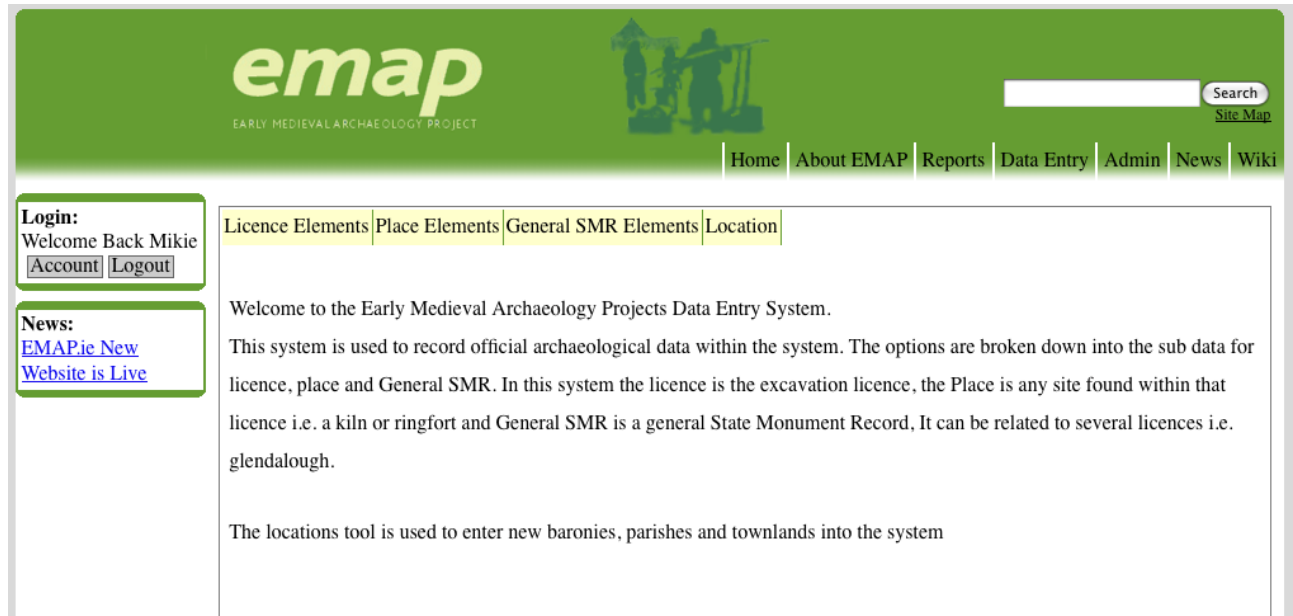
EMAP has established collaborative links between the academic and commercial archaeological sector, with partnerships between UCD School of Archaeology; School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queens University Belfast; CRDS and ACS, as well as other collaborators.

EMAP is a proposed 3-year research project, aiming to publish a series of significant thematic reports, 2008-2010 and support PhD/MA academic qualifications for staff of two commercial archaeological companies.

This project is supported by the Heritage Council under the Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research (INSTAR) Programme 2008
EMAP Web Site Designed by Mikie O'Sullivan and Maintained by UCD School of Archaeology


An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

The main feature of the system is the data management tools. The data entry tool has its own interface, separating it from the rest of the site. It provides a web based interface to anyone with the correct permissions to enter data into the system, it is designed to be convenient allowing multiple researchers to have instant access to the data and maintains data integrity through the use of a single data store.




This is the core purpose of this application as it generates the data for any reporting. Each data entry is handled independently allowing the interface to be tweaked to provide the best user experience by creating simple to use menus and options. All these User Interfaces (UIs) still need final adjustments and improvements, based on beta testing and user feedback, before they are fully complete.

As well as the data entry tool, data management also includes the presentation of data. This still isn't complete, however a basic interface is provided to allow data access. These interfaces will be improved once the data structure has been absolutely finalized. Below is an example of the current data presentation. The sample shows a Place within the system, it should be noted that the word Place is used to describe a site within the system. Also visible in this example are some action buttons at the end of the page. The system is design to adjust depending who is accessing it. All options are presented inline as seen below but only to those logged in with the correct permissions. If an anonymous user were to view this page they would see no action buttons at all.



EARLY MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT



[Search](#)
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[Home](#) | [About EMAP](#) | [Reports](#) | [Data Entry](#) | [Admin](#) | [News](#) | [Wiki](#)

Login:
Welcome Back Mikie
[Account](#) [Logout](#)

News:
[EMAP.ie New Website is Live](#)

Related Licence: 00E0477
Place Name: Balgatheran 1

Description:

Monitoring was conducted in four phases along a stretch of the proposed M1 road from Gormanston, Meath to Monasterboice, Louth. This stretch of road bypassed Drogheda. It was reported in four different reports under the same license (00E0282). Monitoring in 2000 was conducted in two phases and focused on the area between Tullyallen-Sheephouse. Monitoring in 2001 was conducted in two phases and covered the whole area from Gormanston-Monasterboice. Monitoring revealed this site (Balgatheran 1) in advance of the construction of the Northern motorway, north of Drogheda. Monitoring was undertaken by Kieran Campbell. Rescue excavation in 2000 00E0477 revealed a number of prehistoric pits and post holes containing charcoal and burnt bone. The early medieval period witnessed the most intensive settlement in the form of a kiln, two large boundary ditches, possible house foundation trench, petal shaped field and possible industrial structure. The site consisted of a large outer enclosing ditch 70m in diameter. Another L-shaped internal ditch may have originally operated as an internal enclosure or form of boundary division. The ditch and two terminals revealed a large quantity of burnt bone, iron slag, flints and a shattered rotary quernstone. A stone-lined hearth, blue glass bead and quartz crystal was also discovered inside the ditch. A possible industrial building, roughly rectangular, was located centrally within the enclosure. One post hole produced iron slag and worked iron. A smaller circular hut was also discovered to north of inner ditch. A later field enclosure was associated with the main enclosure. A stone lined kiln was recorded to the north of the site (49m north of the outer ditch). it appeared oval with a narrow, short, linear opening to the west (2.6m long x 1.5m wide x 0.32m deep). Both the neck and base of the kiln were lined with a series of flat slabs. It contained eleven distinguishable fills, all of various forms of silty clay with high amounts of burnt clay and charcoal. The uppermost of these deposits yielded a single blue glass bead (Chapple 2000). Three later medieval houses and associated ditches were later built on the site.

Eastings: 304970
Class:
Category:
EMAP Class:
Significance:


Northings: 0
Unknown
Settlement Enclosure
Non-Circular Shaped Enclosure
Highly Significant
Tullyallen,
Balgatheran,
Ferrard,
Louth

Location:

[Edit Place](#) [Delete Place](#) [Add SMR No](#)

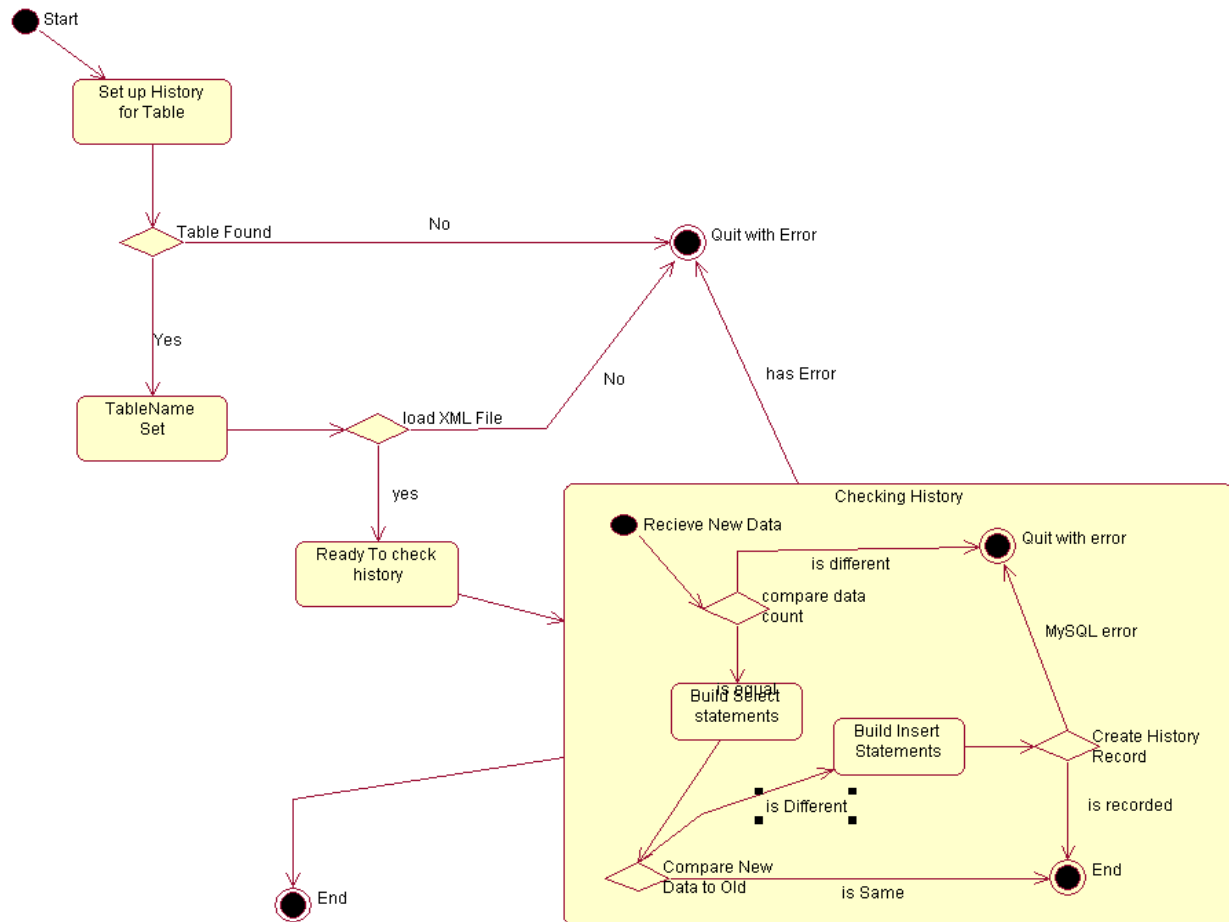
This project is supported by the Heritage Council under the Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research (INSTAR) Programme 2008
EMAP Web Site Designed by Mikie O'Sullivan and Maintained by UCD School of Archaeology

An Chomhairle Oldreacht
The Heritage Council



The purpose of having these action buttons inline is to make it easier to manage the large amounts of data within the system. Without them a user would be required to search for the same entry they are looking at now through a different interface wasting time and resources. This method of keeping the system "inline" is present throughout the site, for example if you check the very first image of the site and compare to the one above, you will notice that the main menu in the top right corner is different. This is because the first image was taken before login and the second when logged in as an administrator.

There are several other advanced features within the data management tool. These include a history tracker and a data backup system. The history tool tracks changes within the database and manages and records the original data independently, this means that even if someone overwrites information incorrectly it can be retrieved from the history and reversed.



The above diagram shows the basic flow of the history application, every time an edit is made to a table it is passed to this system. The system then performs several checks including, verifying the data and comparing to find differences. Once the checks are complete, if a change has occurred, a SQL statement is produced and the original data is recorded. Users can manage data through the site's history management interface.

The interface breaks the changes into three groups: creations, deletions and changes. The image above shows the change history. To minimize the storage space used for the history only the columns that have changed are recorded. From this interface administrators can restore any data they wish simply by clicking the restore data button. Users can also delete individual items from the database if they so wish using the "delete forever" button, this removes the record completely from the system. To make it easy to clean the database a delete all button is also provided, this does however create an XML back up of the history table just in case the user changes their mind at a later date.

The final tool for data management is the database backup tool. This creates full backups of the data to the web server as sql files. If a catastrophic failure should occur an administrator can simply truncate the database and execute the backup script to restore it completely. The system automatically backs up the database every week, this can mean data lose if the database fails late in the week but creating daily ones uses far to much storage. However an administrator can force a backup at any time they choose through the management interface.

The User management tool is complete, it provides a way for the system to manage users allowing them to create accounts and manage access to certain areas of the site. This tool is

tied tightly into the main site and all other tools, especially the data management tool. The tool provides the ability to login and out of the system and helps to maintain an overview of who's doing what within the site.

Spatial Information

Spatial information is currently captured in two ways either as a full grid reference and/or as a text reference to a named place (County, Barony, Parish, Townland). For the purposes of getting the system working for beta testing the latter, is added in as required using a specially designed interface to build up locally available lists.

Licence Elements	Place Elements	General SMR Elements	Location	
Country	County	Barony	Parish	Townland
Ireland	Antrim Armagh Carlow Cavan Clare Cork Derry Donegal Down Dublin Fermanagh Galway Kerry Kildare Kilkenny Laois Leitrim	Unknown Talbotstown Lower Talbotstown Upper Ballinacor South Ballinacor North Newcastle Arklow Rathdown Shillelagh <input type="button" value="Add Barony"/> <input type="button" value="Edit County"/>	Unknown Blessington Boystown Burgage Kilbride Hollywood Crehelp Donard Dunlavin Tober <input type="button" value="Add Parish"/> <input type="button" value="Edit Barony"/>	

In the longer term it is hoped that this and other similar projects utilise data from a single authority acting as service. Discussions are ongoing as to how this might best be achieved. It is also planned to use readily available online services to provide a basic mapping element to the site (e.g. utilisation of the Goggle API).

Research tools

The system also includes several other tools for use by researchers. Each of these are in different stages of development and are being worked on at the moment a selection of the developments will be briefly touched upon here.

The Bibliography tool, which is still in the very early stages of development, will provide the researchers with a method to maintain a single bibliography for the entire project. The plan is to make it possible for researchers to submit endnote bibliographies in the XML format and have them converted and stored in the system. It will also allow users to create logical links between a bibliography record and any other entry in the system for reference.

Title:	<input type="text"/>
Secondary Title:	<input type="text"/>
Short Title:	<input type="text"/>
Pages:	<input type="text"/>
Volume:	<input type="text"/>
Date Published:	<input type="text"/>
Publisher:	<input type="text"/>
ISBN:	<input type="text"/>
Abstract:	<input type="text"/>
Notes:	<input type="text"/>
Language:	<input type="text"/>

File uploaded successfully!

Bibliography

Title: Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape
Publisher: Cork University Press

Title: Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions
Publisher: Penguin
ISBN: 014043531X

The current version provides an interface to manually enter a record as well as upload a limited number of endnote record types as seen above.

The report tool is still in the design stages. This will allow researchers to create collaborative reports through the online system. It will also create auto generated reports using the information within the system allowing users to grab a report containing all information on a single licence, place or a route scheme, this will make it easy for future researchers to gather large volumes of data in an instant.

The system contains several other smaller features used in the day to day maintenance and use of the site. The system contains an internal page editor allowing users to edit the static content within the site such as the home page and about EMAP. This means that the sites content will always remain up to date without the need to touch the system code. This includes a rich text editor making it even easier to format and edit the page.

Another feature is the site search. This is an implementation of google search on the site that allows users to search the sites content quickly and easily. The search also allows users to check the results from the same search on archaeology.ie and excavations.ie, this list can be expanded with some simple editing of the search script.

The EMAP system as a portal

From the start it has been envisaged that the EMAP system would be more than just an on-line database it would also be seen as a research portal. Consequently, other features have been added that allow the site as a whole to be managed by members of the team and to ultimately facilitate collaboration both internally and externally.

Future Developments

Originally the EMAP online element was designed to be delivered to a full three year programme. However, shifts in funding have inevitably meant a reappraisal of priorities. Focus has been primarily, and quite rightly, drawn toward the rationalisation of the archaeological information held. It is really only once this has been more clearly defined that the vision for the online presence can be adequately articulated. Having said this a great deal of the work on the site has been completed, although there is still a lot to do for the potential to be realised. This next section will detail the work currently being performed and that which will be done over the next year.

I am currently working on some modifications to the system and database requested after some in house testing by the EMAP team. This includes some big changes to way we handle data, in the original scheme it was decided that licence would be the anchor table for the system. However after testing it was realized that while ideal it was impractical to enforce this on the data. The new scheme will allow places and licences be equal in importance and create a many to many relationship between them, this creates greater flexibility and reinforces the role of the EMAP database as primarily one of resource recovery, which in an ideal world would tap directly into existing datasets rather than locally repeat data held elsewhere. This is a major change to both the logic and the structure of the system and will require a significant amount of time to complete. There are several other database changes that will be included in this work.

Work currently planned for the future includes the following:

- Bibliography, This tool needs to be completed; the ability to import endnote files of any type is required. Also a more advanced interface is needed to make it easier to manage large numbers of references. Finally the ability to link a reference to other entries in the database (i.e. Licence) is required.
- Report Tool, The report tool hasn't yet started in development. This would be a valuable tool to have for the project, as it would greatly improve collaboration between researchers. This system will be complex and take a large amount of time to complete, as it requires a lot of security features to avoid data loss.
- Report generator, This tool will allow users to generate full reports within the system based on a single source. The possibility of using multiple sources will also be investigated.
- The news and events system needs to be completed. This includes improving the interface for both data entry and retrieval. This will take a relatively short amount of time to complete.
- A complete refresh of the entire user interface. The current interface was created to allow for demos and testing of the system. A complete refresh will be required prior to the system going live. This will dramatically improve all visual elements of the site giving it a clean, professional user-friendly interface on its launch date.
- Javascript form validation, Once the data structure is finalized I will add javascript validation to each form. This will improve the user experience by telling them what is wrong before sending the information to the server.
- Addition of undefined attributes for place, this will allow for the addition of any extra attributes to place without the need to uniquely identify them as individual tables in the database.
- Document management system, Allow for the uploading and creation of relationship between documents and tables in the database.
- Other changes may be required once full usage has begun.

**Appendix 4: EMAP papers (3) submitted in 2009 to
Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy and to *Medieval
Archaeology***

Early medieval settlement enclosures in Ireland: social identity, dwelling practices and domestic life

AIDAN O’SULLIVAN*

Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP), UCD School of Archaeology, University College Dublin, Dublin 4

&

TRÍONA NICHOLL^x

College of Arts and Celtic Studies Graduate School, UCD School of Archaeology, University College Dublin, Dublin 4

[Accepted December 2009. Published XX Month 2010.]

Abstract

Early medieval dwellings and settlements served as the venues for the enactment and performance of social identities of kinship, gender and social status and were the places where society itself was reproduced and changed across time. Early Irish laws, narrative literature and saints' lives reveal how people perceived and understood settlement enclosures as agents in the creation of social identity, while archaeology can trace through its investigation of the physical organisation and inhabitation of settlements, the social, ideological and cultural perception of both domestic life and dwelling places. This paper will utilize evidence from archaeology, history, anthropology, social theory and experimental archaeology to suggest new ways of understanding dwelling practices and domestic life in early medieval Ireland, particularly between the sixth and the ninth century AD.

Introduction

Early medieval settlement enclosures – raths, cashels, crannogs and other enclosure types – were hugely significant places in people’s lives in Ireland between the sixth and ninth centuries AD. Archaeological excavations have revealed that they were the locations for houses, workshops, stores, pathways, cobbled areas and middens all placed within a space defined by earthen banks and ditches, stone walls or wooden palisades.¹ Early Irish historical sources, laws, saints’ lives and narrative literature – ranging in date from the eighth to the tenth century – also show how they were the places where the household slept, ate food, gathered for social occasions and extended hospitality to their wider kin and neighbours. Early medieval settlement enclosures have long been a subject of interest in Irish archaeology. Most recent studies, seeking to reconstruct the early medieval social landscape, have tended to focus on their external, enclosing features (in terms of size, morphology and type) rather than their internal settlement evidence. These enclosing elements have been considered more important in terms of developing a classification of ringforts or raths, in particular.² This ignores the wealth of information available to us *within* the enclosure and has distracted

* Co-author’s email: Aidan.OSullivan@ucd.ie

^x Co-author’s email: trionanicholl@yahoo.co.uk

¹ Nancy Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland* (London 1990); Aidan O’Sullivan, *The archaeology of lake settlement in Ireland* (Dublin: 1998); Christina Fredengren, *Crannógs: a study of peoples interaction with lakes, with particular reference to Lough Gara in the north-west of Ireland*. (Bray: 2002); Nancy Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland, c.400-1169: settlement and economy*. In D. Ó Cróinín (ed.) *A New History of Ireland: I. Prehistoric Ireland* (Oxford 2005), 235-300; Aidan O’Sullivan, Finbar McCormick, Thomas Kerr and Lorcan Harney *Early medieval Ireland: Archaeological excavations 1930-2004* (Dublin 2010).

² Isabel Bennet, ‘The settlement pattern of ringforts in Country Wexford’ *JRSAI* 119(1989), 50-61; Matthew Stout, *The Irish ringfort*, (Dublin: 1997); B.J. Graham, ‘Early Medieval Ireland: settlement as an indicator of social and economic transformation, c. 500-1000’ In Graham, B.J. and Proudfoot, L.J. (eds), *An Historical Geography of Ireland*, (London 1993) 19-57; Matthew Stout, ‘Plans from plans: an analysis of the 1:2500 OS series as a source for ringfort morphology’ *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 92C(1992), 37-53; C.J. Lynn, ‘Some ‘early’ ringforts and

attention from what these places actually were. Early medieval settlement enclosures were dwelling spaces, farmyards, centres of craft and industry and the key locations for the many subsistence practices involved in everyday social and economic interactions. They were the places where traditional values and cosmological beliefs intersected with practical action and it could also be suggested that they were the places where early medieval social identities were actually created and reproduced. Social identity is defined by, and emerges through, the performance of relationships between people, places, things, animals and time.³ Recent archaeological studies have explored how settlements and buildings could be seen as theatre ‘stages’ for the control of social identities and as ‘backdrops’ before which, and around, the social encounters of both inhabitants and visitors were performed or ‘played out’.⁴ Early medieval dwellings could be seen then as key venues for the enactment or performance of social identities of ethnicity, social status, gender, kinship and community.⁵

Early medieval social identity in Ireland involved various social relationships and economic interactions between people, places, animals and things.⁶ While early medieval society varied in its classes and ranks, most of the community lived in physical structures (i.e. houses, raths, crannogs) that constituted homes or domestic venues in which people were drawn together by ties of kinship, service and neighbourliness. In a society obsessed with status and hierarchy, different social classes were engaged in various mannered encounters between the powerful and others, between the king and people of the *túath* or in the various socio-economic transactions agreed or enforced between lord, client farmer, dependent labourer and slave (i.e. the clientship relationship involving the granting of fiefs of land and cattle in return for calves, crops and labour services would have been physically visible at times of the year when animals or sacks of grain were brought by tenants to a lord’s rath). In terms of kinship and gender, they could have involved aspects of daily family life within a rath or cashel, the practice of farming and food preparation inside a house or the practical social and economic ties that bound an extended kin-group together. All of these social relationships of power, gender and kinship were certainly implicated in the daily use of dwellings and settlements, especially when we recognise that one of the key social units in early medieval Ireland was not the modern nuclear family with which we are familiar, but the household (*muintir*),⁷ which variously included those people connected by blood descent (i.e. grandparents, parents, children), by marriage (e.g. husband and wife) or other sexual relationship, through fosterage (foster-father, foster-son relationships being of key importance) and dependency (slaves and servants, who lived and worked with prosperous

crannógs’ *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 1(1983), 47-58; Matthew Stout, *The Irish Ringfort* (Dublin 1997).

³ For general introductions to social identity in early medieval archaeology, see W.O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (eds.), *Social identity in early medieval Britain* (London and New York 2000); John Hines ‘The becoming of the English: identity, material culture and language in Early Anglo-Saxon England’, *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 7 (1994) 49-59.

⁴ Ideas about architecture as a venue or arena for managed social encounters are common in recent archaeological literature; see Michael Parker Pearson and Colin Richards (ed.) *Architecture and order: approaches to social space* (London and New York 1994). For a useful summary of the theoretical background to archaeology and architecture, structure and agency theory, see Katherine Giles, *An archaeology of social identity: Guildhalls in York, c. 1350-1630*. BAR British Series 315 (Oxford 2000), 1-12. Most recently, Matthew Johnson, *Behind the castle gate: from medieval to Renaissance* (London 2002), p 3 has suggested that a late medieval castle’s different architectural features and furniture (i.e. moats and walls that are more impressive than real; gateways that manipulated people’s experiences upon arrival; lordly halls for formal reception, etc) were intended to carefully manage the dynamics of various social encounters. He suggests that different people, depending on their own social identities (i.e. men, women, lords, soldiers and labourers) might encounter and understand the meaning of these spaces in quite different ways.

