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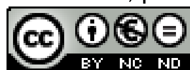

A multi-disciplinary study of lordly centres in the later medieval Uí Chellaig lordship of Uí Maine, *c.* 1100-1600 AD.

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funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences

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Table of Contents

List of Plates 7
List of Figures 10
Dating Conventions 16
Acknowledgements 17
Abstract 18
Chapter 1 – Introduction 20
1.1 – Introduction 20
1.2 – Landscape Setting 21
1.3 – Aims 25
1.4 – The Methodology used in this thesis 25
1.4.1 – Landscape approaches in Historical archaeology 26
1.5 – Archaeological Methods and Techniques 29
1.5.1 – Archaeological Fieldwork 29
1.5.2 – Aerial Photography 30
1.5.3 – Airborne Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) 31
1.5.4 – Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Survey 31
1.5.5 – Geophysical Survey 32
1.6 – Historical Sources 34
1.6.1 – Edited Historical Sources 35
1.7 – Secondary Works 48
1.7.1 – General Histories of Medieval Ireland 48
1.7.2 – General Histories of Later Medieval Gaelic Ireland 48
1.7.3 – General Archaeological Texts on Later Medieval Ireland 49
1.7.4 – Research on the Archaeology of Later Medieval Gaelic Ireland 50
1.7.5 – Archaeological and Historical work on Uí Maine 51
1.8 – Conclusions 54
Chapter 2 – Historical Background: Later Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordship of Tír Maine and Uí Maine 56
2.1 – Introduction 56
2.2 – The early medieval origins of the Uí Chellaig 58

2.3 – The Uí Chellaig and the Lordship of Tír Maine, *c.*1100-1235 64
2.4 – The arrival of the Anglo-Normans to Connacht until the Death of the Brown Earl, 1225 – 1333 71
2.4.1 – Clonmacnowen Migration 73
2.4.2 – Migration beyond Uí Maine 74
2.4.3 – Tír Maine Migration 74
2.4.4 – The fortunes of Conchobhair Ó Cellaig and his Successors 75
2.5 – The Late Medieval lordship of Uí Maine – the height of Ó Cellaig power 81
2.6 – The slow decline of the Ó Cellaig lordship 85
2.7 – Conclusions 91
Chapter 3 – The Landscape and Economy of Uí Maine during the Later Medieval Period 95
3.1 – Introduction 95
3.2 – The Physical Landscape 95
3.2.1 – Soils and Bogland 95
3.2.2 – Woodland 98
3.2.3 – Rivers, Lakes and Turloughs 106
3.3 – Communication Routes through the Lordship 107
3.4 – Focal Points of Assembly in Later Medieval Uí Maine 112
3.5 – The Economy of the Lordship 114
3.5.1 – Pastoral Agriculture 114
3.5.2 – Horse Breeding and Trade 122
3.5.3 – Arable Farming 124
3.5.4 – Resources Derived from the Natural Environment 125
3.5.5 – Wealth and its Expression 129
3.6 – Conclusions 137
Chapter 4 – The Settlement Archaeology of Later Medieval Gaelic Uí Maine 138
4.1 – Introduction 138
4.2 – High-Medieval Castles in Uí Maine 138
4.2.1 – The caistél of Dún Leodha 139
4.2.2 – The Anglo-Norman Baronial Castles of Uí Maine 145

4.2.3 – The Erroneous Labelling of High-Medieval Gaelic Lordly Sites as 'Castles'......*148*

4.3 – Ringforts and cashels......**150**

4.3.1 – Loughbown and Mackney ringforts......*152*

4.4 – High-cairn *crannóga*......**154**

4.5 – The *bódhún*......**157**

4.6 – Gaelic Moated Sites......**158**

4.7 – The *Pailís* Sites of Later Medieval Uí Maine......**165**

4.8 – Tower House castles......**170**

4.9 – Conclusions......**172**

Chapter 5 – Lakeland Elite Settlement in Later Medieval Uí Maine......**174**

5.1 – Introduction......**174**

5.2 – Case Study: Lough Croan and Environs, Co. Roscommon......**174**

5.2.1 – The Toponymy, History and Archaeology of the Lough Croan cenn áit......*176*

5.2.2 – The Focal Point of the Lough Croan Landscape......*188*

5.2.3 – The Cultural Landscape of the Lough Croan cenn áit......*201*

5.2.4 – Summary of Lough Croan Case Study......*207*

5.3 – Case Study: Callow Lough (Lough Acalla) and Environs, Co. Galway **208**

5.3.1 – The Toponymy of the Callow Lough cenn áit......*209*

5.3.2 – Callow Lough and Kilconnell in the Historical Sources......*211*

5.3.3 – The Archaeology of the Callow Lough cenn áit......*214*

5.3.4 – The Cultural Landscape of the Callow Lough cenn áit......*228*

5.3.5 – Summary of the Callow Lough Case Study......*240*

5.4 – Case Study: Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway......**243**

5.4.1 – The Toponymy and History of Ballaghdacker Lough and Environs..*243*

5.4.2 – The Archaeology of the Ballaghdacker Lough cenn áit......*246*

5.4.3 – The Cultural Landscape of Ballaghdacker Lough......*254*

5.4.4 – Summary of the Ballaghdacker Lough cenn áit......*256*

5.5 – Conclusions......**257**

Chapter 6 – Riverine Elite Settlement in Later Medieval Uí Maine......**259**

6.1 – Introduction 259
6.2 – Case Study: An Early Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* at Athlone 259
6.3 – Case Study: Galey Bay and Environs, Co. Roscommon...........................262
6.3.1 – Galey in the Historical and Literary Sources 264
6.3.2 – The Archaeology of the Galey cenn áit...267
6.3.3 – The Cultural Landscape surrounding Galey Bay 279
6.3.4 – Summary of the Galey Bay cenn áit...289
6.4 – Case Study: Athleague, Co. Roscommon 292
6.4.1 – The Natural Environment and Toponymy Around Athleague............292
6.4.2 – Historical Background of Later Medieval Athleague 294
6.4.3 – The Archaeology of the Athleague cenn áit 296
6.4.4 – Summary of the Athleague cenn áit..303
6.5 – Case Study: The Late Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordly Centre of Mote Castle... 304
6.6 – Conclusions 309
Chapter 7 – Elite Settlement Sited On Major Roadways in Later Medieval Uí Maine 311
7.1 – Introduction 311
7.2 – Case Study: Aughrim, Co. Galway 311
7.2.1 – Toponymy and Historical Background of Aughrim and Environs 311
7.2.2 – The Ó Cellaig cenn áit at Aughrim...314
7.2.3 – Summary of the Aughrim cenn áit...325
7.3 – Case Study: The Late Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordly Centre of Lisdaulan Castle 326
7.4 – Case Study: The Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Elite Settlement Sites of the Wider Ó Cellaig Lordship...333
7.4.1 – Ó Cellaig Ambitions in Clantayg 333
7.4.2 – The Ó Cellaig cenn áit at Tiaquin...335
7.4.3 – Abbeyknockmoy and Ó Cellaig Patronage 337
7.4.4 – The Tower Houses of Sixteenth-Century Ó Cellaig Country 340
7.5 – Conclusions 351
Chapter 8 – Discussion 353

8.1 – Introduction 353
8.1.1 – Discussion of the high medieval elite settlement forms of the Uí Chellaig 354
8.2 – The Late Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordship 381
8.2.1 – Tower house castles 381
8.2.2 – The Archaeological Expression of wealth in the late medieval Ó Cellaig lordship 387
8.3 – The Landscape and Economy of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship 389
8.4 – Conclusions 390
Chapter 9 – Conclusion 392
Bibliography 401
Primary sources 401
Secondary sources 404
Appendix 1 – Recorded monuments Discussed Over the Course of the Research 435
Appendix 2 – Additional/Reinterpreted Monuments Uncovered Over the Course of the Research 440
Appendix 3 – The Diversion of the River Hind, Co. Roscommon 442
Appendix 4 – Case Study: *Áth Nadsluaigh*, Co. Galway 451
The Toponymy of Áth Nadsluaigh 452
Historical Information Relating to the Clannmhaicne Eoghain cenn áit 454
Archaeological Expression of Áth Nadsluaigh and Caislen Suicin 455
The Cultural Landscape of the Áth Nadsluaigh cenn áit 461
Summary of the Áth Nadsluaigh cenn áit of the Clannmhaicne Eoghain Uí Chellaig 462
Appendix 5 – *The Inauguration of the Uí Chellaig* 464
The Case of the Two Cluain Tuaiscirt 464
The Inaugurator of the Uí Chellaig 465
The Ó Cellaig Venue of Inauguration 468
The Archaeology of Ó Cellaig Inauguration at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine 470

Summary of the Ó Cellaig Inauguration Venue at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine *475*

Appendix 6 – The Heritage and Heritage Tourism Potential of the Uí Maine Lordship: Feasibility Study..**477**

Appendix 7 – Listing of Service Kindred Families and Landholdings in the Study Area **501**

List of Plates

Plate 2.1 - Foundational remains of Temple Kelly, Clonmacnoise.

Plate 3.1 – Woods of *Bruigheol*.

Plate 3.2 – Lisseenamanragh townland. Recorded as Ancient field system. Thomas Street, Roscommon, Ireland.

Plate 3.3 – A wall painting of the figure of an armoured Gaelic lord on horseback, from Clare Island Cistercian Abbey, Co. Mayo.

Plate 3.4 – Iron fish hook from Loughbown I ringfort excavation.

Plate 3.5 – Medieval coin, Gortnacrannagh 2, N5 Road Project, Co Roscommon.

Plate 4.1 – Earthworks and tower house castle remains at Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon.

Plate 4.2 – Cuilleenirwan moated site, viewed from the northeast.

Plate 4.3 – Bank height at corner of moated site, viewed from the north, Cuilleenirwan moated site.

Plate 5.1 – Punch-dressed stones incorporated into the building fabric of an outbuilding attached to Turrock House.

Plate 5.2 – Aerial photograph of the turlough and former lake at Lough Croan.

Plate 5.3 – Earth resistance survey being conducted at Lough Croan.

Plate 5.4 – Digital reconstruction of a medieval *crannóg* at Coolure Demesne, Lough Derravaragh, Co. Westmeath.

Plate 5.5 – 'Fair Hill' viewed from the north.

Plate 5.6 – The high-cairn *crannóg* located in the centre of Callow Lough, viewed from the southeast.

Plate 5.7 - [a] Large stones marking the perimeter around the *crannóg* in Callow Lough, on the southern side of the island. [b] Noost or jetty features on the eastern side of the *crannóg*.

Plate 5.8 – Interior view of much modified castle wall at Callow Castle.

Plate 5.9 – Punch-dressed stones incorporated into the fabric of the modern farm buildings on the site of Callow Castle.

Plate 5.10 – The 'Dermot Tully' Mether, dated 1590.

Plate 5.11 – Oblique aerial photographs of Kilconnell Friary and infields.

Plate 5.12 – Fourteenth or fifteenth-century canopied tomb in the north wall of the chancel at Kilconnell Friary.

Plate 5.13 – Oblique aerial photography of Abbeygrey religious foundation.

Plate 5.14 – Stony Island, as viewed from the eastern shore of Ballaghdacker Lough.

Plate 5.15 – Sally Island, as viewed from the north-western perimeter of Stony Island.

Plate 6.1 – Athlone Castle.

Plate 6.2 – Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon.

Plate 6.3 – Remnants of outer wet ditch, looking north; Cobbled entranceway onto the summit of the earthworks; large boulders, having fallen from the inner bank, located in the inner ditch; ruined nineteenth-century boathouse, which utilised the course of the northern section of the inner wet ditch. All Galey Bay.

Plate 6.4 – Degraded and overgrown remains of dru-stone-built bank or wall at Galey Bay.

Plate 6.5 – Ground image of the internal remains in Galey tower house, viewed from the southwest.

Plate 6.6 – The ivy-covered remains of the medieval church in Portrunny townland, Co. Roscommon

Plate 6.7 – View east from medieval churchyard over Portrunny Bay.

Plate 6.8 – Fortified house at Athleague Castle, Co. Roscommon.

Plate 6.9 – Vertical aerial image of the fortified house now known as Athleague Castle.

Plate 6.10 – One example of the punch-dressed stone from within the fortified house of Athleague Castle.

Plate 6.11 – The silted up and filled in remnants of the section of *bódhún* ditch at Athleague Castle.

Plate 6.12 – The best preserved of the loops which are incorporated into the building fabric of a mill building located in Mote Demesne, Co. Roscommon.

Plate 6.13 – One of the finest examples of punch-dressing found incorporated into the mill building in Mote Demesne, Co. Roscommon.

Plate 7.1 – Aughrim Castle, Co. Galway.

Plate 7.2 – Outer enclosure ditch surrounding Aughrim Castle.

Plate 7.3 – Presumed entrance into the inner ward of Aughrim Castle.

Plate 7.4 – Some examples of the range of punch-dressed stones incorporated into the building fabric of the eighteenth-century estate house of Sandfield House.

Plate 7.5 – The upper and lower sections of a two-light ogee-headed window, incorporated into an outbuilding adjacent to Sandfield House.

Plate 7.6 – The early fifteenth century tomb in the presbytery of the Cistercian monastery of Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway.

Plate 7.7 – Depiction of the Three Living and Three Dead Kings, Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway.

Plate 7.8 – Barnaderg Castle, Co. Galway, sixteenth-century tower house of the Uí Chellaig.

Plate 7.9 – Monivea Castle, Co. Galway.

Plate 7.10 – The remains of Garbally tower house, Co. Galway, viewed from the south west.

