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Finn's Seat: topographies of power and royal marchlands of Gaelic polities in medieval Ireland

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ABSTRACT

Hill- and mountain-top cairns and mounds in Ireland are often viewed as epiphenomenal features of the medieval landscape. In recent years, research on early medieval ferta, ancestral burial places cited in the legal procedure of taking possession of land and invoked during disputes over land, has highlighted the role of some sepulchral cairns and mounds in boundary maintenance. This paper proposes that particular cairns and mounds, imagined at least as early as the tenth century as Finn's Seat (Suidhe Finn), acted as territorial markers in boundary formation and continuity, and signified royal marchlands (mruig rí) where Gaelic kings went to hunt and to fight. It is argued that such lands were essentially forests, where a range of natural resources were available. A window onto royal marchlands is provided by the medieval Finn Cycle of Tales (fíanaigecht) which encodes knowledge of medieval territorial boundary zones in the names of the places where the quasi-mythical warrior-hunter and border hero, Finn mac Cumail, works for the king of Ireland, hunts with his fían (wild band) and accesses the Otherworld.

KEYWORDS

Boundaries, *fíanaigecht*, Gaelic kingdoms, medieval landscape, marchland, *mruig rí*, quasi-mythical, resource potential, royal, territory, threshold topographies

INTRODUCTION

Elite power in Gaelic society of medieval Ireland (fifth century to c. 1500) was intimately connected with significant topographies. Particular hills and mountains, rivers, valleys and woodlands, often with deep historicity and mythologies, were manipulated by elites for high-status residential and ceremonial landscapes, and for power display in battle and hunting. The aetiology of those relationships and how they were expressed through time in medieval territories is, as yet, thinly understood. This paper focuses on the use of particular hills and mountains as elite boundary landscapes where hunting and fighting took place, paying special attention to the role of summit cairns and mounds as their focus-points. Why one mountain or hill and its lowland skirt was chosen over another as a medieval boundary landmark, a place to hunt and fight, or to gather, lies at the heart of this enquiry. It is suggested that access to areas of natural resources, including earth materials, woodland and hunted species, of which there was long-standing knowledge, combined with cultural resources in the form of prehistoric monuments, may have been among the primary reasons for those choices. The paper is essentially a

conceptual framework for future fieldwork in medieval boundary landscapes, highlighting key attributes that merit further investigation.

It is a curious fact of the archaeology and history of early medieval (fifth century to c. 1000) Ireland that despite long-standing scholarship on royal landscapes, nothing has been written about hunting preserves of Irish kings and little about the places where they obtained earth materials, especially mineral and metal ores and stone (Whitfield 1993). This is, perhaps, partly attributable to a lack of direct references to hunting and to control of mining and quarrying among Gaelic elites and the potential spatial overlap between those activities. The relative silence about royal hunting and mineral extraction in the Gaelic chronicles, for instance, might lead one to believe that very little hunting took place, and that mining and quarrying were negligible in Ireland between the fifth and twelfth centuries. However, texts such as *The Ancient Laws of Ireland* compiled in the seventh and eighth centuries leave us in no doubt that mining and hunting took place. Laws of distraint refer to the crime of extracting copper or iron ore from a cliff or excavating in a silver mine on the property of another person (Kelly 1988, p. 105). Archaeological evidence in the form of early medieval deer-traps (Long & McCarthy 2009), depictions of hunting scenes on monumental sculpture, and laws relating to common rights that enabled law-abiding freemen to hunt deer, badgers and wolves (Kelly 1988, p. 106), all clearly indicate that hunting was a habitual activity.

The research project behind this paper proposes a means of finding hunting grounds and concomitant natural resources in medieval Gaelic territories, areas that in other European polities would be described as *forestis* or forest (Rollason 2016, p. 137; Beglane 2015, pp. 9–10). The research arises from an ‘An Atlas of Finn mac Cumail’s Places’, a cross-disciplinary landscape-based project, which investigates the topographies and archaeologies onto which place-names and lore relating to the quasi-mythical warrior-hunter, Finn, were layered in Ireland and Scotland.

Finn and his *fíán* or wild band of warriors are the central figures of *fíanaigecht* (Finn Cycle of Tales), historically popular among Gaelic-speaking peoples of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. The tales were first documented from the eighth century, perhaps, but it has been argued that their maturity by that time implies a preceding oral tradition (Murray 2012, pp. 31–49; Nagy 1985, pp. 1–3). They occur in the form of ballads and lays, some composed as early as the eleventh century. Ballads and lays became the foremost literary form by the late medieval period and among the most important collections of these are the seventeenth-century Irish *Duanaire Finn* and those in the Scottish *Book of the Dean of Lismore* dated to the sixteenth century (Murray 2005, p. 166). The tales also occur in prose texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, among them *Acallam na Senórach* (*The Colloquy of the Ancients*) and *Macgnímrada Find* (*The Boyhood Deeds of Finn*). From the twelfth century, continuing into the late medieval period, *fíanaigecht* was the dominant literary genre in Gaelic culture and, arguably, the layering of place-names and lore relating to Finn and his *fíán* may have escalated from that time.

Fíanaigecht is rich in place-names of notable landforms in medieval kingdoms that feature in the hunting and martial exploits of the hero and his *fíán*. There are also many place-names associated with Finn that survive in the modern landscape, recorded by the first Ordnance Survey of the nineteenth century, by the Civil Survey of the seventeenth century and earlier still on Tudor maps and in Gaelic documentary sources, but exactly when the layering of Finn lore onto particular landforms and monuments first occurred is often difficult to pin down.

FINN'S SEAT AS A BOUNDARY LANDMARK

Approaches to boundaries, borderlands and frontiers in landscape archaeology are under-developed generally, a point emphasised by Curta (2005, pp. 1–9) in *Borders, Barriers and Ethnogenesis* and by Mullin (2011, pp. 1–12) in *Places in Between*. Archaeologies of boundaries have tended to focus less on their physicality and more on their political and military aspects, as well as interactions between different ethnic and social groups.

The reality of boundaries in the past is that they were often temporally and materially complex interactive spatial domains (Curta 2005, pp. 2–5), which make them potentially dynamic and revealing places for archaeological enquiry. The range and role of 'in-between places' is nuanced and intricate, and this paper adds to that complexity by introducing the concept of a king's march in medieval Ireland. Some of the reasons why particular marches of Gaelic territories were designated as topographies of royal power (Canepa 2014) appear to relate to their deep historicity and natural resources.

New ways of framing topographies and archaeologies associated with marginal and in-between places suggest that they were not outside of or 'epiphenomenal to the main structures of settlement in the landscape', but places that may be interpreted as symbolic topographies, often integral to the configuration of territory (Harmanşah 2014, pp. 3, 11). They can be brought back into view by looking at the nature of their topographies, archaeologies, bedrock and earth materials, in tandem with their place biographies and the cultural and social practices that defined them.

In Ireland the Gaelic place-name *Suidhe Finn* ('Finn's seat'/ 'white seat'), and variants of it, are ascribed to the summits of particular hills and low mountains (Fig. 1) in boundary landscapes and especially to hill- and mountain-top cairns or earthen mounds (Ó hÓgáin 1988, pp. 306–7). The meaning of *Suidhe Finn* can be equivocal — it translates as both 'white seat', and 'Finn's seat'. The origin of the word *finn* (Old Irish *find*) is believed to lie in Common Celtic *vindo* meaning 'white' (Sims-Williams 2006, pp. 123–4). It has been suggested that where the *vindo* element occurs in Celtic place-names in the European landscape, it might relate to 'god-names such as that incorporated into place-names like *Vindobona* at Vienna or to the Gallic *Vindonnus* and Welsh *Gwynn*, rather than to its primary meaning as "white" ' (Murphy 1953, iii. lxxxii, lxxxiv). Williams (2016, pp. 196–8) has raised this possible origin for Finn again. He points out that the Gallo-Roman god *Vindonnus*, identified with Apollo, 'suggestively contains the same element', that the supernatural hunter, *Gwynn*, of Welsh tradition is 'linguistically cognate with Irish Finn' and that the god Lug and Finn share common themes. However, it may be the case that there is no distinction to be made between 'white seat' and 'Finn's seat', that they may in fact be synonyms of each other, with the quasi-mythological Finn embodying the qualities of *finn/vindo* places and possibly even having his origin as a personification of them. While *finn* is usually translated as something 'white', it is not the colour white but something 'bright', something exceptional, that appears to be intended (Quin 1990, p. 307).

There are thirty-seven instances of the place-name recorded to date in Ireland, occurring in the anglicised forms Seefin, Seafin, Seein and as compound variants such as Knockseefin and Carn Seefin (Table 1; Fig. 1). These constitute the main corpus of sites investigated in this paper, alongside five sites (Table 1; Fig. 1: 38, 39, 40, 41, 42) that present similar profiles in respect of their topographies (hills, mountains) and archaeologies (cairns, mounds) and which are variously celebrated in *fianaigeacht* as hunting grounds and Otherworld sites that Finn and his *fian* frequent. The majority of the sites will be obscure to the reader, most of them have never been written about, many of them are no more than bare summits in intensively farmed,

quarried or urbanised land, and where archaeology does occur in association with them it often tends to be underwhelming. It must be stated from the outset that a pre-modern origin for the place-name *Suidhe Finn* cannot, as yet, be confirmed for twenty-four of the sites (Table 1), and the possibility that some of them may be quite late copycat attributions must be considered in any interpretation of their meaning. Within the overall corpus there are ten sites (Table 1; Fig. 1: 17, 19, 20, 23, 27, 32, 39, 40, 41, 42) that are especially celebrated in *fiánaigeacht* and in local folklore, or that feature in other Gaelic literary texts and in the Irish chronicles, and have complex archaeologies. The findings of this paper are largely drawn from those.

There are three recorded instances of *Suidhe Finn* place-names in Scotland — *Aite Suidhe Fhinn*, also known as Fingal's Seat, west of Loch Portree on the Isle of Skye; *Suidhe Choire Fhinn* on Machrie Moor, Isle of Arran; and *Suidheachan Fhinn* on the western edge of Beinn Tarsuinn in Wester Ross. *Suidhe Finn* locations in Ireland are more definitively identified with cairns and mounds than their counterparts in western Scotland. A hill summit crowned with a cairn of possibly more recent origin defines *Aite Suidhe Fhinn*, while a stone circle on a knoll marks *Suidhe Choire Fhinn*, and a distinctive flat-topped outcrop of rock differentiates *Suidheachan Fhinn* in its mountain setting on the edge of Beinn Tarsuinn.

Suidhe Finn as a place-name is not well documented in Irish early medieval sources, but one instance of early use does occur in a topographical poem (*dindshenchas*) that is likely to have been composed in the tenth century. *Suide Find* is cited in *Brug na Bóinde II* (bank, hostel or womb of the Boyne, County Meath), preserved in the *Book of Leinster*. It was possibly composed by the tenth-century Cináed úa hArtacáin as it contains some of the linguistic and metrical features (both Old and Middle Irish) found in the companion poem *Brug na Bóinde I*, which is ascribed to him and of that period (pers. comm. Marie-Luise Theuerkauf). The relevant lines refer to the mythological Buide having 'planted his keen stone in the portion which is called Finn's Seat' (*Clandais Buide a liic laind/ 'sind raind forsmbíd Suide Find*) (Gwynn 1906, ii. 24, 25). The quatrain refers to *Suide Find*, and what appears to be a standing stone there, as a place that is already well known and was probably, by that time, a mnemonic of the River Boyne landscape (Fig. 2).