⁵ See A. O’Sullivan, ‘Early medieval houses: social identity and dwelling places. *Peritia* (2008), 20, 225-256, pp 228-31 for a review of previous theoretical approaches to social identity and dwellings in archaeology.

⁶ Social identity has been a subject of significant interest in various social science and humanities disciplines in recent years, but it could be argued that it has long been perhaps a dominant theme in early medieval historical studies in Ireland. For analyses of social class and hierarchy, see Fergus Kelly, *A guide to early Irish law*, (Dublin 1988) 29-33; Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish farming* (Dublin 1997) 445-8; T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge 2000), 124-136; for early medieval kinship and gender relations, see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 84-95; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Women and the law in early Ireland’ M. O’Dowd and S. Wichert (eds.), *Chattel, servant, or citizen: Women’s status in church, state and society* (Belfast 1995), 45-57; for ethnicity and identity, see T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘Language and society among the Insular Celts, 400-1000’ Miranda Green (ed.), *The Celtic world* (London 1995), 703-36; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Nationality and kingship in pre-Norman Ireland’, *Historical Studies* 11 (1978), 1-35.

⁷ Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 84-95.

families, and who did for them the more menial tasks of grinding grain or digging ditches). The *muintir* were also part of the *derbfine*, an extended kin-group whose members are descendents of a common great-grandfather through the male-line.⁸ The *derbfine* held and worked farmland in common and had many legal and social obligations to one another – including co-operative labour and gathering together for various occasions. In archaeological terms then, the range and number of people potentially involved in daily life in an early medieval settlement, depending on its social status, would have included various classes of men and women, children, slaves and labourers, as well as occasional outsiders (herders, fence-makers, itinerant smiths) of various kinds.

If these are the people likely to have inhabited an early medieval settlement enclosure, what do we mean when we think of domestic life in such a place?⁹ It is unlikely to have been anything like what we regard as ‘domestic’; a term that perhaps suggests a private (an entirely anachronistic term in pre-modern societies) or cosy, Victorian-like homeliness to be set at odds with public life out in the world. In any case, modern scholars of early medieval Ireland have shown rather less interest in domestic life than they have shown in power, social hierarchy and the role of the church. Perhaps this is because scholars have associated past domestic practices with women, while public activities, politics and historical events are thought of as being associated with men. It is revealing for example, that most recent studies of early medieval ringforts have tended to explore their morphology, size and siting because these are seen to be key in terms of their role in public, social display (i.e. in terms of power relationships);¹⁰ while the excavated evidence for daily domestic life has largely been ignored in recent reviews.¹¹ Early Irish historical studies, in contrast, have focused slightly more attention on gender and on the social and economic relationships between women and men, which emphasized a generally co-operative approach to the household economy.¹² The lack of interest in domestic life is unfortunate, as it has been recognised that domestic tasks and maintenance activities were critically important in society and involved “sets of practices that involve the sustenance, welfare and effective reproduction of a social group...the basic tasks of daily life that regulate and stabilize social life. They mainly involve care giving, feeding and food processing, weaving and cloth manufacture, hygiene, public health and healing, socialization of children and the fitting out and organisation of related spaces.”¹³ As we shall see, there is certainly plenty of archaeological and historical evidence for domestic life within early medieval settlements.

Encountering the early medieval enclosure – the social definition of domestic space

⁸ Kelly, ‘Early Irish Law’, 13; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Ireland c.800: aspects of society’ D. Ó Cróinín (ed.) *A New History of Ireland: I. Prehistoric Ireland* (Oxford 2005), 549-634: 553-4.

⁹ Generally, early medieval raths and cashels have tended to be viewed as the dwelling places of reasonably prosperous farmers, lords and kings, and their social and economic occupation and layout has tended to be seen in commonsense and practical terms – being seen as much like the dwellings and farmyards of the self-sufficient, strong Irish farmers of 1950s Ireland in fact. This is not accidental. Jerry O’Sullivan, ‘Nationalists, archaeologists and the myth of the Golden Age’. In M. A. Monk and J. Sheehan (eds.), *Early medieval Munster: archaeology, history and society*. (Cork, 1998), pp 178-89 has discussed how traditional social interpretations of early medieval ringforts have been strongly influenced by the ringfort excavations and publications of Seán P. Ó Riordáin, Michael J. O’Kelly and others, who themselves were working within a ‘Golden Age’ tradition of scholarship that looked back to early Christian Ireland as a model for a newly, independent Irish republic, with its own conservative, rural, agricultural ethos. A. O’Sullivan and N. Kenny, ‘A matter of life and death?’ *Archaeology Ireland* (2008), 86, 8-11 argue that a ‘commonsense’ reading of early medieval settlements is hardly likely to approach a proper understanding of early Irish society, with its complexities of social class, gender and kinship and its range of ideological structures and cosmological beliefs.

¹⁰ For example, Matthew Stout’s important study *The Irish Ringfort* (1997) makes little or no reference to excavated archaeological evidence for the domestic inhabitation of ringforts beyond what was needed to establish their chronology.

¹¹ In contrast, Máire and Liam de Paor’s classic study, *Early Christian Ireland* (London 1958), 79-82, did describe daily life in Irish ringforts in domestic terms.

¹² Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Early medieval law, c. 700-1200’ in Angela Bourke *et al* (eds.), *The Field Day anthology of Irish writing: Vol. IV, Irish women’s writing and traditions* (Cork 2002), 6-43; Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, 448-51; Kelly, *Early Irish law*, 68-79 provide overviews and commentaries on the perception and role of women in early Irish law tracts; for perspectives on gender and identity, see Lisa Bitel, *Land of women: Tales of sex and gender from early Ireland* (Cornell NY 1996); Elva Johnston, ‘Transforming women in Irish hagiography’ *Peritia* 9 (1995) 197-220; Elva Johnston, ‘Powerful women or patriarchal weapons? Two medieval Irish saints’ *Peritia* 15 (2001) 302-10.

¹³ Sandra Monton-Subias and Margarita Sanchez-Romero (eds) *Engendering social dynamics: the archaeology of maintenance activities*. BAR 1862, (Archaeopress 2008).

Defining social groups: enclosing spaces and domestic places

Early medieval settlement enclosures such as raths, cashels and crannogs were essentially bounded social spaces. They were enclosures, bounded by a single or multiple bank and ditch, wall or palisade, typically measuring 30-40m in diameter. Most were occupied between the sixth and ninth centuries AD, and due to significant social and economic changes, most began to be abandoned in about the tenth century. Early medieval settlement enclosures overwhelmingly dominate the excavated archaeological evidence from early medieval Ireland.¹⁴ Although often misleadingly termed 'ringforts' in archaeological terminology, it is widely accepted that most raths and cashels (apart from those deliberately intended as strategic strongholds) had limited military defensive capacities – although this does not mean that they were not understood or perceived as an occasional place of refuge and shelter at times of danger.¹⁵ Some archaeologically excavated raths have produced little or no evidence for houses or structures, suggesting these may have been uninhabited or solely used as a *bódún* ('cow fortress') where the cattle of a neighbourhood could be driven for protection from cattle-raiders.¹⁶ Nonetheless, there is a strong sense that most were actually settlements. They were literally farmyards, with houses and outbuildings, dung-heaps, squawking hens, dogs and pigs.¹⁷ The contemporary legal text *Bretha Crólige* dealing with sick maintenance, paints an eloquent picture of the busy activity associated with early medieval life within such a settlement.¹⁸

'There are not admitted to him into the house fools or lunatics or senseless people or half-wits or enemies. No games are played in the house. No tidings are announced. No children are chastised. Neither men nor women exchange blows...no dogs are set fighting in his presence or in his neighbourhood outside. No shout is raised. No pigs squeal. No brawls are made. No cry of victory is raised nor shout in playing games. No yell or scream is raised'¹⁹

In early Irish law and narrative literature, the enclosure around a house was known as the *les* ('farmyard or courtyard'), which term referred to the enclosed space itself rather than the *ráth* ('earthen rampart') around it.²⁰ The enclosure thus provided a distinct domestic space where houses, outhouses, animal pens and other features could be located.²¹ One of the immediate effects of using such an enclosed space is that it acted as a physical division; one was either within it, or one was outside it, in effect mirroring both the wider boundary divisions between *túatha* that existed across the landscape and the restrictions placed on movement across them.²² This idea of enclosures as carefully defined social spaces can be seen in early Irish documentary sources that demonstrate a distinct concern about control of access *into* them. In the seventh century law-text *Críth Gablach*, there are various penalties prescribed as due for trespass into a house or dwelling enclosure. A person is allowed to open (the gate of?) the *les* from the outside without penalty – presumably to see if anyone is home and to announce his presence. However, if someone enters without permission into a

¹⁴ A. O'Sullivan, F. McCormick, T. Kerr and L. Harney, *Early medieval Ireland*, chap. 3.

¹⁵ C. Lynn, 'Settlement and Disease: a plague on your raths'. *Archaeology Ireland*, (2005), 19(4), 14–7 has suggested that raths originate from a desire to seek shelter and protection from plaques endemic in fifth to sixth century Ireland.

¹⁶ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 366; Finbar McCormick, 'Cows, ringforts and the origin of Early Christian Ireland', In *Emania* 13, (1995), pp 33-37.

¹⁷ D. Ó Corráin, 'Ireland c.800: aspects of society.' In D. Ó Cróinín (ed.) *A New History of Ireland vol. 1: Prehistoric and early Ireland* Oxford University Press, Oxford (2005), 549-608.

¹⁸ Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 130-1. The practice of 'sick maintenance' was enshrined in early Irish law and states that if an injury is committed upon another, the perpetrator is bound to provide very specific levels of hospitality and care for the victim at his home for set periods of time. For a more detailed account of this see D.A. Binchy, 'Bretha Crólige' *Ériu* 12 (1938), 1-77

¹⁹ Kelly *Early Irish Law*, 130

²⁰ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 363-4.

²¹ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 364-7 lists the features that various legal and literary sources imply might be located within the early medieval *les*; including the *airdrochat* (the paved area at the entrance to the les); the *tech* ('house'), *airchae* (outhouse); *tech ndam* (ox-house); *otrach* (dunghill); *lías cáirech* (sheep-pen); *lías lóeg* (calf-pen); *muccfoil* (pig-sty); *áith* ('drying-kiln') and *corróc* (pit or possibly souterrain). However, it should also be recognised that as farmyards, they were also surrounded by other features situated *outside* the enclosure; corn-drying kilns, barns, water mills, fields and gardens and such places as milking yards (*macha*). Recent archaeological excavations outside early medieval ringforts – an area known as the *airlise* - have begun to identify the wider landscapes of these settlements.

²² Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, 4 states that unrestricted movement between *túatha* would have been limited to the 'learned classes' and that excepting travel when on military service, pilgrimage or to attend an *óenach*, ordinary freemen would have stayed within the bounds of their own *túath*.

prosperous farmer's (*mruigfer*) les or yard, the culprit is obliged to pay five *séts* in restitution for the initial entry. Should he venture further in and open the door of the house, a fine of another five *séts* is incurred and if he peers into the house he must pay one cow.²³

In other words, entry into an enclosure was controlled and managed to protect the privacy and property of its inhabitants. Discussion of public and private space in an early medieval context might seem to be anachronistic – and probably should not be understood in modern terms. Nonetheless, the construction of an enclosure with a controlled point of entry and exit does seem to suggest a concern with division of space from the domestic, *muintir*-held dwelling within and the *derbfine* or kin-held settlement landscape beyond – and thus a recognition of a social group defined by living together in a domestic context.

Making an entrance: gates and passageways

Restriction of access into early medieval enclosures also emphasises the immense importance of entrances. Entrances are liminal features; the borderland between a public and a private world. There is extensive archaeological evidence for the size, style and construction material of gates and entranceways on early medieval settlement enclosures.²⁴ It seems likely that gates would have been closed at night to protect against wolves, foxes and outlaws and that their position during the day would be dictated by the needs of the settlements inhabitants, all the while governed by the strict social and legal conventions which governed how and when one should enter another's property.²⁵ Gates, occasionally more than one, are found at various different points through the entrance passage and not only its outer end. At Castleskreen, Co. Down, two stone-lined sockets for the posts were found at the inner end of a stone-lined passage.²⁶ The complex system of four gates at the likely royal rath at Garranes, Co. Cork show variation in both their positioning and design being set variously at the inner and outer faces of the enclosing banks and ditches.²⁷ At the opposite end of the spectrum are sites like Carrigillihy, Co. Cork, where an original Bronze Age enclosure was re-inhabited at some point during the early medieval period. This early medieval enclosure had two entrances, both badly denuded and filled with collapsed material from the banks. Unusually, the early medieval inhabitants of the site appear to have made no effort to reconsolidate the banks or entranceways, electing instead to simply walk in and out over the debris.²⁸

Some entrances were also further defined by entrance passages through the enclosing walls or banks, depending for their length on the scale of the enclosing feature traversed. Many entrance passages were defined and enhanced with low drystone walls or sections of wattle²⁹ and may also have served to protect the

²³ Eoin MacNeill, 'Ancient Irish Law: the law of status and franchise' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 36C(1923), 277-316; Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 431-433; A *sét* being the standard unit of value, equivalent to a three year old dry heifer

²⁴ For sites with good examples of gates and entrances, see R. Ivens, 'Killyliss Rath, County Tyrone' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 47(1984), 9-36; S.P. Ó Riordáin, 'Lough Gur excavations: Carraig Aille and the Spectacles' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 52C(1949), 39-111; S.P. Ó Riordáin, 'The excavation of a large earthen ringfort at Garranes, Co. Cork' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 47C(1942), 77-150; Ó Riordáin, S.P. and Foy, J.B. 'The excavation of Leacanabuilé Stone Fort, near Caherciveen, Co. Kerry' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 46(1941), 85-91; M.J. O'Kelly, 'Two ringforts at Garryduff, Co. Cork' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 63C(1962), 17-120; C.J. Lynn, 'Two raths at Ballyhenry, Co. Antrim' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 46 (1983), 67-91; M.J. O'Kelly, 'Béal Boru, Co. Clare' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 67 (1962), 1-27.

²⁵ MacNeill, 'Ancient Irish Law', 277-316.

²⁶ D.M. Waterman, 'Excavation of a rath with motte at Castleskreen, Co. Down' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 22(1959), 67-82.

²⁷ Ó Riordáin 'Garranes'; The first gate was set at the outer face of the first enclosing ditch with a shallow trench running across the opening forming a threshold or gate jamb. The second gate was sited at the inner face of the second ditch and also appears to have used a threshold/jamb. The third was again found at the outer face of the third enclosing ditch, was smaller in scale and showed no trace of the threshold/jamb element of the first two. The fourth gate was sited at the innermost face of the inner bank and had the most unusual design. It seems to have closed in a projected V-shape, pointing away from the interior with the two halves of the gate merging on a central post. At some point during the life of the settlement this system appears to have been abandoned as the post was removed and later filled in.

²⁸ M.J. O'Kelly, 'An early Bronze Age Ring-Fort at Carrigillihy, Co. Cork' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 56(1951), 69-86

²⁹ For examples of stone revetting see: Waterman, 'Castleskreen', 67-82; B.B. Williams, 'Excavations at Killylane, County Antrim' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 47 (1984), 63-70; Ó Riordáin, 'Lough Gur excavations...and the

walls of the passage from damage and wear and tear.³⁰ The width of the entrance passage varies greatly from site to site and was presumably dictated by what kinds of activities were intended within the enclosure. The entrance passage of Rath II at Ballypalady, Co. Antrim was only 76cm wide at its outer end and broadened along the length of the passage to 1.5m at the inner.³¹ This would have severely limited what could pass in and out of the settlement – such as cattle for example – and would imply that this enclosure at least was not intended to house livestock. Other passageways are much larger in scale such as the multiple entrances at Ballycateen, Co. Cork, which are 3.3m and 3m wide respectively.³² The surfaces of these passageways also vary greatly, again presumably dependent on what level of traffic was going to pass over it and what the ground conditions were like locally. Many sites such as Seafin Castle, Co. Down and Lissachiggel, Co. Louth have either cobbles or paving stones set into the floor of the passage to provide a dry and stable passage.³³ Others take this specialization a step further. The passageway into Carraig Aille II, Co. Limerick was paved on its northern side and cobbled on the southern, both surfaces being contemporary.³⁴ Gates and entranceways are also often altered over the life of the settlement as different needs arise and old banks and walls need to be reconsolidated as at Castleskreen, Co. Down and Killyliss, Co. Tyrone where old stone revetments were covered over and the passage redefined and narrowed in their latter phases of use.³⁵ Ultimately, there is an interesting variability in gates and entrances. While some of the entrances display a concern with providing security, others seem to entirely untroubled by it and indeed have made provision for the gates to stand open efficiently.³⁶

Moving through early medieval enclosures: pathways and perceptions:

Moving on into the enclosure, people would have then negotiated the internal spaces of a rath, cashel or crannog, enabled and controlled in this by various outdoor fixtures or settings, such as pathways, fences, fireplaces, middens, pits and working areas paved in brushwood or stone.³⁷ A person in the early medieval period would have also had the taken-for-granted understanding of social life and would have known the rules of appropriate social and cultural behaviour within an enclosure.³⁸ Pathways laid within the interior are frequently seen to steer movement in particular directions. It is a striking feature of many raths (e.g. Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, Leacanabuile, Co. Kerry and Ballypalady 2, Co. Antrim³⁹), that upon entering the site, a person was often persuaded by laid pathways to move directly and *immediately* to the house doorway. This is most striking at the early medieval rath at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, where there was a quite

Spectacles', 39-111; For examples of wattle or wicker revetting see: D.M. Waterman, 'A group of raths at Ballypalady, Co. Antrim' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 35 (1972), 29-36; Murphy, T.F. and O' Cuileanain, C. 'A ringfort at Oldcourt, Co. Cork' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 66 (1961), 79-92.

³⁰ Ó Ríordáin, 'Lough Gur excavations...and the Spectacles', 39-111. A recess was set into the stone facing to allow the gates to lie flush against the wall when open

³¹ Waterman, 'Ballypalady', 29-36

³² S.P. Ó Ríordáin, 'The excavation of Ballycateen Fort, Co. Cork' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 49C (1943), 1-43

³³ O. Davies, 'Excavations at Lissachiggel' *Louth Historical and Archaeological Journal* 9 (1939), 209-243; D.M. Waterman, 'Excavations at Seafin Castle and Ballyrone Motte and Bailey' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 18 (1955), 71-83

³⁴ Ó Ríordáin, 'Lough Gur excavations...and the Spectacles', 39-111. The excavator interpreted this as being a dual-surfaced path to enable the efficient driving of livestock in and out of the enclosure with a smooth paved path for people and a rougher and tougher cobbled path for the animals – a somewhat unlikely explanation.

³⁵ Ivens, 'Killyliss', 9-36; Waterman, 'Castleskreen', 67-82

³⁶ Ó Ríordáin, 'Ballycateen', 1-43; Ó Ríordáin, 'Garranes', 77-150; O'Kelly, 'Carrigillihy', 69-86; Ó Ríordáin, 'Lough Gur excavations...and the Spectacles', 39-111

³⁷ Harold Mytum, *The origins of Early Christian Ireland*, (London 1992), 123-4.

³⁸ Perhaps it is only in modern reconstructed crannogs and ringforts that we can fully imagine how movement around an enclosure might have been subtly managed, although these rarely have formal pathways. Reconstructed ringforts and crannogs can be found at the Irish National Heritage Park, Co. Wexford (www.inhp.com) and Craggaunowen, Co. Clare (<http://www.shannonheritage.com/Attractions/Craggaunowen/>). These reconstructions have enormous potential for study from an experimental archaeological point of view but have been severely underused to date.

³⁹ C.J. Lynn, 'Deer Park Farms: a visit to an Early Christian settlement' *Current Archaeology* 113 (1989) 193-8; C.J. Lynn, 'Early medieval houses' Michael Ryan (ed.), *The illustrated archaeology of Ireland* (Dublin 1991), 126-31; C.J. Lynn, 'Houses in rural Ireland, A.D. 500-1000.' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 57 (1994), 81-94; S.P. Ó Ríordáin and J.B. Foy, 'The excavation of Leacanabuile stone fort, near Caherciveen, Co. Kerry' in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, 46, (1941), pp 85-91; Dudley Waterman, 'A group of raths at Ballypalady, Co. Antrim' in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 35 (1972), pp 29-36.

complex entrance feature than controlled movement all the way in, with a causeway leading up through a narrow entrance, the side walls of which forced the visitor further in to the site. In this case, the long entrance also served to manipulate the visitor to move right up the entrance door of the main roundhouse on the site.⁴⁰ On early medieval crannogs, it is occasionally also possible to observe such patterns of ‘encouraged’ daily movement towards a house. At Moynagh Lough crannog, Co. Meath, a wooden pathway leads from the entrance into the enclosure, past a metalworking area and on in to the central space of the site, which is overlooked by the house off to the right. At Sroove, Co. Sligo on entering, one had to walk to the right inside the palisade, before turning to the left to the doorway of the house. This direction of the visitor towards the principal dwelling houses can also be seen at Garryduff I, Co. Cork where the gravel spread forming the surface of the entranceway continued on into the enclosure, leading to the doorway of House II.⁴¹ Many sites also show evidence for larger spreads of either cobbling, gravel or, occasionally formal slab paving that seem to have been used as work surfaces for various different craft and subsistence practices.⁴² A section of paving at Croft Road, Co. Down was extremely well worn and fire-cracked and was later buried beneath layers of occupation debris and further cobbling, suggesting that this particular area was a zone of consistent and repeated use.⁴³ In early Irish literary and legal sources, the paved area at the entrance was known as the *airdrochat* and it was meant to be kept clean. In the *Genealogies of the saints*, Diarmait of Lecc na Sinnach cleared his paved entrance path or *airdrochat* with a shovel, while in a description of miserable conditions in the tale *Erchoitmed Inge Gulidi* it was stated that the pavements were dirty.⁴⁴ In other words, the paved entrance way served a public role and was to be maintained.

Early medieval houses: social perspectives on dwelling practices

Sources and perspectives

Early medieval houses, sheds and out-buildings are also known from settlement enclosures and provide a vivid sense of various domestic practices. Although enclosures with only a single house are known, it is clear that some had several houses or buildings in use at the same time, as has been shown by archaeological excavations of the raised rath at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, the crannóg at Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath and the cashel at Leacanabuaile, Co. Kerry.⁴⁵ Indeed, there is particularly good archaeological evidence for houses in this period, particularly between the seventh and the tenth century AD (in contrast with both the Iron Age and the later medieval period, to date) and we have a good understanding of their architectural development, shape, size, building materials and the organization of internal features – although we have less good understanding of their social and ideological organisation within.⁴⁶

Early Irish laws, narrative literature and hagiographies all provide interesting accounts of various social and symbolic activities within houses that enable us to reconstruct the mentalities of their inhabitants and their potential social spaces.⁴⁷ Although the vivid descriptions of fantastic, otherworldly houses in early medieval narrative literature, particularly the *echtrae* (adventure tales) and *immrama* (voyage tales) should not be taken literally, they do provide insights into the perceived role of doorways, hearths, beds, benches and other internal features. For example, doorways are often symbolically charged in the tales. In the ninth-century *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* (‘The Voyage of Máel Dúin’s boat’) the hero finds himself in a house with one

⁴⁰ C.J. Lynn, ‘Deer Park Farms’, pp 193-8; C.J. Lynn, ‘Early medieval houses’, pp 126-31; C.J. Lynn, ‘A note on the excavation of an early Christian settlement in Deer Park Farms, Glenarm, 1984-1987’ *The Glynnys* (1988), 3-16;

⁴¹ O’Kelly, ‘Garryduff’, 17-120

⁴² B.B. Williams, ‘Excavations at Altanagh, Co. Tyrone’ *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 49 (1986), 33-88

⁴³ V.B. Proudfoot, ‘Note on a rath at Croft Road, Holywood, Co Down’ *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 22, 102-6.

⁴⁴ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 367.

⁴⁵ Lynn, ‘Deer Park Farms, Glenarm’, 3-16; C.J. Lynn, ‘Deer Park Farms: a visit to an Early Christian settlement’, 193-8; John Bradley, ‘Excavations at Moynagh Lough, County Meath’ *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries* 112(1991), 5-26; Ó’Riordáin and Foy, J.B., ‘Leacanabuaile’, 85-91.