Plate 7.11 – Original pointed doorway of Garbally Castle, Co. Galway.

Plate 7.12 – The two light ogee-headed window on the north-eastern wall of Garbally tower house.

Plate 7.13 – Site of Gallagh Castle, viewed from the south.

Appendix 3, Plate 1 - Ground image of a section west of the 'Clogher Dyke' in the vicinity of the Timoney cross-section, looking west.

Appendix 4, Plate 1 – The surviving later medieval fabric of the stone bridge of Ballinasloe.

Appendix 4, Plate 2 – Bawn wall of the castle (*Caislen Suicin*) on the eastern bank of the River Suck at Ballinasloe, viewed from the west.

Appendix 5, Plate 1 – *Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine*, Co. Galway, and the traditional inauguration place of the Uí Chellaig.

Appendix 5, Plate 2 – The natural hillock, 200m east of *Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine*.

Appendix 5, Plate 3 – Magnetic gradiometry survey being conducted on the summit of the mound at *Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine*.

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 – Baronies, rivers, lakes and elevations which comprise the Uí Maine study area, as per its extents in the fifteenth century.

Figure 1.2 – Baronies of Moycarn and Athlone in the 1636 Strafford Survey.

Figure 2.1 – A Map of Hy Many, with some of the adjacent territories in the counties of Galway and Roscommon. Taken from the Tribes and Customs of Hy Many.

Figure 2.2 – Approximate territorial extents of the sept families related to Uí Maine, c.800.

Figure 2.3 – Territorial extents Tír Maine, Tír Soghain/Uí Maine and Machaire Connacht, c.1100.

Figure 2.4 – Dioceses and Archdioceses of Ireland.

Figure 2.5 – The territorial extents of the King's Cantreds.

Figure 2.6 – The parishes in the King's Cantreds in which land was granted to English (Anglo-Norman) Tenants.

Figure 2.7 – Reconstructed extents of the Ó Cellaig *trícha céta* of Uí Maine and Tír Maine during the high medieval period, with principal locations mentioned in the text indicated.

Figure 2.8 – Reconstructed extents of the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine by the beginning of the fifteenth century, with principal locations mentioned in the text indicated.

Figure 2.9 – Composite map outlining the widest extents of the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine in the fifteenth century, in contrast with the conflated boundaries of Uí Maine, marked by the red line, as illustrated by O'Donovan in 1843.

Figure 3.1 – Griffith's Bog Commission map, recording the extant bogland to the northwest and northeast of Ballinasloe, Co. Galway at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Figure 3.2 – Soil association map derived from Teagasc soil classifications, with National Monuments Service data plotted on top (Soils data courtesy of Teagasc).

Figure 3.3 – Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) indicating the extent of woodland, known as the Feadha of Athlone, in the region under inspection in the present chapter at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Figure 3.4 – A graphical representation of the townland names which denote woodland and difficult land in Tír Maine, consistent with the historical and cartographic attestations to the wooded and treacherous Feadha of Athlone, woods of Athleague and Bruigheol

Figure 3.5 – Map of the study area and beyond, as recorded in Boazio's *Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio* (1606).

Figure 3.6 – Map of the study area, as recorded in Speed's *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine…* (1611).

Figure 3.7 – Map of the reconstructed woodlands of Uí Maine, based upon a combination of late medieval/early modern cartographic sources, and the surviving toponymy.

Figure 3.8 – Medieval routeways through the Ó Cellaig *trícha céta* of Uí Maine and Tír Maine, as per their territorial extents in c.1100, with the principal settlements from the text indicated.

Figure 3.9 – Location of the assembly and inauguration landscapes under discussion in the thesis, as well as their relationship with the identified *cenn áiteanna* of Tír Maine and Uí Maine.

Figure 3.10 – Location of cattle-related townland names in relation to Ó Cellaig lordly centres.

Figure 3.11 – Art Mór Mac Murchadha Caomhánach riding to meet the earl of Gloucester, as depicted in an illustration to Jean Creton's *Histoire du roy d'Angleterre Richard II*.

Figure 3.12 – Reconstruction illustration of the Hospital of the Crutched Friars at Rindoon, *c.*1500, after its rebuilding under Ó Cellaig patronage.

Figure 4.1 – The locations of the *caistél* fortifications constructed by Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair during his twelfth-century reign as king of Connacht.

Figure 4.2 - 1st Edition Ordnance Survey illustrating the number of islets that made up the fording place of Áth Nadsluaigh.

Figure 4.3 - Reconstruction of former, much more extensive, course of the River Suck at Ballinasloe in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the proposed location of *caistél* Dún Leodha.

Figure 4.4 - LiDAR visualisation of the earthwork remains at Dundonnell Castle, Co. Roscommon.

Figure 4.5 - The Anglo-Norman baronial settler and royal castles in and near the study area.

Figure 4.6 - LiDAR visualisation of Cuilleenirwan moated site, and its proximity to 'Fair Hill', on the townland boundary between Gortaphuill and Tullyneeny townlands.

Figure 4.7 – Topographical plan and cross-section of Cuilleenirwan moated site, Co. Roscommon.

Figure 4.8 - Moated sites within the Uí Maine study area.

Figure 4.9 - Location of the three *pailís* sites in the *trícha céta* of Tír Maine and Uí Maine.

Figure 4.10 - Bog Commission map of the district around Pallas townland, encircled in red, and Clonbrock Demesne, Co. Galway, highlighting the continued presence of woodland in the area into the nineteenth-century (Griffths 1809-1814).

Figure 4.11 - Location of Cornapallis townland in relation to Coolderry, Liscoffy, Cloonca, Cloghnashade, Lenanmalla townlands, and the Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* of Athleague.

Figure 4.12 - Distribution map of the surviving tower house castles located within the Ó Cellaig lordship study area in c.1534.

Figure 5.1 - Location of Lough Croan turlough within the medieval *trícha cét* of Tír Maine in modern south Roscommon and east Galway.

Figure 5.2 – Lisnagavragh Fort.

Figure 5.3 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Lisnagavragh Fort.

Figure 5.4 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Liswilliam Fort.

Figure 5.5 - The townland names of the Lough Croan *cenn áit*.

Figure 5.6 - Extents of a digitally reflooded Lough Croan turlough, with the water level raised to 69m OD, recreating the former lake.

Figure 5.7 - Location of site inspected through the remote sensing surveys.

Figure 5.8 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of the target location of Illaunamona, derived from LiDAR data.

Figure 5.9 - Reconnaissance survey geo-referencing the groundfast stones on the summit of the island at Lough Croan, set within the survey grids.

Figure 5.10 - Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) survey conducted over the summit of the island at Lough Croan.

Figure 5.11 - Earth Resistance Survey conducted in 10m x 10m grids.

Figure 5.12 – Magnetic Susceptibility Survey conducted in 10m x 10m grids.

Figure 5.13 – Summary interpretation of the combination of topographical data and remote sensing investigations undertaken at the island at Lough Croan.

Figure 5.14 – LiDAR DTM of the Tullyneeny landscape, indicating the substantial, but unrecorded bivallate ráth in the western part of Tullyneeny townland.

Figure 5.15 – Summary of the Lough Croan case study, with principal location outlined.

Figure 5.16 – Location of Callow Lough within the oireacht of Tuahacalla – *Túath Caladh*, in the medieval *trícha cét* of Uí Maine in modern east Galway.

Figure 5.17 - Section of Browne's *Map of the Province of Connaught*, noting Callow Lough (1591).

Figure 5.18 - Boazio's *Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio* noting Callow Lough (1606).

Figure 5.19 – Orthographic image of Callow Lough and environs, Co. Galway,

Figure 5.20 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Lisnagry Fort

Figure 5.21 – Plan of Callow Lough *crannóg*.

Figure 5.22 – Flood Mapping of Callow Lough, Co. Galway, based on survey work undertaken by the Office of Public Works (OPW).

Figure 5.23 – Cross-section of the wet ditch across the promontory at Callow Lough, and the location of the cross section.

Figure 5.24 – Composite orthophotograph and DEM image of the southern shore of Callow Lough.

Figure 5.25 – Plan of the extents of Callow Castle as they survive today.

Figure 5.26 – Lisfineel Fort.

Figure 5.27 – Some of the principal townland names surrounding Kilconnell and Callow Lough, Co. Galway, and an interpretation based upon available source material.

Figure 5.28 – Summary of the Callow Lough and Kilconnell case study.

Figure 5.29 – Location of Ballaghdacker Lough in the oireacht of *Túath Átha Liaig*, close to the northern boundary of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine.

Figure 5.30 – Orthophotograph of Ballaghdacker Lough and its environs, Co. Galway.

Figure 5.31 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Cornacask ringfort.

Figure 5.32 – The possible moated site on the eastern shore of Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway.

Figure 5.33 – Plan of Stony Island *crannóg* and levelled possible moated site, both located within the limits of Ballaghdacker townland.

Figure 5.34 – Plan of Sally Island *crannóg*, with a potential dry-land service site evident 320m to the northeast.

Figure 5.35 – Summary of the Athleague & Ballaghdacker Lough case study, with principal locations outlined, including Cornapallis *pailís* site.

Figure 6.1 – The principal locations to be discussed in the Galey Bay case study, located in oireacht of ‘the Heyny’ within the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine.

Figure 6.2 – Plan of the promontory fort at Galey Bay.

Figure 6.3 – Summary plan of the identified archaeological remains at the Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* of Galey Bay.

Figure 6.4 – Reconstruction drawing of the Galey Bay *cenn áit* of the Uí Chellaig, conjecturally as it would have appeared in the mid-fourteenth century.

Figure 6.5 – Reconstruction drawing of the tower house castle at Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon.

Figure 6.6 – Reconstruction drawing of the Galey Bay *cenn áit* of the Uí Chellaig, conjecturally as it would have appeared in the late medieval period.

Figure 6.7 – Map of the merged OSi and TII LiDAR topographical datasets, highlighting the distribution of the unrecorded earthwork sites visible on the DTM.

Figure 6.8 - Boazio’s Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio (1606) highlights a settlement near the western shore of Lough Ree as ‘B. Gally’ – *Baile Gáile*.

Figure 6.9 – The former approach to Galey, visible as faint cropmarks in the left image. LiDAR DTM on the right shows a ‘basket of eggs’ arrangement to the east of the former road, which may be evidence for what is described in stanzas 25-26 of the fourteenth-century poem *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*.

Figure 6.10 – Summary of the Galey Bay case study, with the principal locations outlined.

Figure 6.11 – Location of Athleague in the oireacht of *Túath Átha Liaig*, close to the northern boundary of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine.

Figure 6.12 – Image of Athleague Castle in its wider landscape setting, taken from the Strafford Survey map *c.*1636.

Figure 6.13 – Bog Commission map of the district of Athleague and Ballaghdacker Lough.

Figure 6.14 – The wet ditch which surrounded the site of Athleague Castle, as per the Cassini Six-inch [a] and Historic Twenty-Five--inch [b] maps.

Figure 6.15 –*Bódhún* of Athleague, as indicated from the OS Historic 25-inch map.

Figure 6.16 – Summary of the Athleague and Ballaghdacker Lough case studies, with principal locations outlined.

Figure 6.17 – Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) with 'Mote C.' and 'Kill Mayne Ch.'.

Figure 6.18 – The Mote of other days. Note the possible four-storey tower with the flag on the roof, behind the building on the right-hand side of the image.

Figure 6.19 – Map of the available evidence indicating that Mote Demesne was once the location for an Ó Cellaig lordly centre, likely located on the site of the later mill and farm complex associated with the Crofton landed estate.

Figure 7.1 – The location of Aughrim within the oireacht of Tuahavriana, within the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine.

Figure 7.2 - Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591).

Figure 7.3 – Site of Aughrim Castle in the wider east Galway landscape.

Figure 7.4 - Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of the site of Aughrim Castle.

Figure 7.5 – Schematic plan of Aughrim Castle, derived from LiDAR data, and an interpretation of the elevation data.

Figure 7.6 – Sketch of the Battle of Aughrim, illustrated by Jacob Richards, c.1691.

Figure 7.7 – Magnetic gradiometry survey at Aughrim Castle.

Figure 7.8 – Summary interpretation of the remains at Aughrim Castle, Co. Galway.

Figure 7.12 - Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) with 'Lisdilon C.' and 'Skriy. C.' encircled.

Figure 7.13 – 'Lisdallon' and 'Skrigg' recorded on the Strafford Survey map of *c.*1636, with icons indicating buildings of note located in both landholdings.

Figure 7.14 - Vertical aerial image over the presumed site of Lisdaulan Castle [a] with a simple suggested interpretation [b].

Figure 7.15 - Summary of the Lisdaulan case study, with the principal locations outlined.

Figure 7.16 - Location of Tiaquin and Abbeyknockmoy within the wider territorial extents of 16th-century ‘O’Kelly Country’.

Figure 7.17 - Aerial image and cross section of the largest enclosure recorded for Tiaquin Demesne townland, the most likely candidate for the 1401-attested longport of Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig at Tiaquin.

Figure 7.18 – Contoured topographical plan of the area immediately surrounding Garbally Castle, Co. Galway.

Figure 7.19 - Plan of the surviving elements of the ground and first floors of Garbally Castle tower house.

Figure 7.20 – Contoured topographical plan and cross section of the earthwork remains of Gallagh Castle.

Figure 7.21 – Section of Browne’s Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) for the Barony of Tiaquin.

Figure 7.22 – Summary of the Tiaquin and Abbeyknockmoy case study area, with the principal locations outlined.

Figure 8.1 - Reconstruction of the Rock of Lough Cé, *c.* 1250.