What makes the majority of *Suidhe Finn* and related sites deserving of scholarly attention are their historic boundary geographies. All forty-two sites have been plotted onto territorial units called *trícha céit*, which were in existence by the eleventh century (Fig. 1). Comparable to the English hundred, they are believed to have emerged as 'a refinement' of existing territorial denominations. They were constituted by earlier *túatha*, political communities ruled by lords, and subdivided into *bailte* or estates (MacCotter 2008, pp. 22–4). The important point here is that the boundaries of *trícha céit* territories often incorporated those of earlier *túatha* and sometimes coincided with key boundary points of powerful overkingdoms. Parts of their boundaries were, therefore, integral to various levels of the hierarchy of territories in medieval Ireland and can be associated with pre-eleventh-century boundaries and with boundaries of overkingdoms as well as their constituent client kingdoms. This can be seen, for instance, in relation to Seefin Mountain, also known as *Cenn Abhrat*, in the Ballyhoura Hills between the modern counties Limerick and Cork (Fig. 3). Historically, this mountain was situated on the southern boundary of a local kingdom called Fonn Timchill, which translates as 'border land' (MacCotter 2008, p. 189; 2006, pp. 69–70; Power 1932, pp. 47–9). It was bounded to the south by the local kingdom of Fir Maige Méne, which translates as 'men of the plain of minerals', but the mountain landscape was also a boundary zone between the rival overkingdoms of Tuadmuma and Desmuma in the province of Munster (Fig. 3).

Boundary geography is the strongest trend of *Suidhe Finn* place-name locations in Ireland. Thirty-eight of the forty-two (90.4 *per cent*) *Suidhe Finn* and related place-name locations plotted on the map are disposed to boundary zones of *trícha céit* (Fig. 1). In some instances the place-name is cited explicitly in reference to landmarks used in the configuration of territorial boundaries, a notable example of which occurs in a description of the bounds of the east Connacht regional kingdom of Uí Mhaine, preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript called *Criochairecht O Mainne*, where *Suidhe Finn*, now Seefin Hill (Table 1; Fig. 1: 12), County Galway, is recalled as a point on the boundary of that kingdom (O'Donovan 1843, pp. 4–6).

Suidhe Finn in various anglicised forms is also referenced in early modern maps of Ireland. The cartographer, John Speed, took note of some on his maps of the provinces of Ireland, 1610 (Speed 1611/12). Their inclusion by him is somewhat unusual because antiquities were generally excluded from maps of the period unless they were of strategic value to colonial concerns. Speed's incorporation of them as topographical features suggests that they were recognised as notable boundary landmarks into the seventeenth century. He presented the important boundary cairn, Carn Seefin on Keeraunnageeragh Mountain on the north-west shores of Lough Corrib in Connemara (Fig. 4), as 'Knock Siffingen' on his map of the province of Connacht, and he marked 'Knok Swiffyn', east of the River Slaney boundary zone between the counties of Carlow and Wexford, on his map of the province of Leinster. 'Knock Swiffyn' appears to be Gibbet Hill, the summit of which (315 metres O.D.) straddles the townlands of Corragh and Graiguemore in County Wexford, an area characterised geologically as a stripe of andesitic lavas and tuffs and green-grey and dark blue-grey slate which is quarried. On his map of the province of Munster, Speed marked 'Caric Sulphyn', 'the rock of Finn's seat' in the Slieveardagh Hills, an upland rich in coal on the County Tipperary–County Kilkenny border and historic provincial boundary between Leinster and Munster.

BEDROCK AND FINN'S SEAT

Williamson (2013, pp. 1–5, 36–60), in his study of environment and society in early medieval England, has urged a refocusing of debates about landscape and settlement to incorporate meaningful engagement with the natural environment. He presents 'nature's frame' as an essential factor in human settlement, as Hooke (2010; 1998) has demonstrated in relation to woodland for Anglo-Saxon England. The relationship between nature's frame and land use in medieval Ireland is, as yet, under-developed, especially in respect of human perception of bedrock geology.

The bedrock geology of *Suidhe Finn* locations is variable, with a preponderance of the sites (50 *per cent*) in limestone and sandstone-mudstone geologies, five sites each in granite and conglomerate sandstone locations, and another five in basalt and andesite, just three in quartz, schist or slate, and one lying in combined granite, schist and marble (Fig. 5). It is of interest, however, in relation to boundaries, that approximately 15 *per cent* of *Suidhe Finn* places occur on or within 1.5 km of a lithological boundary that marks a transition from calcareous to acidic rock, typically reflected in changes in soil type and surface vegetation and therefore recognisable as a boundary zone in the landscape. *Suidhe Finn* locations also occupy almost all of the isolated hilly inliers of volcanic rock that protrude from the extensively low-lying limestone midlands of the island. These include the Hill of Allen or *Almhain* (17), County Kildare, which consists of andesite lava, and Knockseefin, at Pallasgrean, County Limerick, with its dramatic, outcropping basalt fan structure (Fig. 6). The tendency for volcanic geologies in Ireland and Scotland to acquire Finn-related place-names suggests that the

celebrated *Suide Find* in the Boyne Valley, County Meath, is the volcanic ridge of Pighill and Carrickdexter in the former demesne of Slane Castle, less than 1 km north-west of the river and west of the Hill of Slane (Fig. 2). A corruption of the Irish *Carraig an Disírt*, ‘rock of the desert or wilderness’, Carrickdexter is a hill of andesite lava and basalt that has, lamentably, been quarried out. The River Boyne which formed a natural subdivision in the early medieval landscape, as it still does today, defined the southern extent of the lands of the king of North Brega, a royal title that is especially evident from the eighth century (Bhreathnach 2005, p. 415). Carrickdexter, at 125 metres above sea level, sandwiched between a great variety of lithologies including shales and volcanics to the north and limestone and sandstone to the south, would have stood out in the Boyne landscape as an obvious landmark on the western side of the low-lying expansive valley (Fig. 2). Both Bhreathnach (2005, pp. 415, 422) and Newman (2005, p. 361) have proposed that internal ‘geo-physical characteristics’ within overkingdoms would have predicated boundaries between the territories of their constituent peoples. Although Newman does not specify Carrickdexter as part of the natural boundaries between his ‘Boyne valley landscape’ and ‘Blackwater landscape’ to the west of it, he notes that the westerly limits of the former ‘are often drawn where the Hill of Slane encroaches on the Boyne around the present village of Slane, resulting in constriction’ (*ibid.* pp. 371, 402–5). The volcanic hill may have had a role in demarcating the boundary between those more localised landscapes as well as forming an iconic landmark which, at least from the tenth century, carried the name *Suide Find* along the course of the River Boyne boundary between the lands of the kings of North and South Brega.

The bedrock of *Almhain*, Knockseefin and Carrickdexter/*Suide Find* is noticeably atypical — it does not conform to the greater geological character of the surrounding regions. The volcanic Croghan Hill, or *Cruachain Brí Éle* (Table 1; Fig. 1: 40; Fig. 7) in north County Offaly, with its large summit mound or cairn that features in *The Boyhood Deeds of Finn*, shares both topographic and lithological similarities with those three sites. Seafin, County Armagh (Table 1; Fig. 1: 1), although granite, is located in the Ring of Gullion, a landscape of volcanic and intrusive igneous rocks exhibiting an atypical ‘ring-shaped’ series of hills, with Gullion at the core.

SUIDHE FINN ARCHAEOLOGY

Cairns, mounds and barrows, imagined as portals to the Otherworld and seats from which Finn observed the hunt, are found in twenty-one (56 *per cent*) of the thirty-seven recorded *Suidhe Finn* place-name locations in Ireland (Fig. 1). The rest are associated with a possible cairn site (Fig. 2:12), a standing stone (Table 1: 9), an enclosure (Table 1: 33), twelve featureless hill or mountain summits (Table 1: 4, 5, 11, 13, 23-6, 31, 34-5, 37) and a lake (Table 1: 10). Among the five sites that present similar profiles to the main group, there are two definite cairns (39, 42), *Carn an Fhéinneda* (cairn of the *fian*) situated on the summit of Shelmartin Hill at Howth, County Dublin, the dramatically situated *Céis Corann*, County Sligo, and the well preserved *Cruachain Brí Éle* on Croghan Hill (Fig. 7). The latter is an almost circular mound of earth and stone, *c.* 23 metres in diameter at its base and 4 metres high. It is surrounded by an external berm and lies within a larger outer enclosure. The size and setting of the monument suggests that it may in fact be a Neolithic cairn enclosing a passage tomb. Of the remaining two sites (38, 41), the footprint of what appears to have been a small cairn has been recorded at site 38, Knockfin on Gorumna Island in south Connemara, and there is a cairn in the townland

of Ferta (from *fert* meaning grave or ancestral burial) on Mangerton Mountain, albeit at a distance south of site 41, *Ros in Fhéinneda* (headland of the *fían*) on Lough Leane, Killarney.

The more imposing cairns cover Neolithic passage tombs. These include Seefin at Scurlocksleap in the Wicklow Mountains, excavated by Macalister in 1931 (Macalister 1932; Grogan & Kilfeather 1997, p. 5), and *Céis Corann* which, at 360 metres above sea level, is the highest positioned cairn in the Carrowkeel-Keshcorann passage tomb cemetery of the Bricklieve Mountains, County Sligo. The cairn is contrived as Finn's hunting mound in the late medieval tale *Bruidhen Chéise in Chorainn, The Enchanted Cave of Keshcorran* (O'Grady 1892, i, p. 306).

The much reduced cairn of *Suidhe Finn* on the summit of Mount Garret, at Clomantagh, c. 350 metres above sea level, in the north-west of County Kilkenny, contains a megalithic chamber, and a Bronze Age cist grave was recorded c. 2 metres south of the cairn (Waddell 1990, p. 101). The summit of the hill is enclosed by a hillfort covering an area of 3.25 ha, a strategic location that must have constituted an important boundary in the remote past, as it overlooks the western approach to the valley of the River Nore (O'Brien & O'Driscoll 2017, pp. 433, 459). The cairn was excavated by Graves in 1851, at which time he recorded the name of the monument as 'See Fionn (Suidhe Fionn)', and noted that it was 'traditionally said to have been a great place of assembly and conference in the old times' (1851, p. 290). The application of the name *Suidhe Finn* to the cairn was recorded as early as 1800 by Tighe who, in his statistical account of County Kilkenny, remarked that 'in Irish this is called, like other heaps, *See Fin* or *Sith Fin* [*Suidhe Finn*]' (1802, p. 623).

Smaller but no less well-appointed cairns include Carn Seefin on Keeraunageeragh Mountain in Connemara, and Seefin on Sheepshead peninsula, County Cork (Table 1; Fig. 1: 36, 42, 18, 14, 6), both of which lie in mineral-rich landscapes. Carn Seefin at 307 metres above sea level (Fig. 4) is an oval cairn c. 20 metres in diameter on its long axis and 3 metres in height. A depression in the north-east quadrant may indicate a disturbed cist. The cairn is constructed from predominantly local rock, including granite, schist and marble, and sandstone boulders sourced from the north side of Lough Corrib. Carn Seefin was an important landmark on the early medieval political boundary between the *trícha cé*t kingdom of Gnó Mór to which it belonged, and the neighbouring local kingdoms. It endured as a boundary landmark for the later medieval Ó Flaithbheartaigh lordship of Iarchonnacht.

Some monuments with the designation *Suidhe Finn* are now quite degraded, such as Knockseefin, County Limerick (Fig. 8), so that it is difficult to tell from surface remains whether the monument was a cairn or earthen mound. In other cases cropmarks and place-names are the only indicators of former hilltop cairns and mounds. The footprint of a cairn can be discerned at Seafin, County Armagh (Table 1; Fig. 1), a low hill quarried for granite in recent years, in the dramatic setting of the volcanic Ring of Gullion. The former presence of a boundary grave marked by a cairn is intimated in the field name Lough Carnaman, 'the cairn of the women' east of Seefin, County Cavan (Table 1; Fig. 1: 2) suggesting a *fert* or ancestral burial place there. Such graves often involved the insertion of female burials into existing prehistoric funerary monuments in the period 400–700 A.D. They were used as territorial boundary markers and cited in the legal procedure of taking possession of land and invoked during disputes over land (O'Brien & Bhreathnach 2011, pp. 53–5).