⁴⁶ C.J. Lynn, ‘Early Christian period domestic structures: a change from round to rectangular plans?’ *Irish Archaeological Research Forum* 5 (1978) 29-45; C.J. Lynn, ‘Deer Park Farms’, 193-8; C.J. Lynn, ‘Early medieval houses’, 126-31; C.J. Lynn, ‘Houses in rural Ireland, A.D. 500-1000.’; A. O’Sullivan, ‘Houses’ in Sean Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Ireland: an encyclopedia* (New York 2005), 224-26 A. O’Sullivan, ‘Early medieval houses’, 231-256.

⁴⁷ Hilary Murray, ‘Documentary evidence for domestic buildings in Ireland, c400-1200 in the light of archaeology’, *Medieval Archaeology* 23 (1979), 81-97; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Ireland c.800: aspects of society’, 551-3.

door facing the sea and one facing the land.⁴⁸ In *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, a clearly fantastic house is described as having seven doors, with a shutter to block the wind from whichever direction it blows.⁴⁹ Although descriptions of interior furniture and decorative features are also often unlikely, they do hint at how real houses were inhabited. In the tales, there are accounts of cauldrons of food over fires, of fine textiles and silver and gold brooches hanging on walls as heroes eat sumptuous feasts or meet with sexually predatory women. In the ninth-century tale, for example *Tochmerc Becfeola* a man and woman go out to an island on which is a mysterious house with beds and cubicles, they first eat a magical meal and then lie chastely together until morning.⁵⁰ Early Irish laws, although prescriptive and ideological in their own way, provide a seemingly more realistic description of early medieval houses. The eighth-century law text *Crith Gablach* strongly emphasizes social status, and to some extent gender, as organising principles for how people should act within houses. *Crith Gablach* also provides some intriguing detail as to their construction and form and lists the types of domestic equipment and tools that should be found within them.⁵¹

House sizes, shapes and forms

The earliest (between c.AD 500-800) house structures in the early medieval period were usually circular or round houses, built of stone or post-and-wattle walls, roofed with thatches of reed, turf or straw or possibly wooden shingles. They tend to be located towards the centre of enclosures. The law text *Crith Gablach* implies that the typical farmer's houses were 6-8m in diameter and archaeological studies indicate that most were fairly small, typically 4-5m in diameter, although some were significantly larger, 6-10m in diameter. The house space itself was therefore typically about 45m², comprising only a single small room.⁵² Despite the claims of the narrative literature, there is no archaeological evidence for massive longhouses as found elsewhere in northwest Europe. Both early Irish law and archaeology suggest that house size was closely related to social rank, so it may have been that both law and customary practice ensured that people did not construct or occupy buildings larger than a certain size. Occasionally, a second circular structure was built attached to the larger house, to create a figure-of-eight shape. This backhouse or *cúile* (which seemingly could only be entered from the larger roundhouse) may have been used as a larder, kitchen, family sleeping area or some type of domestic space reserved from the more 'public' main roundhouse.

Towards the end of the early medieval period (tenth to eleventh centuries AD), after about AD 800, there is an architectural shift in the use of roundhouses to rectilinear houses.⁵³ Rectangular houses built in stone or turf became standard, and roundhouses became rare. There is even evidence for changes within enclosures, with roundhouses being actually replaced by rectangular structures in several raths or cashels. Rectangular houses were typically built in stone, earth or turf, with an average measurement of 6-8m in length. They were simply constructed of low stone walls, with internal wooden poles to support roof of reed, turf or straw. Rectangular houses are often paved, or had parts of their floors lined with stone slabs.⁵⁴ They also tend to be found closer to entrances and towards the sides of enclosures. The reasons for this transition are unknown and are unlikely to be due to foreign (i.e. Anglo-Saxon, Norse) influences as rectangular structures are found in northwest Europe well before the ninth century AD. It is possible that the transition from roundhouses to rectangular houses in the eighth and ninth century AD relates to wider social and ideological change in early medieval Ireland, with an increasing centralisation of political power in large dynasties, an increased emphasis on smaller kingroups and more individualistic land ownership practices. Rectangular house can more easily be sub-divided into 'rooms' or compartments that might be used to signal social differentiation, but it should be admitted that there is little clear evidence for this.

The lifecycles and cultural biographies of early medieval houses

It is likely that most early medieval houses would have been constructed, occupied and abandoned within a generation. Experimental archaeology suggests that roundhouses can deteriorate seriously after 20-30 years,

⁴⁸ H.P.A. Oskamp (ed. and tr.), *The voyage of Máel Dúin: A study in early Irish voyage literature* (Groningen 1970).

⁴⁹ E. Knott (ed.) *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Medieval and Modern Irish Series, viii, Dublin 1975), para. 29.

⁵⁰ Máire Bhreathnach, 'A new edition of *Tochmarc Becfhola*', *Ériu* 35 (1984), 59-91.

⁵¹ Kelly, *Early Irish farming* 361-3.

⁵² Lynn, 'Early medieval houses', 126-31; Lynn, 'Houses in rural Ireland', 81-94; A. O'Sullivan 'Early medieval houses', 231-256.

⁵³ Lynn, 'Early Christian period domestic structures', 29-45; Lynn, 'Early medieval houses', 126-31; Lynn, 'Houses in rural Ireland', 81-94.

⁵⁴ Michelle Comber, 'Tom Fanning's excavations at Rinnaraw Cashel, Portnablagh, Co. Donegal', *Proc Roy Ir Acad* 106C, 67-124.

while dendrochronological analyses of roundhouse timbers from a waterlogged early historic crannog at Buiston, Ayrshire in Scotland suggest that they were used for remarkably shorter periods of time, such as 15-20 years. However, with care and maintenance of their walls and thatched roof, an early medieval house might have stood for 50-60 years - or a generation. Indeed, the main events of a person's life; his or her birth; transition from childhood to adulthood; marriage and ultimate death – could all have potentially occurred within the same house that came to the end of its life about the same time as he or she did. It is possible then, as is common in anthropological contexts, that some early medieval houses had *cultural biographies* that were related to the lifecycles of the household (i.e. that the birth and death of the house potentially mirrored the main events of its household or principal resident).⁵⁵

There is certainly archaeological evidence for dynamic change and mutability in many early medieval houses. In some, there is evidence of the periodic re-laying of house floors, with the introduction of gravels, clays and brushwood, suggesting either long-term re-use or a periodic returning to a previously abandoned site. Fireplaces or hearths were often re-built and changed, again signifying rhythms of continuity and change. Occasionally, such as at Ballyfounder rath, Co. Down, early medieval roundhouses were re-built on precisely the same spot, creating a circle of clusters of two to three postholes.⁵⁶ It is also possible to identify some ways in which the birth and death of houses seem to have been marked by particular actions. Some early medieval houses show evidence for having been deliberately rebuilt or replaced at precisely the same location - potentially over generations. This can be seen at Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath, Leacanabuaile, Co. Cork,⁵⁷ Dressogagh, Co. Armagh⁵⁸ and Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim – amongst many others.

So houses are often built to link with the past, but it is also interesting that the *death* of the previous house is also often marked in some ways. In particular, domestic objects such as rotary quern-stones, wooden troughs and plough implements seem to have been deliberately placed in pits or wall slots at a key moment of the house's life.⁵⁹ These types of objects are specifically those that might be practically and metaphorically associated with the household group itself as they are artifacts used in the production and preparation of food. At Deer Park Farms, a wooden oak trough (with a shoe-last placed within it) appears to have been deliberately left behind on the floor of a small seventh-century wooden roundhouse (structure Zeta) and the post-and-wattle walls were deliberately pushed over to cover the trough and then a new house was built on top of an introduced layer of clay and stones). This wooden trough – which early Irish literary sources would imply was a woman's property and used for kneading dough or presenting food – was apparently 150 years older than the house and must have been one of its cherished antiques so its deposition could hardly be accidental.⁶⁰ One could envisage that upon the death of a grandmother, the trough was finally abandoned within a house that had also come to the end of its life. At Leacanabuaile, Co. Kerry, broken rotary querns were placed in the walls of the Phase I roundhouse that was then subsequently replaced by a Phase II rectangular house. As well as the iron plough share mentioned above, a Neolithic stone axe was also found in the house.⁶¹ At Dressogagh, Co. Armagh, two figure-of-eight roundhouses were placed on top of two

⁵⁵ A. O'Sullivan, 'Early medieval houses', 234-8.

⁵⁶ Waterman, 'Ballyfounder', 39-61.

⁵⁷ O' Riordáin and Foy, 'Leacanabuaile', 85-91.

⁵⁸ A.E.P. Collins, 'Excavations at Dressogagh Rath, Co. Armagh', *Ulster J Archaeol* 29 (1966) 117-129.

⁵⁹ A. O'Sullivan and N. Kenny, 'A matter of life and death?', 9.

⁶⁰ C.J. Lynn and J.A. McDowell, 'A note on the excavation of an early Christian period settlement in Deer Park Farms, Glenarm, 1984-1987', *The Glynn's: J of The Glens of Antrim Hist Soc* 16 (1988) 3-16; Chris Lynn, Houses in early Christian Ireland, public lecture, *Archaeology Ireland* houses conference, 8 November 2003.

⁶¹ Neolithic stone axes, flint arrowheads and scrapers are common finds from early medieval houses and settlements. It is likely that these were discovered accidentally during ploughing in the early medieval period and brought into houses as magical items. In medieval Europe, stone axes and arrowheads were seen as thunderbolts or fairy darts and probably had talismanic or protective powers; see Peter Carelli, 'Thunder and lightning, magical miracles. On the popular myth of thunderbolts and the presence of Stone Age artefacts in Medieval deposits' in H. Andersson, P. Carelli and L. Ersgård (eds.), *Visions of the past: Trends and traditions in Swedish medieval archaeology* (Lund, 1997), pp 393-417; Flint arrowheads were seen in recent Irish folklore as 'witch-stones' having magical properties that could protect cattle, milk and butter. Estyn Evans, *Irish folkways* (London, 1957), pp 303-3 noted that cattle that were not thriving were reckoned to have been 'elf-shot'. A cow-doctor called to a stable would carry a few flint arrowheads to whip out of the animal's body at the right moment so as to 'cure' them. It is interesting that Kelly, 'Early Irish farming', p. 174-5 notes that later medieval manuscripts in Ireland refer to the bewitching of cattle (*mille ba*), which may have been caused by elf-shot (*urchar millte*), so it is likely that flint arrowheads in early medieval Ireland were also seen as supernatural items.

earlier figure-of-eight roundhouses, and the walls pulled down and rebuilt. The broken portions of a rotary quernstone were placed within the wall slots of house 1, before its replacement by house II. At the early medieval unenclosed settlement at 'The Spectacles', Co. Limerick, a broken quern stone was deposited on top of the paving, directly in front of the door of a roundhouse.⁶² At Rinnaraw, Co. Donegal, broken quern stones were left on the floor beside the door, while one fragment was also placed in the doorway threshold.⁶³ At Drumaroad, Co. Down, two broken quernstones were deposited just south of the house doorway, alongside the paving.⁶⁴ At Ballyvourney, Co. Cork, a broken quernstone fragment was deposited in a pit within the floor of a roundhouse used by a metalworker, while other broken quernstones and an iron spearhead were left at the base of a drain outside its doorway.⁶⁵ Broken and smashed quernstones are also known from Lisnagun ringfort, Co. Cork; Lagore crannog, Co. Meath, Carriag Aille I and II, Co. Limerick and in recent excavations at Derrinsallagh 3, Co. Laois, amongst numerous settlements sites.⁶⁶

The deliberate deposition or abandonment of broken quernstones – often themselves in such a fragmentary or smashed state that it must have been done deliberately - requires explanation.⁶⁷ Undoubtedly, some were simply accidentally broken and discarded, but there is certainly an emerging pattern of deposition at house doorways. In anthropological terms, deliberate or structured deposits often mark key events in the life of the house - or the people within it (e.g. the abandonment of the house, the death of a key household figure). In early medieval Ireland, we might imagine that upon the traumatic death of a household member or when a house itself was being abandoned or rebuilt at the end of its life, it may have been a cultural practice to deliberately kill the household's quern and leave it behind in the ruins. Quernstones were used for preparing bread and cereals (an important aspect of early medieval diet). In early Irish sources, food preparation was a woman's task, so it is possible that these objects were associated with a grandmother or mother.

Doorways and entrances: orientation and meaning

Doorways can be clearly identified on many early medieval houses and are variously defined by kerb-stones, vertical wooden jambs and other features. At Ballyvourney, Co. Cork, an early medieval roundhouse had substantial upright stones on either side of the south-facing door ope, with a horizontal stone as a threshold and vertical posts on either side to hold the swinging door.⁶⁸ Doorways are often surprisingly small (presumably to reduce heat loss), and were probably closed with timber, wattle or rush-work doors. At Deer Park Farms, the oak timber door-jambs of an internal door connecting a roundhouse with its backhouse were only 1.1m in height.⁶⁹ One imagines that people would have had to crouch down to move into that backhouse. Doorway orientation also reveals some interesting details. In most early medieval roundhouses in Ireland, doorways are typically oriented towards the south, east or southeast (and only very rarely to northwest). This is typically interpreted as practical in intent, aimed at providing shelter from any prevailing wet, southwesterly winds. However, it could also have been an inherited, cultural tradition, with the doorway facing the rising sun in the morning, as has been argued for Iron Age houses in Britain. Doorways often face directly towards the dwelling entrance, enabling a person sitting within the house to watch visitors entering the enclosure.⁷⁰ However, on some sites, such as Moynagh Lough crannog, Co. Meath and Sroove crannog, Co. Sligo, the house doors do not face the palisade enclosure entrance, but in some other direction. In these latter sites, some other imperative – such as a clear view towards a distant place of interest - was clearly more important.

The orientation of doorways may also have been a signifier of social status or the seasonal use of the house. Sroove is probably a 'poor' person's crannog and it has a generally untypical southwest-facing door. At

⁶² S.P. O'Riordáin, 'Lough Gur excavations...and the Spectacles', 39-111.

⁶³ Michelle Comber, 'Tom Fanning's excavations at Rinnaraw Cashel', Fig. 24.

⁶⁴ Waterman, 'White Fort, Drumaroad', *Ulster J Archaeol* 19 (1956) 73-86.

⁶⁵ M.J. O'Kelly, 'St. Gobnet's house, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork' *J Cork Hist and Archaeol Soc* LVII, (1952) 31-2.

⁶⁶ A. O'Sullivan and N. Kenny, 'A matter of life and death', 10.

⁶⁷ The occurrence of broken quernstones on early medieval crannogs such as Lagore, Co. Meath, where floor surfaces were presumably soft and waterlogged, certainly suggests a deliberate smashing of stones.

⁶⁸ O'Kelly, 'Ballyvourney', 36, Fig. 2.

⁶⁹ Lynn and McDowell, 'Deer Park Farms, Glenarm', 9; The oak door-jambs were dendrochronologically dated to AD 648.

⁷⁰ This is particularly striking at Deer Park Farms, where the occupant of the house could have had a clear view of anybody walking up the *airdrochat* towards the house door – while the visitor would have only seen a dark opening at the end of the causeway; Lynn and McDowell, 'Deer Park Farms, Glenarm', 9.

Ballyutoag, Co. Antrim, an early medieval upland enclosure perhaps associated with summer cattle herding (with radiocarbon dates indicating use in the seventh to eighth century AD), the doors of the houses do not face the 'normal' direction to the southeast, but again towards the southwest, perhaps because these were temporary, seasonal habitations.⁷¹

Floors and beds: palimpsests of human history

Floor surfaces are present in some early medieval houses (particularly in the waterlogged conditions of some crannogs and in the Hiberno-Norse towns). Early medieval house floors were made of brushwood, wattle, earth, clay and gravel and stone slabs. They were built up over time in sequences, being gradually raised both by the natural detritus of daily living and as part of the deliberate renewal of house spaces. As might be expected, these vary in their character and form. They are not always continuous, they vary in their depth across a house (from the centre to the edges), and were also subject to constant human trampling and reveal much about the use of house spaces, particularly when waterlogged deposits can be analysed in detail.

At Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim palaeoenvironmental analyses revealed that the house floors of this rath were covered 'in a spongy organic material, not unlike well-decayed leaf mould, with litter consisting of heather, bracken, brushwood and even fallen leaves', all attractive to insects.⁷² At Sroove, Co. Sligo, the house floor of the phase 2 occupation was composed of a layer (20cm thick) of brushwood, intermixed with clay.⁷³ There were few animal bones on this floor, but the presence of grain, blackberries and raspberries suggest food preparation and consumption within the house, probably during the summer and autumn. A flint thumb scraper and chert arrowhead found near the hearth may have been one of these 'magical items' collected and brought into the house to protect it. At Sroove, the floor of the next phase of occupation, phase 3, was entirely different. This was a floor of flagstones laid over a base of smaller stones, 2-3 layers thick. Finds from this floor level included a lignite bracelet, comb fragment (near the fireplace), and bone beads. Towards the back of the house there were iron nails, a small bone needle, a bone pin and a knife. Fredengren suggests that the presence of such objects argue that the house was still 'alive' and not cleaned out before its abandonment. However, it is also possible that these personal objects indicate the location of the bedding against the back of the house walls, and thence usefully the organisation of daily and nightly activity within the structure.

There is rarely evidence for internal furnishings in houses, either in the archaeological or literary evidence, but there certainly strong evidence in both defined separate wooden cubicles or compartments around the edges of walls. These features usually survive in archaeology as stake lines or post-and-wattle and are usually to be interpreted as the beds or benches termed *imdae* or *immdai* in the documentary sources.⁷⁴ The literary texts imply that some beds could be made more private using textile curtains hung on wooden rods, while bronze furnishings and other decorative features are also mentioned.⁷⁵ At the early medieval rath at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, the central roundhouse (structure X) had beds made of wooden posts and post-and-wattle screens, with a 'bedding' foundation of brushwood, meadow grass and grassland sods. Palaeoenvironmental analyses indicate that various insects lived with and on the people who slept in these mouldy and slightly smelly deposits; as indicated by one sample from the southern bedding where there were identified sixty-three human lice (*Pediculus humanus*), thirty-three human fleas (*Pulex irritans*), some cattle lice and a small amount of human intestinal parasites (e.g. *Trichuris trichiura*) as might be accidentally deposited if a child had a brief bout of diarrhoea in the bed.⁷⁶ Things other than insects were also recovered. In the main roundhouse bed, a small bronze brooch pin was found in the bedding. In the roundhouse (structure Eta) beside it, eleven glass beads and an iron ringed pin were found in the bedding⁷⁷, either because they were accidentally lost or hung beside the bed.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Williams, 'Ballyutoag', 37-49.

⁷² Fred Allison, Alan Hall and Harry Kenward, 'Technical report: Living conditions and resource exploitation at the Early Christian rath at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, N. Ireland: evidence from plants and invertebrates. Part 1: text' Unpublished report from the Environmental Archaeology Unit, York 99/8. University of York, (1999), pp 62.

⁷³ Christina Fredengren, *Crannogs: A study of people's interaction with lakes, with particular reference to Lough Gara in the north-west of Ireland*, (Bray, 2002), pp 226-32

⁷⁴ Murray, 'Documentary evidence', 87-8.

⁷⁵ Murray, 'Documentary evidence', 88.

⁷⁶ Allison *et al*, *Living conditions...at Deer Park Farms*, 62.

⁷⁷ Lynn and McDowell, 'Deer Park Farms, Glenarm', 9.

⁷⁸ It is also possible that brooches, jewellery and bronze pins were actually hung on the walls for display. This is

Hearths and fireplaces: symbols of the household

Finally, hearths and fireplaces would have been of huge symbolic and social importance to the early medieval household, being literally the centre of the dwelling and the focus of most domestic and social activity within it. They provided warmth vital for human survival during cold winters, for food preparation and even light for craft activities⁷⁹ and would have been the hub for various social and domestic events, such as cooking, crafts and social interaction. Hearths can be clearly identified within many early medieval houses. Some were merely roughly circular areas of ash, burnt clay and charcoal, often located at the centre of the house; but even these have multiple layers of ash and clay from long-term use and build-up. Occasionally, undefined hearths such as these are placed across a single level stone. At Sroove crannog, in Phase 2 the central hearth within the house was on a single fire-reddened stone. The same place in the house was re-used as a hearth in Phase 3.⁸⁰ In other houses, hearths are more formally defined, being rectangular boxes edged and lined with stones. These hearths were also frequently re-built on top of each other, perhaps over significantly long periods of time. At Moynagh Lough crannog, in the two roundhouses in Phase Y, the hearths were built of stones set on edge to create a rectangle or square. The same hearths were clearly re-used, but shifted slightly in location within the house and changed slightly in shape across time.⁸¹ In Moynagh Lough's large eighth-century roundhouse, the first fireplace was an open hearth into which a second rectangular, stone-lined pit was placed. Subsequently, a third fireplace was added to the east. There was also evidence for periodic rake-outs from this main hearth, with at least twenty discrete spreads of ash taken out from the fire and spread across the house floor. Hearths were permanent fixtures or settings that hearkened back to the past, while their re-building signals an intention that they be used again in the future or the changing use of the house. The evidence suggests that some hearths became historical settings, acting as symbols of the household's genealogical past.

Daily life within enclosures: the domestic economy and craft activities

The organisation and lay-out of farmyards

However, while early medieval houses were socially and ideologically important, they were not the only locations of domestic life. The settlement enclosure itself provided the space for various daily tasks and farmyard labour. Both archaeological and historical sources indicate that scattered around the enclosure interior were such features as open-air fireplaces or hearths for outdoor cooking or industry, while small lean-to structures or storage sheds were occasionally located against the inner face of the bank.⁸² There were also wooden pens for sheep, pigs and perhaps calves. Also to be seen around a rath were a range of other features and fittings, some that would leave little archaeological trace today; from movable objects such as

suggested by a description of a fantastic house on an island in *Immram curaig Maile Dúin* (The Voyage of Máel Dúin's Boat). In the story, when the hero enters a house, he sees that 'from one door post to the other was a row of brooches of gold and of silver, with their pins in the wall,' as well as a row of neck-torques of gold and of silver and a third row of swords, with hilts of gold and of silver. The rooms were also full of white quilts and shining garments. Other items included a roasted ox, and a flitch in the midst of the house, and great vessels with good intoxicating liquor. H.P.A.

Oskamp (ed. and trans.), *The voyage of Máel Dúin: A study in early Irish voyage literature* (Groningen 1970), para. xi

⁷⁹ Triona Nicholl, 'The use of domestic space in early medieval roundhouses: an experimental archaeological approach' *Trowel* 10 (2005), 27-32: 29 describes a recent experimental archaeological study that has revealed through scientific measurement of light levels within modern roundhouse reconstructions that people using a fire within an early medieval roundhouse could have had sufficient light from it to carry out quite intricate craft activities, such as the threading of a needle, embroidery and textile working. The best light available is at c.1m above floor level, just where a seated person's eyes would be.

⁸⁰ Fredengren, *Crannogs*, pp 226-32

⁸¹ Triona Nicholl's ongoing experimental archaeological research has identified an interesting explanation for why some early medieval hearths appear to 'migrate' across a house floor as they are rebuilt. Experimental archaeological recording of a roundhouse reconstruction at the Irish National Heritage Park, Ferrycarrig, Co. Wexford suggests that hearths must always be directly under the apex of a roof for smoke to clear. If the roof shifts or slumps sideways, the hearth may need to be moved so as to 'follow' the apex. Archaeological sites with 'moving hearths' may therefore be evidence for roof changes as houses aged.

⁸² Waterman, 'Ballypalady', 29-36; Jope, E.M. and Ivens, R. 'The rath at Ballymacash, County Antrim' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* Vol. 98c (1998), 101-123; A.M. Lennon, 'Excavation of a ringfort, Raheens I, near Carrigaline, Co. Cork' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 98, 75-89.

ploughs, carts, miscellaneous agricultural equipment to wood piles, dungheaps, middens and caches of raw materials.⁸³

Although early literary sources imply the existence of barns, sheds and storehouses, there are obvious difficulties in distinguishing between domestic houses and outbuildings on archaeologically excavated sites. There are a number of known structures that can be positively identified as outbuildings on account of their size, shape, location and use.⁸⁴ The rath at Ballymacash, Co. Antrim has some of the best-preserved structures of this kind.⁸⁵ Incorporating the inner face of the bank as their rear wall, they were enclosed by a post and wattle wall running in parallel along the northern side of the enclosure, later replaced with a series of low walls, which indicate no lapse of use of the structures. To the east, a series of sleeper trenches and a spread of posts were interpreted as the remains of a lean-to structure, the roof of which would have rested directly on the walls. The floors within the lean-to structures were well-laminated and showed little evidence for the presence of livestock (i.e. they were not stables or buildings for heavy animals). What is most interesting about these structures is the depth of evidence they present for subsistence at the site; including a grain-drying kiln, an oven with associated hearth and a storage pit. Ballymacash neatly illustrates one of the key subsistence practices that would have been undertaken at most settlements – the processing and storage of cereal grains. It also presents a clear image of the structured use of the enclosure space with clearly defined zones of action and practice; the structures associated with agricultural and subsistence practices were located in the northern half of the enclosure, while the domestic dwelling houses are located only in the south.