Appendix 3, Figure 1 - Lansat image, captured February 2016, indicating the extents of two substantial turloughs in high flood immediately to the northeast of the ford of Athleague, and just to the west of the medieval communication route of Route 9.

Appendix 3, Figure 2 - Course of the River Hind, as recorded in the Down Survey (1685).

Appendix 3, Figure 3 - Cross-section of the 'Clogher Dyke' section, recorded in 1977 at ITM 585500; 761140.

Appendix 3, Figure 4 - Location of the three cross-sections on the presumed course of the River Suck - River Hind diversion.

Appendix 3, Figure 5 - Theorised course of Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair's waterway, based on the evidence outlined above.

Appendix 4, Figure 1 – The oireacht of Clonmacnowen, indicating the intersection of riverine and overland routeways which converge on the ford of Áth Nadsluaigh, modern-day Ballinasloe.

Appendix 4, Figure 2 – The Hurdle Ford, the Viking Dún of Dubh Linn, c. 1014.

Appendix 4, Figure 3 – Reconstruction of former, much more extensive, course of the River Suck at Ballinasloe in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the proposed locations of caistél Dún Leodha and Caislen Suicin.

Appendix 5, Figure 1 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of the natural mound adjacent to the east of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Co. Galway.

Appendix 5, Figure 2 – Magnetic gradiometry survey of the mound at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Co. Galway.

Appendix 5, Figure 3 – Closer look at the magnetic gradiometry survey [left] and the present writer's interpretation of the survey [right].

Dating Conventions

Early Medieval period – *c.*500 to *c.*1100

High Medieval period – *c.*1100 to *c.*1350

Late Medieval period – *c.*1350 to *c.*1600

Later Medieval period – *c.*1100 to *c.*1600

Post Medieval/Early modern period – post 1600

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Abstract

The Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine was a substantial political territory and influential cultural power in later medieval Connacht. The central aim of this thesis is to identify and reconstruct the physical appearance of the Ó Cellaig lordly centres from their emergence as one of the principal offshoots of the Uí Maine in *c.*1100, to the demise of the lordship around the year *c.*1600. Due to the terms of the present writer's Irish Research Council Employment-Based Scholarship, a subsidiary aim of the thesis is to carry out a review of how this research can be of value, in economic and social terms, to the present-day communities that inhabit the Ó Cellaig lordship today.

This study initially examines the historical background of the lordship, and this achieved two things. Firstly, it identified for the first time a series of Ó Cellaig lordly centres for further investigation. Secondly, it enabled the defining of the physical boundaries of this territory at two key points in the history of these eastern Connacht lords, something which has not been systematically undertaken before. Thereafter, aspects of the physical landscape of later medieval Uí Maine were reconstructed, and this was used as the basis to explore the primary resources and then the economic conditions which underpinned this inland Gaelic lordship during the period.

The present writer then reviewed the settlement forms usually chosen by the later medieval Gaelic elite, with a view to understanding what morphologies to consider when inspecting the individual Ó Cellaig lordly centres on the ground. In doing so, a new settlement form was identified, coined here as the *bódhún*, while initial insights were garnered on why certain sites were selected by the Gaelic elite during the high medieval period particularly, prior to the greater cultural uniformity that manifested with the adoption of the tower house castle in the late medieval lordship.

The focus of the research then concentrated on the investigation of eleven representative case study lordly centres, thematically grouped due to their siting on or near lakes, in close proximity to rivers, or their siting on important medieval regional roadways. This approach produced a number of new insights into our understanding of the Ó Cellaig lordship, particularly the elite settlement forms chosen by the lords of Uí Maine throughout the period, in the form of *crannóga*, promontory forts, moated sites, ringforts and cashels. It also highlighted the continuity of use at many of these lordly centres through time, as well as the dynamic cultural landscapes which developed and were maintained around these focal points. More than this,

the multidisciplinary approach has enabled a reevaluation of the accepted historical narrative of the late medieval Ó Cellaig lordship, showing the value which archaeology can provide in reconstructing the medieval past. Finally, important new considerations on the spatial organisation of Gaelic lordly centres more generally were brought to light, while this study also serves to add to the argument that when a researcher visits a later medieval Gaelic lordly centre on the ground, the principal settlement forms which survive for inspection come in the form of *crannóga*, promontory forts, moated sites, ringforts and cashels during the high medieval period, while late medieval elite settlement conforms largely to the construction of tower house castles.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 – Introduction

The Gaelic-Irish Ó Cellaig (O'Kelly) lordship of Uí Maine is both a subject and territorial unit that many Irish archaeologists, historians and historical geographers have encountered at times during the course of their research. This partial familiarity is at least partly due to the fact that John O'Donovan's mid-nineteenth century translation and edition of *The Tribes and Customs of Hy-Many, Commonly Called O'Kelly's Country, Now First Published from the Book of Lecan, a Manuscript in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy*, collated and published much information on the lordship (O'Donovan (ed. and trans.) 1843).[1] The paradox here is that this comprehensive early work seems to have led to a situation where many later scholars erroneously believed that a lot was known about the Uí Chellaig and Uí Maine and, hence, the whole subject needed little in the way of focussed study.

The fact that no in-depth modern study has ever been published on the later medieval lordship of Uí Maine has led to many flawed conclusions and statements about the Uí Chellaig and their territory in eastern Connacht. The boundaries of Uí Maine at any stage in its history have never been truly defined, other than a vague understanding by scholars that the lordship covered a wide expanse of east Galway and south Roscommon. There seems to be a lack of understanding, too, that these boundaries did not remain static during the later medieval period and changed through time due to shifting circumstances. Despite the fact that there is excellent preservation of archaeological monuments today in what was Uí Maine, little is also known about the settlement sites associated with the Uí Chellaig and their sub-lords, or the lifestyle and economy of the people who lived in them.

The present writer, who comes from a farming background, is a native of the parish of Taughmaconnell in south Roscommon, in what was later medieval Uí Maine, but works as the Manager of the Rathcroghan Visitor Centre at Tulsk in mid-Co. Roscommon, in what was the heartlands of royal Uí Chonchobair (O'Conor) territory in later medieval times. Through his daily work of interpreting and presenting the archaeology of the multi-period cultural landscape of Rathcroghan, the present writer has come to appreciate the large amount of multi-disciplinary research carried out on the later medieval period of this area over the last quarter-century by various archaeologists and institutions. Furthermore, detailed multi-disciplinary research has also been taken place across Ireland in recent years on various other later medieval

[1] Hereafter *Tribes and Customs.*

Gaelic lordships, including the Mac Diarmaida (Mac Dermot) lordship of Maigh Luirg in north Roscommon (see 1.7.4 below). This research, in particular the work undertaken in recent years in mid and north Roscommon, has led the present writer to realise that archaeology in particular and a multi-disciplinary approach in general can throw much-needed light on later medieval Uí Maine and by doing this, he can better understand the origins of his own native place. Furthermore, the present writer's work at Rathcroghan has made him aware that archaeology has a large role to play in cultural tourism, education and community cohesion. It is hoped that at least some of the academic research for this thesis will be able to benefit in social, economic and educational terms many of the modern communities who live across what was Uí Maine. These, then, are the different motivations that lie behind the present writer's decision to undertake research on the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine.

1.2 – Landscape Setting

The study area is, as we have seen, routinely referred to, rather ambiguously, as basically south Roscommon and much of east Galway. The precise extents of the lordship will be discussed more fully later, but for the moment 'O'Kelly Country' is broadly consistent, at its greatest extent in the fifteenth century, with the Baronies of Athlone and Moycarn, - Co. Roscommon and the Baronies of Clonmacnowen, Kilconnell, Killian and Tiaquin, - Co. Galway (Fig. 1.1). The combined area of these six baronies is *c*.1,705.9km^2.

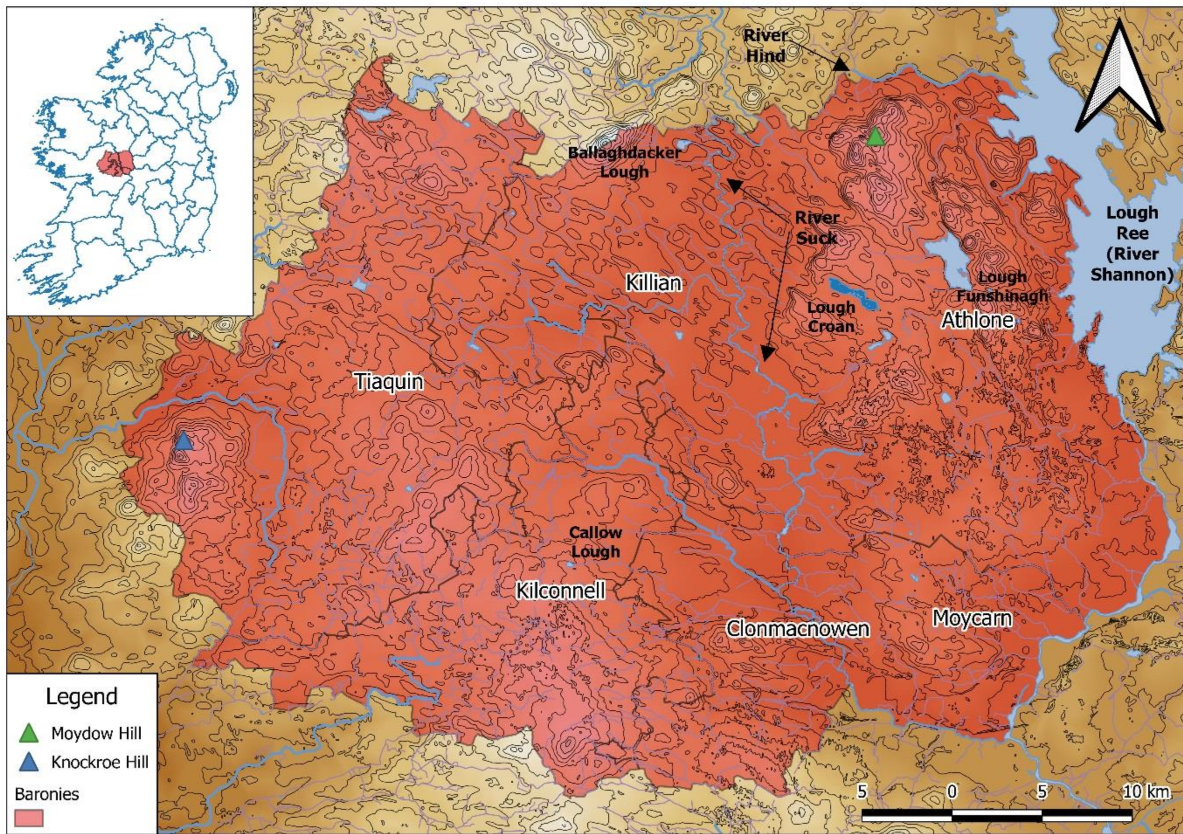

Figure 1.1 – Baronies, rivers, lakes and elevations which comprise the Uí Maine study area, as per its extents in the fifteenth century, when the Ó Cellaig lordship was at its most powerful during the later medieval period.

The landscape character of this broad region is mixed, with substantial zones of peatland throughout the district, between which is located tracts of riverine pastures, grazing land, low hills and generally undulating grassland. The underlying bedrock of the area is primarily Carboniferous Limestones. As a result, the soil composition of the agriculturally-suitable areas are made up of a range of limestone tills, a soil type that contains an abundance in soil nutrients which are very complementary to high-quality livestock production (Collins 2016, 2; O'Conor 2018, xxviii-xxix). This attribute is borne out in the traditional agricultural practices of the region, which centre on cattle and sheep production. The best farmland in the region is in south Co. Roscommon, in the district north of the villages of Dysart and Brideswell, up to the banks of the River Hind, south of Roscommon town.

By contrast, the most marginal land exists in pockets in the very far south of Roscommon, as well as large sections of the baronies west of the River Suck in Co. Galway. Large tracts of peatland dominate, particularly in the baronies of Killian, Clonmacnowen and Tiaquin, resulting today in smaller farm sizes and meandering communication routes in places.

This region is predominantly flat and gentle in topography, served only by the occasional elevated area. The highest point on the Roscommon side of the study area is Moydow Hill, which measures 137m OD while the highest prominence in the Galway part of the study area is Knockroe, which stands at a mere 157m OD. Rather than elevated locations serving as the most prominent physical features of this region, instead it is the rivers and lakes of the district that define it. The eastern limits of the study area are bounded by the course of the River Shannon and the western shore of Lough Ree, one of its lakes which has a surface area of 105km². The value of Lough Ree and the River Shannon as an economic resource and as a communication route is well-attested in the historical sources and is discussed later in the thesis (see 3.2.3 and Chapter 6 below). As it continues south beyond Athlone, the River Shannon forms the eastern and some of the southern extents of the study area, until it meets with its major tributary, the River Suck, near Shannonbridge, and then proceeds further south on its course.