Royal control of resources associated with forests in liminal places of European kingdoms has been noted by Rollason (2016, pp. 147–50). Resources included everything the forest could provide, from pasture to timber, honey and minerals. The extraction of minerals was especially important, and he points to the examples of exploitation of iron and coal in the Forest of Dean, silver at Goslar palace in Germany and iron in the Ardennes. The identity and use of deer parks in Anglo-Norman Ireland as places where a wide range of resources, including pasture, timber and turf, were concentrated is well understood (Beglane 2015, pp. 73–89), but exactly where in early medieval Gaelic kingdoms and later medieval lordships such resources were accessed has not been tackled. At least half of the boundary places indicated by *Suidhe Finn* landmarks can be confidently described as landscapes of enriched natural resources in their historical contexts. They were locations where useful earth materials were available. If the place-name *Suidhe Finn* is taken as indicative of real hunting grounds, and not just as an index of the survival of Finn lore, then all forty-two sites can be considered as environments that once supported hunted species. The Finn Cycle of tales alludes to hunting in the landscapes of some of the more well-known seats of Finn, such as *Cenn Abhrat* or Seefin Mountain (Fig. 1: 20) in the Ballyhoura Hills, *Suidhe Finn* at Slievenaman (Fig. 1: 27) in County Tipperary, Seefin Mountain in *Sliabh Cua* (Fig. 1: 32) County Waterford, *Carn an Fhéinneda* (Fig. 1: 39) on Howth headland, and *Céis Corann* (Fig. 1: 42) in the Bricklieve Mountains. The thirteenth-century *Colloquy of the Ancients* directly associates *Suidhe Finn* with the choicest hunting ground of Finn and the *fian* on the summit of ‘Sliab Formaile’ (‘very bare mountain’), alias ‘Breicsliab’ (‘speckled mountain’), in upper Connacht (Dooley & Roe 1999, pp. 183–5). In the tale *Bruidhen chéise in Chorainn*, Finn and his *fian* set out hunting on the borders of the upper Connacht kingdom of Corran. To observe the dogs coursing the hill, Finn sits on his hunting mound (*dumha selga*) on the top of *Céis Corann* (O’Grady 1892, i, p. 306). The term *dumha selga*, used of a hunting platform in literary and historical sources, is attributed a curious hybrid identity in *fíanaigeacht*, often presented as a burial mound and Otherworld entrance as well as the focus of an assembly or inauguration (FitzPatrick 2013, pp. 115–6).

It may seem sensible to dismiss the hunting places of *fíanaigeacht* as fictive, literary landscapes, but their role as real hunting preserves in Gaelic polities can be corroborated to a degree. For instance, the landscape of Seefin Mountain in *Sliabh Cua*, celebrated in the *Colloquy of the Ancients* as one of Finn’s hunting preserves (O’Grady 1892, ii, p. 138), was a forest and royal demesne of the English kings Henry III and Edward I, set aside for their hunting in Ireland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Sweetman 1875, p. 458; 1886, p. 114). That role for *Sliabh Cua* is likely to have originated with the early medieval kings of Déisi Muman. It was on the border of their territory where it met the kingdom of Eóganacht Caisil. A cairn at Poul-na-maddra-ruadh (hole of the red dogs) on Seefin Mountain, which sits in an extensive Bronze Age ritual and settlement landscape (Moore 1995), was a royal boundary landmark and probably a hunting seat of the kings of Déisi Muman.

Further confirmation of the reality behind Finn’s hunting grounds is provided by dog, pig and deer-related place-names. The first Ordnance Survey also recorded for *Sliabh Cua* the names ‘Dog’s Gap’, and ‘Harnanmaddra Gap’, which may refer to a former coursing or ambush location. Seefin in Nagles Mountain, County Cork, contains a natural pool called ‘Poulawaddra’ (‘hole of the dog’) with a ring-barrow adjacent to it, and immediately east of Knockfin on Gorumna Island in Connemara, the townland name Teeranea ‘land of the deer’, recorded as early as 1585, suggests a red deer population on the island in the past (Freeman 1936, pp. 52,

55). The presence of modern deer parks in *Suidhe Finn* settings may indicate an adaptation of earlier hunting environments. Carrickdexter and its adjoining townland of Pighill (*Suide Find* of the Boyne valley) contained a deer park in the nineteenth century, as did Knockseefin at Pallasgrea (Fig. 8) and Croghan Hill in County Offaly.

Hunting was the predominant land use in frontiers between territories and in liminal areas between wild and cultivated land in European kingdoms (Rollason 2016, pp. 140–2; Pluskowski 2006, p. 59) and there is no reason to believe that hunting practices among Gaelic elites in medieval Ireland departed from that norm. Predation on the borders of territory in medieval Ireland may have been related to maintaining key boundary places and it is possible that linear earthworks of varying lengths in some of these landscapes (Table 1: 1, 8, 17, 23, 27) might have been reused in medieval ritual coursing of deer and boar/wild pig on boundaries.

In Ireland 47.6 *per cent* of *Suidhe Finn* sites occur in close proximity (250 metres–5 km) to documented metal ore localities, many of which have been worked in recent history (Fig. 9). The bedrock of *Cenn Abhrat* or Seefin Mountain in the Ballyhoura Hills is conglomerate and purple sandstone which hosts a bed of iron ore *c.* 250 metres east of the summit (Fig. 3). The volcanic Knockseefin at Pallasgrea lies in an area rich in iron, zinc, malachite and quarried limestone, dolomite and sandstone (Fig. 8), and gold has been recorded in the foothills of Slievenaman, County Tipperary, the summit of which hosts a mound variously known as *Suidhe Finn* and *Síd na mBan Finn* — ‘otherworld mound of the white women’ (Fig. 1: 27). Carn Seefin in Connemara (Fig. 4) lies in a contact zone between Ordovician granite and older Dalradian metamorphic rocks that host copper and gold pyrite, chalcopyrite, sulphur and lead, among a range of other minerals, all of which has been mined in the modern period. The majority of the copper mine sites occur to the north, north-east and east of Carn Seefin. The lowland skirt of the mountain, and the mountain itself with its summit cairn, are home to some of the largest red deer in Britain and Ireland. The animals appear to seasonally migrate there to avail of the abundance of mineral licks.

Evidence for early medieval exploitation of ores and stone at boundary locations with Finn-related place-names or attached Finn lore is, as yet, uncorroborated to any great degree. However, one outstanding example that encourages an *a priori* case for seeking field evidence of medieval opencast mining and metallurgy, as well as quarrying for building stone, in boundary landscapes with Finn associations, is the layering of tales of Finn onto an early mining landscape at Lough Leane, County Kerry. Lough Leane was on royal land of the early medieval Munster kingdom of Eóganacht Locha Léin (Fig. 1). Excavations on Ross Island (*Ros in Fhéinneda*), a headland running westward into Lough Leane from the east shore, revealed Bronze Age copper mines and, crucially for this argument, evidence of early medieval copper smelting at five locations, the majority of which were radiocarbon dated to the eighth century (O’Brien 2004, pp. 405–6). It has been suggested that the Eóganacht Locha Léin dynasty may have controlled this important resource and metalwork production on Ross Island (Comber 2004, p. 449). Ross Island and Lough Leane both feature in the Finn Cycle of Tales, with the former described in the *Colloquy of the Ancients* as situated ‘on swelling Loch Léin’s edge’ (O’Grady 1892, ii, p. 114). Lough Leane is where Finn goes to hunt for the king of Bantry in the twelfth-century text *The Boyhood Deeds of Finn* (Nagy 1985, p. 212) and it is also the subject of a late medieval lay in which Finn and his *fian* hunt a wild pig around the lake (Murphy 1933, ii. 184–5).

It has long been established that battles and military musters were convened in particular early medieval boundary zones (Ó Riain 1974), but despite that important observation there has been remarkably little application of it in Irish landscape studies. The in-between world of boundary zones were ideal performative spaces for aggressive displays of power (Mac Shamhráin 1996). The Irish chronicles contain regular if fleeting references to early medieval conflicts in territorial boundaries of client kingdoms and their overkingdoms. In A.D. 593 and 1031, two battles were fought between the Munster dynasties of Déisi Muman and Eóganacht Caisil, in the *Sliabh Cua* mountain range which, as already seen, constituted a limen between the territories of the two rival dynasties (O'Donovan 1856, pp. 219, 823; Fig. 1). *Cenn Abhrat* or Seefin Mountain in Fonn Timchill (Fig. 3), the boundary land that acted as a buffer between the rival overkingdoms of Tuadmuma and Desmuma, was the site of a battle in 757 (Mac Airt & Mac Niocail 1983, pp. 210, 211). The reasons for persistent conflict there, between two major Munster overkingdoms, are unclear, but it may have been related to the mineral wealth of the neighbouring local kingdom of Fir Maige Méne, the name of which the twelfth-century Irish tale, *Forbus Droma Damhghaire*, attributes to the 'quantity of minerals in the mountains surrounding it' and 'mineral stones ... in every field to this day' (Bhreathnach 2008, p. 583; Sjoestedt 1926–7, p. 66). Seefin Mountain was contested throughout much of the early medieval period, a boundary dispute that was inherited by the Anglo-Norman settlers of that region from the late twelfth century and persisted into the seventeenth century (MacCotter 2008, pp. 269–71). As late as the mid-seventeenth century the Down Survey parish map for this area referred to the unprofitable Seefin Mountain as disputed land 'in controversie betweene ye Countys of Corke and Limerick'. It records 'A hill on the top of a Mountaine' which is a reference to the cairn on the summit (Petty 1655–58). The Down Survey ordinarily does not show antiquities other than ruined churches, castles and houses. The cairn must therefore have been deemed a significant boundary indicator in the uplands between the two counties in the seventeenth century, perhaps echoing the earlier importance of this place as a major medieval boundary.

A case study of the landscape of the hill of *Almhain* and its summit mound of *Suidhe Finn* in the northern confines of the province of Leinster is now presented in order to bring together some of the key attributes of a threshold topography in a royal march (Figs 3 and 4).

FINN'S SEAT AND THE BOUNDARY LANDSCAPE OF *ALMHAIN*

Almhain (Old Irish *Almu*) was the legendary abode of Finn mac Cumhaill and a historically important threshold place of northern Leinster and of its constituent regional Gaelic and later Anglo-Norman territories (Figs 10 and 11). It had an important symbolic role for the early medieval kings of Leinster, some of whom were attributed sobriquets that associated them with the hill — such as Braen of Carman, described under the year 942 A.D. as 'The golden Rock of *Almhain*' (O'Donovan 1856, ii., p. 653).

Recent work on reconstructing early medieval territorial frameworks for power structures in this region of Ireland has suggested that the hill of *Almhain* gave its name to a royal estate of the client Leinster kingdom of Uí Fáeláin where the 'resident kin-group had obligations to maintain the territory as a neutral place of public assembly, commercial intercourse and, perhaps mensal income' for the kings of Uí Fáeláin (MacCotter 2016, p. 64). In other words, *Almhain* was royal land and perhaps best termed a forest. It was particularly important at provincial level too, and it can be argued that it was also set aside for the use of the kings of the province of

Leinster (Fig. 11). In that context, local client kingdom boundaries may have been quite permeable and transgressed in order to meet the needs of the highest-ranking royalty in respect of food production and natural resources, as well as facilitating royal hunting, battle and assembly. The origins of such an arrangement are believed to lie in a process whereby some subordinate kings conceded what is termed *mruig rí*, ‘king’s land’, to the king of the province within their client kingdoms in order to gain the right to contend for the provincial kingship (Charles-Edwards 2009, pp. 73–4; Mac Eoin 1999, p. 169). It should be noted too that *mruig* has a more particular reading as a march (Quin 1990, p. 469) and, therefore, *mruig rí* could mean a royal forest on a kingdom boundary.

Following Newman’s (2005, p. 361) and Bhreathnach’s (2005, pp. 415, 422) rationale for the demarcation of early medieval estates and local kingdoms by ‘geo-physical characteristics’, the *Almhain* landscape, as used by the kings of Leinster for their power displays, is likely to have been framed by key topographical markers that include the hill and bog of *Almhain*, the holly wood of Feighcullen (*Fidh Chuilinn*), the Chair of Kildare Hills, Pollardstown Fen and the Curragh Plain (Fig. 12) lying between the neighbouring client Leinster kingdoms of Uí Fáeláin and Uí Failge. Within that frame, the hill of *Almhain* is the dominant topographical feature drawing the eye, a prospect that is especially numinous when looking towards *Almhain* from Pollardstown Fen (Fig. 10). It is in just this kind of in-between place that the questing border-hero, Finn mac Cumail, who works for the king of Ireland, is found in the tales (Miller 2000, pp. 147–50).