Agriculture, the domestic economy and gender relations

The range of craft activities and domestic economic practices carried out within an early medieval settlement would have varied according to the social status of its inhabitants. Domestic life was also largely organised on the basis of gender relations, with men and women working together on some tasks, while some crafts were gender or age specific.⁸⁶ The early Irish law text *Cáin Lánamna* makes it clear there were many daily domestic or agricultural activities that were done by both men and women, including ploughing, reaping, the care of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats within enclosures and general work in the fields.⁸⁷ Similarly, children were probably involved in a whole range of tasks around the household.⁸⁸

However, it is also clear that women were responsible for a range of domestic tasks such as child-rearing, food preparation and the production of textiles. *Cáin Lánamna* is clear that women were responsible for feeding (*biathad*) the household.⁸⁹ The preparation of food, such as the grinding of grain in rotary querns and the preparation of milk, cheeses, whey, curds, and so on tend to be broadly portrayed as women's work in the literature.⁹⁰ Women (whether they were a wife, daughter or slave) prepared dairy products (milk, buttermilk, butter, cheese, whey, curds) and the wooden buckets and churns used in milking, cheese and butter-making have been occasionally found in rath and crannog excavations. Indeed there is a strong association between women, milking and dairying.⁹¹

⁸³ MacNeill, 'Ancient Irish Law', 277-316. The seventh century text *Crith Gablach* provides a detailed list of the tools, commodities and supplies expected to be present within the settlement enclosure of the *mruigfer* grade farmer, and all were to be 'in their proper places'. MacNeill, 'Ancient Irish law', 291 and A. O'Sullivan 'early medieval houses', 250-51 indicate that such items included 'a cauldron with its spits and supports, a vat, a washing trough, and a bath, tubs, candlesticks, knives for cutting rushes, ropes, an adze, an augur, a saw, a pair of large wooden dividers, a chisel (see O'Sullivan, footnote 78 which explains Donnchadh Ó Corráin's new translation here), a grindstone (rotary quern), mallets, a billhook, a hatchet spears for killing cattle, a fire always alive, a candle on the candlestick without fail, full ownership of a plough with all its outfit : C.J. Lynn, 1986 *Houses and related outbuildings in early Christian Ireland*. Unpublished PhD thesis, NUI, describes the marked similarity between *Crith Gablach* and the houses and artefacts he recovered from the rath of Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim.

⁸⁴ Jope and Ivens, 'Ballymacash', 101-123; D.M. Waterman, 'Excavations at Ballyfounder rath, Co. Down' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 21(1958), 31-61; C.J. Lynn, 'A rath in Seacash Townland, County Antrim' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 41(1978), 55-74

⁸⁵ Jope and Ivens, 'Ballymacash', 101-123

⁸⁶ Bitel, *Land of women*, pp 111-37.

⁸⁷ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 448-9.

⁸⁸ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, pp 451-2.

⁸⁹ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, 451.

⁹⁰ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, pp 449-50; Bitel, *Land of women*, pp 123-5.

⁹¹ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, 450.

Early Irish law claimed that women should own such equipment as a sieve (for sieving flour) and a kneading trough for making dough. Some law texts describe a woman's other equipment as including a griddle, beetle, scale, bucket, kneading trough, sieve, dishes, cups, hides, pillows and cookpots. Quernstones were used domestically for grinding cereal grain and almost certainly this was work that was done by women (although noblewomen were, of course, meant to avoid such menial work). The archaeological excavation of quernstones in homes and dwellings confirms the role of cereal crops in the secular domestic economy.⁹² Both the early Irish historical sources and anthropological studies indicate that textile production, involving the spinning of yarn, cloth dyeing, weaving, and the actual manufacture of clothing were all tasks carried out by women in the home.⁹³ In fact, women were expected to bring to a marriage the equipment for such tasks, such as spindles, distaffs, carding combs – and these as well as weaving tablets, needles and possible loom weights have been recovered from houses and settlements. In an ordinary farming household, clothing manufacture was probably carried out by mothers and daughters; on lordly or more prosperous settlements, it was more likely to have been done by slave-women (although the early Irish sources claim that elaborate embroidery was carried out by noble women).

Men (if they were not lordly and meant to avoid physical work) were responsible for the initial work of agricultural labour, while women were responsible for dealing with its products; men worked at ploughing, sowing of cereals, harvesting, threshing and drying grain in a kiln and the slaughter of livestock. Occasionally, the tools and equipment associated with these activities can be found within houses and dwellings, suggesting that men brought them in from the fields for safe-keeping. Plough shares and coulter were often carefully secured and stored within settlements. Presumably because these were valuable items that a prosperous freeman was expected to contribute to co-operative ploughing, they were cherished and preserved safely inside the home.⁹⁴ Other crafts, in particular metalworking, stone working, house-building and carpentry are also portrayed in the literature as broadly men's activities. Blacksmiths, personages of extraordinary symbolic resonance, for example, are virtually always portrayed as men in the saint's lives and narrative literature.

Crafts and industry: working practices within settlements

Most early medieval settlements have produced a wide range of evidence for various crafts activities.⁹⁵ Craft production in early medieval Ireland would always have been understood by people in social terms – being bound up with ideas about social rank, status and gender. Early Irish laws and hagiographies indicate that wrights, copper-workers and smiths were all high-status individuals themselves, occasionally having a similar honour-price to that of lower grade of nobility. It is also clear that manual labour was to be avoided by people above a certain social rank (so that being discovered cutting wood was a mark of shame for a lord, for example). In contrast, comb-makers were portrayed as being of low social status by the jurists who compiled the laws, who scoffed that comb makers were to be associated with dogs and dunghills – the location of their raw materials.⁹⁶

Some crafts such as non-ferrous metal working (including the working of copper alloys, silver, tin, gold), glass-working, as well as sophisticated coopering and lathe-turning were probably specialist crafts carried

⁹² Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, 450; For a recent analysis of quernstones from early medieval houses and settlements, see A. O'Sullivan and N. Kenny, 'A matter of life and death?', 8-11.

⁹³ Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, pp 448-51.

⁹⁴ Plough shares and coulters have often been found on early medieval crannogs, where they obviously could not have been actually used for ploughing. At the early medieval cashel of Leacanabuaile, Co. Kerry, amongst the iron objects found were three knives, a possible barb from a fishing spear, a sickle, a quantity of slag and, most notably, a plough sock which was recovered from the habitation layer in house A; Ó Ríordáin, S.P. and Foy, J.B. 'The excavation of Leacanabuaile Stone Fort, near Caherciveen, Co. Kerry' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 46(1941), 85-91; see MacNeill 'Ancient Irish Law...', for a detailed outline of what tools and equipment specific grade of society were expected to own. See Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, 49, etc for an account of the practice of *comingaire* 'joint herding'. This would involve settlements that could not afford a full plough team and equipment of their own to co-operate with other settlements in the area when it came to large tasks such as ploughing, sowing and harvesting.

⁹⁵ O'Sullivan, *The archaeology of lake settlement*, pp 141-5; Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland*, pp 68-98; Mytum, *Origins of early Christian Ireland*, pp 210-52.

⁹⁶ Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 63.

out by skilled craftsmen who would not have been permanent residents. As skilled itinerants, they may have moved around the *túath*, working for patrons, who would have supplied them with raw materials, food and protection in return for the prestige goods they produced.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the archaeological evidence for iron slag from many early medieval settlement sites, including crannogs, seems to indicate that small-scale iron-working must have been relatively common and that an individual farmer may have had sufficient knowledge of iron-working to at least repair his own equipment or make simple tools. However, there is also clear evidence from the archaeological record, and in the early Irish literature, for particular specialist ironworking. The processing of iron ore, and the forging of complex objects (e.g. swords, spearheads, axes) would have been carried out by blacksmiths.

The production of stave-built buckets and the carving of lathe-turned bowls were probably done by those trained at the craft. In particular, those 'wet-coopered' buckets required to contain liquids (water, milk, beer) would have had to have been cleft from oak planks and carefully carved to produce a tight fit. So specialist woodworkers may occasionally have been present on some sites. There is abundant evidence from the waterlogged deposits of crannogs for the on-site manufacturing, use and discard of such wooden artefacts, such as lathe-turned bowls, carved tubs, stave-built buckets.⁹⁸ Bucket stave blanks found at Moynagh Lough suggested that some element of coopering was being carried out on the site.⁹⁹ A few crannogs (e.g. Lagore and Moynagh Lough) have also produced some evidence for lathe-turning wasters (the wooden 'cores' left after the bowls are complete) suggesting that they were manufactured on-site using pole-lathes.¹⁰⁰

Bone working and antler working has left its raw materials, semi-worked pieces and complete plain and decorated bone pins, toilet implements, combs and other objects on both high-status and low-status sites. The large bone assemblages in middens (of pig bone in particular, as simple pins were commonly carved from pig fibulae) probably served as a ready supply of raw material for pins, and recent studies are beginning to reveal the various stages of production and discard involved.¹⁰¹ It might even be suggested that the production of bone pins to be worn in the hair or clothing was closely linked to the 'quality' of a site's food waste, both being a means of social display. Leather working may have been practiced on some sites as discarded shoes, worked scraps of leather and a wooden shoe-last were found at Lagore, while iron leather-scoring tools are known from Lagore and Ballinderry No. 1.¹⁰²

It is occasionally possible to trace the social and spatial organisation of such crafts and industry within the enclosed spaces of raths and crannogs. This is particularly the case of metalworking, where the use of furnaces, pits, fires and dumps of material leave the most significant archaeological traces. Particularly interesting are those fixtures or fittings that had to be constructed, used and maintained across time (i.e. pits and furnaces for heating metals, cobbled surfaces for pouring molten metal into moulds and then laying to cool, pits for waste, etc). Such features can be firstly understood in terms of how people used a particular feature in the *past*. They can also be used to trace people's intentions to use them again in the *future*. This is particularly true of iron working and copper-alloy working where individual furnaces were filled with clean sand, implying that a metalworker had the intention to return to a site and to re-use it. Finally, they also signal the moment of abandonment, when metalworking areas simply stopped being used, occasionally in mid-use.

The physical evidence for the range of these activities is remarkably broad and varies greatly. One of the most common features at almost all sites is the use of external hearths, varying from amorphous, unenclosed burnt spreads used for short periods of time; to formally stone-lined hearths with deep accumulation of ash

⁹⁷ John Bradley, 'Moynagh Lough: an insular workshop of the second quarter of the 8th century'. In R. M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds.), *The age of migrating ideas*. (Edinburgh, 1993), pp 74-81, Fig. 8.4; Susan Youngs (ed), *The work of angels: Masterpieces of Celtic metalwork, 6th-9th centuries AD* (London, 1989), pp 178-8; Michael Ryan, 'Fine metalworking and early Irish monasteries: the archaeological evidence' in John Bradley, *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1988), pp 33-48, at pp 38-9.

⁹⁸ Caroline Earwood, *Domestic wooden artefacts in Britain and Ireland from Neolithic to Viking times* (Exeter, 1993).

⁹⁹ John Bradley, 'A separate-bladed shovel from Moynagh Lough, County Meath. In *J.R.S.A.I.* 112 (1982), pp 117-22.

¹⁰⁰ Caroline Earwood, 'Turned wooden vessels of the early medieval period from Ireland and western Scotland' in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 54-55 (1991-1992), pp 154-159.

¹⁰¹ James Boyle, pers. comm.

¹⁰² O'Sullivan, *The archaeology of lake settlement*, pp 141-5

and other burnt material.¹⁰³ Some, as with the two stone-lined hearths within the enclosure at Ballypalady II, Co. Antrim, are thought to have been used for cooking.¹⁰⁴ Others are associated with metalworking, both ferrous and non-ferrous and can be seen as active working areas, augmented with additions such as windbreaks, furnaces and spreads of broken crucibles, slag and other waste products. Metalworking can occasionally be seen to become the dominant practice at a settlement, as at the raised rath at Altanagh, Co. Tyrone. During Phase II at the site, the entire occupation surface was laid with cobbles and a sandstone pavement was inserted around a metalworking hearth.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, the site also revealed no definite evidence for houses or other structures but ample evidence for metalworking in the form of furnace bottoms, a bowl furnace and quantities of slag, hammer scale and flint.¹⁰⁶ At Moynagh Lough, phase X (dated to the early eighth century), there was evidence for several episodes of copper production, including both melting and casting.¹⁰⁷ This occurred episodically, in places that may have been deliberately located towards the edge of the site. Metalworking area 1 (possibly dated to c.AD 720) appears to have been between a house and the entrance to the site. It was a spread of charcoal, earth and ash and the presence of pieces of baked clay, crucible shards, mould fragments, an iron stake used for sheet metalworking and motif pieces, probably indicates the full manufacture of objects there. Metalworking area 2 was also located in an outdoor location, at the back of the roundhouse. Several features were used, including a wind-break, a cobbled area, a furnace, a stone-edged area of burnt clay and a compacted spread of pebbles. These were permanent fixtures, used for on-site manufacturing and production. Interestingly, the furnace, constructed in a prepared scoop in the peat, had been filled with clean sand and tiny pebbles. This, and the nearby presence of charcoal spreads, suggested that it was used concurrently (on at least eight occasions) and it may have been intended to return to it in future. In a dump of metalworking debris were fragments of clay-nozzles, crucibles, heating-trays and up to 600 pieces of moulds used to cast brooches, pins, mounts and studs.¹⁰⁸

Hearths are frequently both the first and last thing to be used at a settlement, highlighting their importance not only on an industrial and productive scale, but also on a more familiar level as providers of heat, light and comfort. This is poignantly demonstrated by the construction of a hearth on top of the remains of a collapsed house during the final 'squatting' phase of Ballyutoag I, Co. Antrim.¹⁰⁹

Pits are one of the more enigmatic elements to be found within the enclosure. Others are a little harder to discern. At Glenkeen South, two large rectangular pits were found lying side by side in the centre of the enclosure, both filled with masses of charcoal, identified as being from small branches of alder.¹¹⁰ A similarly confusing pit was found at the ringfort at Killarn, Co. Down. Located within an arc of postholes the pit was 30cm deep and 1.2m in diameter, filled with stone and charcoal.¹¹¹ When the stones were removed, the walls of the pit were found to have been firebaked and the pit was seen to contain a second, internal pit, 30cm in diameter. Perhaps used for making charcoal, the intriguing nature of evidence such as this serves to highlight the gaps in our understanding of the practicalities of craftwork in early medieval Ireland.

Dirt, food and the dungheap on early medieval settlements

One thing that a modern person would observe on a putative visit to an early medieval rath or crannog would be the dirt, smell and general noisome atmosphere. Rubbish and animal dung would have often been

¹⁰³ V.B. Proudfoot, 'Excavation of a rath at Boho, Co. Fermanagh' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 16 (1953), 41-57; T.E. McNeill T.E. 'Excavations at Dunsilly, County Antrim' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 54-55 (1991-1992), 78-112.

¹⁰⁴ Waterman, 'Ballypalady', 29-36

¹⁰⁵ Williams, 'Altanagh', 33-88

¹⁰⁶ Williams, 'Altanagh', 33-88

¹⁰⁷ Bradley, 'Moynagh Lough: An insular workshop', pp 178-84; John Bradley, 'Excavations at Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath'. *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 111 (1991), pp 5-26; Ryan, 'Fine metalworking and early Irish monasteries', pp 38-9. Michelle Comber, 'Lagore crannóg and non-ferrous metalworking in early historic Ireland'. *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 8 (1997), pp 101-14 is a key text for interpreting non-ferrous metalworking in Ireland.

¹⁰⁸ Bradley, 'Moynagh Lough: An insular workshop', pp 178-84.

¹⁰⁹ B.B. Williams, 'Excavations at Ballyutoag, County Antrim' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 47 (1984), 37-49

¹¹⁰ D.M. Waterman, 'A pair of raths at Glenkeen, Co. Derry' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 30 (1967), 49-52

¹¹¹ Boal, F. W. & M. K. Moffitt. 'A partly destroyed rath in Killarn townland, Newtownards, Co. Down' *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 22(1959), 107-11.

literally underfoot, although there were clearly some areas that were kept clean (such as the house floors and the *airdrochat*). Indeed, rubbish was periodically cleaned up and dumped in a specific places within the enclosure - a midden, mound or dung-heap – often at the edge of the site or close to the entrance. The early medieval tale *Fled Bricrend* describes how Bricriu and his queen fell from their *grianán* when Cú Chulainn tore their *dún* apart, ‘and wound up in the dunghill in the middle of the *les* among the dogs’.¹¹² Middens/dungheaps provide a range of information on early medieval diet, animal management and economy, but also give an insight into how people may have perceived dirt in early Irish society. On some early medieval crannogs, it is clear that rubbish was cast up against the wooden palisade, or tossed across it out into the lake-water. This was the case at Moynagh Lough crannog¹¹³ and Ballinderry crannog No. 2, where bones were clearly gathered up after feasts, carried to the palisade and flung across it.¹¹⁴ At Ballinderry crannog No. 1, the largest accumulation of bone was at the palisade at the north side of the crannog, ‘furthest from the house’. Hencken reckoned that this was the ‘rubbish heap of the crannog’.¹¹⁵ At Craigyarwarren crannog, Co. Antrim, the midden was at the northeast at the crannog palisade.¹¹⁶ The placing of rubbish at the site boundary, the palisade, supports the idea discussed above that early medieval communities placed a particular importance on boundaries, and understood them as significant edges. In many societies, dirt and rubbish is perceived as ‘polluting’ and dangerous, so is often placed at the edge of the dwelling because that is a spatially and mentally liminal location.¹¹⁷

Rubbish also had the potential to convey social messages to outsiders. Certainly, one of the first things that a visitor to a prosperous rath or crannog would have seen (and smelled) would have been a midden or dunghill at the boundary. A visitor to a high-status rath or crannog might have seen the bones remaining from prime joints of expensive beef, pork or mutton, as consumed at the lordly table. On other low status sites, bones were similarly also available to view outside the door of the house. It is also worth noting that in many small-scale societies, the bones from different animals, the skulls and jaw bones in particular, can be deliberately deposited and prominently displayed to protect a site. In other words, the location of horse stallion skulls beside the ‘house’ at Craigyarwarren, Co. Antrim and at Lagore crannog, Co. Meath may not have been entirely accidental.¹¹⁸ In any case, at Moynagh Lough, the diet and economy of the site was revealed by studies of the large faunal assemblage.¹¹⁹ The middens from the crannog lay outside the palisade, and were particularly thick across the north, east and west side of the island. John Bradley suggested that these unphased layers of habitation debris were the ‘rubbish tip’ of the island. They were rich in animal bones and also produced large amounts of small finds, such as objects of wood (including a separate-bladed shovel that might have been used to cast material over the palisade),¹²⁰ leather and even gold (a small piece of filigree). Finbar McCormick has recently provided a social interpretation to the

¹¹² Ó Corráin, ‘Ireland c.800’, 551.

¹¹³ Finbar McCormick, *Stockrearing in Early Christian Ireland*. Unpublished PhD thesis, QUB, Belfast (Belfast, 1987), section 3.22.

¹¹⁴ Hugh O’Neill Hencken, ‘Ballinderry crannóg no. 2;’. In *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 47 (May 1942), sect. C, no. 1, pp 1-76, at p. 31 stated that “immediately outside the palisade (of the ninth-century crannog of Ballinderry No. 2) upon the level of the old swamp or shallow lake was an enormous accumulation of food bones, chips and fragments of wood, and other debris from the crannog. This was particularly abundant on the eastern and southern sides where the deposits were deeper.” This bone included huge amounts of cattle bone, as well as significant quantities of pig (mostly young animals), and some sheep/goat, horse.

¹¹⁵ Hugh O’Neill Hencken, ‘Ballinderry crannóg no. 1’. In *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 43 (April 1936), sect. C, no. 5, pp 103-239: 118.

¹¹⁶ Coffey, ‘Craigyarwarren’, the midden comprising cattle, sheep/goat and pig bone, as well as three ‘very fine’ horse skulls. Other finds from this midden included an iron pan and fragments of leather shoes.

¹¹⁷ Richard Hingley, ‘Boundaries surrounding Iron Age and Romano-British settlements’ in *Scott. Arch. Review*, 7 (1990), pp 96-104, at p. 100; Michael Parker-Pearson, ‘Food, fertility and front doors in the first millennium BC’, T.C. Champion and J.R. Collis (eds.), *The Iron Age in Britain and Ireland: Recent trends* (Oxford 1996), 117-32; Joanna Brück, ‘The Early-Middle Bronze Age transition in Wessex, Sussex and the Thames Valley’. Unpublished PhD thesis (Cambridge, 1997), p. 159.

¹¹⁸ George Coffey, ‘Craigyarwarren crannog’. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 26 (June 1906), sect. C, no. 6, pp 109-18: pl. X.

¹¹⁹ Finbar McCormick, *Stockrearing in Early Christian Ireland*. section 3.2; Finbar McCormick, ‘Interim report on the animal bones from Moynagh Lough’ in *Ríocht na Midhe*, 7, no. 4 (1985-1986), pp 86-90; Finbar McCormick, ‘Dairying and beef production in Early Christian Ireland, the faunal evidence’ in T. Reeves-Smyth and F. Hammond (eds.), *Landscape archaeology in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983), pp 253-267.

¹²⁰ Bradley, ‘A separate-bladed shovel from Moynagh Lough’, pp 117-22.

consumption of food on Moynagh Lough crannog.¹²¹ One of the interesting aspects of the cattle bone from Moynagh Lough is that the bones from all types of cuts of beef are present, from the tenderloin and fillet (which literary sources suggest were high-status meats for kings, lords and other significant personages) down to the ankles (given to lower status craftsmen). McCormick suggests that the presence in the middens of virtually all of the cattle carcass indicates that feasts were being held on the crannog at certain times of the year, when a larger than normal social group would gather. However, the occupants of low status crannogs seem to have consumed essentially the same meats, at least in terms of range of animal species if not in actual volume. Camilla Lofqvist's faunal studies on the small early medieval crannog occupation levels at Sroove, Co. Sligo indicate that the bone assemblage was generally typical of other early medieval sites, with a preponderance of dairy cattle, with some pig, sheep, and lesser amounts of horse.¹²²

Cesspits

Although pits are rare on early medieval settlements, at least some are known and occasionally their function as latrines or cesspits is clear. For the excavator, the role of a certain pit at the early medieval rath at Killyliss, Co. Tyrone was fairly easy to determine.¹²³ At some early medieval crannogs (e.g. Ballinderry 1, Moynagh Lough, Lough Faughan), there are also pits and depressions that appear to have been used as cesspits, places where people might have put their own bodily wastes (as well as other rubbish). A prosaic event involving somebody defecating on a crannog in the seventh century is described in a story entitled 'The death of the three sons of Diarmait son of Cerball', purporting to have taken place in AD 651.¹²⁴ A cesspit was investigated at Moynagh Lough phase X (dated to the early eighth century). This was a sub-rectangular dug feature (1.7m x 1.3m), filled with lenses of dung, alternating with narrow fibrous lenses composed of straw and leaves (presumably the 'wiping' material used in the toilet). It had been re-cut on two occasions and could have been cleaned out without leaving archaeological trace much more often. This cesspit was located just inside the entrance to the crannog, off to the right of the end of a timber pathway that led into the site, and in full view between a roundhouse and the palisade. It was also dug into the west edge of metalworking area 1 mentioned above, suggesting that when that ceased to be a dump for metalworking debris, it became a place for depositing human waste.¹²⁵ Similar dug pits have been noted on other crannog sites. At Ballinderry no. 1, a double pit was located to the east of House III, between its walls and the palisade, towards the end of the eleventh century use of the site. Similarly, at Ballinderry no. 2, a pit was located at the north edge of the site, just inside the pile palisade of the ninth-century crannog. This was probably also a cesspit, again visible from the site entrance.¹²⁶

Conclusions

Early medieval dwellings and settlements were the places where people spent most of their time, where they came to learn about the world from birth, through life to death. They were the places where they learned,

¹²¹ Finbar McCormick, 'The distribution of meat in a hierarchical society: the Irish evidence' in Preston Miracle and Nicky Milner (eds.), *Consuming passions and patterns of consumption*, (Cambridge, 2001), pp 25-32.