The other major river in the study area is the River Suck, which serves today over much of its course as the administrative boundary between Co. Galway and Co. Roscommon. Interestingly, in the period under investigation, this was not the case, and the lordship straddled both sides of the river, particularly in the late medieval period. Nevertheless, the River Suck is a key resource within the study area, and the river was utilised by the Ó Cellaig lords in a number of places, and for a number of purposes. The Shannon and the Suck regularly flood their banks in winter but the stretches of low land beside these rivers, known as the Callows, provide excellent seasonal grazing land in summer (Meehan and Parkes 2014, 50-1). A number of smaller tributaries feed the two major rivers in the study area. The River Suck is fed primarily by the Shiven, Castlegar, Cloonlyon and Bunowen/Ahascragh Rivers, which contribute to the more waterlogged conditions and peaty soils that dominate sections of the east Galway landscape. Conversely, there is only one noteworthy tributary to the River Shannon in the study area, apart from the River Suck itself. The River Hind runs broadly west to east across the middle section of Co. Roscommon, before emptying into Lough Ree. The river serves as the border between the baronies of Athlone and Ballintober South, the boundary between the medieval *trícha céta*[2] of Machaire Connacht and Tír Maine (see 3.3; Appendix 3). A number of lakes also dot the study area. In Co. Roscommon, Lough Funshinagh is the most substantial of these bodies of water, with a surface area measuring 3.8km². Two further lakes, Ballaghdacker or Hollygrove Lough near Athleague and Callow Lough or Lough Acalla, near Kilconnell, both Co. Galway,

[2] [2] *trícha cét* - lit. thirty hundreds, a unit of landholding in the latter part of the early medieval period.

are much smaller in surface area, measuring 0.208km² and 0.141km² respectively. A former lake, now a turlough, known as Lough Croan is located in the civil parishes of Dysart, Taghboy and Tisrara, Co. Roscommon. The surface area of this former lake measures approximately 1.440km².

The survival of native woodland cover within the study area is very limited. A 2012 summary of The National Survey of Native Woodlands calculated that 1.5% of the land area of Co. Roscommon is today covered by native woodland, while only *c*.1.7% of the land area of Co. Galway is similarly covered (Cross 2012, 77). This is a near terminal decline from pre-modern figures for tree cover in this part of Ireland (see 3.2.2). The case is less clear in the Co. Galway area under consideration for the study, as the cartographic sources do not record woodland here, except in the district immediately across the River Suck to the west of Athleague, Co. Roscommon. The modern survival of native woodland in the study area is now really limited to one area, St. John's Wood and its immediate surrounds, located to the east of the village of Lecarrow, St. John's civil parish, Co. Roscommon. The woodland area measures *c*.1.1km², and extends from the head of the Rindoon peninsula north to the shores of Lough Ree. It is recognised as the largest stretch of natural woodland in the Irish midlands (Alexander 2011, 5-6). The main settlements of this study area can be broken down into three categories: towns, villages and hamlets. Two towns, Athlone, Co. Westmeath (population 2016 – 21,351) and Ballinasloe, Co. Galway (population 2016 – 6,662), function as the modern local centres of administration, employment and retail, and both serve a large hinterland. Both towns occupy longstanding fording places over the Shannon and Suck, and are key locations along the main east-west transport and communication artery linking Dublin to Galway city.

The villages of the study area, in certain cases, have also developed in close vicinity to the waterways of the region. Athleague, Ballyforan and Ahascragh have all developed on river fords, while Lecarrow and Knockcroghery both originated as settlements connected to sheltered bays on Lough Ree. All of the above settlements were established at intersections between overland communication routes and river routes, while both Kilconnell and Aughrim also served as key locations on the overland communication routes leading west to Galway.

A number of hamlets also exist throughout the study area. These serve as focal points for the local rural communities of their areas, with at least one found in each of the civil parishes. The development of settlements at specific points in the landscape has grown from the needs of what is a predominantly rural population. They correspond with fording places for driving

livestock and goods across the larger rivers of the study area, and occur along parts of the terrestrial route network across the island. As a result, these settlements, up until recent times, all retained a regular market and seasonal livestock fair, the vestiges of which are still apparent in these areas.

1.3 – Aims

The central aim of this research is to identify and reconstruct the physical appearance of the Ó Cellaig lordly centres in their lordship from their emergence as one of the principal offshoots of the Uí Maine in *c*.1100, to the demise of the lordship around the year *c*.1600. Due to the terms of the present writer's Irish Research Council Employment-Based Scholarship, a subsidiary aim of the thesis is to carry out a review of how this research can be of value, in economic and social terms, to the modern communities that inhabit the Ó Cellaig lordship today (see Appendix 6).

The secondary research questions which the present writer will address, and which are tied to the central aim of the study, are as follows:

- What elite settlement forms were in use in the lordship of Uí Maine during the period from 1100AD to 1600AD?
- What did the landscape of Uí Maine look like during the period and did it change between the twelfth century and the late-sixteenth century?
- Can the study of the settlement forms, societal organisation, and the landscape also throw some light on the material culture and economy of the lordship during the period under review? Can the thesis provide at least some insights into the archaeology and history of the lower status vassal clans and service families of the Ó Cellaig?
- Can the research carried out for the thesis help better understand the history and genealogy of the Uí Chellaig between the twelfth and early seventeenth century?
- Is it possible to improve on the multi-disciplinary methodology used by many scholars to understand the cultural landscapes of other Gaelic lordships in Ireland and Scotland?

1.4 – The Methodology used in this thesis

The aims of this thesis will be achieved by embracing a number of disciplines. Medieval archaeology, being a form of 'historical archaeology', is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature (Anderson, Scholkmann and Kristiansen 2007, 25). There is much debate as to the place which archaeology holds in terms of its role in reconstructing the historic

past. In some cases, a hierarchy exists in the use of sources, with the written word often given primacy. In these instances, the discipline of archaeology is often relegated to the position of an auxiliary science, in service to the narrative provided by the study of medieval history (*Ibid*., 28). The present writer believes that one of the best approaches to the present study is the theoretical framework espoused by Moreland in his 2001 book *Archaeology and Text.* Coined as 'contextual archaeology', he describes it as follows:

> 'Contextual archaeology demands a close and detailed engagement with data, and should result in the production of histories with affinities to the kind of thick description advocated by Clifford Geertz and the 'microhistories of recent historical scholarship…Contextual archaeology also demands that we use *all* the data we have available from the past…' (Moreland 2007, 83)

Taking this approach, textual sources become a part of the interpretive jigsaw, as opposed to being the dominant element. It is only through the application of this model of research which views the archaeological evidence and the written sources as 'discursive contexts', to be analysed in an equal and complementary manner, that an overall understanding of the medieval world will be achieved (Anderson, Scholkmann and Kristiansen 2007, 28).

1.4.1 – Landscape and Historical archaeology

Landscape archaeology is an area of the discipline that mandates the researcher to draw multiple lines of evidence together to reconstruct a detailed and coherent meta-narrative. It is a perspective that can add considerably to traditional, site-specific, archaeological approaches, because it makes use of diverse source materials. According to Branton:

> 'This unique ability to draw together multiple lines of evidence and model a vast range of human-place interactions in the past makes landscape archaeology an ideal tool for examining things as diverse as tenements and utopian communites, formal gardens and mining camps, natural resources and creation stories. Landscape approaches embrace, and even demand, a rich variety of evidence (artifacts, text, and oral history).' (Branton 2009, 54).

Thus, landscape archaeology has evolved from a sub-discipline of archaeology into an almost universal paradigm of the discipline, informing every dimension of the practice, not because it provides a methodology but because it is a way of *thinking* about the past, and indeed about archaeology itself. Based on a phenomenological perspective, landscape archaeology embraces and interrogates the compositional nature of human existence—not merely how culture

manifests in the phenomenon of place and the invention of time and space, but *that* this is ontologically axiomatic. It is *how*-we-are-in-the-world (see Casey 1996, 13-52). To the landscape archaeologist, landscape comprises not only the material reality of place, but the intangible, communal meanings and values invested in and reflected in place, and the manifold ways, tangible and intangible, in which these find expression through time.

To interrogate these lines of evidence demands an interdisciplinary approach. The model of the T-shaped expert, a researcher that besides being well trained in their main discipline, has the ability to communicate as well as do research beyond perceived disciplinary boundaries (Arts, Buizer, Horlings, Ingram, van Oosten and Opdam 2017, 443; see, also, Finan 2010,11) seems apposite. It is a template that describes a particular type of scholarship, but it is one that, albeit a little clunky, reflects lived experience as well.

In this case, the writer is a native of his study area, his immediate background a mixed pastoral farm, rural and agricultural, on land that has been in the family for generations. What may be lacking here in objectivity is compensated by deep, positive subjectivity, familiarity with place, people and tradition. This is a living landscape whose heritage is alive and close to the surface. The entanglement, to borrow a phrase from Ian Hodder's *Studies in Human-Thing Entanglement* (Hodder 2016; see also Tim Ingold 2010, 2-14) of place, placename, monument, artefact and story is the writer's lived experience, and reflects not only the present but is what this thesis is aiming to re-assemble in respect of elite, medieval landscapes from what pieces remain. Keith Basso captures the sentiment in the title of his award-winning 1996 *Wisdom Sits in Places*, where the meanings and values are relict, they can be invoked by the simple act of utterance, like a placename, or, as is the case here, through scholarship.

In this work, a theoretical framework has been built around the complementary concepts of 'landscape archaeology' and 'contextual archaeology', and a methodology that brings all available archaeological, historical, literary, place-name and cartographical evidence together in order to create as full a picture of the area as possible. The writer believes that this multidisciplinary, synthetic methodology is suited to the reconstruction of the cultural landscape of later medieval Uí Maine and, more specifically, to answer the questions posed in this thesis.

In an Irish context up until recently, the archaeological discipline has primarily focussed on individual sites. However, the trend towards multidisciplinary approaches and landscape archaeology has shown itself to be more beneficial in attempting to understand past societies.

Colin Breen states ‘In many ways contemporary archaeological approaches to landscape can be regarded as the most integrated and holistic of any discipline because they aim to understand the landscape as a whole’ (Breen 2005, 20).

Other issues relating to the study of later medieval Gaelic Ireland also mean that it is critical to adopt this multidisciplinary approach. For instance, the fragmentary manner in which evidence survives for Gaelic Ireland necessitates taking evidence from a number of disciplines, in order to fully understand native society during the later medieval period (Finan 2010, 11). For example, the relative absence of detailed socio-economic documentation for Gaelic Ireland before the late-sixteenth century – the equivalent of Anglo-Norman manorial extents and inquisitions post-mortem – has been something of an impediment to the study of native society during the later medieval period (O'Conor 1998, 73-4; Nicholls 2008, 398). Meaningful research into later medieval Gaelic Ireland, therefore, has to be conducted by drawing ‘large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts’ (Geertz 1973, 28). In the absence of detailed administrative accounts, alongside the archaeological evidence, the underexploited literary evidence (Simms 2001; Finan and O'Conor 2002) and the even more underutilised toponymical data (Ó Muraíle 2001, 244; Ó hAisibéil 2018, 158, 161) become vital resources in helping to reconstruct the landscape, economy and society of later medieval Gaelic lordships.

The disciplines used in this thesis, primarily archaeology, history and historical geography, provide different sets of evidence for the researcher to interpret, with strengths and weaknesses inherent in each. As a result, synthesising this material in order to create an accurate narrative can be difficult. Historical documents and literary sources provide valuable information, particularly about the usually literate elite in society. Archaeology informs us much more about the lives of communities at large, including the lower strata of society. Excavation routinely provides insights into the material culture of both the elite and ordinary people in society. The paucity of surviving historical sources does mean that the discipline of archaeology has a major role to play in understanding later medieval Gaelic Ireland in particular. As a result, in any future study of Gaelic Ireland, arguably archaeology and archaeological methods of enquiry will have a major role, if not even the primary role, to play in understanding the later medieval Gaelic world (see, for example O’Conor and Fredengren 2019, 80; O’Conor 2021).

A number of archaeologists have successfully taken this multi-disciplinary approach to the study of later medieval Gaelic lordships and regions, both in publications and at PhD level (e.g. Breen 2004; 2005; Naessens 2007; 2009; McDermott 2010; Finan (ed.) 2010; 2016; O’Conor

and Finan 2018; O'Conor and Fredengren 2019). Another scholar who has comprehensively and successfully combined archaeological research with historical, literary and toponymical source material is Elizabeth FitzPatrick, creating what could be described as 'micro-histories' in Gaelic lordly landscapes and delving deep into the social organisation of later medieval Gaelic Ireland (e.g. FitzPatrick 2004; 2012; 2015; 2016; 2018).

The multi-disciplinary approach taken by these scholars has greatly informed the methodology used in this research, and they espouse the spirit of the 'contextual archaeology' framework attempted here. The results of this multi-disciplinary research will be outlined in turn across Chapters 5 to 7, to better interpret the historical information outlined in Chapter 3, and build up a picture of these individual elite landscapes. This will be undertaken firstly through locating the lordly centre in the landscape, followed by historical, toponymical, cartographical and literary allusions to the *cenn áit*, where they survive. Thereafter, the archaeological manifestation of these centres will be investigated, followed by an evaluation of the cultural landscapes which surrounded these focal points.

1.5 – Archaeological Methods and Techniques

1.5.1 – Archaeological Fieldwork

Archaeological fieldwork has been defined as the examination of archaeological remains without excavation (Brown 1987, 9-11). Excavation has not been attempted at any of the monuments or groups of monuments targeted in this research, owing to the prohibitive expense and legal requirements that it carries. The fieldwork methodologies in this study were preceded by an extensive desk-based survey of the Ó Cellaig lordship, in order to identify targets for field survey. This was necessitated by the previous lack of identified Ó Cellaig sites apparent in existing research. The initial field survey involved a series of visits to these sites, in order to ascertain the condition of the archaeological remains, and to plan the most suitable fieldwork strategy for the location being inspected. Thereafter, the field survey involved the compilation of descriptive and ground photographic records of the elite settlements of the Uí Maine study area. Upon completion of this task, depending on the nature of the site, it was selected or discarded in terms of exploring it further as a key representative site. It must be stated that the study area, and indeed the province of Connacht more generally, has some of the best-preserved archaeology in Europe (O'Conor 2018, xxxviii-xxix), therefore serving as an ideal location in which to study later medieval Gaelic Ireland.