Leinster, the historic province to which *Almhain* belonged was, at once, a mosaic of constituent client kingdoms and a geographically cohesive territory focused on the rivers Liffey, Barrow and Slaney (Fig. 11). From the eighth to the eleventh century the kingship of the province was dominated by the Uí Dúnlainge of northern Leinster who were a federation of three Leinster dynasties — Uí Fáeláin, Uí Muiredaig and Uí Dúnchada from whom all the kings of Leinster were drawn in that period (Bhreathnach 2014, p. 97). By the end of the first quarter of the eighth century the Uí Fáeláin became dominant (d. 738 A.D.) (Ó Corráin 1972, p. 26). *Almhain* and the Chair of Kildare range, as well as the holly wood, constituted a boundary zone between their kingdom and the neighbouring local kingdom of Uí Failge (Figs 11 and 12). While Uí Failge was a Leinster territory and its rulers claimed ‘a remote common ancestry’ with the Uí Dúnlainge, the latter were adversarial towards them from the second half of the eighth century (*ibid.*, p. 27). The landscape of *Almhain* was therefore an important threshold with Uí Failge to the west for the Uí Dúnlainge group of Leinster kings and with the powerful Uí Néill overkingdoms of Mide and Brega to the north (Fig. 11) who contested the suzerainty of all Leinster between the sixth century and the end of the tenth century (Mac Shamhráin 1996). The role and memory of the *Almhain* landscape as a limen between local kingdoms endured through subsequent Anglo-Norman colonisation. As late as the seventeenth century, the O Byrne Gaelic family of Wicklow, who were tenacious of their Uí Fáeláin origins, had their court poets resurrect the title ‘king of Uí Fáeláin’ and connect them with *Almhain* in poems of the period 1550 to 1630 (Mac Airt 1944, pp. 35, 47, 247).

TOPOGRAPHY AND TOPONOMY

The low-lying volcanic hill of *Almhain* is part of a range of north-east–south-west trending hills rising up out of a fertile island of Magh Life, the great Liffey Plain that stretches eastwards across County Kildare (Figs 10 and 12). In the medieval past, *Almhain* and its island skirt was almost entirely surrounded by a vast area of bog and woodland extending into the Irish midlands (Smyth 1982, pp. 3, 48, 153). The immediate hinterland

incorporated the renowned early medieval church of St Brigit to the south at Kildare and, extending east and south-east of there, the impressive prehistoric landscape of the Curragh Plain, with its complex of barrows and linear earthworks, which may have been the locus of the early medieval royal assembly of *Óenach Life* (Ó Murchadha 2002, pp. 65–6).

The entire centre and north-west edge of *Almhain* has been quarried out for andesite and the remaining south-east portion of the summit, and the rim of the hill extending from north clockwise to west, has been planted with commercial forestry. In Irish medieval texts, it is ascribed various names that convey a sense of its topography, perceived resources and setting. A twelfth-century topographical poem ‘Almu I’ (Gwynn 1906, ii, p. 73) and a contemporary prose text *The Cause of the Battle of Cnucha* (*Fotha Catha Cnucha*) fancifully attribute the naming of the hill to Núadu, a famous druid in the service of Cathair king of Tara who, honouring the request of his wife Almu, called the hill after her. In this origin tale, Núadu builds a fort on the hill and applies alum to it so that it becomes pure white — ‘as if it had taken [all] the chalk of Ireland [to whiten it]. It is after the alum which he brought to the house that Almu is named’ (Best & Bergin 1929, 3143–9; Nagy 1985, pp. 218–9).

The thirteenth-century *Colloquy of the Ancients* alludes to *Carraig Almhaine*, the rock of *Almhain*, capturing its outcropping character (O’Grady 1892, ii. 256), a quality observed by Lewis (1860, ii. p. 83) who described *Almhain* as ‘one great body of granular and compact greenstone and greenstone porphyry’. The seventeenth-century Down Survey recorded it as ‘ye hill of Carrick’ and the place-name survives in the townland name, ‘Carrick’, in which *Almhain* lies. In the *Colloquy of the Ancients*, *Almhain* is also referred to as *Tulach na Faircsena*, ‘the look-out hill’, implying that before it became Finn’s residence it was a strategic vantage point for observing movement in the surrounding countryside (O’Grady 1892, ii., p. 131). The prospect from the summit of *Almhain* is expansive, taking in the nearby Curragh Plain to the south, Croghan Hill, its volcanic counterpart to the northwest, and to the east, the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. The place-names *Druim Almhaine*, the ridge of *Almhain*, and *Móin Almhaine*, the bog, moor or waste of *Almhain* are also applied to the *Almhain* landscape in *fianaigecht*, in connection with the tale of Lurgan, a grey, one-eyed pig that haunted *Almhain* and when hunted by the hound, Gabhran, dived underground in the surrounding bog (O’Grady 1892, ii, pp. 486–7, 534; Gwynn 1913, iii, pp. 158–9).

Although *Almhain* was islanded by the Bog of Allen, to the extent that it was romantically referred to as the ‘Isle of Allen’ by the often fantastic topographer, Beauford (1786, p. 362; Smyth 1982, p. 48), it is nonetheless an integral part of the only significant high ground in the plain-lands of County Kildare, two-thirds of which is otherwise less than 100 metres above sea level. For that reason the hill of *Almhain* should be viewed in the context of the entire range (Figs 12 and 13) and not solely as a separate islanded locus as it has generally been portrayed. Extending between Kilmeague and the town of Kildare, a distance of *c.* 12 km, the upland comprises *Almhain* at 202 m O.D. and the range of hills known collectively as the Chair of Kildare Hills, from which it is separated by a 3 km skirt of lower ground (92 m O.D.). On their route south-west, the Chair of Kildare Hills include Grange Hill (226 m O.D.), Dunmurry Hill which is the highest point in this range at 234 m O.D., with Red Hills (140 m O.D.) marking the end of the range just north of Kildare town (Figs 12 and 13). The integrity of *Almhain* to this modest upland is especially seen in the volcanic lithologies of the range which are atypical in the otherwise limestone bedrock of the plain-lands (Fig. 13). Significantly, the earth material

resources of the region are also concentrated there, an important factor in the consideration of *Almhain* as royal land.

BEDROCK GEOLOGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Almhain is situated within a narrow, 10 km-long, north-east-trending outcrop of Ordovician and Silurian rocks, known as the Kildare Inlier (Fig. 13). It is an island of Lower Palaeozoic rocks, surrounded by younger Upper Palaeozoic rocks (Devonian to Carboniferous age). *Almhain* and Grange Hill are primarily formed of volcanics known as the Allen Andesite Formation, which contain amygdales — vesicles of gas that are trapped within cooling volcanic rock and later filled by secondary minerals (McConnell *et al.* 1994). Similar amygdaloidal features are found in the rocks at Knockseefin on the Carboniferous volcanic hill at Pallasgrea (Fig. 8).

The Kildare inlier is host to a variety of rock types of considerably different ages, within a small area range of around 15 km². The diverse assemblage of igneous rocks includes tuffs, basalts, andesites and blocky breccias (Fig. 13). Sedimentary rocks range from fine shales and siltstones through to sandstones and conglomerates. A major north-east–south-west trending fault runs alongside the inlier, with several other faults traversing it in a north-west–south-east direction.

Archaeological excavation results, historical and literary sources, and contemporary geological knowledge collectively indicate that the landscape of *Almhain* was a focus of resource potential, where a range of materials, from alum, copper and iron, to ochre, building stone and conglomerates used for millstones, were available in the past. Two major zinc deposits occur in townlands situated within a distance of 4 km of *Almhain*: Harberton Bridge, near Allenwood, and Bostoncommon, just west of the hill (McConnell *et al.* 1994). Present evidence for the exploitation of any of those resources before the eighteenth century is tentative and circumstantial, but sets a useful agenda for future fieldwork in the *Almhain* landscape.

It has already been observed that two twelfth-century literary texts attribute the origin of the name of the hill of *Almhain* to alum (Nagy 1985, pp. 218–19). Alum is found naturally in small quantities as the crystalline substance, potassium aluminium sulphate. Usually sourced from volcanic rock, it is found in abundance in andesite (Gómez-Tuena, Straub & Zellmer 2014, p. 1). Andesite lava is the bedrock of *Almhain* itself and a band of it also occurs on the north-west side of Grange Hill in the Chair of Kildare range of hills trending south-west of *Almhain* (McConnell *et al.* 1994). An understanding of the properties and applications of alum were set out as early as the eighth century by Arabian alchemists, and its use was widespread in the medieval European mainland (Singer 1948, pp. 48–53). A colourless crystalline substance, its purity was highly valued in the past as a mordant for dyeing. It was used to fix dyes on fabrics and to soften and tan leather. Its pure white quality is referenced in the twelfth-century topographical poem ‘Almu I’ in which the druid, Núadu, having built a fort on the hill, ‘by him alum was rubbed on the rock over the whole fort, after it was marked out. ... all white is the fort as if it had received the lime of all Erin, from the alum he put on his house, thence is Almu named’ (Gwynn 1906, ii. 72, 73).

In constructing a profile of the mineral and metal resources of the hill of *Almhain* and the Chair of Kildare Hills, the records of antiquaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are important. Seward and Lewis refer to the discovery in 1786 of copper at Dunmurry Hill (Fig. 13) including indications of it at *Almhain*. Seward (1811) noted that the principal bed of the mine seemed to ‘lie deep within the hill, and even to dip under the valley which separates Dun Murry from the hill of Allen’. Lewis (1837, ii. 83) added that the ‘masses of

sulphuret of copper' found in 1786 was 'of nearly 40 percent purity' and 'in the veins of the rocks and in the matrix of the ore, were quantities of the yellow ochre proper for painting'. Furthermore, he observed that *Almhain* presented 'indications of copper'.

In the same account, Lewis (1837, ii. p. 83) noted the exploitation, for millstones, of red sandstone conglomerate available at the northern foot of Red Hills (Fig. 13). This record of the use of local red sandstone conglomerate for manufacturing millstones is of interest in view of an early medieval account of quarrying and moving a large millstone from a 'mountain', in *Vita Brigittae*, written in the seventh century by Cogitosus. Although Kildare is not mentioned at all in the *Vita*, there is reasonable certainty that Cogitosus was 'a religious of the Brigittine monastery of Kildare' (Connolly & Picard 1987, p. 5) and, therefore, that the landscape of the *Vita* is set in the Kildare area. The longest section of the *Vita* concerns the making of a millstone and its transportation to the mill, which is regarded as an accurate historical account of the manufacture of a millstone, and its mill-site context, in seventh-century Ireland (*ibid.*, p. 6). However, the place-name of the 'mountain' where the stone was quarried is not provided in the text. In early medieval Ireland and continuing into the later medieval period, Gaelic society tended to exploit sandstone and sometimes granite for millstones, but sandstone was the more efficient for grinding grain (Rynne 2017, p. 50). It has been suggested with reference to the millstone miracle in *Vita Brigittae* that the Kildare area would have provided red sandstone for millstone manufacture (Rynne 2017, 51; Connolly & Picard 1987, p. 6). The hills of Kilmeague and *Almhain* and the full range of the Chair of Kildare hills contain Old Red sandstone defined as red conglomerate sandstone and mudstone (Fig. 13), with Silurian sandstone on the summits of Dunmurry and Red Hills. That area is therefore likely to have been the historical upland source of millstones quarried for St Brigit's monastery at Kildare. Baug's (2016) research on the mica-schist quernstone and millstone production quarries of Hyllestad in western Norway, which were worked from at least as early as the eleventh century and probably as early as the eighth and ninth centuries, identifies archaeological indicators of quernstone and millstone quarrying which might be usefully applied to searching out any surviving remains of early quarry sites in the range of hills north of St Brigit's monastery at Kildare. At Hyllestad, Baug (2016, p. 25) determined that quarries were both shallow, whereby the rock for querns and millstones was exploited one layer at a time, leaving circular forms in the rock surface, and deep, whereby the artefacts were quarried in columns, one beneath the other, leaving tall, often stepped, carved walls. Of interest too is the fact that quarries were mostly under the control of newly established monastic estates and parish churches in Norway from the twelfth century onward. The value of such resources to medieval monasteries in Ireland, such as St Brigit's at Kildare, has yet to become the subject of field-based archaeological investigation.