¹²² Camilla Lofqvist, 'The animal bones', in Fredengren, *Crannogs*, (CD-ROM Vol. 2, Appendices), pp 142-184.

¹²³ Ivens, 'Killyliss', 9-36. A wattle-lined pit was identified, surrounded by two sleeper trenches that Ivens interpreted as screens to provide a modicum of privacy.

¹²⁴ Kuno Meyer (ed.), 'The death of the three sons of Diarmait mac Cerrbeóil', in *Anecdota Oxoniensia* (Oxford, 1894), p. 70; In the story, the king Diarmait Ruanaid (obit *A.U.* 664) collects an army at his crannog at Lagore to avenge the death of his nephews at the hands of the Leinstermen. In the middle of the night, the king comes out to 'bend his knees' (i.e. to defecate). In front of the house he meets with an enemy, Maelodran. Not recognising him, the king instructs him to 'bring me a wisp', whereupon Maelodran mischievously brings him a handful of nettles, and kindly holds Diarmait's sword while he goes about his business. It is only when the king painfully wipes his bottom with the nettles that he realises that he has been tricked. Threatened with death, he negotiates with Maelodran, to the latter's benefit. Presumably, this was not the only time that somebody ended up in an uncomfortable position when stumbling around in the dark on a crannog.

¹²⁵ Bradley, 'Moynagh Lough: an insular workshop', p. 76.

¹²⁶ Hencken, 'Ballinderry crannog no. 2', p. 31 regarded it as a well (for no better reason than it filled with water when he cleared it out). It was found to be filled with bone and gravel, with a blue-glass bead suggesting its early medieval date. A patch of gravel beside it provided a stable place to stand. Conor Newman, 'Ballinderry crannóg No. 2, Co. Offaly: pre-crannóg early medieval horizon'. *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 11 (2002), pp 99-124, at p. 123 agreed that this was a refuse pit, although he associated it with the sixth-century pre-crannog occupation. In this author's opinion, the lack of wicker surround (as found on the earlier sixth-century site), and the fact that it is directly inside the ninth-century crannog's palisade suggests that it is indeed a cess pit from that crannog occupation.

performed and negotiated their own social identities of household, kinship, gender and social status. Ordinary places and things such as houses, fireplaces, doors, sheds, working areas, pits and latrines, gateways, entrances, pathways and the enclosure boundary itself were the stage settings, props and furniture through which traditional values and beliefs could be expressed. Early Irish laws and narrative literature can enable us to understand how they perceived and understood settlement enclosures as agents in the creation of these social identities, while archaeology can reconstruct the physical organisation and inhabitation of settlements and the social, ideological and cultural perceptions of both dwelling places and domestic practices in people's lives.

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A new Irish early medieval site type? Exploring the ‘recent’ archaeological evidence for non-circular enclosed settlement and burial sites

JONATHAN KINSELLA^{*}

Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP), School of Archaeology, University College Dublin

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Abstract

Development-led excavation in Ireland increased dramatically in recent years, which revealed a large number of previously unknown early medieval enclosed settlements and settlement/cemetery sites. Many of these sites are non-circular in shape, which has led to the suggestion of a new site type. It is argued here that this is not the case and that the mistaken perception of the circularity of the Irish ring-fort has led to the incorrect identification of recently discovered early medieval settlements. There is emerging evidence, however, for settlement/cemetery sites that are mostly non-circular with origins, in many instances, in the late Iron Age. It is the association of settlement and burial that differentiates these from the thousands of variously shaped enclosures known as ring-forts and cashels in the Irish country-side. This paper assesses the archaeological settlement landscape evidence and material culture for a range of enclosed early medieval sites and explores these findings against the backdrop of social status and mobility, which were such important aspects of Irish society during the early Middle Ages. The findings are based on a small sample of excavated non-circular enclosures—in some cases from interim excavation reports and unpublished research—and an examination of a larger corpus of material may reveal differing outcomes. The aim of this paper is to continue the critical evaluation of archaeological findings as they reveal themselves at a pace not seen before in Irish archaeology.

Introduction

This paper will explore and assess the recently excavated non-circular sites variously referred to as D-, heart- and plectrum-shaped enclosures. It is the writer’s belief that these sites were the dwelling-places for a variety of social classes, as described in the seventh- and eighth-century law texts, from the ordinary small farmer (*ócaire*); to the strong farmer (*bóaire*); and the lordly classes (*aire/rí*)—see Kelly (1988, 1997) for an in-depth analysis of the law tracts and society in early medieval Ireland. The archaeological remains reflect diversity in the agriculture and industry practised by the occupants and retainers of these households. It is argued—as opposed to Coyne and Collins (2003) and Coyne (2006)—that the majority of non-circular enclosures do not represent a new early medieval settlement type but that they mirror the type of material remains discovered on previously excavated ring-forts. This paper begins with a detailed examination of the morphological, chronological, landscape and artefactual evidence for early medieval ring-forts. The archaeological evidence suggests social hierarchical divisions within both circular and non-circular enclosures and reveals that enclosure shape had no relevance to the types of activities or status of the people within these settlements. It is suggested that a simplified approach has been taken regarding the classification of ring-forts and their supposedly uniform circular plan, and that this has led to the wrongful identification of a host of ‘newly recognised’ early medieval settlement types. However, excavations are now revealing mainly non-circular settlement/cemetery sites that emerged in the late Iron Age and they can be differentiated archaeologically from the evidence discovered at many ring-fort excavations. Often, it was the

^{*} Author’s e-mail: kinsella.jonathan@gmail.com
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settlement's relationship with the cemetery that resulted in its development and prominence in the surrounding landscape.

The author has chosen a small sample of previously published ring-fort excavations displaying variations in material wealth, size, shape, landscape setting and longevity of use. These are compared with the newly published and grey literature from more recent non-circular enclosure excavations. It is the author's view that the sample referred to in this paper is representative of the types of enclosed settlement found throughout early medieval Ireland.

Ring-forts

Introduction

This first section of this paper utilises a range of publications on early medieval ring-forts. General texts include Stout (1997) and Edwards (1990, 6–33). More recently Comber (2008) has written comprehensively on ring-fort economy, which is a much valued addition to the original work by Proudfoot (1961) on the same subject. A range of other papers deal mainly with morphology (Barrett 1980; Stout 1991, 1998); dating (Barrett and Graham 1975; Limbert 1996); and settlement (Kerr 2007). Of course there is considerable overlap in the findings presented by the various authors. Stout (1997, 22–31) presents a very useful chronological assessment of the radiocarbon dates from ring-forts. Kerr (2007, 86–100) interrogates this data further and suggests variations in the construction dates between univallate and platform ring-forts. The location of ring-forts—including soil preferences and altitude—has also been comprehensively covered in a range of papers including some of those mentioned above (for example Barrett and Graham 1975; Fahy 1969; Kerr 2007; Monk 1998; Stout 1991, 1997, 1998). The range of publications on ring-forts is, therefore, plentiful. However, there has been a recent introduction into archaeological discourse of 'newly discovered' non-circular early medieval enclosures, an issue that is specifically addressed in this paper.

Morphology and the problems associated with defining a ring-fort

Before non-circular, enclosed early medieval settlements are discussed, it is necessary to examine the perceived morphology of a ring-fort and if, in fact, circularity is a crucial factor in its classification. It becomes apparent that scholars and researchers, past and present, have different views on what defines a ring-fort. Ó Ríordáin (1942a, 29) in his *Antiquities of the Irish countryside*, stated that 'In its simplest form the ringfort may be described as a space most frequently circular, surrounded by a bank and fosse or simply by a rampart of stone'. Nineteen years later, Proudfoot (1961, 94) declared that the enclosed spaces of ring-forts or cashels were generally circular although 'oval or rectilinear' examples were also found. Edwards (1990, 14) has since stated that ring-forts can be circular, oval or pear-shaped enclosed areas. More recently, Stout (1997, 14–15) suggests that the circular shape of the ring-fort was achieved using a line connected to a central stake and that circularity was the defining characteristic according to the seventh- and eighth-century law tracts. The circular shape of the ring-fort is, therefore, often seen as one of its essential characteristics today, even though former scholars recognised smaller numbers of oval-, pear- or rectilinear-shaped enclosures as ring-forts. The easy availability of Stout's (1997) work has, perhaps, led to the view that many non-circular early medieval enclosures represent a new site-type but the archaeological evidence outlined in this paper demonstrates this to be inaccurate.

A number of contemporary terms exist for early medieval enclosed sites such as ráth, cashel and dún. The former relates to earthen enclosures while 'cashel' describes stone-built examples. The latter appears to relate to enclosures of greater prestige and prominence. 'Ráth' is a term that is favoured in Northern Ireland while 'ring-fort' is a more common term south of the border. As early as 1928—in *Ulster, its archaeology and antiquities*—the term ráth was used in preference to ring-fort (Lawlor 1928) while Kerr (2007, 1) has noted that this preference still prevails. It is now time to re-evaluate the use of these terms because neither accurately reflects the archaeological evidence. This author suggests that the term 'enclosed settlement' is more agreeable with the large numbers of differently sized, and shaped, early medieval enclosed sites that are identifiable in the archaeological record. This term accurately refers to the dwelling-places of early medieval families and their

retainers who were engaged in farming and small-scale industrial and craft activities. There are also enclosed early medieval sites with non-settlement functions such as livestock enclosures, specialist industrial sites (see Cahircalla More, Co. Clare, below, which was an enclosed iron-smithing forge) and defensive fortifications etc. To avoid using misleading terms such as ring-fort and ráth, these can simply be classified by their function such as livestock enclosure, enclosed iron-smithing forge etc. Therefore, these terms will be used throughout the remainder of this paper and it is hoped to influence the future classification of enclosed early medieval sites.

Chronology

The dating of early medieval enclosed settlements has been a contentious issue (see Limbert 1996 on Iron Age origins) but Stout (1997, 24) has shown that the majority were constructed from the beginning of the seventh until the end of the ninth centuries, covering a 300-year period. More recently, Thomas Kerr (2007, 99–100) has interrogated this evidence and has identified that platform enclosures were constructed later than univallate types between the mid-eighth and mid-tenth centuries.

Identifying chronological phases and morphological changes for enclosed settlements has caused further disagreement. Monk (1995), after excavation of an enclosure at Lisleagh 1, Co. Cork, demonstrated that it was enlarged and replaced with a more formidable defence after only a short period. Conversely, its neighbouring site, Lisleagh 2, began as a large enclosure but the following phase witnessed the levelling of the bank and the construction of a shallow ditch and palisade. The final phase saw the infilling of the ditch as occupation occurred over it. At Rathgurreen, Co. Galway, a secondary large bank and fosse were built inside the original bank and fosse (Comber 2002). Mytum (1992, 123), conversely, states that enclosure banks were ‘generally unsubstantial and only constructed once’. He supports his view by declaring that only 4 of the 16 excavated enclosed settlements from Co. Antrim, which allowed for confident interpretation, showed evidence of more than one phase of enclosure bank while 12 (of 21) sites from Co. Down, and all 9 excavated enclosures from Cush, Co. Limerick (Ó Ríordáin 1940), produced similar evidence. However, the evidence from the majority of recently excavated early medieval enclosed settlements shows that their banks and ditches were re-cut and modified on more than one occasion and the validity of Mytum’s claims can now be seriously questioned.

It appears that the majority of excavated enclosed settlements were occupied for one (Lynn 1978) or two centuries (Monk 1998). It is possible that high-status sites may have been occupied over a longer period and, as a result, produced archaeological evidence for numerous ditch re-cuts, bank/wall re-builds and a higher number of artefacts when compared to the majority of enclosed settlements. Based on their morphology and rich artefactual evidence, some raised enclosed settlements were arguably high-status sites, which were occupied for long periods of time. The raised enclosure at Gransha, Co. Down, revealed three occupational phases dating from the sixth/seventh century to the tenth century (Lynn 1988a). A similar dating sequence was recorded at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim (Lynn 1988b), while another raised enclosure at Rathmullan, Co. Down, revealed five phases of early and later medieval activity (Lynn 1981/2). Many less-substantial and lower-status enclosed settlements probably saw only occasional repairs. However, very few have actually been excavated, and even fewer have seen total excavation and publication. The most recent research shows that 168 early medieval enclosures have been excavated (Comber 2008, 225–8). This represents a tiny percentage of the total amount in the country, anywhere between 30,000 (Stout 1997) and 60,000 (Mytum 1992). An increased understanding of the activities, chronologies and social roles associated with enclosed settlements will not become apparent until a much larger sample has been excavated and/or more comparative surveys of their surface features have been undertaken.

Size

Early medieval enclosures commonly have an enclosed space between 15m and 35m in diameter (Barrett 1980, 42; Edwards 1990, 14), with the majority approximately 30m in diameter. Most are univallate (one enclosing element), though where bivallate (two enclosing elements) and multivallate (more than two enclosing elements) examples occur, they tend to enclose a space greater than 35m in diameter (Edwards 1990, 14). Raised and platform types represent another variation due to the

artificial heightening of their interiors. They, like multivallate enclosures, comprise only a small percentage of the overall number. In the barony of Ikerrin, Co. Tipperary, for example, raised and platform enclosed settlements comprised only 13% of the total recorded (Stout, G.T., 1984), while none were noted in the survey of south Donegal (Barrett 1980). However, more recent studies have shown that there are more raised enclosed settlements in Co. Offaly than elsewhere but the boggy nature of the county's landscape necessitated the need to raise the interior above the water table (Stout 1998, 33).

The relatively small number of multivallate, raised and platform examples, in comparison to the vast numbers of univallate enclosures, has contributed to their identification as high-status settlements (Edwards 1990; Graham 1993; Mallory and McNeill 1991; Stout 1997). Many multivallate sites also enclose a larger space compared to enclosures with just one bank and ditch. It has been suggested that raised and platform types were deliberately heightened to convey their status and wealth as they were positioned on prominent locations in the landscape and could be seen from greater distances (Edwards 1990, 20; Graham 1993, 44).

However, such morphological identifications of status should be viewed with caution until a greater number are excavated. The enclosure at Garryduff I, Co. Cork (O'Kelly 1963), for example, was univallate yet it produced a large quantity of prestige artefacts, evidence for copper-alloy working and a possible wooden gate tower at its entrance. This was clearly a dwelling of some prestige yet it was surrounded by only one bank/wall and ditch. The quantity, variety and quality of artefacts uncovered at Ballycatteen (Ó Ríordáin and Hartnett 1943), also in Cork, were much less impressive than Garryduff I yet this was a very large trivallate enclosure. This suggests that the classification of sites, based on multivallation alone, can be misleading when attempting to identify the status of its inhabitants. However, it is worth noting that only 25% of the interior of Ballycatteen was excavated, compared to the 100% excavation of the interior at Garryduff and this has implications for our understanding of the functions and status of early medieval enclosures. The suggestion that raised and platform enclosed settlements were constructed as a means of conveying and displaying status does not correspond with the evidence for the sites at Inchigaggin, Co. Cork (Hartnett 1946; Fig. 1); and Lackan, Co. Wicklow (O'Connor 1944; Fig. 2); discussed below. Their raised construction was an obvious attempt by the builders to avoid the surrounding damp and wet conditions. Their location within bog and marshland, coupled with a paucity of finds from both sites, demonstrates that their inhabitants were of low status.

Landscape

Just as it is a perception that enclosed early medieval settlements are wholly circular in plan, it is commonly proposed that they occur exclusively on agriculturally productive lands. Edwards (1990, 19), for example, declares that as the majority of enclosures functioned primarily as farms, poor soils were avoided and only good land was exploited. This is also a view held by Stout (1991, 206; 1997, 106–07) who states that enclosed settlements avoided areas that could not support farming activity. Further studies also indicate that enclosed settlements utilised only the best soils and avoided the inhospitable uplands and waterlogged lowlands (Fahy 1969; Kerr 2007; Monk 1998, 42). Therefore, uplands and lowlands were avoided in favour of free-draining and sloping ground. In many cases, the law tracts have been used to support this hypothesis as land was valued according to its agricultural capability. The best land was considered to be flat and agriculturally productive while the least favoured, unsurprisingly, was mountain and bogland (Kelly 1997, 394–6).

However, not all early medieval enclosures are circular and, equally, not all are to be found on the best land. Hartnett (1946, 126), for example, excavated a platform enclosed settlement in Inchigaggin. The surrounding landscape was prone to flooding but he observed that the upper levels of the platform remained dry in adverse weather. O'Connor (1944, 53), in his excavation of three enclosed settlements in Lackan showed that the largest was situated on a slightly raised platform while a second, known as Quinn's Rath, occurred on a naturally raised platform. All three were situated on marshland. An enclosure at Boho, Co. Fermanagh, was also located on the summit of a natural mound, above the surrounding poorly drained soils (Proudfoot 1953, 41; Fig. 3). Ó Ríordáin (1949, 128) has shown, using the stratigraphy from his excavation at Grange, Co. Limerick, that the area was covered in peat prior to the construction of the site and an enclosure at Ballykenedy, Co.

Antrim, just below the 121m contour, was situated on poor-quality marshland (Brannon 1980, 65; Fig. 4). There are, therefore, many examples of early medieval enclosed settlements that were built and located in areas that diverge from the perceived ideal ring-fort environment.

Material culture

The finds from the majority of ‘regular’ early medieval enclosed settlements tend to be small in number and are usually dominated by utilitarian items. Iron artefacts, where they survive, consist of knives, needles, nails and various pieces of scrap and slag. Stone and bone functional items include rotary querns, hone stones, flints, spindle whorls and needles. Personal and dress items are rarer and are represented by copper alloy and iron ringed pins and brooches, glass beads and bracelets, lignite bracelets and bone combs and pins.

Generally, higher-status settlements produce similar artefacts, though greater in number and variety to those listed above. Moreover, personal and dress items, such as brooches and ringed pins, are usually more frequent than those found at ‘regular’ enclosures. They occasionally display decoration and, in rare cases, the use of precious metals such as gold and silver. Imported pottery, primarily B- and E-wares, demonstrates contact with the Mediterranean world and western Gaul respectively (Thomas 1976, 1990; Wooding 1996). The presence of crucibles, moulds, ingots and motif pieces shows that the production of bronze and glass items occurred on many sites belonging to wealthy farmers and the noble social grades (see Comber 2004, 2008 for an in-depth analysis of non-ferrous metallurgy in early medieval Ireland).

One way of archaeologically identifying the difference in status between early medieval sites is by an analysis of the number, variety and sophistication of the artefacts discovered. Fredengren (2002, 244) demonstrated this by comparing the artefacts excavated at the small crannóg at Sroove, Lough Gara, Co. Sligo, with those found on larger high-status crannógs such as Rathinaun Crannóg (Raftery 1957) on the same lake, and Lagore Crannóg, Co. Meath (Hencken 1950). She concluded that the items from Sroove were fewer in number and showed less variation in the materials used (see also Comber 2008 for discussions on metallurgical craft production).

It is apparent that the majority of early medieval individuals and kin groups had access to a range of functional items to assist in their day-to-day farming and domestic activities while personal and dress items were less common. Wealthier individuals, however, had access to similar objects and greater quantities of dress items, and the wearing of brooches, in particular, was seen as an indicator of high status (Nieke 1993).

Discussion

When a holistic approach is taken to analysing the morphological, chronological, landscape and artefactual evidence for enclosed settlement in early medieval Ireland, a hierarchical division of society is immediately apparent.

The vast majority of the population were self-sufficient farmers with limited material means. They probably resided in simple and small univallate enclosures with many located on agriculturally productive lands. Others, however, were situated in marginal and upland places. Very few artefacts are discovered from these sites, and those that are usually consist of everyday utilitarian items for practical farming and domestic use. The enclosed settlements discussed above at Inchigaggin, Lackan, Boho and Ballykennedy shared similar characteristics in that they were all small univallate enclosures located on lands unsuited to agriculture and they each produced a meagre collection of artefacts. Some examples of enclosures that were located on lands more suited to agriculture but that revealed little in the way of material remains include Ballyduff (Cleary 1985; Fig. 5) and Croom (Shee-Twohig 1977; Fig. 6), both in Co. Limerick; Ballyhenry 1, Co. Antrim (Lynn 1983; Fig. 7); and Crossnacreevy, Co. Down (Harper 1973/4; Fig. 8). In many instances, the scale of excavation and levels of preservation differ at these sites but it is the author’s belief that their interpretation would not significantly change should all have experienced 100% excavation. It is apparent from a quick glance through Figs 1–8 that the enclosures comprise a variety of shapes including circular, oval and D-shaped examples.

It can be reasonably argued that these enclosed settlements were inhabited by poorer individuals including the *ócaire* social grades and, perhaps, others once belonging to the free social classes who had descended into the ranks of the semi-free. The law tracts list the *fuidri* and *bothachs* as semi-free individuals who were dependants of their lords (Kelly 1988, 33–5). Ten types of *fuidir* are listed and some are clearly people who were reduced to semi-free status through the severance of connection to their kin (Kelly 1988, 34). A quote taken from a law tract describes the predicament that faced the free members of early medieval society when the lines between the free and unfree became blurred ‘It is not easy for each of them to be a *bóaire* when four or five men are heirs of a *bóaire*’ (cited in Ó Cróinín 1995, 89). Therefore, the law of inheritance was a major contributory factor in maintaining wealth and status within a kin group, but as family sizes increased, it became more difficult to distribute wealth. For some of the youngest family members, who did not receive their inheritance share, it is not difficult to conceive that this resulted in competition and pressure for resources such as land and livestock. Within this socially unstable climate, many members of large kin groups, already experiencing economic hardships, must have been precariously close to dropping into the ranks of the semi-free. The author’s interpretation of the archaeological evidence from the enclosed settlements discussed above indicates that this fate may well have befallen some of those individuals.

This paper adds to the growing number of publications identifying the presence of the lower social grades within early medieval enclosed settlements (Comber 2008; Kinsella 2005; O’Sullivan and Harney 2008; Stout 1997). Some previous narratives have maintained that enclosures were occupied exclusively by the free in early medieval society (for example Graham 1993; Mallory and McNeill 1991; Mytum 1992), yet they have not considered how status fluctuated throughout the early Middle Ages. Settlements, therefore, must also have enclosed those marginally above and below the free social grades (for a further analysis of the archaeology of the lower social grades in early medieval Ireland see Boyle 2004; Kinsella 2005).

The law tracts list the *bóaire* as a prosperous farmer while various grades of lords are described from the *aire déso* to the *aire forgill* (Kelly 1988). Archaeologically, the prosperous free classes resided in univallate, multivallate, raised and platform enclosed settlements. The enclosed spaces were probably larger than that of the lower social grades, with diameters greater than 30m. The artefacts discovered within these dwellings include items similar to those from the *ócaire* and semi-free settlements but in greater quantities and varieties. Status symbols such as items of personal ornament and evidence of foreign trade are also often present. The latter includes imported pottery such as B- and E-ware and resources such as tin. There may also be evidence for non-ferrous and/or glass-working. Another feature of wealthier settlements is their longer period of occupation compared to ‘regular’ enclosures. Therefore, the archaeological evidence indicates a social group in a position of wealth above the majority of the population, but clearly below that found in the minority of royal sites (see below).

Some of the raised and platform enclosed settlements described above are probable examples of *bóaire* or lordly settlements. The raised settlement at Gransha was first occupied in the early medieval period *c.* AD 600 when a natural ridge approximately 4.5m in height was utilised. The second phase witnessed its heightening by a further 1.5m due to the accumulation of occupational debris representing continuous settlement. The final phase, during the tenth century, involved its deliberate heightening, which created a flat-topped mound approximately 45m in diameter. The wealth of the site is attested to by a bronze zoomorphic brooch with enamel and millefiori ornament and E-ware from the first phase, motif pieces, a stylus and clay moulds from Phase 2 and a bronze ringed pin and glass bead from the final phase (Lynn 1988a, 38–41). Phase 2 represented the longest occupational phase and displayed both settlement and industrial evidence in the form of copper-alloy working and textile production (Lynn 1988a).