A number of fieldwork methods and techniques were then applied to the chosen sites, which will be outlined below. The resultant maps and diagrams found throughout this thesis were all created by the present writer.

1.5.2 – Aerial Photography

Aerial photography is the capturing of an oblique or vertical image of a subject or landscape from the air, collected via a range of media. Understandably, it is a vital resource for modern archaeological research. First becoming available in any meaningful way to the Irish field archaeologist in the 1960s (Barry 1987, 11), the quality and the coverage provided by this resource in the intervening years has improved immeasurably. The archival collections of aerial photography for Ireland are still of great use to the researcher in reconstructing the past environment, particularly in circumstances where a monument has deteriorated in condition, has since been removed, or its landscape attributes have been modified through time. The primary archival imagery available for the Ó Cellaig lordship has been J.K. St. Joseph's Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography (CUCAP), the Irish material being collected between 1951 and 1973 (*Ibid.*). This collection does include a number of photographs that are of value to this thesis (Pls. 3.2; 5.2; 5.11; 5.13). Other databases with Irish material, such as the Army Air Corps, Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) (Barry 1987, 11), and the Leo Swan aerial photographic collections, have either proven difficult to acquire, or captured little, if any, imagery within the Uí Maine study area.

The arrival of easily accessible satellite aerial photography databases has enabled wider-scale inspection of the archaeological landscapes worldwide. The most useful databases in examining the archaeology of the Ó Cellaig lords were primarily Google Earth, Bing Maps, the Geohive database, and the United States Geological Survey Lansat Image database. In certain cases, the differing dates of capture of this imagery can be of use to the researcher in terms of uncovering anomalies that are not readily apparent on the ground surface, such as cropmarks in ploughed out or tillage land, or in the case of monuments situated close to watercourses, the rise or drop in water levels has revealed archaeological remains. The present writer also commissioned Western Aerial Survey to carry out UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) vertical aerial surveys of Callow Lough and Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway, and Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon (For example Figs. 5.19; 5.30; 6.3).

1.5.3 – Airborne Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR)

Airborne LiDAR scanning provides a means of recording topography and micro-topography by scanning the ground with a dense swath of laser beams which are reflected back to a sensor or detector array mounted on an aircraft. These technologies first appeared in the 1970s, and have since emerged as a key tool for the landscape researcher and archaeologist (Ackermann 1999, 64-5). The recorded data can be analysed using software that differentiates and visualises responses from topographical elements, such as built structures, the ground surface and the vegetation growing on it. Where there is vegetation cover, and in suitable conditions, a three-dimensional micro-topographic model of the ground surface can be produced. This is known as a Digital Terrain Model (DTM) or 'bare-earth model', which represents the topography of the ground surface beneath the line of vegetation (Curley, Flynn and Barton 2018, 24). One of the major benefits of LiDAR is that the data can, under the correct circumstances, be used to create an accurate topographical plan of, particularly, earthen monuments and their immediate surroundings, as well as aiding in the discovery of low profile topographical anomalies, which might be obscured by dense vegetation. There are numerous studies which have harnessed LiDAR surveys in order to uncover new monuments, as well as aid in better understanding the relationships between existing sites in a landscape, including ones at Stonehenge in England and the Hill of Tara in Ireland (Bewley, Crutchley and Shell 2005; Fenwick, Corns and Shaw 2009, e74-e76).

Where LiDAR coverage is available for the study region, this data has been acquired in order to better understand a monument or group of monuments in their landscape setting (For example Figs. 5.6; 7.4; Appendix 3). At time of writing, LiDAR data is available for parts of the country, free of charge, on a topographical viewer hosted by the GSI, and this resource was utilised by the present writer. LiDAR data for key representative sites in this study area has also been acquired from Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi).

1.5.4 – Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Survey

Where LiDAR coverage is not available at a key representative site, and where a specific research question can be addressed through its application, a UAV survey was commissioned. This technology has emerged in recent years as a viable means of aerial image collection and archaeological survey, particularly as the equipment costs have gone down, and the equipment size has decreased also (Campana 2017, 277-8).

The present writer has commissioned UAV surveys in order to collect detailed aerial imagery of three key representative sites in the study area, as stated, and the data collected from these surveys has also been used to model a Digital Earth Model (DEM), similar to that of a DTM, again enabling the identification of low-profile topographical features at or in the vicinity of the targeted sites (For example Figs. 5.23; 5.24; 5.32). One of the major advantages of the UAV survey over that of LiDAR data, aside from the obvious cost and coverage implications, has been the relative low altitude that the survey can be flown at, and the detail that can be afforded by this height difference.

1.5.5 – Geophysical Survey

The application of geophysical, or remote sensing, techniques to the archaeological discipline has its origins in experimental approaches conducted in the 1940s and 1950s, using methods that had been shown to be successful for engineering and similar purposes (Clarke 1996, 11-2). Since that point in time, geophysical technologies have become more sophisticated, and their application has become a routine part of archaeological survey. Numerous Irish archaeological research projects have incorporated geophysical survey techniques, with a notable example being the ArchaeoGeophysical Imaging Project, which applied a multi-method remote sensing methodology to eleven of the most prominent monuments in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape (Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009).

The techniques utilised as part of this methodology are as follows: Earth Resistance, Magnetic Susceptibility, Magnetic Gradiometry, and Electrical Resistivity Tomography.

1.5.5.1 – Earth Resistance (Fig. 5.11)

Two pieces of Earth Resistance equipment were operated over the course of the research, operating from the same principal. The surveys used a TR/CIA Earth Resistance Meter and a Geoscan RM85 to make measurements on grids of 0.5m- spaced readings along lines spaced 0.5m apart (Gaffney and Gater 2003, 26-34). The data were logged on an internal data logger.

This survey technique is relatively slow to operate, as electrodes have to be inserted in the ground to obtain individual readings. In consideration of the scale of features that were likely to be encountered, sample readings were taken at 1m intervals along parallel north/south transects set 1m apart. This equates to a total of 400 individual readings for each completed 20m by 20m panel.

Under favourable soil-moisture balance conditions, this technique responds to moisture in soils and rocks and to a certain degree the clay content of the soil. Porous, permeable soils will contain more water than compacted soils, and as a result will provide a lower resistance reading. Soil in a ‘cut’ feature such as a back-filled pit or ditch will be more porous than the natural soil in which it is cut or dug, and as a result will have more water and a lower resistance. Conversely, less porous features such as subsurface walls, compacted ground, stone spreads and rock will have less or no water and have a higher resistance than the natural soil in which they lie (Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009, 22). A resistance is calculated by Ohms Law. The depth of investigation of the 0.5m twin-probe array used is estimated to be 0.50m to 0.75m.

1.5.5.2 – Magnetic Susceptibility (Fig. 5.12)

A Bartington MS2 magnetic susceptibility meter employing an MS2D search-loop was used to take volume specific measurements across the field (Dearing 1999; Gibson and George 2003, 88-9). Readings were taken at 2m intervals along north/south transects set 2m apart (i.e. 100 readings per 20m x 20m panel). This qualitative field assessment and relatively coarse sample interval was employed in order to record trends in the susceptibility values of the surface soils.

This is an electromagnetic technique which assesses the ability of the topsoil or plough soil and features within it to be magnetised. This ability is largely related to the existence of certain mineral types which can be magnetised. Mineral types and their abundance are controlled by a combination of bedrock geology, glacial history and ancient and modern land use. Burnt debris and also the incorporation of settlement and industrial waste in soils can enhance their magnetic susceptibility value. The technique is used in archaeological investigations to detect settlement sites, industrial activity, areas of burning (e.g. a hearth, furnace, kiln or pyre), field systems and land use, and soil and/or bedrock variation (Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009, 19-21).

1.5.5.3 – Magnetic Gradiometry (Figs. 7.7; Appendix 5, Fig. 2, Fig. 3)

The magnetic gradiometry surveys employed a Bartington Grad601-2 dual-sensor fluxgate gradiometer (Gaffney and Gater 2003, 66-7). This is a non-ground contacting device consisting of two sensors, each of which displays values of magnetic gradient simultaneously as a continuous signal. In comparison to other techniques, therefore, it is possible to cover large areas of ground relatively rapidly. The instrument is supported from the shoulders by a harness, enabling it to be used over uneven terrain. In this instance, values of magnetic gradient were recorded at 0.25m intervals along north-south parallel transects set 0.5m apart, amounting to 3,600 readings per 20m x 20m panel. This instrument is designed to measure and record minute

variations in the vertical component of the Earth's magnetic field. These may be as a result of the presence of near-surface archaeological features or objects encountered during the course of a survey, which exhibit magnetic properties. The instrument's depth of investigation is not fixed. It will detect very weak magnetic anomalies close to the ground surface along with more strongly magnetic features at greater depth. Buried archaeological features such as sediment-filled ditches, drains or pits, for instance, may be detected by virtue of the fact that these may contain a greater concentration or volume of magnetically enhanced sediments in contrast to their surrounding or background soils (Gaffney and Gater 2003, 36-9; Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009, 19-22). Additionally, features associated with intensive burning will often display a distinctive thermoremanent magnetism. Certain igneous rock types too, occurring naturally or as part of a built structure – or, indeed, the presence of ferrous material (ancient or modern) – may also exhibit a sizable dipolar magnetic response.

1.5.5.4 – Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) (Figs. 5.9; 5.10)

The ERT survey provides modelled pseudo-depth sections based on a systematic expansion of an electrode array connected to a resistance meter. The principal of this methodology exploits the fact that the depth of investigation of an electrical resistance array is largely governed by the electrode 'a-spacing'. By incrementally increasing the separation distance between electrodes centred over a specific point, the current will penetrate progressively deeper into the ground and hence the resistance value measured will reflect a progressively deeper and greater volume of soil. It is possible in this way to calculate the earth resistance of ground to greater depths (Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009, 23). Two instruments were used in this survey: a TR/CIA Resistance Meter with an adapter cable for a 3m depth survey and a Campus Geopulse Resistance Meter for 6m and 9m depth surveys.

1.6 – Historical Sources

Historical sources are a vital resource for the medieval archaeologist to be able to inspect (Barry 1987, 3-10). They can provide information on the location and form of monuments that no longer retain above ground remains, and they can also inform us on additional features of a landscape that no longer survive. For instance, O'Conor used evidence from documents to note that Anglo-Norman castles once had residential, agricultural and administrative buildings within or adjacent to them (O'Conor 1998, 29-33; 2002, 175).

Historical sources can also be used alongside archaeological and architectural remains to throw light on the development and role of a historically-attested monument through time. This

approach can be seen with the recent research conducted on Rindoon Castle, Co. Roscommon, where the combined analysis of the standing remains, coupled with a close reading of the surviving references, have been able to throw light on the development of the castle through time (O'Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015). Outside of this, written sources can also provide key insights into the political, social and economic aspects of life in the medieval period.

In terms of the historical sources that are available to Irish archaeology, Barry provides a comprehensive account of the written sources which can help illuminate the past environment, although he mostly concentrates on colonial sources, with only a brief mention of what is available for Gaelic Ireland (Barry 1987, 3-10). However, Simms' (2009) *Medieval Gaelic Sources*, while not written specifically for archaeologists, discusses and usefully outlines the various sources available for the study of native Irish society from the early medieval period through to the seventeenth century.

1.6.1 – Edited Historical Sources

1.6.1.1 – Gaelic Irish sources

As noted above, little by the way of detailed socio-economic administrative sources survives from later medieval Gaelic Ireland. However, there are other types of written sources available to interrogate with a view to reconstructing later medieval Gaelic lordships and, in the present context, identifying settlement sites within them.

The medieval annalistic record is a vital resource in terms of interpreting the archaeology of Gaelic Ireland, including that which occurs within what was the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine, despite the sparse and laconic nature in which the information is recorded. Nevertheless, there are numerous references within them to Gaelic Irish defensive and religious sites (Barry 1987, 9; O'Conor 1998, 73). References to the Uí Chellaig are particularly abundant in certain sets of annals. These are the *Annála Connacht: The Annals of Connacht, AD 1224-1544* (Freeman (ed.) 1944; 1977)[3] and *The Annals of Loch Cé* (Hennessy (ed. and trans.) 1871; reprint 1939).[4] Both seem to have derived from a now lost book of annals that were compiled in the Connacht Ó Maolchonaire school during the high medieval period, before being continued and completed in other Connacht locations in the sixteenth century (Simms 2009,

[3] Hereafter *AC*.
[4] Hereafter *ALC*.

25-6; Ó Muraíle 2018, 215-6). Both of these annals possess a strong Connacht focus, owing in no small part to their patronage by the Uí Chonchobair and Meic Diarmada lords.

Rev. Denis Murphy published his edition of *The Annals of Clonmacnoise: Being annals of Ireland from the earliest period to AD 1408* in 1896 (Murphy (ed.) 1896; reprint 1993).[5] A major issue with this source is that the edited text is based on a seventeenth-century English-language translation of an earlier manuscript, while Rev. Murphy further confuses the issue by omitting parts of that text which he believed to have been unedifying to the general public (Simms 2009, 27). Another of the Clonmacnoise group of chronicles which is of benefit to the present study is the *Annals of Tigernach* (Stokes (ed. and trans.) 1895-97; Mac Niocaill (ed. and trans.) 2010).[6] One problem with this source is that it ends in the year 1177, meaning that it is only relevant for the earlier periods of the present research, as Clonmacnoise was a religious foundation with strong Ó Cellaig links.