The extent to which metal ores might have been exploited in the medieval *Almhain* landscape is unknown, but there is archaeological evidence for pre-modern metal-working that may have used local resources on the southern slope of Boston Hill, a low hill of nodular shale and limestone, in the townland of Drinnanstown South, which lies 1.5 km north-west of Grange Hill and c. 4 km west of *Almhain* (Fig. 12). The scale of that evidence suggests that local resources must have been used. Geologically different from the hill of *Almhain* and the Chair of Kildare Hills range, Boston Hill is an outlier to the former. Monitoring of an area 0.5 km² in extent revealed pits that had been subjected to firing and contained charcoal-rich soil and both iron and copper slag (Elliott 2001). These were especially concentrated in an arc on the south-east downslope of the hill and it was proposed that the remains were indicative of a full suite of metal-working activity, namely charcoal-

burning pits, pit furnaces and smelting furnaces (Elliott 2001). Subsequent excavation of six pits, and postholes representing some type of hut site or shelter in this metal-working complex, confirmed their charcoal and charcoal-rich soil content, with one of the excavated pits containing ferrous slag (Ó Maoldúin 2002). No dating evidence was determined from any of those investigations, but during field-walking in the vicinity of the hut site, an Early Bronze Age flint arrowhead and other flint fragments, as well as part of a medieval spindle whorl, were recovered. Since ferrous metal-working techniques remained virtually unchanged from the Iron Age to the medieval period in Ireland, the focus of metal-working activity west of *Almhain* could relate to any time within the broad period from c. 500 B.C. to the late medieval period (Elliott 2001), with hints of an earlier Bronze Age interest in the resources of this landscape.

SUIDHE FINN AND THE BOUNDARY ARCHAEOLOGY OF ALMHAIN

The complex temporality of *Almhain* as a boundary landmark is expressed in the archaeology of the hill (Fig. 12). On the summit, a degraded and now almost imperceptible grass-covered mound perches c. 8 metres from the edge of a precipitous quarry cliff. Alluded to in the *Colloquy of the Ancients* as ‘the beautiful *síd* (Otherworld mound) of *Almhain*’ (O’Grady 1892, ii. 225), it is c. 2.5 m high with basal dimensions of c. 44 m by 40 m. The *síd* mound in Irish literature is contrived as an entrance to the supernatural dwelling-places of the immortal beings of Irish myth in an Otherworld often described as a wondrous place where ‘the soil is made of gems, the houses are of gold and silver and bronze, the trees of purple glass’ (Carey 1990, p. 31; Ó Cathasaigh 1978, pp. 137–55).

Suidhe Finn on *Almhain* has been treated with ignominy in the modern period, with a folly known as the Allen Tower erected at its centre in 1859 and a major quarry opened there in 1952 and still worked. A cist grave was allegedly discovered within the mound by workmen digging foundations for the folly (Herity 2002, p. 97; Shiel-O’Grady 1903–5, p. 455). No scientific record of the find was made, but there is a second-hand description of what was recovered. The mound was filled with soft clay and when the masons reached the bedrock they ‘came upon a number of human bones, each measuring three feet long, and “a barrowful of small bones”’. All the bones were ‘re-interred in a hollow space under a sloping tongue of rock’. They were attributed to ‘the giant Finn M’Coul’ (De Courcy-Wheeler 1914, pp. 411–13).

In 1837 the antiquary John O’Donovan visited *Almhain* during the progress of the first Ordnance Survey of County Kildare. His is the only detailed account of the archaeology of the hill before the mound was excavated and quarrying began there. He encountered an old man who ‘dreamed or pretended to have dreamed’ that Finn mac Cumail’s treasure was buried in a cave on the south-eastern slope of the hill and that Finn’s dog, Bran, guarded it (Herity 2002, p. 101). He remarked on the extensive view that the summit of the hill of *Almhain* commanded but added that it was ‘itself remarkable for nothing’ apart from the mound (Fig. 14) for which he had locally obtained the name ‘*Suidhe Finn* or Finn’s Chair’ (*ibid.*, p. 97). O’Donovan was confounded that his perambulations over the summit revealed nothing suggestive of a royal seat. During the period that he was reporting on *Almhain*, it was believed by Irish scholars that Finn was an historical figure, hence O’Donovan’s expectation that some kind of elite residence, and not a funerary mound, associated with Finn might have survived on the hilltop. He made a sketch of the hill and its mound of *Suidhe Finn* in relation to St Brigit’s church at Kildare, the monuments on the Curragh Plain and the pre-Christian cult site of *Dún Áilinne* (Fig. 14), showing an inclination on his part to relate those landmarks to each other in the historical boundary

zone between the Leinster kingdoms of Uí Faeláin, Uí Failge and Uí Muiredaig. The northern bounds of the local kingdom of Uí Muiredaig with Uí Faeláin was, after all, ill-defined before the twelfth century (Gleeson & Ó Carragáin 2016, p. 77).

Across the full range of the Chair of Kildare hills there are several monuments on the hill summits and in the immediate lowlands around them. Most of the monuments on the hills are prehistoric. Degraded remains of two cairns and a pair of hut sites lie within a large hill-top enclosure that girdles the summit of Dunmurry Hill, while a solitary but impressive triple-banked ring-barrow commands Red Hills. A group of sites including a spring well (the ‘Earl’s well’) and a mound (*Carraic an Iarla* — the Earl’s Rock) on which there are the fragmentary remains of a castle, cluster on a narrow rocky terrace in a cleft between Grange Hill and Dunmurry Hill to the south-west (Mac Niocaill 1992, p. 160; FitzGerald 1914). Local tradition connected with the mound (Fig. 15) and recorded in the early twentieth century relates that it was ‘where the kings of Leinster were crowned’ and where the FitzGerald earls of Kildare were inaugurated (FitzGerald 1914, p. 327; FitzPatrick 2004, p. 166). The FitzGeralds of Anglo-Norman origin are not known to have adopted Gaelic inauguration customs but it is possible that they used this place as a hunting seat or an open-air court site, perhaps appropriating earlier use of the venue by the rival local kingdoms of Uí Faeláin and Uí Failge. A prerequisite of inauguration sites was an extensive view of the host territory — the east–west vista from *Carraic an Iarla* looks to the Wicklow Mountains, south-east over the Curragh Plain, west to Croghan Hill in Offaly with Carbury Hill visible in the distant northwest corner of the county.

Almhain was the setting for at least three battles recorded in the chronicles for the sixth, eighth and tenth century. The first of these is known only through a fleeting chronicle reference for the year A.D. 531 (O’Donovan 1856, i. 175) and was related to the Uí Néill conquest of the Central Plain of Ireland from the Leinstermen. Although events of the fifth and sixth centuries are most unlikely to have been the subject of contemporary record, memories of battles could be relayed for generations especially where battles resulted in a change of dynasty or territorial boundaries (Mac Shamhráin 1996, p. 32). The most significant of the three conflicts was the battle of *Almhain* fought in A.D. 722 between the troops of the Uí Néill king of the northern half of Ireland and the forces of the king of Leinster. The chronicles for that year claimed that the Uí Néill king led 21,000 men against 9,000 Leinstermen (Radner 1978, pp. 66–7; O’Donovan 1856, i. 317). The tenth-century tale *Cath Almaine* relates how Fergal, king of the Uí Néill of the northern half of Ireland, was defeated and slain in the battle by Murchad, king of Leinster, and how the principal saint of the province of Leinster, Brigit, was invoked by the Leinster army to strike terror into the opposing forces of the Uí Néill. It is her very presence that is seen to ensure their defeat (Ó Cathasaigh 2004, p. 45; Ó Riain 1978). Implicit in this, is the role of her church in the maintenance of the threshold lands of the king of the province of Leinster.

The battle of A.D. 722 was between powerful overkingdoms. Later, in A.D. 956, the Uí Faeláin went to battle against neighbouring dynasties at Feighcullen, the ‘holly wood’ (Fig. 12), situated immediately north-west of the foot of the hill of *Almhain* (O’Donovan 1856, ii. 677). This tenth-century reference to a specific battle site within the *Almhain* landscape may point to the general area in which the eighth-century battle was also held. Large-scale encounters, involving up to 30,000 men, as the battle of A.D. 722 allegedly did, are perhaps likely to have been staged somewhere in the great plain-lands of the district. The nature of early medieval warfare, in which an invading army entered the host’s territory and waited for the defending army to arrive, required the invading army to camp at some familiar landmark whether a road, a fording point or at a monument where they

could be easily located. It has been argued that such places were used for declarations of war but not necessarily as battle sites (Cathers 2002, pp. 13–14). There is some intimation in Gaelic sources that seasonal assembly places doubled as military camps but no direct references to battles in assembly landscapes. In *Mesca Ulaid* (*The Intoxication of the Ulstermen*), a narrative from the Ulster Cycle of Tales, written sometime between c. A.D. 700 and A.D. 1000, the mythological Ulster hero Cú Chulainn advises his king to camp his army at an assembly place because it was winter and ‘this rough wintry season is no season of tribal assembly’ (Watson 1941, p. 15). Out of season, assembly places could be used for other purposes such as military encampment. Since the battle of *Almhain* in A.D. 722 was allegedly fought in December (Radner 1978, pp. 66–7; Ó Cathasaigh 2004, p. 41), it is possible that an assembly place somewhere within the *Almhain* boundary landscape was the mustering venue for that battle. *Almhain* is attributed an assembly venue of its own in poetic sources, such as the late medieval fenian lay, ‘Caoilte’s sword’, which refers to Finn and his *fian* gathering at ‘Áonach na hAlmhaine’ (the assembly or fair of *Almhain*) (Murphy 1933, ii. 128, 129). In any consideration of where the battle itself took place, the great Curragh Plain (Fig. 12) is an obvious candidate.

CONCLUSION: LANDMARKS OF ELITE POWER

This investigation has proposed that cairns and mounds, named *Suidhe Finn* in hill and mountain topographies, were used as boundary landmarks of Gaelic kingdoms. Hitherto, they have been regarded as epiphenomenal and somewhat intangible landscape features, best explained as literary motifs or markers of the survival of Finn-lore in the Irish medieval landscape. For sites that have pre-modern place-name evidence and/or literary and historical references, it has been argued that the layering of the toponym, *Suidhe Finn*, onto cairns, mounds and outcropping rock on heights happened from at least as early as the tenth century and probably long before. However, the processes of naming sepulchral cairns and mounds and their uplands after Finn may have increased in tandem with the popularity of *fianaigeacht* and the refinement of territorial boundaries, especially the consolidation of *trícha cét* boundaries, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The intention behind imagining cairns and mounds as hunting seats and Otherworld entrances of the warrior-hunter and border hero Finn and his *fian*, who work for the king of Ireland in marginal places of kingdoms, may have been to designate symbolic topographies of royal power, especially on contested boundaries between territories. It is, perhaps, the case that they had a more ancient role in boundary formation and became mnemonic devices in cognitive landscapes of the territories to which they belonged. As expressions of elite spatial power, they were important to maintain.

It has been suggested that the role of the hill and mountain landscapes in which *Suidhe Finn* monuments are set was royal marchland (*mruig ríog*) of Gaelic elites, preserved for hunting and the exploitation of a range of natural resources. Conflict leading to battle may have been an inevitable consequence of those functions. Boundary landscapes such as *Cenn Abhrat* or Seefin Mountain in the Ballyhoura Hills, *Suidhe Finn* at Slievenaman, Seefin Mountain in *Sliabh Cua*, *Carn an Fhéinneda* on Howth headland, and *Céis Corann* in the Bricklieve Mountains, which are profiled in *fianaigeacht* as major hunting grounds, alongside locations such as *Almhain* and Knockseefin that had significant resource potential, may have been the equivalent of the royal *forestis* elsewhere in Europe. In that respect, the attested role of the hunting landscape of *Sliabh Cua* in Munster as a royal forest of English kings in Ireland, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is likely to have been a continuity from its use by the Gaelic kings of Déisi Muman on the border of their kingdom. Designated royal

marchland or *mruig rí* appears also to have served different levels in the territorial matrix, with *Almhain* providing for the kings of the province of Leinster as well as the local kingdom of Uí Faeláin.