Another raised enclosed settlement, at Deer Park Farms, was occupied over a prolonged period between the sixth and tenth centuries. It appeared as a flat-topped mound, 25m in diameter, and 6m high. Unlike Gransha, its height was largely the result of continued occupation over approximately four centuries. The artefacts included a bronze brooch and roughly 50 coloured and decorated glass beads. Also discovered were over 700 sherds of native souterrain ware alongside other functional artefacts. A massive revetment wall was added to the outside of the mound during its penultimate phase, which made it appear as a large impressive cashel (Lynn 1988b, 47).

A more recently excavated example is the multivallate and multiphase hill-top enclosure at Rosepark, Co. Dublin, which was utilised from approximately the late Iron Age until the eighth or ninth centuries (Carroll 2008). It appears that an unenclosed settlement of seven souterrains replaced the initial elevated enclosed settlement. The former was located downhill, and nearby, to the latter to which it was located in nearby in a downhill direction. Other noteworthy aspects of the site were the occurrence of eleven cereal-drying kilns and large quantities of E-ware sherds. The large settlement of Cathair Fionnúrach at Ballynavenoor, Co. Kerry, enclosed a figure-of-eight house, a souterrain and produced B-ware and a crucible fragments among other finds (Gibbons 1998). The scale and size of these sites indicate that the inhabitants had access to a considerable labour supply—in the form of base clientship—which reflected their elevated position within early medieval society.

Lagore Crannóg (Eogan 2000; Hencken 1950) and the settlement atop the passage-tomb mound at Knowth (Byrne *et al.* 2008; Eogan 1974, 1977), both in Co. Meath; the enclosure at Clogher, Co. Tyrone (Warner 1988); and the trivallate enclosure at Garranes, Co. Cork (Ó Ríordáin 1942b); are archaeologically and historically recognised as royal dwellings. Much has been written about these sites already so they are not discussed in great detail here. They are recorded in contemporary literature as royal settlements and have produced large and impressive collections of artefacts, with many dress items demonstrating the work of highly skilled craftspeople working under the patronage of their respective kings. The quantity of artefacts from each royal site far exceeds that uncovered from the *bóaire* and lordly enclosures discussed above. Common to each is the presence of non-ferrous metal-working and glass-working while evidence for foreign contacts, involving trade and exchange, is demonstrated by the presence of imported pottery wares. The archaeological record of the royal sites clearly identifies a much wider social and political gap between prosperous freemen and the royal social grades than between the former and lower-status individuals such as the *ócaire* and the semi-free.

Non-circular early medieval enclosures

A total of fifteen recently excavated non-circular enclosures form the basis of the following discussion. The circular enclosures at Dowdstown (Cagney and O'Hara 2009; Pl. I) and Colp West (Clarke and Murphy 2001; Fig. 9), both in Co. Meath, are incorporated within this research because non-circular enclosures were annexed onto both. Firstly, the chronological, morphological, landscape and artefactual evidence for all sites within the sampled group is examined (including settlement/cemetery sites) and an integrated investigation of the results follows. Moving on from this, the final part of the paper looks more specifically at the archaeological evidence for recently recognised settlement/cemetery sites including Castlefarm (O'Connell 2006, 2009), Johnstown (Clarke 2002; Clarke and Carlin 2008, Pl. II), Laytown (McConway 2002, 2003, 2004), all in Co. Meath; Balriggeran (Delaney and Roycroft 2003; Roycroft 2005), Millockstown (Manning 1986), both in Co. Louth; and the settlement/cemetery and agricultural complex at Raystown, Co. Meath (Seaver 2005, 2006; Fig. 10).

Chronology

A certain amount of variation is apparent in the dating of non-circular enclosures. The sites that were radiocarbon dated (thirteen of the fifteen; see Tables 1 and 2) produced dates spanning the fifth to sixteenth centuries AD. The two circular enclosures at Colp West and Dowdstown, later expanded into larger non-circular enclosures, were dated between the seventh and eighth centuries and seventh and ninth centuries respectively, fitting with Stout's (1997) chronology for early medieval enclosed settlement occupation. The D-shaped enclosure at Cahircalla More was utilised between the mid-sixth and mid-seventh centuries (Taylor 2006). The D-shaped enclosure at Killickaweeny, Co. Kildare (Walsh and Harrison 2003; Walsh 2008, Pl. III); and the sub-rectangular enclosure at Ballycasey More, Co. Clare (O'Neill 2003; Fig. 11); were dated between the eighth and tenth centuries and the seventh and late ninth centuries respectively, again roughly corresponding with the construction of enclosed settlements in early medieval Ireland.

Sites occupied for more than five centuries (as evidenced by their radiocarbon dates) include Roestown, Co. Meath (O'Hara 2007, 2009; Pl. IV); Castlefarm, Raystown, Johnstown, Laytown,

Ballynacarriga, Co. Cork (Noonan *et al.*, 2004; Fig. 12); and Millockstown. The material culture from the non-circular enclosed settlement at Balrigger indicates that it was occupied during the second half of the first millennium and into the second millennium.

Six sites from the sampled group suggest that they were occupied before the sixth century and include Castlefarm, Raystown, Johnstown, Laytown, Millockstown, and Ballynacarriga.

Interestingly, five of these are settlement/cemetery sites (see Table 2 for radiocarbon dates associated with settlement/cemetery sites). Only Ballynacarriga is not associated with a cemetery. Therefore, it appears that the majority of these settlement/cemetery sites have their origins in the late Iron Age (O'Sullivan and Harney 2008, 91). Non-circular enclosed settlements without associated cemeteries, however, were generally constructed approximately a century later—*c.* AD 600 onwards—which agrees with Stout's (1997) early medieval enclosed settlement chronology. A distinct difference is, therefore, evident between these two types of non-circular enclosure.

Size

Early medieval enclosures have an average diameter of 30m and it has been argued that larger enclosed spaces equated to increased status. Similar arguments have suggested that multivallation and raised or platform types also reflected the wealth of their inhabitants (see above). The majority of non-circular enclosures have considerably larger diameters than average-sized enclosed settlements. The only examples of similar or smaller enclosures include those at Colp West, with a diameter of 29m, and Cahircalla More (D-shaped) which was 38m wide. The former site, however, had a large sub-rectangular enclosure, measuring 55m east–west by 20m north–south (partly excavated), annexed to its northern side. It also had a smaller oval enclosure attached to its southern side, and it is possible that all three were contemporary. The majority of the remaining non-circular enclosures had average diameters between 50m and 70m while some were very large. Castlefarm, for example, had an inner enclosed space of *c.* 90m by 70m and an outer, later, enclosed area of 120m by 100m.

Landscape

Some degree of variation is present in the location of the non-circular enclosures. Eight sites were situated on the highest point of the surrounding landscape, be it on a ridge, hill or small rise. Four settlements were located on relatively flat land while Balrigger differed as it was situated within a large saucer-shaped depression. Killickaweeny was positioned on the slope of a hill; Cahircalla More and Ballynacarriga in a valley; and Laytown on a ridge. Many of the enclosures were located on agriculturally productive lands. Seven sites (Roestown, Raystown, Johnstown, Killickaweeny, Balrigger, Cahircalla More and Ballycasey More) were in proximity to bog or marshland while Laytown was located on the coast. Therefore, the builders and inhabitants of non-circular enclosures demonstrated considerable variation in their choice of location, a variation also noted in the discussion of enclosed settlements (see above).

Material culture

The quantity and quality of artefacts uncovered from the 15 non-circular enclosures varied (see Table 3 for artefacts related to non-circular enclosures and Table 4 for items associated with non-circular settlement/cemetery sites). It is suggested that the status of each settlement can be partially determined through an examination of the personal and dress items that were discovered. Some sites, such as Roestown and Castlefarm, produced large quantities of finds including impressive items of adornment, abundant animal bone, exotic pottery and evidence for non-ferrous metalworking that demonstrated their occupants' elevated position within society.

Laytown, Raystown and Johnstown produced a similar range of material culture, but not in the same quantity or variety when compared with Roestown and Castlefarm. Laytown, considering its length of occupation, produced only a small quantity of personal items; namely three ringed pins, glass beads and some bone combs (the final report has yet to be published). The recovery of a jet bracelet and E-ware indicated contacts with western Britain and Gaul while glass-making slag demonstrated the presence of highly specialised craft activities. Personal items at Raystown were

represented by a range of pins, beads and bracelets, while horse bits are also suggestive of high-status occupation. Johnstown produced a copper-alloy pseudo-penannular brooch; iron ringed and stick pins; and a glass bead. All four sites also produced high quantities of animal bone and it is apparent that their inhabitants were people of some importance within their respective communities.

The only other non-circular sites with comparable material culture to the non-circular enclosures at Laytown, Raystown and Johnstown, located outside Co. Meath, are Killickaweeny and Millockstown (see Tables 3 and 4).

The remaining non-circular enclosures have produced a similar range of material culture but in less quantity and, notably, with fewer items of personal adornment. The remaining county Meath sites—at Dowdstown and Colp West—produced only a handful of personal items. A similar number and range of personal artefacts were found at Balriggeran, Ballycasey More and Ballynacarriga. The non-circular enclosures at Newtown, Co. Limerick (Coyne and Collins 2003; Coyne 2006; Fig. 13); Lusk, Co. Dublin (Giacometti 2006); and Cahircalla More produced very few personal or functional artefacts. The latter probably functioned as an enclosed iron-smithing forge due to the presence of a smithy and general lack of occupational evidence (Taylor 2006, 35).

The material culture from the non-circular enclosures under discussion demonstrates a hierarchical division of wealth. The following discussion integrates these findings with the chronological, morphological and topographical results to consider how non-circular enclosures are understood in terms of their role in early medieval Ireland.

Discussion

There is sufficient archaeological evidence to suggest that many of the non-circular enclosures were the dwelling-places of the *bóaire* and lordly social grades. Roestown, for example, probably belonged to a family of noble rank. Its sustained chronological sequence and range of material culture reflects that it was a settlement of importance in the early medieval kingdom of south Brega. Roestown was just 3km from Lagore and produced very similar artefacts, most notably motif pieces bearing designs that may have come from the same hand or workshop as those found on the crannóg. Both sites were occupied from approximately the seventh until the late tenth/early eleventh centuries (although a later medieval phase was also evident at Roestown—see O’Hara 2007, 2009). The evidence suggests that Roestown and Lagore were socially and politically related and that perhaps the inhabitants of the former were the noble free clients of the royal crannóg residents.

Castlefarm is another possible lordly residence. The inner, and chronologically earliest, enclosing ditch was substantial, surrounding an area *c.* 90m by 70m. The final outer enclosing ditch was more impressive, measuring 120m by 100m. The artefactual evidence included many fine items of personal adornment and the enclosure was occupied for a considerable period between the fifth/sixth and twelfth/thirteenth centuries. Although the recovered assemblage lacks evidence of foreign trade and non-ferrous metalworking, only half of the enclosure was excavated. The archaeological evidence certainly indicates that Castlefarm was a high-status site during the early medieval period.

Many of the remaining enclosures were probably the homes of well-to-do early medieval farmers such as those of *bóaire* rank. This is suggested by the large size of the enclosures; artefacts including a range of functional agricultural and domestic items; personal items such as ringed pins and occasionally brooches; and evidence for prolonged occupation. Killickaweeny, for example, has been described as the dwelling-place of a prosperous farming family (Walsh 2008, 27–54). The range of artefacts recovered, the enclosure size and its chronology are comparable to those from the settlement at Ballycasey More. The sites at Colp West and Dowdstown differ slightly in that they were initially constructed as smaller circular enclosures, which were enlarged at a later phase. The modification of both sites may have been the result of familial pressures on resources, requiring the enclosure of more land, or perhaps a reflection of upward social mobility/increased wealth.

The square enclosure at Ballynacarriga produced just a handful of personal artefacts. However, the remaining archaeological evidence indicates that prosperous farmers of free rank resided here. Firstly, a number of occupational phases were identified, both within the square enclosure and an associated L-shaped enclosure, with settlement dated between approximately the fifth and eleventh centuries. Secondly, the square enclosure contained a number of structures

including a round house, a later rectangular house, four possible structures, two souterrains, a possible sunken oven, a corn-drying kiln and several large pits. Finally, three round structures, two corn-drying kilns, a cooking pit and a possible souterrain were found within the L-shaped enclosure. The length of occupation, number of structures, and evidence for cereal processing indicates continued farming practices over a number of centuries.

Although highly schematic, the law tracts do contain valuable information on life in early medieval Ireland. The hierarchical divisions portrayed by the writers of these texts are supported by the archaeological evidence. A system of clientship—whereby clients provided their lord with food rent and services in return for advances of stock and legal protection (see Kelly 1988, 29–33)—features prominently in these early writings and one of the roles of the base client was to build and maintain the home of his lord (Charles-Edwards 2000, 71; Kelly 1997, 439–44). Prosperous freemen each held a number of base clients who performed the labour-intensive work in and around their dwellings (Kelly 1988, 30). When considered alongside the archaeological evidence from many of the enclosures discussed above, this lends credence to their identification as the homes of wealthy free farmers and lords. These sites witnessed prolonged occupation and enclosed large spaces/areas. Associated field systems, for example at Dowdstown and Roestown, testify to the considerable labour that was required to farm the surrounding lands, the majority of which was provided by low-status individuals.

A smaller number of non-circular enclosures were probably the homes of ordinary or low-status farmers and the archaeological evidence suggests that they were people of limited wealth. Some of the enclosures had different or specialist functions such as the iron-working forge at Cahircalla More. Only a handful of finds were uncovered at the sub-square enclosure at Lusk although this is offset somewhat by the large quantities of animal bone. The enclosure was relatively small (less than 40m in diameter) and the site awaits radiocarbon dating to determine its length of occupation. The low quantity of finds, however, suggests a relatively short chronological sequence more in keeping with the majority of early medieval enclosed settlements that were occupied for one or two centuries.

Another non-circular enclosure that produced little in the way of finds was Newtown. This plectrum-shaped enclosure had a central figure-of-eight structure measuring 11m internally. Interestingly, the slot trench on the northern side of the structure revealed a flint scraper, some horse teeth and the top of an adult skull, possibly reflecting the retention of pagan beliefs (Coyne 2006, 68–70). Certainly, Newtown is an unusual site and its function remains something of a mystery.

Coyne and Collins (2003, 18–19) were the first to suggest that non-circular enclosures represented a new early medieval site type. They interpreted enclosures such as Newtown and Killickaweeny as high-status sites that favoured hill-top locations rather than the mid-slopes preferred by many early medieval enclosed settlements. The shape and landscape context of these sites were used to identify a new, high-status, early medieval settlement type. Walsh and Delaney (2004), however, disagreed and argued that the shape of the enclosure was the result of topographical constraints rather than a preconceived vision of how the settlement should appear.

They were the first to challenge Coyne and Collins' (2003) identification of a new site type and their association of Newtown with Killickaweeny. Walsh identified topographical constraints as a factor contributing to the shape of the enclosure at Killickaweeny. The presence of bedrock along the eastern side of the D-shaped enclosure at Roestown prevented the easy excavation of a circular enclosure (R. O'Hara pers. comm.). Seven of the non-circular enclosures were located in proximity to bog, marsh or wetland and this, undoubtedly, would have impacted on the shape of the enclosure. Newman (1997, 201) has previously recognised that topography was influential in ordering the size and shape of early medieval enclosures, and this is evident in the above examples.

The presence of pre-existing upstanding structures may also have influenced the shape of an enclosure. Stout (1997, 14–15) suggested that the circular shape of the ring-fort was achieved by running a line from a central post; however, this became impossible if a structure was already present. It has been proposed that the enclosure at Raystown was originally circular but that its D-shape was the result of an expansion that was restricted by the presence of a milling complex (M. Seaver pers. comm.).

The social dynamic was also a factor in determining the shape of an enclosure. Giacometti (2006, 37) has demonstrated that the sub-square enclosure at Lusk appeared circular and larger when approaching the entrance from the south. Large postholes indicated the presence of an impressive

wooden bridge over the ditch, the latter being deepest at this point. The adjacent banks were also more substantial here. The ditches and banks surrounding the rest of the enclosure were less impressive, suggesting that the occupants deliberately designed their settlement to appear more substantial than it actually was. The residents of Lusk were probably from the lower social grades of early medieval society, evident by their sparse material culture. However, it appears that they were aspiring to an elevated position in society that belonged to people with greater material wealth and who resided within larger enclosures.

This research demonstrates that the archaeological evidence from non-circular enclosures mirrors the findings from ring-fort/enclosed settlement excavations. The majority of non-circular enclosed settlements equate to the homes of the prosperous free social grades—people who also resided in circular enclosures. Some lower-status individuals designed their enclosures to appear more substantial than they really were, while those who had experienced upward social mobility expanded their settlements to enclose a larger space. Stating that non-circular enclosures differ from ring-forts/enclosed settlements in shape and landscape context is clearly an over-simplification. A number of factors influenced the eventual appearance of *all* early medieval enclosures, with sites of all shapes found in a variety of topographic settings.

This author strongly suggests that terms such as ‘ring-fort’ and ‘ráth’ be replaced with the more encompassing term of ‘enclosed settlement’. The term ‘ring-fort’ is a misnomer, which fails to adequately describe the many non-circular enclosures that are currently being archaeologically discovered. An oversimplified view of the morphology, economy and status of early medieval ring-forts has resulted in their incorrect identification as ‘new’ settlement types. The complexity of enclosed early medieval settlement must be recognised anew and a holistic approach to the archaeological evidence must be adopted before identifications of ‘newly recognised site-types’ are postulated. Clearly, ring-forts and non-circular enclosures are the same monument. They were the dwelling-places for a variety of social grades between the sixth and tenth centuries. In essence, they are the enclosed settlements of early medieval Ireland.

Discussion of recently identified settlement/cemetery sites

Non-circular enclosures associated with cemeteries differ in date as well as function to those without burial grounds. The former appear to have evolved during the late Iron Age, with burial grounds forming the focus of activity. The non-circular enclosures at Castlefarm, Johnstown, Laytown, Raystown, Balriggeran and Millockstown differ to early medieval enclosed settlement due to the presence of a cemetery. Some of the cemeteries were small, for example only 8 burials were discovered at Castlefarm, while others were very extensive, for example 398 graves at Johnstown. It appears, therefore, that some cemeteries were familial in nature while others contained the remains of the surrounding community over many centuries.

Many of these sites developed around late Iron Age burial grounds. The archaeological evidence from Johnstown demonstrates that the settlement succeeded the first burials and expanded thereafter in tandem with the growth of the cemetery (Clarke and Carlin 2008, 55–86). The evidence from Raystown depicts a similar story. The burials date from the early fifth century (Seaver 2006, 78; see Table 2 for radiocarbon dates), and indicate settlement in the area, which led to agricultural activity and the later cemetery. At Castlefarm, two burials were dated between the mid-fifth and sixth centuries and it appears that the settlement evolved from this. It has been suggested that the cemetery—located within the original enclosure—at Balriggeran was a familial burial ground used throughout the settlement’s life cycle (Delaney and Roycroft 2003, 19). At Laytown, the cemetery came into existence during McConway’s (2003) ‘Early Christian Phase’ (between the fourth and eighth centuries). It succeeded two inner enclosures, with some of the burials found within the upper fills of these ditches. However, the director does describe a crouched burial amongst the internments (McConway 2004), suggesting prehistoric activity of possible Bronze Age or Iron Age date. Millockstown differed in that the cemetery was established during the latter stages of its Phase II and was mostly utilised during its final phase (Manning 1986). The final phase related to the significant enlarging of the enclosure. Further investigations from the Early Medieval Archaeological Project (EMAP) have identified that, for the most part, settlement/cemetery sites are generally associated with

late Iron Age funerary monuments such as ring-ditches and ring-barrows for example (O'Sullivan and Harney 2008, 93).

The number of people buried in each cemetery differed. A total of 398 inhumations were recorded within the main cemetery at Johnstown. Another large cemetery with approximately 133 burials discovered in the excavated half of the burial ground was found at Raystown. Smaller numbers were found at the remaining sites, ranging from 8 burials at Castlefarm; 49 at Balriggan; 57 at Millockstown; to 80 at Laytown. Therefore, some of these sites enclosed small familial burial plots whilst others must have included the burials of the wider community.

The definition of these sites as secular requires a comparison with known early ecclesiastical foundations. Swan (1983, 274) listed, in order of frequency, the features that are most commonly found at ecclesiastical sites. These include an enclosure, a burial area, place-name evidence with an ecclesiastical element, a structure or structural remains, i.e. church and domestic/workshop buildings; a holy well; a bullaun stone; a carved, shaped, inscribed, or decorated stone cross or slab; the line of a townland boundary forming part of the enclosure; a souterrain; a pillar-stone; a founder's tomb; and, finally, associated traditional ritual or folk custom. Other features not listed by Swan that can be added include round towers and sundials.

He followed this with the assertion that few sites will demonstrate all of the above features but that the majority will have between four and five and none will have less than three. The average size of ecclesiastical enclosures is between 90m and 120m while a significant amount range from 140m to 400m (Swan 1983). The place-name evidence is dominated by the Irish words *cell* ('church'), *disert* ('remote area/monastery') and *domnach* ('church building'), since anglicised to kil(l), desert and donough, respectively (Swan 1983, 274). *Cell*, for example, in early Irish translates to church and in a number of texts clearly refers to monastic settlements or foundations (Quin 1983, 110). *Disert* is commonly used in conjunction with the name of a founding or patron saint (Swan 1983, 274) and, similarly, *domnach* is frequently found in place names associated with a church (Quin 1983, 340). During the later medieval period, terms such as grange, glebe and temple were commonly used (Swan 1983, 274). Hamlin (1992, 144) has since argued that clear evidence for both a church and burials must be present for a site to be considered ecclesiastical in nature.

The size and place-name evidence for the settlement/cemeteries discussed above suggests that they were not ecclesiastical sites. The enclosure sizes are generally smaller while none display place-names characteristic of church sites. All settlements were occupied during the latter part of the first millennium and into the second millennium, but none have produced evidence for a church. It has been suggested that stone churches replaced wooden structures between the eighth and tenth centuries and that they were widespread by the twelfth century (Edwards 1990, 112). Church remains, therefore, would be expected within an enclosure of these dates if the enclosure was ecclesiastical in nature.

The archaeological evidence points to the existence of families and communities living, working and burying their dead within the enclosed confines of their settlements. O'Brien (forthcoming) has stated that the laity were buried in familial cemeteries up until the early eighth century, and that burial within monastic cemeteries was reserved for important and high-ranking individuals. After this, the Church began encouraging communities to abandon ancestral burial grounds in favour of ecclesiastical cemeteries. O'Brien (forthcoming) suggests that the Church was successful in dealing with this issue and, by the ninth century, burial in familial cemeteries had ended. It is probable that the majority of communities were Christian but that they maintained links with their pagan past, and that the conversion to burial in consecrated cemeteries was a slow process.

The cemetery, rather than being removed from the daily life of the community, was at its centre (Leigh Fry 1999, 47). This is supported by the evidence from many of the settlement/cemetery sites discussed above, and by further examples of recently excavated early medieval cemeteries with evidence for related industry and settlement. The cemetery at Augherskea, Co. Meath, for example, contained 197 inhumations. To the east of the burial ground was an area of agricultural activity, with settlement evidence to the west (Baker 2004). Tobin (2003, 32–7) has suggested that the cemetery and settlement (a rectangular enclosure identified by geophysical perspective) at Corbally, Co. Kildare, was utilised as a market fair or *óenach*. Twenty-six cereal-drying kilns were located in proximity to the burials. The excavator suggested that pits containing barley, wheat and oats provide evidence for alcohol production on site. Other excavated examples of early medieval settlements in which burial

and industrial activities occurred include Mount Offaly (Conway 1999) and Gracedieu (Conway 2000), both in Co. Dublin and Colp West, Co. Meath (Gowen 1989).

Philippe Ariés (cited in Leigh Fry 1999, 47) described a medieval French cemetery as a:

Place for procurements, auctions, proclamations, sentences; scene of community gatherings; promenade; athletic field; haven for illicit encounters and dubious professions ... it was the public place *par excellence*, the centre of collective life ... for a very long time, before it was isolated from the church, the cemetery was the public square.

Similar activities were documented at the early medieval cemetery and *óenach* at Teltown, Co. Meath. The yearly fair/*óenach* originated in the funeral processions of important and high-ranking individuals and consisted of communal gatherings where the business of the *túath* was conducted. Goods were exchanged, social ties and relationships were arranged and games and sports occurred, including horse-racing and athletics (see Swift 2000). Burial mounds, or *ferta*, were perceived during the early medieval period as ancestral burial places. *Ferta* functioned as territorial boundary-markers (Kelly 1988, 186–9), and were places where important legal decisions were determined (see O’Brien forthcoming; Swift 1996). The archaeological evidence from settlement/cemetery sites and information from historical sources indicate that burial mounds and cemeteries were central places in the everyday lives of surrounding communities. A range of important social, economic and political activities were performed in proximity to the resting place of the ancestors.