Three further chronicles have been of use to the present study. The *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* (O'Donovan (ed. and trans.) 1856)[7] was edited in seven volumes in the mid-nineteenth century by antiquarian John O'Donovan. Despite the more island-wide focus of these annals, the Ó Cellaig lordship features prominently, and due to the late date to which it extended, 1616, it retains much useful material, particularly for the later period of the lordship. The Uí Maine and Uí Chellaig also feature in *The Annals of Ulster* (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill (eds. and trans.) 1983).[8] Finally, the *Miscellaneous Irish Annals,* also known as *Mac Carthaigh's Book* (Ó hInnse (ed. and trans.) 1947)[9] records key information relating to the Uí Chellaig which wasn't recorded in any other chronicle, filling in some gaps of knowledge in the process.

Moving beyond the annalistic record for information, *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* is a prose narrative, interspersed with long poems, written before the mid-fourteenth century, which was edited by Standish O'Grady in two volumes in the early twentieth century (O'Grady (ed. and trans.) 1929).[10] It deals with an internecine struggle between different branches of the Uí Bhriain for control of the lordship of Thomond, at this stage comprising what is now modern Co. Clare, during the course of the late-thirteenth and early fourteenth century. It is highly

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[5] Hereafter *ACl.*
[6] Hereafter *AT.*
[7] Hereafter *AFM.*
[8] Hereafter *AU.*
[9] Hereafter *MacC.*
[10] Hereafter *Caitréim Thoirdhealbhaigh.*

partisan towards the *Clann Toirdelbaig*, one of the two opposing Uí Bhriain factions, and is also hostile to the Anglo-Norman settlers in Thomond (Westropp 1902-4; McNamara 1958-61). There is much in the text of the *Caithréim Thoirdhealbaigh* that is of interest to the archaeologist as there are numerous references within it to settlement sites, strongholds and fortresses (O'Conor 2004, 246-7). In the context of this thesis, however, there are references within the text to the relationship between the Uí Chellaig and their southern neighbours in Thomond during the period. There are also hints in the text as to why there were territorial changes to the boundaries of Uí Maine in the late-thirteenth and fourteenth century.

Genealogical sources have also assisted greatly in informing this research, particularly material in the fourteenth-century *Leabhar Ua Maine* [RIA MS D ii 1]. The real benefit of inspecting the Ó Cellaig genealogies in this source relates to instances where they record locational information for the main residences of the lords of Uí Maine (Ó Muraíle 2008; 2010).[11] Legal tracts on rights are another class of source available for scholars researching later medieval Gaelic Ireland. The material combines the arts of the historian and the judge, and individual lordships possessed rights tracts in their name. The most well-known example of a rights tract from medieval Ireland is *Lebor na Cert: the Book of Rights* (Dillon (ed. and trans.) 1962),[12] which may date to as early as the eleventh century, and records what is due from Uí Maine to the king of Connacht, and what is due to Uí Maine in return. *Lebor na Cert* is plainly a Ó Briain propaganda document, but with some genuine local traditions embedded in it (Simms 2009, 96). The information recorded on Uí Maine and the Delbna of Connacht, presumably the Delbna Nuadat, approximating to the later Barony of Athlone, relates the tributes due to the king of Connacht. Both the tributes of the Uí Maine and the Delbna are deemed to have been weighted on account of the prosperity of their respective lands (*Lebor na Cert*, 53), a tribute which could relate to the wealth that could be derived from the mixed quality of land (see 1.2).

The Tribes and Customs of Hy-Many (O'Donovan (ed. and trans.) 1843) can also be discussed in this section, as it is a valuable compendium of edited source material on the Uí Chellaig, which incorporates genealogical material, a rights tract on the Uí Chellaig, a saint’s life, and other documents which concern the Uí Maine and the Uí Chellaig. While some of the conclusions drawn by O’Donovan in this publication are outdated, this source served as a

[11] Hereafter *Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment i and ii.*
[12] Hereafter *Lebor na Cert.*

routine first port of call for the present writer when researching the lordship and identifying the main settlement sites of the Uí Chellaig in the late medieval period in particular.

As mentioned above, a rights tract survives which directly concerns the Uí Chellaig. *Nósa Ua Maine* (Russell (ed.) 2000),[13] a likely fourteenth-century composition, perhaps sourced and embellished from earlier material, is part of this wider literary genre that concerns the documentation of the rights and privileges of a ruler in later medieval Gaelic Ireland (Ní Mhaonaigh 2000, 367-8). As such, *Nósa Ua Maine* is a valuable source in attempting to reconstruct the Ó Cellaig lordship and identifying the main settlement sites within it. Caution is advised when mining *Nósa Ua Maine* for accurate information on the Uí Chellaig, however. This is due to the contrast between the propagandistic and legacy building motives behind the text's creation, as opposed to the political realities of most later medieval lords and their retinue (*Ibid*., 380-1). In spite of this, *Nósa Ua Maine* has proven to be very beneficial in identifying the lordly centres of the Uí Maine, as well as the locations and histories of some of the vassal clans and service kindreds in the Ó Cellaig lordship. These service families were an elite class of professionals in Gaelic society, some of which performed hereditary military duties for the lord, while others were literate, educated groupings, who specialised in disciplines such as law, history, poetry, music and the medical arts.

Saga material initially seems to be an unexpected source of information for those researching later medieval Gaelic Ireland. Simms questions the validity of these sources in a historical context (Simms 2009, 88). However, in cases where the origins of the text and its manuscript are securely located, many of the issues outlined by Simms can be mitigated. This is the case with the late-twelfth or early-thirteenth century prose narrative *Acallam na Senórach* (Dooley and Roe (eds.) 2008), the most important of the Fenian Cycle tales.[14] From an archaeological and cultural history perspective, FitzPatrick has successfully demonstrated the value of carefully inspecting *Acallam na Senórach* with a view to recovering the landscapes used for hunting by the later medieval Gaelic elite (FitzPatrick 2012).

In the case of this research, the *Acallam*, and particularly its strong local dimension, has also been harnessed with a view to interpreting the past environment. The geographical setting for the *Acallam* strongly advocates for a Roscommon *locus* for the composition (Connon 2014, 21-59), and an episode of the tale, the first meeting of St. Patrick with Muiredach Mór, fictional

[13] Hereafter *Nósa.*
[14] Hereafter *Acallam na Senórach*.

King of Connacht, takes place in 'the Land of Maine, and [to] *Loch Linngáeth*, now called Lough Croan' (*Acallam na Senórach*, 33). The 'Land of Maine' and Lough Croan are more than worthy of mention in the text, particularly as Patrick performs his most powerful miracle in this location, raising Áed, the king's son, back to life following his collapse and death after a game of hurling (*Ibid*., 38). Muiredach Mór and his son Áed are regarded as literary representations of Cathal Crobhdearg Ó Conchobair and his son Áed respectively, rulers of Connacht around the time the *Acallam* was written (Connon 2014, 53). Coupled with this, there is a body of evidence that suggests that Cathal Crobhdearg may have established a royal centre in Uí Maine, elevating this literary source to being highly significant for the present research (see 5.2.3.3).

The final Gaelic source material used to inform this research is the collection of surviving praise poetry eulogising Uí Chellaig and connected patrons. Praise poetry is a different class of historical source to those discussed above, in that it was usually addressed to the lay nobility, was designed to be publicly recited, and dealt primarily with the patron's present political ambitions, as opposed to anything ancient in character. These attributes make praise poetry the most valuable source material to the historical researcher of later medieval Gaelic Ireland (Simms 2009, 57), and the present writer would argue that this importance extends to the archaeological discipline also. A particular motif within the praise poetry corpus is that of the 'house poems', verses which were either wholly or partially concerned with describing a nobleman's house (Simms 2001). Such poems can help locate later medieval Gaelic elite residences in the landscape and provide information about their physical appearance when in use. For example, the historically-attested moated site of Cloonfree, Co. Roscommon, was a residence of the later medieval Uí Chonchobair lords of Machaire Connacht, and a careful reading of two praise poems describing the site allowed insights into its location, original appearance, internal arrangements and defences (Finan and O'Conor 2002; FitzPatrick 2018, 179-87). Eight poems were of particular benefit to the present research. The earliest two were written in praise of eleventh-century king of Uí Maine, Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig (r.1002-1014). These poems begin, and are thus named, *Beannacht, a Bruin, ar Brigit, fuil am thig rim nach anait* and *Samhoin so, sodham go Tadg* respectively (Meyer (ed.) 1912). The next poem of interest to this study concerns another Tadg Ó Cellaig, an early-fourteenth century lord of Uí Maine, and is called *Uasal an síol Síol Ceallaigh* (https://bardic.celt.dias.ie/).

Two of the most important poems in terms of understanding the archaeology of later medieval Uí Maine deal with the career of another fourteenth-century lord of Uí Maine, Uilliam Buide

Ó Cellaig. These are the only two poems consulted for this study which can be described as 'house poems'. The earlier, beginning *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*[15] (Hoyne (ed.), Forthcoming), recounts his ascent to the lordship, while *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*[16] (Knott (ed.) 1911) records a famous Christmas feast which Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig hosted in 1351. There is a large amount of information in this particular poem on life and buildings in later medieval Uí Maine.

The career of Uilliam Buide's son, Maolsechlainn, was also immortalised in praise poetry, and *Fá urraidh labhras leac Theamhrach*[17] (MS RIA 626) provides some insights into the character of the Uí Maine lordship at the beginning of the fifteenth century (https://bardic.celt.dias.ie/).

Two other poems have provided information on later medieval Uí Maine. *Cruas connacht clanna sogain* (MacAlister (ed.) 1941), assisted in locating the Mac an Bhaird service kindred on the Uí Maine landscape, while *Leasaighthear libh leine an riogh* (McKenna (ed.) 1939/40, no. 3) provides a version of the death of an adversary of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig, Áed Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht.

1.6.1.2 – Anglo-Norman/English sources

There is a wide range of Anglo-Norman and later English sources available to the researcher of medieval Ireland, and some of these are of benefit in our attempts to reconstruct the medieval Ó Cellaig lordship and, in particular, to recognise the main Uí Chellaig settlement sites within it. These can be separated into two sections: the records created by the Dublin Government and Crown, and the historical sources produced by the great landowning families of Anglo-Norman Ireland (Connolly 2002; Barry 1987, 2-10).

Records of the Dublin Government and Crown

By far the most complete source for the purposes of researching Uí Maine, and Connacht more generally, is the *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1171-1307*,[18] which is published in five volumes (Sweetman (ed.) 1875-86). These volumes are a calendar of all instruments and entries relating to Ireland from 1171 to 1307 found among the Public Records of England and contain much information within them that is of value to the settlement historian and archaeologist (Barry 1987, 4). Another government source which has aided in the

[15] Hereafter *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach.*
[16] Hereafter *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach.*
[17] Hereafter *Fá urraidh labhras leac Theamhrach.*
[18] Hereafter *CDI.*

understanding of later thirteenth and early-fourteenth century Uí Maine is the *Calendar of Justiciary Rolls of Ireland 1295-1314* (Mills and Griffiths (eds.) 1905-14).[19] This source provides information about Anglo-Norman settlement in Uí Maine and helps define the extent of the lordship.

The first volume of *Rymer's Foedera*,[20] which lists agreements made between the English Crown and foreign powers, records a list of kings and lords summoned by Henry III in 1244 to take part in an expedition against Scotland. This list included an Ó Cellaig (Rymer (ed.) 1739, 150).

The *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland, 1869* also contain some information about Uí Maine (Public Record Office Ireland 1869, 54). References to the field area in the records emanating from the administration in Dublin become relatively rare from the early fourteenth century onwards into the later sixteenth century. This is clearly linked to the effects of the Gaelic Resurgence in Uí Maine, when Anglo-Norman control over parts of it waned and then collapsed totally, with the Uí Chellaig regaining complete control of their old lands and then expanding their territories in the late medieval period (see 2.5 below).

This gap in references to the field area in documentary sources compiled by administrators working for central government ends in the later sixteenth century. This rise in references is linked to the gradual reconquest of Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland, including Uí Maine, and the re-establishment of English control during Tudor and Stuart times. State papers concerning Ireland are preserved in the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office) in London. There is a large amount of information concerning settlements, castles and landholdings that is of interest to the archaeologist. Calendars of the papers covering the period 1509-1670 were published in twenty-four volumes by the Public Record Office between 1860 and 1911, under the title of *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland*.[21] The first ten volumes covering the years between 1509 and 1603 were consulted during the course of the research for this thesis (Hamilton (ed.) 1860-1890; Atkinson (ed.) 1893-1905). Other documents were produced by the English administration in the sixteenth century which contain information relating to landownership in Uí Maine. Written in 1585, *The Compossicion Booke of Conought* was a record of indentures between Gaelic lords, including the Uí Chellaig and their vassal lords, and

[19] Hereafter *Cal. Just. Roll. Ire.*
[20] Hereafter *Foedera.*
[21] Hereafter *CSPI.*

the Crown (Freeman (ed.) 1936).[22] This is a valuable source for late medieval Uí Maine as it details landholding in the lordship and outlines the division of Uí Maine by this time into a series of territories – *oireachtaí*, which were effectively the estates of individual sept branches of the Uí Chellaig in the sixteenth century. The *Compossicion* also identifies some prominent castles and imparts information on the economy and landscape of 'Ó Cellaig Country' (see McNeary and Shanahan 2005, 11).

Documentation connected to the Privy Council of England, known as the *Acts of the Privy Council of England* were also beneficial to the present research, and recorded the important points raised during the Privy Council meetings.[23] The first thirty-two volumes have been edited between 1890 and 1907 (Dasent (ed.) 1890-1907), while the period 1556-1571 is published as part of *The manuscripts of Charles Haliday, Esq., of Dublin: acts of the privy council of Ireland, 1556-1571* (1897).[24] The Ó Cellaig feature in a small number of these records during the sixteenth century, and assist in reconstructing their changing relationships with the Tudor administration at this time.