Much work remains to be done in the field to reconstruct land-use histories of the landscapes of Finn's seats and to substantiate that they reflect former biogeographies of hunted species in royal forests where predation, quarrying and mining took place in the medieval past.

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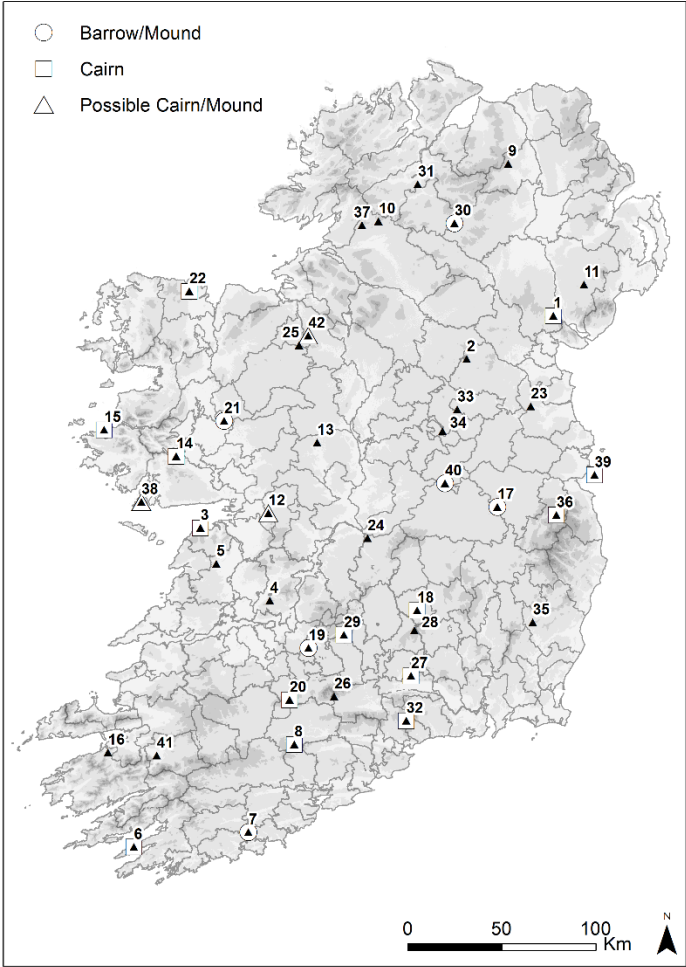


Fig. 1 Distribution of *Suidhe Finn* place-names in Ireland in *tricha cét* or local kingdoms showing associated cairns and mounds (Ronan Hennessy).

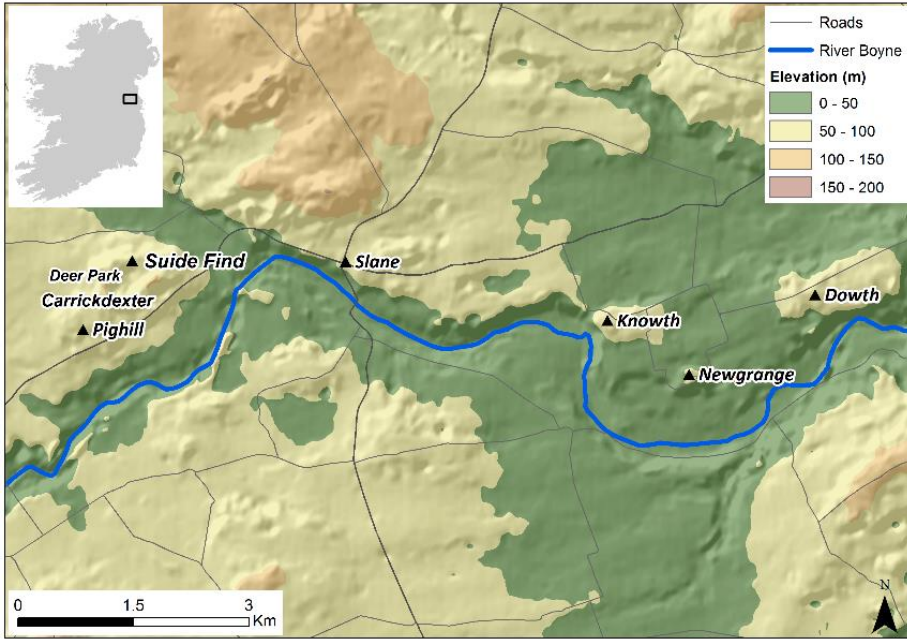


Fig. 2 The suggested location of the early medieval *Suidhe Find* (Finn's Seat) in the Boyne Valley, County Meath (Ronan Hennessy).

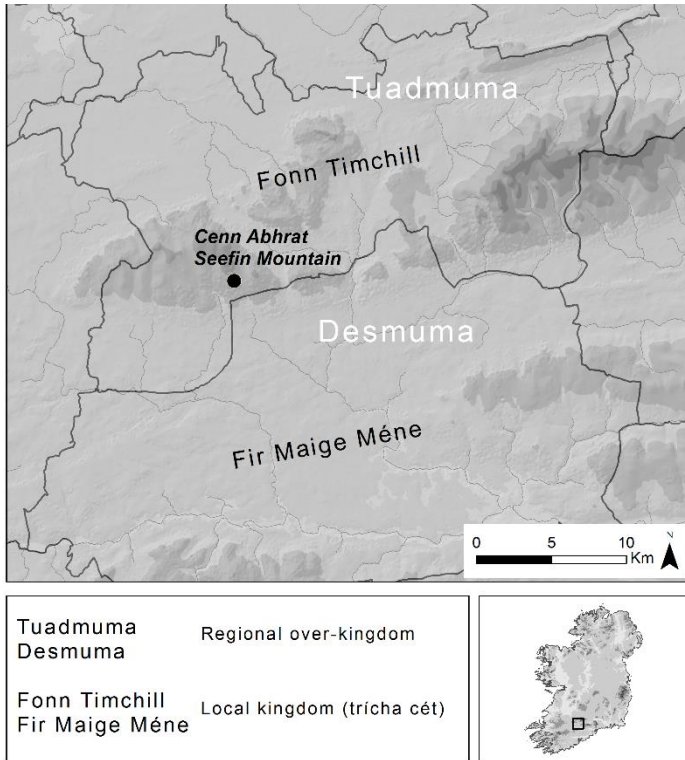


Fig. 3 Seefin Mountain (*Cenn Abhrat*) in the boundary landscape of Fonn Timchill and Fir Maige Méne and their over-kingdoms of Tuadmuma and Desmuma in the province of Munster (Ronan Hennessy).



Fig. 4 Carn Seefin on Keeraunnageeragh Mountain, Connemara (Paul Naessens).

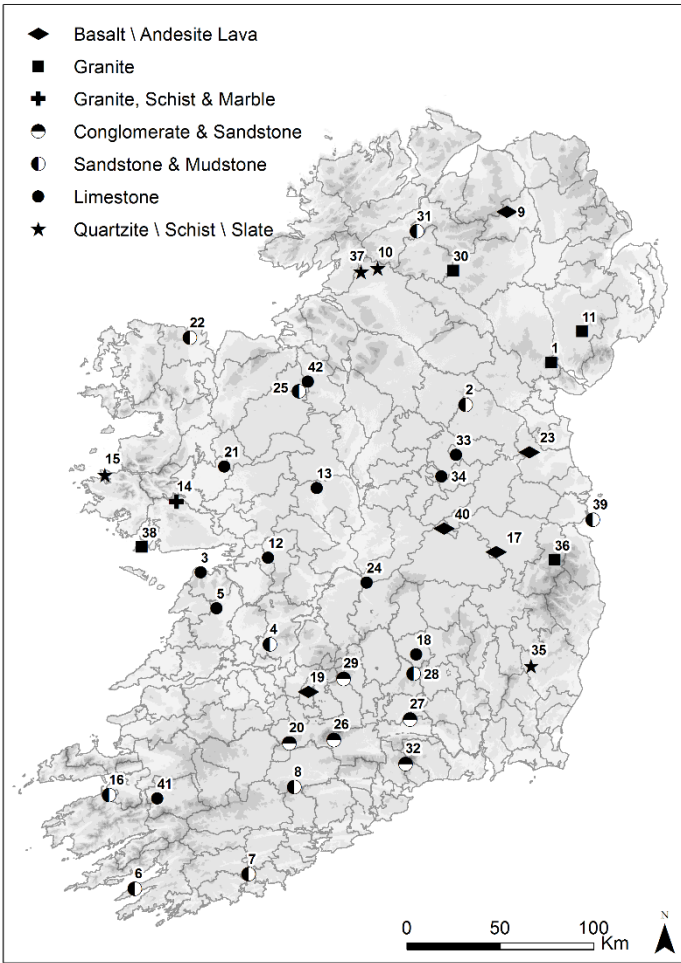


Fig. 5 The bedrock geology of *Suidhe Finn* locations (Ronan Hennessy).



Fig. 6 Fan-shaped outcrop of jointed basalt columns exposed at Knockseefin, County Limerick (Elizabeth FitzPatrick).



Fig. 7 The great mound of *Cruachain Brí Éile* on the summit of volcanic Croghan Hill in north County Offaly (Elizabeth FitzPatrick).

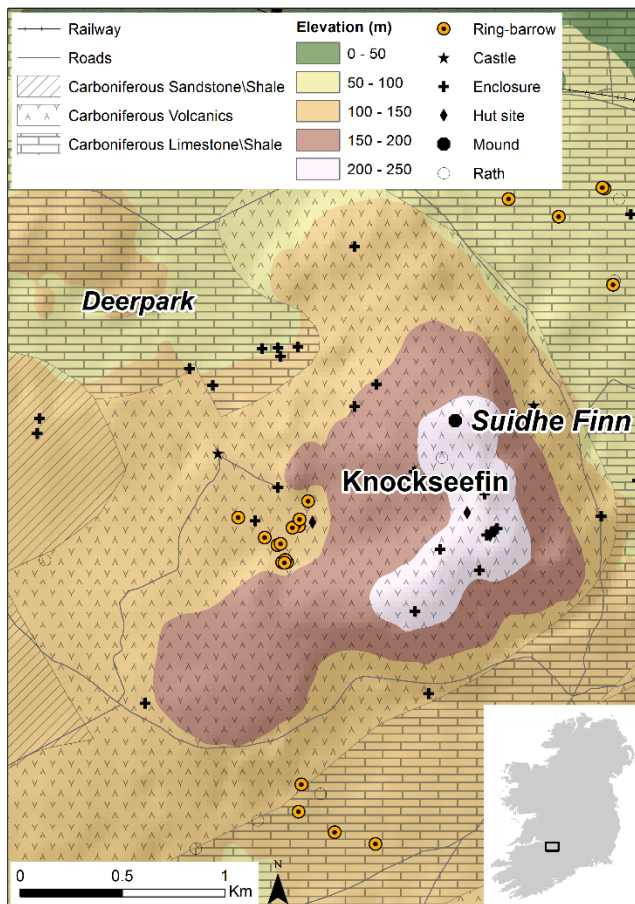


Fig. 8 The volcanic geology and archaeology of Knockseefin, Pallasgreen, County Limerick (Ronan Hennessy).