The scale of agricultural and industrial activities, and general status, varied on different settlement/cemetery sites. They all, however, display evidence for prolonged occupation and economic activity over many centuries. Raystown certainly stands out as a bustling settlement and agricultural complex. Brady (2006, 53) identifies Raystown as a centre of large-scale production and this is not difficult to imagine given the presence of eight watermills and five cereal-drying kilns. Indeed, Raystown must have functioned as a specialist agricultural centre during the site’s most active years. The presence of the burial ground, which was established before the construction of the mills, and the quantity of finds (over 900), indicate that it developed from an important cemetery and settlement into a thriving agricultural estate. Perhaps this was the burial place of important and prominent people within the community, and this led to its development as a significant site in south Brega. The site was located on a contested political boundary and may have been utilised as a neutral place, removed from the autonomy of the Church, where legal decisions and related matters could be addressed (O’Sullivan and Harney 2008, 96).

A number of other settlement/cemetery sites were also large, busy and important places. Laytown, overlooking the sea on the east coast, was prominent in both its location and scale. The site produced multiple phases of use, spanning a number of centuries and consisted of many large enclosures—surrounding settlement, industrial and burial activity as well as those used as animal corrals—souterrains and open settlements (McConway 2002). The appearance of the site altered throughout the centuries but it remained an important place until its demise probably during the later medieval period. Balriggan consisted of a very large outer enclosure with a smaller inner enclosure. Industrial and farming activities were prominent and the small cemetery lay within the inner enclosure (Delaney and Roycroft 2003). Johnstown was a multi-phased enclosure that expanded from its inception as an Iron Age ring-ditch (Clarke and Carlin 2008). Large quantities of ferrous metallurgical waste were recovered—over two tonnes—indicating that iron-working was a major component of the industrial activities at the site. A possible watermill and mill race were also discovered, reflecting large-scale cereal processing. Finally, at Castlefarm the presence of nine large wells is suggestive of some form of semi-industrial textile production (O’Connell 2009). This interpretation is supported by the numerous needles that were recovered from the ditch fills. Again, this was a multi-phase large enclosure intimately related to earlier burial activity.

What differentiates non-circular settlement/cemetery sites from enclosed settlements? The fundamental difference is the site’s relationship to and, in most cases, development from earlier burial activity. Settlement/cemetery sites tend to be slightly earlier in date—usually originating during the

fifth century—and generally expand throughout their life cycle until their abandonment several hundred years later. It is this connection with the past and our ancestors that resulted in their special significance and their development into important settlement, agricultural and industrial sites.

Conclusion

It was not possible to investigate the archaeological evidence for early medieval non-circular enclosures without first examining perceptions of the social and economic function of ring-forts. It is argued that a simplistic narrative is apparent in certain archaeological literature that depicts free social grades living within circular enclosures found uniquely on agriculturally productive lands. It is this oversimplified view of ring-fort settlement that has resulted in the identification of ‘new’ early medieval enclosures that are non-circular in shape and located on hill-tops.

When the archaeological evidence from a range of circular and non-circular enclosures was examined, it was found that there is variation in their chronological, topographical and artefactual evidence. The circularity of the enclosure was not an issue in determining the function and status of the enclosure and enclosed settlements *of all shapes* housed a variety of social grades. The findings revealed that most of the non-circular enclosures were the homes of prosperous farmers and that a smaller number could be considered low-status settlements or specialist sites. To avoid future confusion, the author suggests that the term enclosed settlement should replace misleading terms such as ring-fort and ráth.

There does appear to be a case for describing settlement/cemetery sites—that are mostly non-circular—as a new site-type of the early medieval period. These tend to originate in the late Iron Age, continue in use for several centuries, are associated with a variety of agricultural and industrial activities, and produce ‘high-status’ artefacts. Enclosed early medieval settlements were mostly constructed at least a century later, many were occupied over a much shorter period, and the majority have not revealed the same scale of agricultural or industrial activities. Therefore, it is the association with the cemetery—and possibly with the burial of high-ranking individuals—that allowed for the development and success of many of these settlements.

Finally, it must be stated that many of the sites discussed above are awaiting the publication of their final reports and, as such, these research findings and interpretations may alter as new information comes to light. However, these interim findings seek to encourage and continue discussions in early medieval archaeological settlement landscape and material culture research.

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**Living with the dead in early medieval Ireland: some
observations on burial, cemeteries and settlements, AD
400-1100**

By MATTHEW SEAVER AND AIDAN O' SULLIVAN¹

The traditional view of early medieval Irish society as one in which people lived in ringforts, cashels and crannogs and buried their dead at early Christian ecclesiastical churchyards has been radically challenged by archaeological discoveries in recent years. In particular, the perception, role and changing character of burial grounds, particularly with the recent identification of archaeological site types that have been variously termed 'secular cemeteries', 'settlement-cemeteries' and 'cemetery-settlements', have been shown to be socially, ideologically and chronologically complex. It has become clear that people occasionally buried their dead close to or beside dwellings and within bounded spaces that were themselves located within settlement or agricultural enclosures. The EMAP (Early Medieval Archaeological Project), funded by the INSTAR (Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research) programme is currently investigating the history, character and results of early medieval archaeological excavations in Ireland, 1930-2008 (see www.emap.ie). This paper briefly outlines some of these significant discoveries in relation to death, burial and dwelling practices and offers some interpretations for their role in early medieval Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to introduce and discuss Early Medieval Irish sites where people lived, worked and died and were buried within bounded spaces which did not have definitive evidence for churches. It will examine the evolution of the excavated sites which led to the re-examination of our view of burial and settlement in Early Medieval Ireland and will introduce some of the initial interpretative questions and problems. The nature of the excavated resource will be examined and the extent, significance of dating and phasing of these sites will be considered. This is a crucial issue for examining how they evolved within the landscape. It is also vital to discuss the numbers of burials crucial to evaluating the size of the communities living and dying within these settlements. The paper discusses how these

¹ Authors' joint address: The Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP), UCD School of Archaeology, College of Arts and Celtic Studies, UCD, Belfield, Dublin 4, Re. of Ireland.

sites incorporating burials and settlement elements were laid out and how has this been used to interpret them to date. How did these sites exist in the wider world of ecclesiastical sites and other settlements and routeways within the landscape? What other settlements from the period contained burials and how do they differ from the main group discussed within? Did these sites continue as burial sites in a different form, such as burial grounds for the unbaptised and other marginal groups? Finally the paper discusses the concept of burial within settlements which were not associated with churches occur elsewhere in Europe and it compare with Ireland.

UNDERSTANDING EARLY MEDIEVAL BURIAL PRACTICES IN IRELAND – BEFORE AND AFTER THE ‘CELTIC TIGER’ ARCHAEOLOGICAL BOOM

Traditionally, the prominence of early medieval ecclesiastical sites in the Irish archaeological landscape and the rich documentary evidence for the early Irish church meant that an agenda for the study of the relationships between the living and their dead was rarely set by excavated archaeological remains.² Furthermore, until the recent ‘Celtic Tiger’ boom in Irish archaeology, our only widely accepted insights into early medieval burial practices came from the research excavations of early monastic sites such as Reask, Co. Kerry or hermitages such as Church Island, Co. Kerry.³ However, it is also true that by the 1950s some state-sector archaeological excavations were revealing cemeteries that did not appear to located within ecclesiastical enclosures such as the one associated with a large early medieval settlement and metalworking site in sandhills at Dooey, County Donegal; or within a rectangular enclosure at Knockea, County Galway; or associated with a succession of enclosures, a cemetery and two souterrains at Millockstown, Co. Louth and a cemetery and souterrains at Boolies, County Meath (Figure 2).⁴ By the 1980s, archaeological excavations in advance of the construction of gas pipelines led to the discovery of enclosed cemeteries within narrow excavation corridors at Colp, County Meath and Gracedieu, County Dublin⁵.

² J O’ Sullivan, ‘Nationalists, Archaeologists and the Myth of the Golden Age’, 178-189 in M A. Monk and J. Sheehan (eds.) *Early Medieval Munster, Archaeology and Society* (Cork, 1998).

³ T. Fanning, ‘Excavation of an Early Christian cemetery and settlement at Reask, Co. Kerry’ 61-172 in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy 81C* (1981)., M. O’ Kelly, ‘Church Island near Valencia, Co. Kerry’ 57-136 in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* -- v. 59, section C, no. 2 (1958, Dublin)

⁴ A.B O’ Riordáin and E. Rynne, ‘A Settlement in the Sandhills at Dooey, Co. Donegal’, 58-64 in *Archaeological Acquisitions in the Year 1959*, in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. XCI (1959, Dublin)M.J Kelly, Knockea, Co. Limerick, 72-101 in E. Rynne (ed) *North Munster Studies: essays in commemoration of Monsignor Michael Moloney* (Limerick, 1967)., C. Manning, ‘Archaeological excavations of a succession of enclosures at Millockstown, Co. Louth’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Vol 86, Section C (Dublin, 1986). P.D Sweetman, ‘Souterrain and Burials at Boolies Little, Co. Meath’, 43-57 in *Ríocht na Midhe*, 7.

⁵ M. Gowen, ‘Meath 1988:Colp West, Early Christian Enclosure and Cemetery’ 30-31 in I. Bennett (ed.) *Excavations 1988: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (Bray, 1989). M Gowen, ‘Dublin

This archaeological excavations were able to clearly identify a range of unenclosed cemeteries, or small penannular enclosures with low numbers of burials, burial mounds that were not associated directly with churches and occasionally even burials within ringforts. Interpretation of these burial grounds was hampered by the fact that they were often uncovered with relatively small excavated areas, while a lack of programmatic radiocarbon dating made it difficult to establish their full chronologies and to clarify the proper relationships between settlement activity and cemetery spaces. Thus sites like Millockstown were interpreted as places that saw successive phases of settlement and burial, one replacing the other – rather than places where both may have been ongoing at the same time⁶. Nonetheless, Elizabeth O’ Brien was able to use this emerging archaeological evidence with contemporary documentary sources to show that as late as the eighth century the church was concerned about people still being buried in ancestral burial grounds.⁷ It also could be used to suggest that Anglo-Saxon England, with its penannular burial enclosures of the seventh century was influencing Irish burial practice in the seventh century. These few glimpses enabled by archaeology of a different world of life and death in the early Middle Ages in Ireland were about to be illuminated by spectacular archaeological discoveries.

By the 1990s, Irish archaeology began to be transformed as major EU, Government and Private Sector funded infrastructural developments such as residential housing schemes, gas pipeline developments and motorway construction projects got under way. The ‘Celtic Tiger’ economic boom saw a hugely accelerated programme of archaeological excavation, particularly from 1997-2004.⁸ (O’Sullivan et al 2008). Early medieval archaeology in particular was transformed, as settlements, field-systems, cereal drying kilns and watermills were uncovered in large numbers. The larger scale of infrastructural and housing developments have allowed archaeologists to view early medieval sites across larger, if still localised, areas and have allowed a wider landscape view of settlement. This has presented many new issues surrounding the relationship between the living and the dead. Early medieval human burials were also recovered from a wide range of contexts and monuments revealing that there was an even greater range of practices than previously suspected for dealing with the dead in early medieval Ireland.⁹ Amongst the range of early medieval archaeological sites that have produced human remains are a significant number of enclosed

1988:16 Gracedieu Early Christian cemetery, enclosure’ 16-17 in I. Bennett (ed.) *Excavations 1988: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (Bray, 1989).

⁶ C. Manning. Op. Cit. Note 3, 143.

⁷ E. O’ Brien, ‘Possible Anglo-Saxon Burials in Ireland’ 179-186 in *Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed*, BAR British Series 289 (Oxford, 1999).

⁸ A. O’ Sullivan, F. McCormick, T. Kerr, and L. Harney, *Early Medieval Ireland: Archaeological Excavations 1930-2004*, EMAP Report 2.1 (www.ucd.ie/t4cms/emap_report_2_1_complete.pdf (Dublin, 2008).

⁹ A. O’ Sullivan, F. McCormick, T. Kerr, and L. Harney, Op. Cit. Note 7.

burial sites located within large enclosures which themselves have a wide variety of associated settlement features, both internally and externally (see Table 1). These settlements with burial grounds do not contain definite church buildings, stone sculpture or any unambiguous indicators of an ecclesiastical site (as listed for example, by Leo Swan in his influential criteria for the identification of an early medieval monastic enclosure.¹⁰ These vary greatly in size and content but share a number of characteristics.

DEFINING THE PROBLEM: EARLY MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENTS WITH BURIAL PLACES

How can we meaningfully discuss the practice of burial on settlement sites of the period? Given the myriad of forms of sites incorporating Early Medieval burials is it useful to divide them? Some have simply sought to divide all burial sites into a secular:ecclesiastical division, while others have noted very clear divisions between barrows, ring ditches, flat cemeteries and sites which contain settlement and burial within the one space¹¹ (Stout and Stout 2008, McCormick and O' Carragáin, forthcoming). The former require those within to travel through the landscape from settlements, even if they are relatively close by, to a designated place while the latter require burial where people were living. This subtle but important difference was clearly had meaning in the construction of memory and identity for the community. While the settlement sites may contain mounds, cairns and elements of the other burial sites they are directly within the place in which people are living. This article will examine enclosures which contain burials within ditched enclosures with no clear evidence for church structures (Table 1). They contain evidence for settlement in the form of structures, large faunal, artefact and plant remains assemblages, attached enclosures and agricultural features such as kilns and mills. They can be contrasted with other settlement forms which contain occasional individual or small groups of burials. The sharpness of the division between these two groups of site will be examined and the individual differences as well as similarities in the choices made by different groups of people will be discussed.

THE NATURE OF THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

¹⁰ L. Swan, 'Monastic proto-towns in early medieval Ireland: the evidence of aerial photography, plan analysis and survey' 77-102 in H.B Clarke, and A. Simms (eds) *The Comparative history of urban origins in non-Roman Europe*, British Archaeological Reports, S255

¹¹ G. Stout and M. Stout, *Excavation of an Early medieval Secular Cemetery at Knowth Site M, County Meath*, (2008, Bray), A. O' Sullivan, F. McCormick, T. Kerr, and L. Harney, Op. Cit. In note 7, T. O Carragáin, Cemetery settlements and local churches in pre-Viking Ireland in light of comparisons with England and Wales in M. Ryan, forthcoming J. Graham-Campbell and M. Ryan, (Eds.) *Anglo-Saxon/Irish Relations before the Vikings*, (London, forthcoming)

The excavations have produced a large quantity of evidence. There are at present a number of difficulties with comparing these sites. How does the settlement relate to the burial activity? How many burials are present and over what period of time?

When were people buried? Chronological issues surrounding dating and phasing

A key problem in evaluating how settlements related to burial is that there is a significant disparity in the number of radiocarbon dates available or published. This is particularly true with some sites where burials have sometimes been treated as a single phase, particularly where they have little relationship with other features on site.

The initial explanatory framework for sites such as Millockstown and new discoveries at Ninch, Co. Meath were that they were settlements which in their later phases developed church sites¹². In both cases the burials were all assigned to the one later phase, even though there were few radiocarbon dates. Large circular enclosures with burials and settlement, even those where there is no clear indication of church sites are often assumed to be ecclesiastical enclosures. Large burial grounds such as the enclosed sites at Mount Offaly, Cabinteely and Rathfarnham, County Dublin were thought to be missing church sites equated with the names of churches which were recorded in documentary sources but whose site is unknown¹³.

Sites with significant dating programmes have shown that burials can often span a period between the fifth and tenth century and in the case of a number of recent sites burials continued further into the medieval period. A number of these sites such as Carrowkeel, Johnstown and Knowth, Site M have been the subject of more detailed publications¹⁴. There are frequent references to sites within Table 1 being ancestral burial sites giving the impression that this was a continuation of prehistoric ritual in opposition to the growth of Christian practice¹⁵. It is clear from a review of many sites that the burial of significant numbers of people within enclosures which contained other settlement activity was a new practice in the fifth/sixth century. Given the lack of fully published sites to date there has been an emphasis on the link between these sites and prehistoric activity and some have been discriminatory in reading radiocarbon dates to choose the earlier date within two-sigma date ranges to indicate that burials began in the fourth century. At sites with extensive series of

¹² C. Manning, Op Cit in note 2, 163, C. McConway '1489. Ninch, Laytown' 412-425 in I. Bennett, I, (Ed). *Excavations 2002*, (Bray, 2003). C. McConway, 'Excavations at Laytown reveal coastal settlement' 16-19 in Meath in *Archaeology Ireland*, Vol.16, No. 1, Issue No.59 (2002).

¹³ M Conway, '124. Mount Offaly, Cabinteely, Early Medieval Enclosed Cemetery' 36-37 in Bennett, I, *Excavations 1998*, Bray, (Bray, 2000). J. Carroll '184. The Old Orchard Inn. Butterfield, Rathfarnham, 59-60 in I. Bennett (ed.) *Excavations 1997*. (Bray, 1998)

¹⁴ B. Wilkins and S. Lalonde, 'An Early Medieval settlement/cemetery, at Carrowkeel, Co. Galway' 57-83 in *Journal of Irish Archaeology*, Volume XVII (2008). N. Carlin, L. Clarke, 'Living with the dead at Johnstown 1: an enclosed burial, settlement and industrial site', 55-86 in N. Carlin, L. Clarke and F. Walsh (Eds.) *The Archaeology of Life and Death in the Boyne Floodplain* (2008, Bray). G. Stout and M. Stout, *Excavation of an Early medieval Secular Cemetery at Knowth Site M, County Meath*, (2008, Bray)

¹⁵ Stout and Stout, Op Cit in note. 13, 74-75.

radiocarbon dates it is seen that sites such as Raystown, began in the fifth century with both burials, enclosure and settlement activity dating to that period and ending in the ninth-tenth century¹⁶. Extended sequences from Carrowkeel show that the enclosure and burials are seventh or eighth century in origin¹⁷. At Treenbaun excavations showed that the enclosure was created in the seventh century and used for burial from at least the ninth to thirteenth century¹⁸. The implication is that these sites developed concurrently with and perhaps triggered by the changes in burial practice brought about by the introduction of ecclesiastical sites.

Sites such as Dooley, County Donegal also occupy this middle ground. Burial was thought to be confined to the later stages of this rich enclosed habitation site but dating of three of the burials put them in the late sixth to eighth centuries AD¹⁹. This was interestingly seen by the excavators as ‘*unfortunate*’ as it interfered with the central part of the site. The burials were thought to have cut the occupation strata. It is likely that this site, like others, has suffered from a paucity of scientific dating and given the history of many others went through a similar phase progression.

How many people were buried? Population groups, demography and practices

Knowing how many people were buried in these types of site is vital in attempting to understand the biography of settlement and burial. There are a number of difficulties with this. In the case of those sites which were part of private building projects cemeteries for example at Ninch and Ratoath, County Meath were often only partially excavated with the remaining burials preserved under green areas. This meant that there was a difficulty estimating the true number of interments.

¹⁶ M.Seaver Through the Mill: Excavation of an Early Medieval settlement at Raystown, County Meath’, 73-87 in J. O’ Sullivan and M. Stanley (eds.) *Settlement, industry and ritual:proceedings of a public seminar on archaeological discoveries on national road schemes*, Archaeology and the National Roads Authority Monograph Series No. 3 (2006, Dublin), M. Seaver, *Final Report on Excavations at Raystown, County Meath*, 03E1229, Unpublished Report for the National Roads Authority, (2009), ‘M.Seaver, ‘Against the Grain:Excavation of Early Medieval settlement and burial on the Blackhill: excavations at Raystown, Co. Meath’ in M. Potterton and C. Corlett (eds.) *Death in Early Christian Ireland* (Bray, forthcoming 2010).

¹⁷ B. Wilkins and S. Lalonde, ‘An Early Medieval settlement/cemetery’, 57-83 at Carrowkeel, Co. Galway in *Journal of Irish Archaeology*, Volume XVII (2008) M.Muñiz-Pérez *Final Report on E2123, Treanbaun*, Unpublished Report for National Roads Authority

¹⁸ Muñiz-Pérez, Op. Cit in note. 16

¹⁹ E. O’Brien, Post-Roman Burial Britain to Anglo-Saxon England:Burial Practices Reviewed, 180, BAR British Series 289 (1999, Oxford). E. O’Brien, ‘Burial practices in Ireland: first to seventh centuries’ 62-72 in J. Downes and A. Ritchie (Eds.) *Sea Change: Orkney and Northern Europe in the later Iron Age AD 300-800*, (Trowbridge, 2003)

The importance of the numbers of burials over time is discussed in O' Carragáin's consideration of what he calls *Cemetery Settlements*²⁰. He discusses them in the context of the density of Irish church sites when compared to the situation in Anglo-Saxon England. In his view these sites, while lacking detailed publications, have relatively small populations who are buried on site. Like smaller church sites this situation changed in the tenth-eleventh century with the establishment of new cemeteries for larger communities, based on new ideas about what constituted a family group. Many of these settlements and burial sites then faded from use. He contrasts the numbers of burials at Cemetery Settlements (using some examples from Table 1) with later manorial church sites such as Raunds, Northamptonshire where the church had 363 burials over the late ninth to twelfth century. In short the earlier sites had smaller and more localised contributing populations.

Apart from the issues in calculating numbers of burials over time there are other factors complicating this. As can be seen in Table 1 there is a significant range in the numbers of burials and duration of use in cemeteries. O' Carragáin cited Raystown as having less than 150 burials. This, however only included the excavated area and it is likely that there were at least 3-400 burials albeit over six hundred years. Some cemeteries were used for considerably longer and for larger communities than was initially envisaged for example Parnabhanna, County Laois, Mount Offaly, County Dublin and Faughart, County Louth while others such as Treenbaun, County Galway and Castlefarm, County Meath were clearly for small extended family groups²¹.

The question of who used these burial sites is evidently a key one and varied from area to area. The contributing population to the excavated part of the burial ground at Carrowkeel was thought to be 450 people over time²². Scientific estimation of populations served by cemeteries are very difficult calculations and involve complex statistical osteological information in the construction of pathways. Numbers of burials, lifespan and other factors are taken into account but factors such as migration into an area are not²³. Even the techniques to correct biases in the construction of life tables are fraught with problems. Some sites clearly catered for more people than could have lived on site even taking into account the length of time they were used for. The large numbers of ringforts and other settlement forms must have chosen how and where to carry out burial as part of complex social networks.

²⁰ T. O Carragáin, Cemetery settlements and local churches in pre-Viking Ireland in light of comparisons with England and Wales in M. Ryan, forthcoming J. Graham-Campbell and M. Ryan, (Eds.) *Anglo-Saxon/Irish Relations before the Vikings*, (London, forthcoming)

²¹ See table 1

²² B. Wilkins and S. Lalonde, Op. Cit. Note. 16

²³ G.R. Milner and J.W Wood and J.L. Boldsdén, 'Paleodemography' 485 in A. Katzenburg, and S. Saunders, *Biological Anthropology of the Human Skeleton*, (New York, 2000)

RECONSTRUCTING THE SPATIAL LAYOUT OF SITES

The use of space within these sites has similarities and differences. At a very basic level the people who created them shared a desire to enclose burials, to bound them from the outside world. At another level these sites share the need to keep these bounded settlements within spaces which were used for other activities including habitation. O' Carragáin in his review of Anglo-Saxon and Irish churches has indicated that ecclesiastical sites share a characteristic of spatial arrangement with many of these enclosed burial sites. He notes that burial is frequently located in the eastern part of both types of site. The remaining space in sites without churches is either blank space or contains structures, pits and other habitation related features. Despite the commentary of scholars such as Petts who suggested that separate enclosed cemeteries were not a feature of Early Medieval burial grounds until the eighth century. The development of a physical separation between the living and the dead was seen as a key change from Late Antiquity to the Early Medieval period. Excavations at sites such as Lusk, County Dublin have shown that there was a concern with enclosed burials and the ecclesiastical site in the fifth-sixth century AD. Raystown is different in that it incorporates a burial enclosure at its heart with habitation in bounded areas on either side. Sites such as Carrowkeel, Treenbaun and Ratoath seem to have an anticipated size from the outset while many others have evolved in size as the community's needs grew. At many sites contained within larger enclosures the burials are separated from the wider enclosure by subrectangular or curving enclosures (See table 1). Therefore some cemeteries were deliberately separated from settlement space at a much earlier date. Authors such as Stout and Stout have discussed these sites focussing on the core burial enclosure(s) rather than seeing them in their entirety²⁴. They see the absence of structures as signifying that what they term secular cemeteries were ancestral burial sites which were also used for certain industrial activities and what they term low status occupation. The presence of large amounts of animal bone is explained by funerary feasting. Available animal bone reports, however, show the range of species and practices commensurate with daily consumption by a population who lived on site rather than those simply commemorating burial events. Animal bone is found at sites which are unambiguously and solely linked to burial such as within two small ring-ditches at Cross, County Galway containing burials centring on the fifth-sixth century which had considerably earlier Iron Age burials²⁵. Comparison of these bone assemblages may yield differences in social practice.