The (Irish) Fiants of the Tudor sovereigns contain a wealth of information pertaining to individuals and their landholdings in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (FitzPatrick 2018, 182).[25] *Fiants* were warrants directed to the Irish Chancery as a precursor to letters patent. Letters patent could relate to a wide variety of matters from land grants and leases to pardons and appointments. There is a large amount of information within the *Fiants*, particularly those dating to after the mid-1550s, concerning settlement and, in particular, people. The originals were destroyed in 1922 during the Irish Civil War but fortunately they had been calendared in the late nineteenth century and published by the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records and recently reprinted in four volumes (Nicholls (ed.) 1994).

Historical Sources Produced by the Great Landowning Families of Anglo-Norman Ireland

The manorial extents, surveys and accounts produced by the great landowning families of Anglo-Norman Ireland contain information within them that can be of major use to archaeologists in their research (Barry 1987, 5). Documents relating to the Butlers of Ormond are amongst the best preserved, simply because the family has survived to the present day, keeping their family papers intact (*Ibid*.). This is important as members of this lineage had

[22] Hereafter *Compossicion.*
[23] Hereafter *Act. Privy Council.*
[24] Hereafter *Haliday Privy Council.*
[25] Hereafter *Fiants.*

established themselves in the study area in the thirteenth century (see 2.4.4; 2.6 below), The *Calendar of Ormond Deeds* was published in six volumes between 1932 and 1943 (Curtis (ed.) 1932-43).[26]

1.6.1.3 – Ecclesiastical Records

The cartularies and registers of various religious houses, along with general church records, have been important sources for researching medieval settlement (Barry 1987, 6). As will be seen later in the thesis, the Ó Cellaig lordship had strong connections with a number of the religious houses in and near Uí Maine (see 3.5.5; Chapters 5-7 and Appendix 5 below).

Gwynn and Hadcock's 1970 *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland* tabulated all known references found in various historical sources to Ireland's later medieval monasteries, friaries, hospitals, colleges and cathedrals, including ones within the study area (see Chapters 5-7 and Appendix 5 below). This source was also useful in terms of piecing together the relationships between the religious houses of the lordship and the secular centres, and how this developed through time.

One source that is useful in terms of understanding the economic situation of early-fourteenth century Uí Maine is the Ecclesiastical Taxation of Ireland, 1302-1306. This was a valuation taken of the Irish parish churches and prebends, in order to measure the papal 'tenths', the amount of annual income owed by a church to the papal exchequer (*CDI*, v, Nos. 202-323; Finan 2016, 96-114). The taxation provides a snapshot in terms of the wealth distribution across much of medieval Ireland at this time. There are difficulties in interpreting some of the place-names in the source and some dioceses are either not recorded or are poorly recorded (Barry 1987, 7-8). It has been suggested that the information collected in this source does not really reflect the true extent of wealth in Gaelic-dominated parts of the island *c*.1300, including Uí Maine (Chevallier 2019, 21). This will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis (see 3.5.5 below).

The *Registry of Clonmacnoise* (O'Donovan (ed.) 1857, 444-60) was also consulted for the research carried out for this thesis.[27] This source is believed to have been edited into its surviving form in the fourteenth century, after undergoing a number of redactions in earlier centuries (Kehnel 1997, 210-1). The account contains a substantial number of locatable place-

[26] Hereafter *Cal. Ormond Deeds.*

[27] Hereafter *Reg. Clon.*

names within Uí Maine, as well as identifiable church lands, and can help in reconstructing parts of the later medieval lordship.

One source of papal records containing some information of use to the present study is the *Obligationes pro Annatis*. These records, commonly known as the *Annates*, were promissory notes of the first year's income of a foundation to the papal camera by a benefice (Dudley-Edwards and O'Dowd 2003, 63). The *Annates* contain the names of the incumbent clergy and also the value of the benefices associated with their foundations. Two *Annates* relate to the Ó Cellaig lordship, namely the *Obligationes pro Annatis Diocesis Clonfertensis* [1420-1531] (Egan and Costello 1958) and the *Obligationes pro Annatis Diocesis Elphinensis* [1426-1548] (Mac Niocaill and Costello 1959). In this regard, Uí Maine at its greatest extent lay in the southern part of the diocese of Elphin and a very large part of the lordship, both east and west of the River Suck, lay in the diocese of Clonfert. Both of these sources are useful to the present study as they provide the names of a number of clergy who operated within the lordship, men from both the Ó Cellaig senior and junior lines, as well as from the Uí Maine vassal clans and service kindreds. This information, along with evidence from other sources, enabled the present writer to physically place these families and septs within the landscape of the wider Uí Maine lordship. Finally for this research, the recently published *A Calendar of Papal Registers relating to Clonfert Diocese* provides key insights into the everyday workings of the various religious houses of this medieval diocese (Larkin (ed.) 2016).[28] This source, along with evidence from the *Annates*, allowed the present writer insights into the religious careers of men from across later medieval Uí Maine.

1.6.1.4 – Toponymical Sources

One of the best preserved, yet underused, sources available to the archaeological and landscape researcher in Ireland is the toponymical record. As will be referred to repeatedly throughout this study, the survival of townland names and the names of local features is an invaluable key to the former organisation of the later medieval landscape, and the societies that utilised them (Mac Shamhráin 1991; Bhreathnach 2014, 19). A considerable amount of information can be gleaned from analysis of the toponymy, particularly townland names, as they are one of the primary forms of recording and remembering landscape (Kilfeather 2010, 167), a use that is often overlooked. Although evidence for the origins of the townland system is difficult to confirm, it is in place by at least the twelfth century, as townlands are referred to in

[28] Hereafter *Clonfert.*

documentary sources of that date (Ó hAisibéil 2018, 169). The divisions and in many cases names, can be presumed to be of considerable antiquity, with possible origins for the townland system in the early medieval period or even earlier (McErlean 1983, 335; Nicholls 2008, 138-9). A number of important archaeological studies of aspects of later medieval Gaelic Ireland have sought to incorporate toponymical evidence into them (Kilfeather 2010; McDermott 2010; FitzPatrick 2004; 2012; 2016; 2018).

The Placenames Database of Ireland, accessed via www.logainm.ie, is the primary resource for searching recorded and translated Irish place-names, including those found in what was Uí Maine. The present writer also found the Ordnance Survey Letters of John O'Donovan for counties Galway[29] and Roscommon[30], edited by Prof. Michael Herity (Herity (ed.) 2009; 2010) to be most helpful with regard to place-names, their locations, and other information that was valuable to the research. Careful consideration of these place-names can help to identify otherwise unknown places of importance in the landscape of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship and, indeed, throw some light on their function during this period.

1.6.1.5 – Cartographic Sources

Early maps can provide insights into the landscape, settlement patterns, economy and elite residences (mostly some form of castle) of later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland. The production of maps during this period, however, was linked to English conquest and expansion. They contain many inaccuracies and, also, biases and agendas associated with the colonial process (Prunty 2004, 18; Smyth 2006, 25). Nevertheless, these maps do contribute to our understanding of the cultural landscape of Ireland at the very end of the late medieval period (Andrews 2001). These maps, if used carefully, can yield important information about the landscape of any given area in the late-sixteenth or early to mid-seventeenth century, such as what were the principal settlements, elite residences and churches. Great stands of woodland can be identified too (Smyth 2006, xix).

There are a number of cartographic sources available that assist in understanding study area at the very end of the later medieval period. Beginning in the late-sixteenth century, key resources include John Browne the Younger's 1591 *Map of the Province of Connaught* [TCD, MS1209/68] (Fig. 3.3; Andrews 2003, 84-92), Baptista Boazio's *c*. 1606 *Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio* (Fig, 3.5; Boazio 1606) and John Speed's 1611-12 *The theatre of the empire of Great*

[29] Hereafter *OS Letters, Galway.*
[30] Hereafter *OS Letters, Roscommon*.

Britaine: presenting an exact geography of the kingdomes of England, Scotland, Ireland... (Fig. 3.6; Speed 1603-11). While these maps only view the province of Connacht from a regional perspective, they record features, settlements, place-names, and versions of place-names, which in certain cases have not survived to the present day, within Uí Maine.

Later in the seventeenth century, William Petty's Down Survey (http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php) provides a snapshot in time *c*.1650. This civil survey was the first to be undertaken as part of the Cromwellian confiscations of the mid-seventeenth century and commenced in 1654-5. The aim of this survey was to provide locational information and the extents of confiscated lands in order to enable their redistribution to new English settlers, mainly soldiers, who were to be paid for their services in the form of Irish land (Andrews 1985, 61). This survey did not cover Connacht, and the earlier Strafford Survey of 1636 served as the substitute. Much of the Down Survey and accompanying maps were destroyed in a fire in 1711. What remained was copied in 1786-7 before even these surviving originals were also destroyed in 1922 during the Civil War. These copies are now lodged in the National Library. As such, only the general maps survive for Co. Galway, and the incomplete survival of the Strafford Survey means that there is only partial coverage of Co. Roscommon (McNeary and Shanahan 2005, 11). Luckily maps survive for the two Roscommon baronies of the study area, Moycarn and Athlone, with detail surviving to townland level. These maps were accessed via *The Down Survey of Ireland* website, developed by Trinity College Dublin (http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php).

Figure 1.2 - Baronies of Moycarn and Athlone in the 1636 Strafford Survey. This map source preserves valuable information on land divisions, townland names, micro-toponymy and settlement indicators for part of the study area, including information that does not survive to present day (Image courtesy of Trinity College Dublin)

The next cartographic source of use to the present research is Richard Griffith's Bog Commission map of the area from the very beginning of the nineteenth century (Figs. 3.1; 4.10; 6.12) (Griffths 1809-1814). In 1808, Sir Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, advocated the setting up of a commission to enquire into the possible utilisation of Irish bogs. With this in mind, Sir Richard Griffiths was appointed Engineer for the Bog Commission in 1809, and set about mapping the extant wetlands, including those of the study area. The value of Griffith's mapping of the wetlands and woodland at this time is not to be underestimated, as the landscape approach to this research benefits of from the recording of physical features that have since been drained and 'improved', or stands of woodland that no longer survive. The Bog Commission maps were accessed via the Bord na Móna Living History website (https://www.bordnamonalivinghistory.ie/maps/).

The First Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch maps for the research area have been consulted at length for the present study. These maps were produced between 1824 and 1846 for the whole island and depict the countryside before the extensive reorganisation of settlements, field boundaries and the transportation network which followed the Great Famine (Barry 1987, 10; McNeary and Shanahan 2005, 13). In particular, these Ordnance Survey maps are of value

because they depict archaeological monuments that have either been levelled (now showing no visible surface remains) or have been heavily modified since the 1840s (Barry 1987, 10).

1.7 – Secondary Works

1.7.1 – General Histories of Medieval Ireland

One of the first publications to focus on later medieval Ireland in the early twentieth century was the important if controversial *Ireland under the Normans, 1169-1333* (Orpen 1911-1920, reprint 2005). The usefulness of this work to the present study lies primarily with its outlining of Anglo-Norman land grants within the areas of the cantreds of Omany and Tyrmany during the thirteenth and early fourteenth century. An unpublished PhD thesis, entitled *The English in Connacht, 1171-1333* (Walton 1980), provides a wealth of information and interpretation of the changing dynamics in the study area during the high medieval period.

A number of general texts relating to the history and archaeology of early medieval Ireland were consulted during the course of the research (Ó Corráin 1972; Ó Cróinín 2013; Bhreathnach 2014; Stout 2017). These helped provide an understanding of life and society in Uí Maine during the early medieval period, particularly in the two centuries before *c*.1100. This laid the foundations for research into the study area during the whole later medieval period. An understanding of the earliest history of the Uí Maine is provided by a book section in *A New History of Ireland I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Ó Cróinín 2008), one of the only chapters in this publication to discuss the territory of Uí Maine and its people during the early medieval period.

A number of useful articles giving an outline of the general historical background to later medieval Ireland were also consulted during the course of the research (Lydon 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; Quinn 2008; Glasscock 2008; Watt 2008; Nicholls 2008; Simms 2018a; 2018b; Moss 2018). Duffy's (1996) *Ireland in the Middle Ages* and, more recently, Downham's (2018) *Medieval Ireland* were books that also provided basic historical information on later medieval Ireland. However, if there is one criticism that could be levelled at most of these works, is that archaeological evidence rarely features in them.

1.7.2 – General Histories of Later Medieval Gaelic Ireland

Later medieval Gaelic Ireland (which included Uí Maine) is defined here as meaning the parts of Ireland that, in some way, saw the large-scale survival of the native elite during this whole period (e.g. Simms 2009, 9; O'Conor 2018, 148-9). In this regard, relatively little specific

research was carried out on the history of later medieval Gaelic Ireland prior to the 1970s (Duffy, Edwards and FitzPatrick 2001, 21-39). Interest in the history of the later medieval Gaelic world began to emerge after Nicholls' pioneering 1972 publication *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Nicholls 1972; 2003). This was followed in 1987 with the publication of Simms' *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Simms 1987; 2000). These two publications laid the foundation for subsequent scholarship on the history of later medieval Gaelic Ireland. Both texts were consulted during the course of this research.