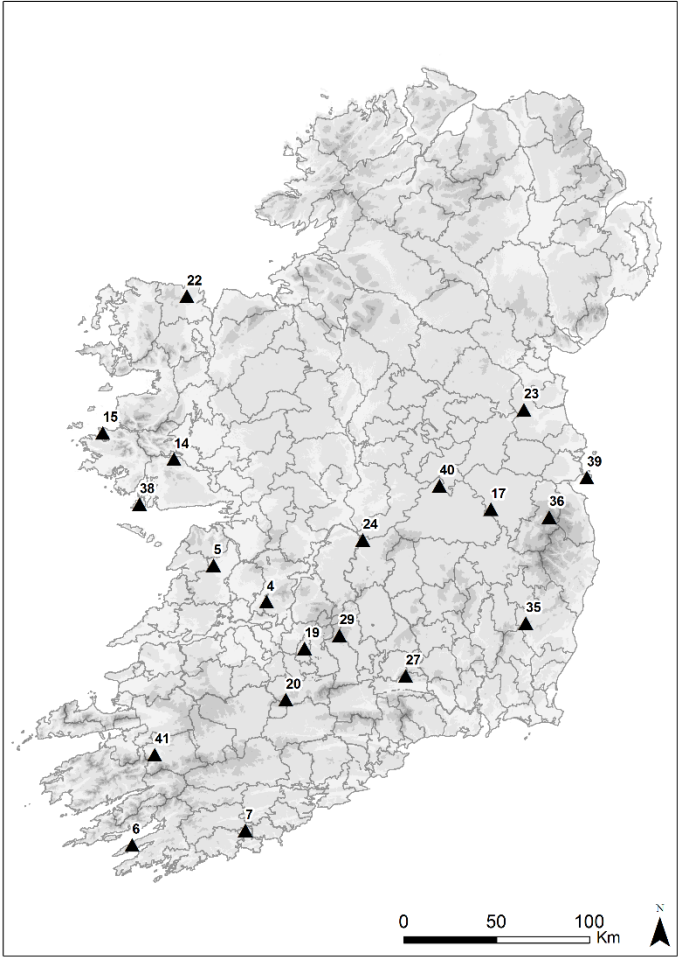


Fig. 9 Distribution of mineral and metal ores in *Suidhe Finn* landscapes (Ronan Hennessy).



Fig. 10 The hill of *Almhain* looking north across Pollardstown Fen (Elizabeth FitzPatrick).

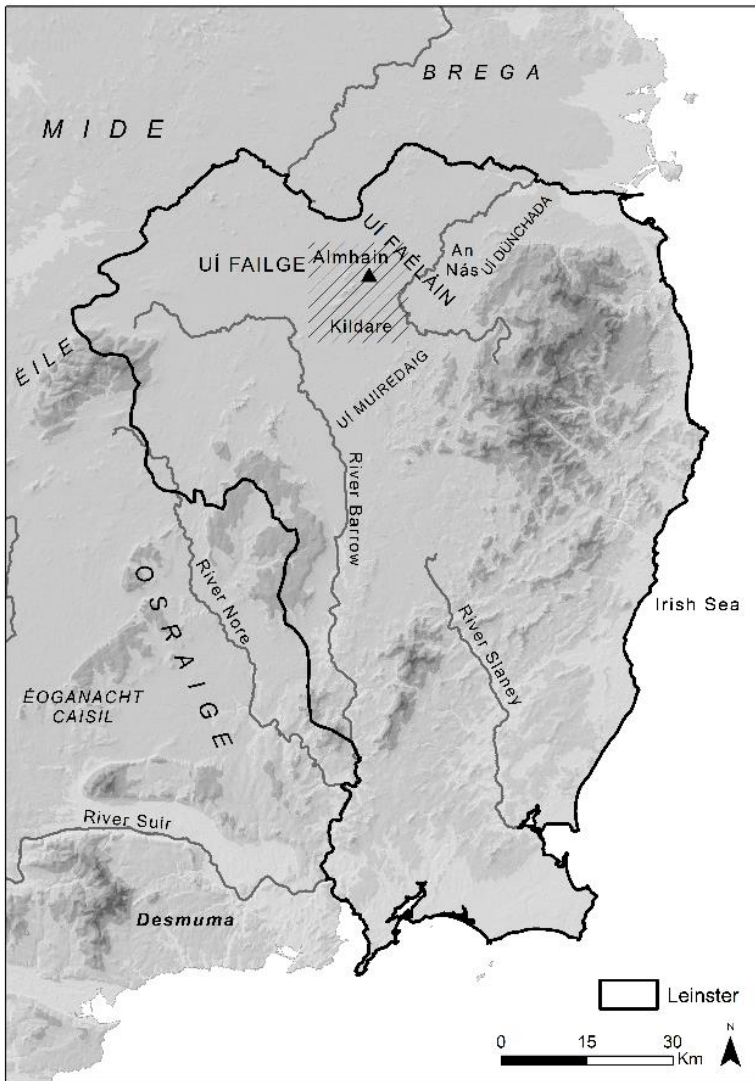


Fig. 11 The province of Leinster showing the location of *Almhain* and its landscape setting in the context of the northern client kingdoms of the province and its neighbours A.D. c. 700-1000 (Ronan Hennessy).

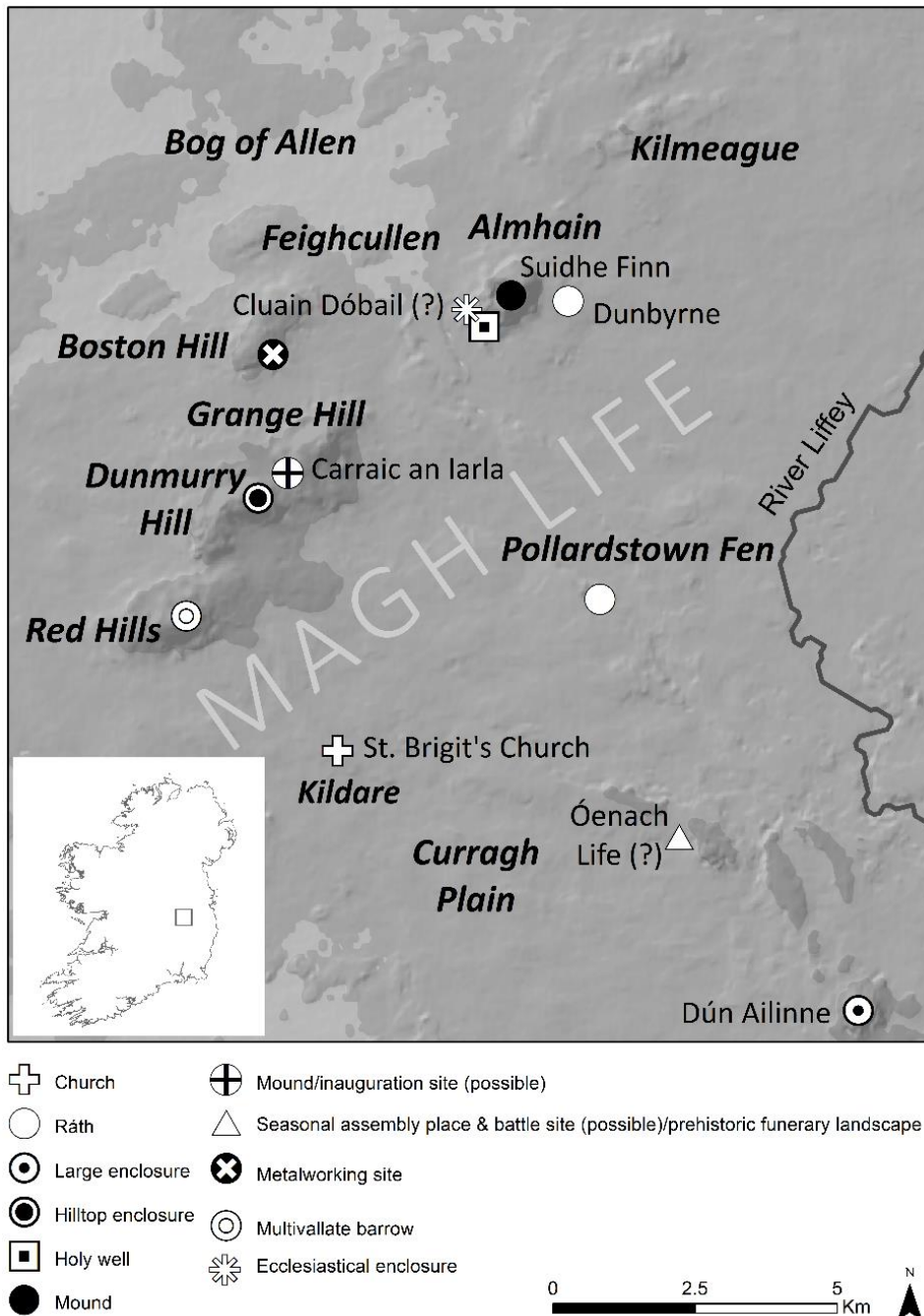


Fig. 12 Topography of the *Almhain* landscape and major archaeological sites mentioned in the text (Ronan Hennessy).

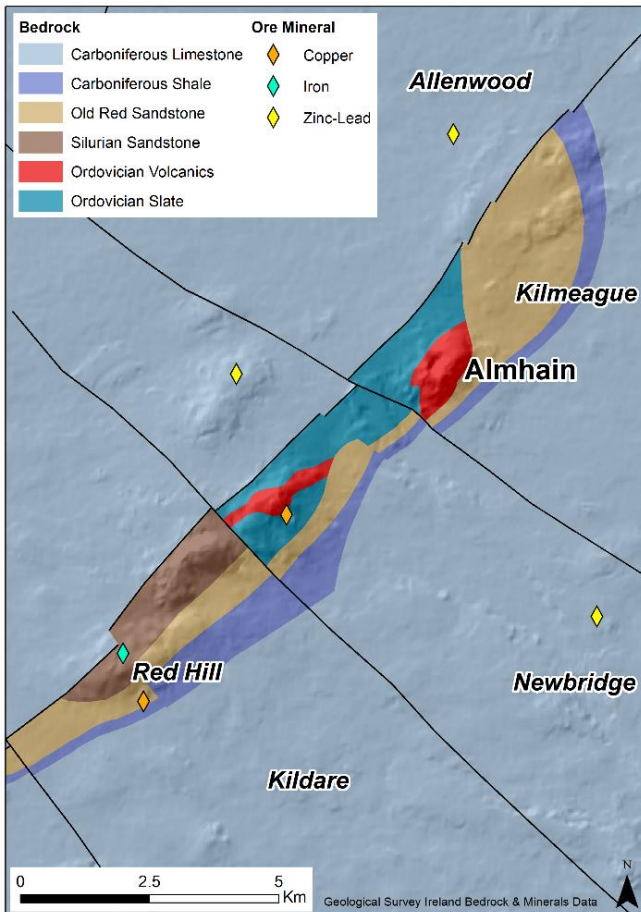


Fig. 13 The bedrock geology and mineral ores of *Almhain* and the Chair of Kildare Hills (Ronan Hennessy).



Fig. 14 John O'Donovan's sketch of *Almhain* (1837), crowned with the funerary mound of *Suidhe Finn*, and to the south Pollardstown *rath*, St Brigit's church at Kildare, the archaeology of the Curragh Plain including the linear earthwork named the 'race of the black pig' and *Dun Áillinne* (Ordnance Survey Letters Kildare, 1837).



Fig. 15 The mound known as *Carraic an Iarla* – the ‘Earl’s Chair’ – with Dunmurry Hill left of picture (Elizabeth FitzPatrick).