A review of even the small number of sites with detailed final reports show that the artefact assemblage is characteristic of habitation sites with the same range and scale of activities as ringforts, ecclesiastical sites and other settlement sites. This differs markedly with the evidence from field cemeteries, penannular enclosures and barrows which have a small number of burial related artefacts. The lack of structural remains is characteristic of many Early Medieval excavated enclosures where the faunal, artefact and scattered posthole, pits

²⁴ Stout and Stout Op. Cit Note. 3

²⁵ G. Mullins, Final Report E2069, Cross, County Galway. Unpublished Report for the National Roads Authority, (2008)

and hearths are the material indicators of habitation. Circular and rectangular structures are found at sixteen sites in Table 1 including the remarkable Camlin 3 with 6 external and 6 internal non-contemporary structures (Figure 3)²⁶. Souterrains are found at numerous sites (see table below) and frequently are based around some of the later enclosure ditches. Souterrains are almost always linked to the locations of houses; the *modus operandi* being that they could be accessed *without being seen* and then facilitating storage of either humans or goods and given their byzantine layouts allowing the inhabitants to hide while defence from attack was organised.

Stout and Stout when discussing the material evidence from what they termed ‘*secular cemeteries*’ suggest that bone manufacturing, iron smelting, cereal drying were ‘low status activities’ which contrasted with ‘high status’ artefacts which were connected with those buried in the cemetery and came from those from the surrounding area rather than those living at the site²⁷. The excavated evidence from the sites in Table 1 suggest a far more nuanced approach must be taken. All the alleged low status activities and features are facilities which higher grades of noble families must possess according to the law tracts. The remarkable milling complex at Raystown was something which only noble ecclesiastical and secular settlement types held. The frequent presence of kilns at many of the sites in Table 1 indicates the importance attached to drying cereals and the presence of mills at some sites indicates that they were important in localised networks of converting grain to foodstuffs for consumption and render to their client lords. This is a more likely explanation than the suggestion that they acted like later medieval granges²⁸

The material assemblage from Raystown suggested that the people living and working there had a large range of material tools for farm and craft work, ringed-pins and beads as badges of display while lacking the excavated evidence for weaponry and finer craftworking evident at nearby Lagore. The small number of burials with knives, beads and pins did not suggest any great difference between those living and working there. A review of even the summary information presented below shows that the communities buried and carrying out activities at these sites had a wide range of different material assemblages suggesting the same kind of range as other settlement forms within the period. The economic and social basis of their daily lives may have differed considerably depending on their place within the hierarchies of local arrangements for the render of surplus and clientship. Early Medieval archaeology is often more about the interpretation of space than structures and the rich documentary sources from the eighth century indicate the range of enclosures and spaces present close to

²⁶ C. Flynn, ‘Camlin 3: a cemetery-settlement in north Tipperary’ 133-141, in M. Stanley, E. Danaher and J. ‘Sullivan (eds.) *Dining and Dwelling, Archaeology and the National Roads Authority Monograph Series No. 6*, (Dublin, 2009).

²⁷ Stout and Stout, Op. Cit. Note3, 69.

²⁸ N.Brady, ‘Mills in Medieval Ireland: Looking Beyond Design’ in 39-68 *Wind & Water in the Middle Ages, Fluid Technologies from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, (Tempe, 2006). Brady suggests caution in the level of any market economy in Early Medieval Ireland but suggests the large scale production of grain for surplus

ecclesiastical and other settlement types²⁹. The ground plans of many enclosed burial sites indicate a similar range of attached enclosures.

Monumental features were often used to mark these burial sites. At Johnstown a mound may have been used to contain the earliest buried remains³⁰. A standing stone was present at the core of the site at Dooley and it was unclear how it related to the chronology of the site³¹. Like at Knoxspark, Sligo, where monumental construction of cairns marked the core of the cemetery and settlement, the stone may belong to the same sequence of development³². While these sites copied monumental forms which had been used during prehistory they consciously used them to signify their connection to ancestries. Unlike the mounds and small barrows which commemorated small groups of people or individuals these became foci for whole communities. These may have served as commemorative foci for communities which did not have the use of stone sculpture and inscribed stones. It may be that there is not a clear cut division between the sites examined in this paper and ecclesiastical sites in making conscious references to the ancient past. This would mean that there was no clear ancestral/secular: ecclesiastical mode for burial. The chosen method of commemoration may have been contingent on local peoples interpretations of monuments from the past in their particular area.

THE WIDER LANDSCAPE

As with much archaeological interpretation there is a tendency to want to immediately categorise these sites, extract them into a group while in reality they have many individual differences. Perhaps the most helpful approach to understanding burial practice and its relationship to settlement is to take case studies of particular areas with intensive excavations. The hinterland of Raystown, County Meath includes a further settlement enclosure with burials at Ratoath (Figure 5, 6). The burial ground has a date range of fifth to sixth century and continued to the seventh to ninth century AD (on the basis of seven dated burials)³³. These burial grounds are located within the same area as a series of Early Medieval churches. Some of these such as Donaghmore, a mere 1km from Raystown, is likely to date from the fifth century while another ecclesiastical site at Killelland 0.5km across the stream contained a similar range of features and structures to Raystown when excavated. All these sites coexisted within the same landscape setting. A similar range of burial sites can be seen in south county Dublin where a small burial ground within an enclosure at Cherrywood, a very

²⁹ C. Swift 'Forts and Fields: A Study of Monastic Towns in Seventh and Eighth Century Ireland' 112 in *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*, Vol IX (1988).

³⁰ N. Carlin, L. Clarke, Op Cit. Note 13.

³¹ A.B O' Ríordáin and E. Rynne, Op. Cit. Note 4.

³² C. Mount 'The Promontory Fort, Inhumation Cemetery and sub-Rectangular Enclosure at Knoxspark, Co. Sligo', 103-116 in M.A Timoney (Ed.) *A Celebration of Sligo, First Essays for Sligo Field Club*, (2002, Sligo)

³³ A.Wallace, 'Excavation of an Early Medieval cemetery at Ratoath, Co. Meath' in M. Potterton and C. Corlett (eds.) *Death in Early Christian Ireland* (Bray, forthcoming 2010)

large and long lived burial ground and possibly a settlement at Mount Offaly and early church sites at Tully, Rathmichael and Mount Offaly, Cabinteely all co-existed within a very short distance during the fifth and sixth centuries (Figure 7) ³⁴. Earlier settlement sites from the period excavated within both areas, generally comprising ringforts, field systems and kilns did not contain burials and must have contributed their dead to one of the other.

SETTLEMENTS AND THE DEAD

All settlements In Early Medieval Ireland had a relationship with the dead, whether the final journey and creation of ancestral memory took place within the site or nearby and each process was imbued with meaning. In some cases such as Raheenamadra, two burials, were placed within an existing settlement during the life of the site³⁵. At others such as Garadice, County Meath and Carrigoran, County Clare, burial of small groups of people took place within the fields of the settlement over a couple of hundred years³⁶.

The notion of using settlement sites for burial which evolved in the later part of the period with burials continuing in sites which had ceased to operate as homesteads. Other sites may have multiple phases of burial, some of which may be contemporary with settlement. At Balrothery, County Dublin the disarticulated remains of two adults, dated to the seventh century were found in pits within the heart of a complex of ditches, structures and souterrains on a hilltop³⁷. At Rahally, County Galway, where a familial cluster of ringforts was uncovered within a Bronze Age hillfort, a single female burial was placed within the silted up ringfort ditch and two children within another between the ninth-twelfth century³⁸. At Hughes Lot East, Cashel, County Tipperary a single female burial was found within a bivallate ringfort ditch. Undated examples such as a burial in the ringfort ditch at Lisanisk, County

³⁴ See Table 1

³⁵ M. Stenberger, M A, Ringfort at Raheenmadra, Knocklong, Co. Limerick, 37-64 in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 65C, G. Mullins, *Final Report on Excavations at Rahally, AO41:E2006*, 76, (2008, Unpublished Report for National Roads Authority) C. Baker, 'Excavations at Cloncowan II, Co. Meath', 16-132 in *The Journal of Irish Archaeology* Volume XVI (2007) V.J Keeley, 'Westmeath 1990:113, Marlinstown' 113 and 'Westmeath 1991:126, Marlinstown' 126 in I. Bennet (ed) *Excavations 1990: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland, Excavations 1991:Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (Bray, 1991, 1992), Anon, *N2 Carrickmacross Bypass, County Monaghan* (2005)

³⁶ E. Larsson, *Final Report on Excavations at Garadice, 07E0296, County Meath*, Unpublished Report for National Monuments Service (2008). F. Reilly, 'Clare 2000:0055 Area EX1, Carrigoran, Multi-phased' 18-21 In Bennett, I (Ed.) *Excavations 2000:Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*, (Bray, 2002)

³⁷ J.Carroll, *Archaeological Excavations at Rosepark, Balrothery, Co. Dublin* (Dublin, 2008).

³⁸ G. Mullins, *Final Report on Excavations at Rahally, Co. Galway, E2006*, Unpublished Report for National Roads Authority (2008).

Monaghan may also belong to this period³⁹. There often appears to be a desire to reference the ditch, which cannot simply be seen as it often is; a convenient place to put a burial.

FROM ENCLOSED CEMETERIES WITH SETTLEMENTS TO CILLINEACH

Many of the sites presented in Table 1 continued as cillín sites for unbaptised children and people who were not eligible for burial. This practice may have evolved from the use of separate areas for these categories of people contemporary with the other burials at sites like Raystown. At Cloncowan II, County Meath an earlier enclosure was used to bury children and adults in the twelfth to thirteenth century⁴⁰. At Gneevebeg burials a whole series of burials were found in the eastern part of the enclosure, the site had been clearly used as Cillín from the sixteenth century but in many ways the site is similar to that at Carrowkeel, County Galway evolved from a cemetery where all community members were buried in the Early Middle ages to a Cillín in the later period⁴¹. Likewise Johnstown continued to be used in this way in the later Middle Ages⁴².

APPROACHES TO EXPLANATION

Archaeologists, historians and historical geographers have been anxious to explain these burial practices. There have been attempts to neatly classify them as secular cemeteries in opposition to ecclesiastical cemeteries. One is related to an older, ancestral order often with an emphasis on prehistoric sites while the other can be seen as Christian burial sites with church buildings which in the later part of the period became the main repository for burial as the parish structure began to develop. This kind of model has a considerable number of difficulties. There was a vast range of different ways of dealing with the dead in Early Medieval Ireland as noted in recent excavations above. Each of these communities had slightly different strategies for dealing with death, burial, and social commemoration relating to local beliefs, important places, kin and tribal ties. Where and how people were buried was rarely expedient and is usually a statement to a wider population group. It is highly likely that Christianity became incorporated within these beliefs with practising Christians being

³⁹ Hughes-Lot in *National Roads Authority, N8 Cashel, Information Brochure* (2008), Lisanisk in *National Roads Authority, N2 Carrickmacross Bypass, Information Brochure* (2006)

⁴⁰ C. Baker, 'Excavations at Cloncowan II, Co. Meath' 61-132 in *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*, Vol XVI, (2007).

⁴¹ A. Wallace, 'No. 1864. Gneevebeg, Multi Period' 342-344 in E. Grogan, L. O' Donnell and P. Johnston (Eds), *The Bronze Age landscapes of the Pipeline to the West*, (Bray, 2007). Carrowkeel, B. Wilkins and S. Lalonde, Op. Cit in note 11 and B. Wilkins, 'The Origin of the Irish Cillín: the segregation of infants within an early medieval enclosure at Carrowkeel, Co. Galway', paper presented to TAG, Columbia University, 2008, available at www.scribd.com/doc/18686459, accessed July 2009

⁴² N. Carlin, L. Clarke, Op Cit. Note 13.

buried within these other burial sites. Equally many early hagiographies note how saints made pagan sites with prehistoric monuments Christian⁴³

The question of who was buried at church sites is not clear in the early period. Burial at church sites in the eighth century required payment for chanting, burial dues relating to the honour price of the person buried and a payment to the priest for viaticum⁴⁴. While ecclesiastical tenants, ecclesiastics and the grades of those working at church sites were probably buried at these sites⁴⁵ an unknown percentage of the population for financial, political, familial and other reasons were buried elsewhere. Much of the discussion of Irish rites for death and burial relate to the anointing of the sick, prayers, purification and salvation with commemorative aid for the dead through masses, penance and prayer⁴⁶. Etchingham notes that the documentary sources suggest that burial outside consecrated ground continued beyond the eighth century and therefore after the turning point of AD700 indicated by O' Brien⁴⁷. He notes the importance of individual burials and monuments as legal claims to land. These important observations go some way to explaining the chronology of practices seen in Early Medieval Ireland the documentary sources but do not often go into great detail about the physical act of burial and its location. What does the treatment of the body, the lack or presence of enclosure, covering monument, settlement mean about the choices for memory and the dead?

Burial practises on these sites are generally supine inhumations, although crouched, flexed and prone examples occur. They are usually a variation on east-west and be orientated within groups to within varying degrees of these cardinal points. At Raystown there was considerable competition and intercutting for the central position within the enclosure perhaps suggesting a focal point or burial. Burials can be in earthcut graves, lintelled graves, slab lined graves and some have earmuff stones or other forms of head protection. Wood lined graves are also known. There is clearly some emphasis on the separation of infants and children and some adults at sites such as Faughart, Raystown and Carrowkeel. Some burial practices were thought to indicate pagan practice. Burials initially thought to be highly unusual such as double male burials, often with injuries such as at Knoxpark were suggested

⁴³ C. Fredengren *Crannogs*, Wordwell (Bray, 2002). 207-210, Fredengren notes the instances of St. Patrick founding church sites at natural topographical features and prehistoric settlement sites in reference to collections of early ogham stones.

⁴⁴ C. Etchingman *Church organisation in Ireland 650-1000*, 271 (1999, Dublin)

⁴⁵ C. Swift, 'Sculptors and their customers; a study of Clonmacnoise grave-slabs' 105-124 in H. King (ed) *Clonmacnoise Studies*, Vol. 2, (2003, Dublin)

⁴⁶ F.S Paxton, *Christianizing Death, The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe*, 203-204 (1990, New York)

⁴⁷ C. Etchingham, 'Pastoral Provision in the first millennium' 79-90 in E. Fitzpatrick and R. Gillespie *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland*, (2006, Dublin)

to be ‘pagan’. They also occur within ecclesiastical sites as at Lusk and at open unenclosed cemeteries like at Mount Gamble, Swords both in County Dublin⁴⁸. They may be warrior burials as described by Tireachan ‘buried....face to face...in the manner of men at war’⁴⁹. There does not appear to be significant difference between burial practices at enclosed burial sites and the range of other Early Medieval burial sites and ecclesiastical sites. While full analysis of burial positions and grave construction has still to be undertaken a variety of rites from burial in shrouds to clothes appears to be present. It seems that those involved in funerals were incorporating different rites and communicated different messages to the community gathered for such events. This factor demonstrates that the unhelpful term ‘secular cemeteries’ is not useful.

The excavations in Ireland have revealed that the vast majority of burials were not accompanied by portable artefacts although each cemetery has a couple of burials with beads, necklaces, iron knives, buckles, occasional pins (see table 1). This is a practice shared by the enclosed burial sites and the unenclosed field cemeteries. It has most frequently been interpreted as an indicator of cultural affiliation, principally links with Anglo-Saxon England. In the earlier part of the period in parts of Merovingian Europe and Anglo-Saxon England artefacts were used as a medium to assist in working through the social tensions and ideas about the past brought about by death⁵⁰. Many of the enclosed cemeteries are associated with small numbers of sherds of imported Mediterranean and continental pottery and glass. E, B, D and PRSW have all been found on sites. At Raystown sherds of E-Ware and a fragment of a glass cone beaker were found within the burial enclosure. This parallels the use of such vessel at other funerary sites for example Garadice where a grave within a small group of open burials contained a single sherd of a Palm cup⁵¹. These vessels linked these enclosed cemeteries with clusters of important settlements centred around areas of importation such as the royal Crannog at Lagore⁵². They may have been linked to funerary rite in the sixth to seventh centuries. In Western Britain and Ireland the emphasis on dealing with these tensions fell on the use of monuments and the archaeology of the body and the grave.

Some of the earlier sites were reused Iron age ring ditches which were deliberately chosen to recreate meaning in an area for example at Collierstown, Co. Meath and Cherrywood, Co. Dublin. At Collierstown, while radiocarbon dates are pending, the excavator sees the site developing from a ringditch containing burials to a larger enclosure which included a small

⁴⁸ A. O’ Connell, ‘Excavations at Church Road and the Early Monastic Foundation at Lusk, Co. Dublin’ 51-63 in C. Baker (ed.) *Axes, Warriors and Windmills, Recent archaeological discoveries in North Fingal* (Dublin, 2009)

⁴⁹ E O’ Brien. *Op cit* in note 18, 55

⁵⁰ H. Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain*, 18, (Cambridge, 2006)

⁵¹ Garadice, E. Larrson, *Op Cit* in Note 5.

⁵² I. W, Doyle. ‘Mediterranean and Gaulish pottery imports in Early Medieval Ireland’ paper submitted to the *Journal of Irish Archaeology*, XVIII (forthcoming).

square footing trench for a building⁵³. The excavator suggests that the site was ‘formally Christianised’ during the 6th century AD. This structure is similar in size to grave shrines, mausolea and cellae memoriae from western Europe and to church sites from Ireland⁵⁴. It may have served a similar purpose to the rectangular wooden buildings within burial grounds with settlements at Dunmisk, County Tyrone and Carrigatogher Harding, County Cork⁵⁵. Doherty when discussing sites such as Dunmisk and Millockstown suggests that many of these may represent private churches on estates or possessions of larger churches⁵⁶. The interpretation of structures within the enclosures as churches or mortuary houses is fraught with difficulty. At Balriggeran the four poster and nine poster buildings found within the inner enclosure alongside the burials were thought to have potential as a church structure while a mill was recognised within the enclosure (Figure 4)⁵⁷. More recent work at ringforts with kilns such as Sallymount in County Limerick have demonstrated that these buildings had a more mundane purpose, probably as raised granaries⁵⁸. That is not to play down the importance of association between the dead and cereal, something which appears consistently from burials in kilns, to milling, to these granary sites. Perhaps this unconscious desire to link the dead with regrowth is a theme worth exploring further.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER AREAS OF WESTERN EUROPE

Burial within settlements which do not have church associations is not of course unique during this time period. In Britain groups of graves are found within Anglo-Saxon settlements such as Bloodmoor, Suffolk⁵⁹. In the Netherlands groups of burials are found within

⁵³ R. O’ Hara, ‘From Pagan to Christian in an Early Medieval Cemetery, Collierstown I’ 367-373 in *Medieval Britain and Ireland, Medieval Archaeology*, Vol 51, No. 1 (2007)

⁵⁴ H. Williams, Op Cit. In Note 49., 152-3.

⁵⁵ R. Ivens, ‘Dunmisk Fort, Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone Excavations 1984-1986’, 17-110 in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 52 (1989). Carrigatogher Harding is described in P. O’Keeffe, 46-46, ‘Through the Valleys and Hills: travels on the N7’ in *Seanda, NRA Archaeology Magazine*, (2007). It is more recently discussed by the excavator in K. Taylor, ‘An Early Medieval enclosure and cemetery at Carrigatogher (Harding) Co. Tipperary’ in M. Potterton and C. Corlett, (eds.) *Death in Early Christian Ireland*, (forthcoming)

⁵⁶ C. Doherty, ‘Settlement in Early Ireland: A Review’, 50-80 in T. Barry (ed.) *A History of Settlement in Ireland*, (London, 2000).

⁵⁷ S. Delaney, ‘An Early Medieval Landscape at Balriggeran, Co. Louth’ in M. Potterton and C. Corlett (eds) *Death in Early Christian Ireland*, (forthcoming)

⁵⁸ P. Long, ‘Food for thought: newly discovered cereal-drying kilns from the south-west midlands’ in 19-28, M. Stanley, E. Danaher and J’ O’ Sullivan (eds.) *Dining and Dwelling, Archaeology and the National Roads Authority, Monograph Series No.6* (Dublin 2009)

⁵⁹ A. Dickens, S. Lucy and J. Tipper, *The Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Cemetery at Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville, Suffolk*, East Anglian Archaeology Monograph No.131, (2009, Cambridge)

settlements of the seventh century⁶⁰. In Germany groups of burials are found within unenclosed settlement clusters. In France significant small groups and individual burials have increasingly been found within settlements in the Paris-Marne area. Zadora-Rio argues that these represent a parallel tradition of burial which continued alongside the growth of church burial grounds, rather than one evolving from the other⁶¹. She makes the important point that to say that these represented a continuity of pre-Christian tradition is to deny the clear absence of such traditions in Iron Age settlements. Individual graves themselves were considered sacred and there was no necessity to be buried in church sites. The consecration of burial grounds in Western Europe seem to largely date from the early eleventh century with specific legislation for the demarcation of sacred space in Ireland in the eighth century⁶². Parallels with the Irish situation can clearly be drawn, for example the smaller burial groups in ringforts and in the fields of Irish settlements, despite the huge differences in the histories of conversion and settlement in these countries. None of the sites from these international comparisons are enclosed and usually have relatively small numbers of burials. The range of enclosed burial sites with no known church associations and settlements in Ireland however clearly seem quite different.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Burial in Early Medieval Ireland was an enormously complex issue with a range of familial, religious, political and social factors influencing where someone was buried and in what manner. The different and changing responses to death are something which can be meaningfully addressed by archaeological analysis given that the fragmentary historical sources are largely written by ecclesiastical writers. Enclosed cemeteries and settlements are an exciting factor within this mix. There are many aspects of these sites which still have to be addressed and the continuing gathering and synthesis of information will lead to further changes in the way they are perceived. There is a need for an anthropological approach to understanding settlement and death for archaeology to offer its own perspective. Equally sites must be viewed in relation to the landscape in which they are situated. Historical evidence is a parallel strand and there has to be a more nuanced way in which one discipline informs the research questions of the other. The EMAP project is funding doctoral level research to further this integration of the excavated resource with the research community funded by INSTAR (Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research). While the development of each

⁶⁰ F. Theuvs, 'Notes from changing settlement patterns, burial grounds and the symbolic construction of ancestors and communities in the late Merovingian Southern Netherlands' 337-351 in C. Fabech and Ringtved, J (eds) *Settlement and Landscape* (1998, Jutland Archaeological Society)

⁶¹ E. Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards and Parish Territories in the Early-Medieval Landscape of France and England in the 7th-12th Centuries: A Reconsideration' 1-19 in *Medieval Archaeology* Vol. XLVII (2003)

⁶² H. Gittos, 'Consecrating the Sacred: Anglo-Saxon Rites for Consecrating Cemeteries' 195-208 in S. Lucy and A. Reynolds *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 17 (Leeds, 2002)

is different and contingent on local factors the continued study of how the living kept the dead at the heart of some homesteads has huge potential for interpreting the lives of people in Early Medieval Ireland.

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Figure 1; Map of Ireland showing sites mentioned in the text

Figure 2; Plan of Millockstown, County Louth (after Manning 1986) and Treanbaun, County Galway (after Muñiz-Pérez, forthcoming)

Figure 3; Plan of Camlin 3 (after Flynn, 2009) and Parcnahown (after O' Neill, 2007)

Figure 4; Plan of Balriggan, County Louth (after Delaney, forthcoming) and Raystown, County Meath

Figure 5; The landscape context of Raystown, County Meath

Figure 6; The local context of Raystown and Killegland, County Meath based on excavations by CRDS Ltd,

Figure 7; The landscape context in South County Dublin showing variety of burial sites in their Early Medieval context



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