No	Place-Name	Townland & County	<i>Trícha Cét</i>	Archaeology & Topography	Earth Materials
1	Seafin (OS 1832-46); Shefein 1657 (Paterson 1939, p. 228)	Seafin, Ring of Gullion, Armagh	Ind Airthir (MacCotter, p. 240)	Site of cairn (ARM029:006) on Carn Hill, 187.5m OD. ‘Dane’s Cast’ linear earthwork (ARM029:014) south of hill	Granite (‘stones’ recorded OS 1832-46; quarries recorded OS 1846-62). Located in a landscape of volcanic and intrusive igneous rocks
2	Seefin (OS); Siffin 1618 (Hardiman 1829, ii, Inq.Ult, Jac. I, p. 7)	Seefin, Cavan	Gailenga (MacCotter, pp. 203-4)	Ridge summit 251.5m OD	Sandstone and mudstone
3	Carnsefin (OS)	Aghaglinny North, Clare	Crích Bóirne (MacCotter, p. 196)	Cairn (CL002-002) on hill slope, 268.5m OD. Doughbranneen cairn (CL002-001), 317.3m OD, on mountain summit in adjoining Murrooghkilly	Limestone
4	Seefin & Knockaunnamoughilly (OS)	Ballykelly, Slieve Bearnagh, Clare	Ua mBlait (MacCotter, p. 196)	Hill summit c. 213.4m OD; Wedge tomb at NE of townland; standing stone in Hurdleston townland to E	Sandstone, mudstone, iron, galena, jasper, gold
5	Seefin, Kintlea, Knockincleagh, Ceann Sleibhe and Ceann	Clifden, Inchiquin, Clare	Cenél Fermaic (MacCotter, pp. 193-4)	A hill summit at 168.6m OD overlooking Inchiquin Lough	Limestone, galena, copper, lead

	Nathrach (Westropp 1913, pp. 100, 103)				
6	Seefin (OS)	Killeen North/South Sheepshead peninsula, Cork	Fonn Iartharach (MacCotter, p. 153)	Cairn (CO129-024) on spine of Seefin Mountain in Killeen North/South, west of summit, c. 306m OD	Sandstone, mudstone, copper
7	Maullaghseefin (OS)	Monteen, Cork	Uí Badamna (MacCotter, pp. 158-9)	Barrow (CO123-004) on hill summit, c. 158.5m OD	Sandstone, mudstone, copper
8	Seefin, Leacht (OS)	Cloghvoolia South, Knoppoge, and Carrig, Nagles Mountain, Cork	Fir Maige /Uí Chuirb Liatháin (MacCotter, pp. 152, 159)	Cairn on mountain summit 424m OD. Not recorded by Archaeological Survey of Ireland. Another cairn (CO034-053) Seehaunnamnafinna, 408.5m, lies NE of Cloghvoolia South, in Ballydague.	Sandstone, mudstone
9	Seefin Stone, Seefinn Hill (OS)	Ballyknock, Killelagh, Derry	Fir Lí (MacCotter, p. 226)	Standing stone (LDY032:069) 'Finn McCool's Finger Stone' Seefinn Hill 228m OD	Basalt located in boundary between Antrim basalts (east) and sandstone/schist (west).
10	Seafin Lough (OS)	Cullion/Tievemore, Donegal	Fir Manach (MacCotter, p. 243)	Lake overlooked by Crockkinnagoe 362.5m OD	Quartzite, schist, slate Close to boundary between limestone (east) and Dalradian metamorphics (west)
11	Seafin (OS 1832-46), Ballyliphyn 1609, Ballysiffyn 1611 (Morris 1966, pp. 395b, 189a)	Seafin, Down	Uí Echach Cobo (MacCotter, p. 235)	Hill summit 106.7m OD west of River Bann. Seafin Castle and several ringforts in townland	Granite
12	Seefin Hill, <i>Suidhe Finn</i> , sixteenth century (O'Donovan 1843, pp. 4-6)	Seefin, Galway	Cenél Guaire (MacCotter, pp. 144-5)	Cairn (possible) (GA104-269) 87.8m OD	Limestone
13	Seefin (unverified place-name)	Cloonruff, Galway	Tír Maine (MacCotter, p. 208)	Featureless rise c. 55m OD	Limestone. Cloonruff, from the Irish <i>Cluain Ruibh</i> , translates as meadow of brimstone or sulphur. Nearby townland of Coalpits suggests coal measures but uncorroborated by

					Geological Survey of Ireland.
14	Carn Seefin (OS)	Derroua, Galway	Clann Fhergail (Delbna Tíre dá Locha) (MacCotter, p. 134)	Cairn on mountain summit, (GA039-010) 307.3m OD.	Granite, marble, schist, copper, lead, iron, gold, pyrite, chalcopryrite
15	Lough Seefin (OS)	Cloonlooan, Galway	Conmaicne Mara (MacCotter, 137)	Cairn (GA009-029) on the summit of Tully Mountain 357.3 OD	Quartz, schist, slate, soapstone, copper, talc
16	Seefin, 'Giant's Seat' (OS)	Treangarriv/Treanmanagh/ Curraheen, Kerry	Uíbh Ráthach (MacCotter, 169)	Seefin is a featureless bald summit 555.4m OD. 'Giant's Seat' – outcropping rock SW of Seefin, 381m OD, may be the feature to which Seefin actually applies.	Sandstone and mudstone
17	<i>Suidhe Finn</i> (OS) <i>Almhain</i> , Hill of Allen (Gwynn 1906, ii, p. 73)	Carrick/Pluckerstown, Kildare	Uí Faeláin (MacCotter, pp. 176-7)	Mound (KD018-021002) on hill summit, 206m OD	Andesite lava, alum, copper, zinc, lead. Chair of Kildare Hills – sandstone, conglomerate, shale, siltstone, copper, yellow ochre
18	<i>Suidhe Finn</i> (Tighe 1802, p. 623)	Clomantagh (Mountgarret), Kilkenny	Áes Cinn Caille (MacCotter, p. 182)	Cairn/passage tomb (KK008-124001) on mountain summit 351.8m OD	Limestone
19	Knockseefin (OS)	Lackanascarry, Limerick	Uí Énna (Eóganacht Áine) MacCotter, p. 190)	Mound (LI024-012) on hill summit 226.2m OD	Basalt/andesite lava, iron, lead
20	Seefin Mountain <i>Cenn Abhrat</i> , Sliabh Riach (OS); Gwynn 1913, iii, pp. 226-33)	Glenosheen, Limerick	Fonn Timchill (MacCotter, p. 189)	Cairns (LI056-032001; LI056-032002) on mountain summit 518.8m OD	Conglomerate, sandstone, iron, gold
21	Siffine 1610 (Griffith 1966, p. 179)	Seefin, Mayo	Conmaicne Cúile Talad (MacCotter, p. 136)	Pond barrow (MA111-057) on hillslope c. 61m OD	Limestone
22	Seefin (OS)	Knockaghaleague, Aghaleague, Mayo	Tír Amalgado (MacCotter, p. 149)	Cairn (MA014-002005-) On hill at c.240.2 OD. There is another cairn (MA014-002006-) and a court tomb (MA014-002007-) on Knockaghaleague.	Sandstone, mudstone, iron, chalcopryrite
23	<i>Suide Find</i> (Gwynn 1906, ii, pp. 24, 25)	Carrickdexter, Pighill, Meath	Brega (MacCotter, pp. 204-6)	Quarried-out hill, 124.6m OD, in the former demesne of Slane Castle	Basalt, andesite, copper
24	Seefin c.1610 Siffin Wood 1638 (Malcomson 2008, p. 110)	Seefin, Birr, Offaly	Éile Uí Cherbaill (MacCotter, p. 212)	Featureless ridge, 85.7m OD, in area of urban housing	Lead, zinc, iron, copper
25	Seefin Sephen 1655 (Petty)	Seefin Sligo	Corran (MacCotter, p. 137)	Featureless hill 91.5m OD 6km SW of Keshcorran (see No. 40).	Sandstone, mudstone

26	Seefin (OS)	Skeheenaranky, Galtee Mountains, Tipperary	Uí Fothaid Aiched (MacCotter, p. 218)	Featureless, bare-topped mountain, 447.8m OD.	Conglomerate, sandstone
27	Shyfyne 1654-6 (Simington 1931, pp. 259-60)	Ballyknockane/Ballypatrick/Shanbally Tipperary	Uíbh Eóghain Fhinn (MacCotter, p. 218)	Cairn (TS078-001) on N edge of summit of Slievenaman 720.6m OD	Conglomerate, sandstone, gold
28	Caric Sulphyn 1610 (Speed 1611/12)	Slieveardagh Hills Specific point may be Knocknamuck at 349 OD in Newpark townland, Tipperary	Sliab Ardachaid (Eóganacht Chaisil) (MacCotter, p. 215)	Precise location unknown	Sandstone, mudstone, coal
29	Laghtseefin (OS)	Glencarbry Tipperary	Múscraige Uí Chuirce (MacCotter, pp. 214-5)	Cairn (TS045-014) on bare-topped mountain at 434.4m OD	Conglomerate, sandstone, barytes, copper
30	Seefinn (OS)	Bancran, Tyrone	Telach Óc (MacCotter, p. 224)	Seefinn mound c. 106m OD (TYR035:005) Cloghfin portal tomb to NW in adjoining <i>trícha céit</i> of Árd Srátha	Granite, extensive area of basalt to north
31	Seein (OS)	Seein Tyrone	Mag Ítha (MacCotter, p. 228)	Featureless ridge, 61m OD, west of Mourne River	Sandstone, mudstone
32	Seefin and Dog's Gap (OS); Sliabh Cua (O'Grady 1892, ii. p.138)	Cutteen North/Coumaraglin Mountain. Waterford	Sliabh Cua (MacCotter, p. 247)	Cairn (WA014-001) on Seefin Mountain, 725.5m OD, at Poul-na-maddra-ruadh	Conglomerate, sandstone
33	Seafin (OS)	Ballinlough (Lough Bane) Westmeath	Cáille Follamain (MacCotter, p. 203)	Small hill crowned by traces of an enclosure (ME015-075), 201.5m OD, overlooking Lough Bane	Limestone
34	Sheefin (OS)	Sheefin, Westmeath	Tír Beccon (MacCotter, p. 202)	Hill summit, 151.5m OD.	Limestone
35	Knok Swiffyn 1610 (Speed 1611/12)	Probably Gibbet Hill, at junction of townlands of Corragh, Graiguemore and Coolmela, Wexford	Síl nÉlóthaig (MacCotter, pp. 253-4)	Featureless mountain summit, 314.9m OD, on edge of forest.	Quartzite, schist, slate, pyrite
36	Shiffin alias Shifeanan 1654 (Simington 1961)	Scurlocksleap Wicklow	Uí Dúinchada (MacCotter, pp. 163-4)	Cairn, passage tomb (WI006-003) on summit of Seefin Mountain, 622.7m OD	Granite. iron
37	Meenseefin, Mín Suidhe Finn (OS), Meensyfin (McCrea 1801)	Meensheefin, Donegal	Fir Manach (MacCotter, p. 243)	Featureless bare-topped hill, 907 OD	Psammitic paragneisse, quartzite, schist, slate
38	Knockfín (OS)	Maumeen, Gorumna Island, Galway	Clann Fergail (Delbna Tíre dá Locha) (MacCotter, p. 134)	Possible footprint of cairn on hill summit 49.1m OD	Granite, basalt lavas, iron, pyrite, fluorite
39	<i>Carn an Fhéinneda</i>	Shelmartin hill, Sutton South, Howth, Co.	Fine Gall (on southern	Cairn (DU019-003) on summit of Shelmartin hill, 167m OD	Sandstone, mudstone,

	(cairn of the warrior band) (O'Grady 1892, ii, p. 105)	Dublin	boundary of early medieval overkingdom of Brega) (MacCotter, p. 166)		manganese clay
40	Cruachain Brí Éile (Nagy 1985)	Croghanhill, Offaly	Uí Failge (MacCotter, p. 174)	Mound (OF010-004001) on summit of Croghan hill, 234.4m OD	Basalt, andesite lava, bog iron ore in surrounding peatlands
41	<i>Ros in Fhéinneda</i> (headland of the warrior band). (O'Grady 1892, ii, p. 114)	Ross Island, Lough Leane, or Muckross Demesne, Muckcross lake, Kerry	Eóganacht Locha Léin (MacCotter, p. 160)	Headland on Lough Leane containing copper mines. A cairn (KE074-015) lies in the townland of Ferta (from <i>fert</i> meaning ancestral grave) on Mangerton Mountain, south of Muckcross lake but there is no Finn lore recorded for it	Limestone, copper
42	<i>Céis Corann</i> , Kesh Corann (O'Grady 1892, i, p. 306)	Kesh Corann, Drumnagranshy and Murhy, Bricklieve Mountains, Sligo	Corann (MacCotter, p. 137)	Cairn, passage tomb (SL040-008) on summit of Kesh Corann mountain, 362.2m OD	Limestone

Table 1. Inventory of *Suidhe Finn* and related sites, Ireland.