The publication in 2001 of the edited book a *Gaelic Ireland, c.1250 – c.1650: Land, Lordship and Settlement* was extremely important for the study of later medieval Gaelic Ireland (Duffy, Edwards and FitzPatrick (eds.) 2001). In the present context, various articles in this book written by historians and historical geographers were important background reading for much of the research in this thesis (Edwards 2001; Kingston 2001; Fitzsimons 2001; Duffy 2001; Nicholls 2001; Simms 2001). Other books consulted on the history of later medieval Gaelic Ireland were *Hospitality in Medieval Ireland, 900-1500* (O'Sullivan 2004), *Ulster and the Isles in the Fifteenth Century: the Lordship of Clann Domhnaill of Antrim* (Kingston 2004) and *Gaelic Ulster in the Middle Ages* (Simms 2020). Various historical essays on Gaelic lordships published in the edited books *Regions and Rulers in Ireland, 1100-1650* (Edwards (ed.) 2004; Casway 2004; FitzPatrick 2004) and *Lordship in Medieval Ireland: Image and Reality* (Doran and Lyttleton (eds.) 2007; Malcolm 2007; Verstaten 2007; Naessens 2007; Kelleher 2007) were also important sources of information. As well as this, a collection of essays submitted for the 'Irish Chiefs' Prize' was published in 2013 entitled *Gaelic Ireland (c.600-1700): Politics, Culture and Landscapes* (Simms (ed.) 2013), which covered a range of historical themes with a broad geographical spread (Ó hAodha 2013; Beggan 2013a).

1.7.3 – General Archaeological Texts on Later Medieval Ireland

General textbooks on the archaeology of later medieval Ireland include Barry's 1987 *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland* and O'Keeffe's 2000 *Medieval Ireland: An Archaeology*. Monographs and books on specific aspects of the archaeology of the period also proved informative. Quite an amount has been published in book form on the various types of castle built across Ireland between the twelfth and seventeenth century (Leask 1941; McNeill 1997; Sweetman 2000; O'Keeffe 2015, 184-306; McAlister 2019). O'Conor's (1998) review of rural settlement in later medieval Ireland was also of use to the research carried out in this thesis.

General works on later medieval ecclesiastical architecture were also consulted during the course of this thesis (Leask 1955-60; Stalley 1987; O'Keeffe 2015, 1-184). One criticism of Barry (1987) and O'Keeffe's (2000) books on the archaeology of later medieval Ireland is that they focus on the archaeology of the Anglo-Normans and eastern Ireland in particular. Little attention was paid in these works to archaeology of the parts of Ireland that saw the large-scale survival of the Gaelic elite (O'Conor 1998, 14; 2001, 329; Breen 2005, 15).

1.7.4 – Research on the Archaeology of Later Medieval Gaelic Ireland

Modern research into the archaeology of later medieval Gaelic Ireland really owes its origins to two publications (that have already been briefly mentioned above for other reasons) that were published around twenty years ago. Firstly, Chapter Four of O'Conor's *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland* outlined the settlement types inhabited by the Gaelic elite between the twelfth and late sixteenth century (O'Conor 1998, 73-107). Secondly, various essays in the edited book *Gaelic Ireland, c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, Lordship and Settlement* (Duffy, Edwards and FitzPatrick (eds.) 2001) also discussed the settlement archaeology and material culture of later medieval Gaelic Ireland (Breen 2001; Donnelly 2001; FitzPatrick 2001; Horning 2001; Loeber 2001; McNeill 2001; O'Conor 2001; O'Sullivan 2001).

Since then a whole plethora of research has been published on aspects of the archaeology of later medieval Gaelic Ireland (see O'Conor 2018, 149-51 for a listing of these publications), much of it emanating from NUI Galway (see 1.4). These publications included substantial works on such subjects as Gaelic inauguration (FitzPatrick 2004), the archaeology of later medieval Gaelic lordships (Breen 2005; Finan (ed.) 2010; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Romo-Fidalgo 2010; Soderberg and Immich 2010; Finan 2010; 2016) and burials (McKenzie, Murphy and Donnelly (eds.) 2015). More recently, various essays published in *Becoming and Belonging in Ireland AD c. 1200-1600* (Campbell, FitzPatrick and Horning (eds.) 2018) are another major addition to our understanding of the archaeology of later medieval Gaelic Ireland (Breen 2018; Donnelly and Murphy 2018; FitzPatrick 2018; Gardiner 2018; Logue 2018; Naessens 2018; O'Conor 2018; Rynne 2018). These papers give a good overview of current research on the latter subject.

The Discovery Programme's Medieval Rural Settlement Project carried out a seven-year multi-disciplinary project between 2002 and 2009 focussing on the archaeology and history of the north Roscommon area and the Uí Chonchobair (O'Conor) lordship of Machaire Connacht (Brady 2003; 2005; 2009; Brady and Gibson 2005; Connon 2005; 2012; McNeary and

Shanahan 2005; 2009; 2012; Brady, Connon, Corns, McNeary, Shanahan and Shaw 2005; Brady, McNeary, Shanahan and Shaw 2011-12). Extensive research has also been carried out on the Mac Diarmaida lordship of Magh Luirg, also in north Roscommon (Clyne 2010; Finan 2010a; 2010b; 2018; Moss 2010; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010; Read 2010; Soderberg and Immich 2010). The Uí Chonchobair moated site at Cloonfree, near Strokestown, again in the northern half of Roscommon, has also been the subject of detailed research (Finan and O'Conor 2002). The archaeology and landholding history of service families in the Uí Chonchobair lands of Machaire Connacht has also been examined in detail (FitzPatrick 2018, 179-87). An overview article outlining the archaeology of elite settlement of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century date in Gaelic north Roscommon has been published recently (O'Conor and Finan 2018). These publications on the later medieval archaeology of north Roscommon are important as it shows that the lordships to the immediate north of Uí Maine have been studied in some detail.

1.7.5 – Archaeological and Historical work on Uí Maine

1.7.5.1 – Historical Work on Uí Maine

There are a number of publications examining or partly throwing light on the history and emergence of Uí Maine and the ancestors of the Uí Chellaig during the early medieval period (Walsh 1936-7; 1940-1; Kelleher 1971; Byrne 2004, 92-3, 230-53; Mannion 2006; Ó Cróinín 2013; Devane 2013). An account has been written on the eleventh-century Tadhg Mór Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine. This publication examines his role as an ally of Brian Boru at Clontarf in 1014 (Mannion 2014, 7-9). Yet, in reality, little detailed research has been published on the early medieval history of the study area. While the early medieval history of Uí Maine is beyond the scope of the present research, as stated, it is important in terms of contextualising the state of affairs in the area prior to *c*.1100, when the Ó Cellaig sept is coming to prominence in the region.

Moving into the later medieval period, consistent with the emergence of the Ó Cellaig sept in monopolising the kingship and later lordship of Uí Maine, a similar dearth of research is evident, with a few notable exceptions. Firstly, prominent mention must be given to an, as yet, unpublished manuscript written by Nicholls for the Irish Manuscripts Commission which is entitled 'Survey of Irish lordships: I Uí Maine and Síl Anmchadha' (Nicholls 1969). This document, which includes a series of hand-drawn maps of individual sub-lordships, has proved

to be of major benefit in understanding the Ó Cellaig lordship, its geography and its archaeology between the twelfth and late sixteenth century.

There are a series of individual entries in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* for various later medieval Ó Cellaig lords of Uí Maine. These are Conchobar Ó Cellaig (d. 1268), Domnall Ó Cellaig (d. 1295), Donnchad Muimnech Ó Cellaig (d. 1307), Uilliam Buidhe Ó Ceallaigh (d. 1381), Maolsheachlainn Ó Ceallaigh (d. 1402), Aodh Ó Ceallaigh (d. 1467) and Tadhg Ó Ceallaigh (also d. 1467) (O'Byrne 2009a-g). The entries serve as a clear and reliable chronology of the activities and interactions of these Ó Cellaig lords, and provide an insight into the political dynamics of later medieval Connacht. In an appendix of her book *Medieval Gaelic Sources*, Simms describes an incident involving the Uí Chellaig in fourteenth-century Connacht as a way of showcasing the way in which the various Gaelic medieval written source materials can be brought together in order to get a fuller understanding of a particular event (Simms 2009, 109-17). Important research has also been published on the genealogy of the later medieval Uí Chellaig as it survives in *Leabhar Ua Maine* (Ó Muraíle 2008; 2010), referred to earlier.

A small, but valuable, amount of published historical research was produced at the beginning of the twentieth century on one of the religious houses in the study area, the fourteenth-century Franciscan friary of Kilconnell, Co. Galway. Francis Joseph Bigger conducted an extensive study of Kilconnell friary, which was published in three parts (Bigger 1900-1; 1902; 1903-4), covering all aspects of the friary's history, architecture and archaeology. A number of inventories listing religious books and sacred vessels owned by the friary has also been published (Jennings 1944). This work is invaluable as a means of understanding Ó Cellaig relations with the Church in the later medieval period, as well as providing a case study into how secular lords expressed their wealth and authority through the means of ecclesiastical patronage.

Aside from the publications mentioned thus far, however, historians have published little to date the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine.

1.7.5.2 – Archaeological Work on and within the territory of Uí Maine

It was shown above that considerable archaeological research has been carried out in North Roscommon on what were the Gaelic Irish Ó Conchobhair and Mac Diarmada lordships of Machaire Chonnacht and Maigh Luirg (see 1.7.4). This is not the case in modern south Roscommon and east Galway, the two areas which effectively correspond to the later medieval

lordship of Uí Maine at its height. Archaeological research on the later medieval period in the study area is virtually non-existent, and when it is published, the focus is primarily on the Anglo-Norman material remains extant in the region (Graham 1988a; Holland 1987-1988; 1997; O'Keeffe 1998; Dempsey 2014; O’Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015; O’Conor and Naessens 2016a; O'Conor and Shanahan 2018). Little has been published on the archaeology of the Uí Chellaig lords and their vassal clans.

Certainly quite an amount of archaeological information has been published on the study area during the early medieval period, suggesting a quite open, relatively rich agricultural landscape *c.*1100, at the beginning of the later medieval period. Two articles have been published on the early medieval archaeology of the Ballygar area of east Galway. This work includes a dubious identification of an early-medieval ‘royal’ site in Ballygar itself (Beggan 2013a; 2013b). Large quantities of archaeological information on the early medieval period in Uí Maine were also garnered from excavations funded by the National Roads Authority along the route of the M6 road project, which now links Athlone to Galway, bypassing Ballinasloe. One major publication from this road scheme is *The Mill at Kilbegly: An Archaeological Investigation on the Route of the M6 Ballinasloe to Athlone National Road Scheme* (Jackman, Moore and Rynne 2013). This monograph is a detailed analysis of the excavation of a well-preserved horizontal watermill uncovered the townland of Kilbegly in south Co. Roscommon, which was built *c.*700 AD and was used throughout the eighth and ninth centuries. The other National Roads Authority monograph published on the study area is *The Quiet Landscape: Archaeological Investigations on the M6 Galway to Ballinasloe National Road Scheme* (McKeon and O’Sullivan (eds.) 2014). Most of the material uncovered in the thirty-eight excavations that took place during the course of this scheme uncovered evidence in the study area ranging from the prehistoric period through to the modern period, with a number of articles within this edited book of particular relevance to the present study (Molloy, Feeser and O’Connell 2014; Muñiz-Pérez 2014; Bower 2014; Delaney 2014).

Another major published excavation of a later medieval site in the study area is that of the Augustinian Priory of St Mary at Clontuskert near Ballinasloe, which was probably founded in the twelfth century and was the beneficiary of much Ó Cellaig patronage in the fifteenth century. This excavation produced a lot of information about life in Uí Maine during the whole later medieval period (Fanning 1976; see, also, Barry 1987, 151-3). It has also been noted that the Hospital of the Crutched Friars at Rindoon, which also saw Ó Cellaig patronage from the fourteenth century onwards, was seemingly heavily rebuilt in the fifteenth century (O’Conor

and Shanahan 2018, 40-1), As mentioned already, a number of fifteenth-century sacred vessels and utensils are also associated with the Ó Cellaig lords of Uí Maine (Jennings 1944).

The Ó Cellaig tower house at Galey, Co. Roscommon, on the shores of Lough Ree in Co. Roscommon, has also been the subject of some research (Kerrigan 1996). This may be the site of the fourteenth-century residence of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig and the location of a famous feast organised by him in 1351 (*Ibid*., 103-4). FitzPatrick has argued for an alternative location for this feast, suggesting that it was held at or beside a moated site at Pallas, near Gallagh in east Galway (FitzPatrick 2016, 204). This feast, its exact location and the contents of the poem will be discussed in more detail below (see 6.3). The three Ó Cellaig tower houses of Gallagh, Garbally and Monivea have also been briefly mentioned in a 2001 review of later medieval Gaelic castles from across Ireland (Loeber 2001, 310).

Dundonnell Castle, Co. Roscommon, is a castle in the study area that been subject to detailed architectural analysis and geophysical survey. This stronghouse, which seems to date to the very late-sixteenth century or early to mid-seventeenth century, is sited within a bivallate earthen enclosure (Curley 2011; 2016; 2018). The site was owned by the *Mac Eochadha* (McKeogh) lords of *Magh Finn* who were vassal lords of the Uí Chellaig of Uí Maine.

Aside from the above outlined archaeological research undertaken to date, two inventories compiled of the recorded monuments within the landscape of counties Roscommon and Galway have been of particular use to the present study. These enable the researcher to evaluate the extant remains at these Uí Chellaig lordly centres, and understand where gaps may still exist in our knowledge of the archaeology of the study area. The *Archaeological Inventory of County Galway, Volume II: North Galway* (Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999) is extremely valuable in terms of its cataloguing of archaeological remains in the Galway section of Uí Maine, while the National Monuments Service *Historic Environment Viewer* (https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/) provides descriptions and geo-locational information on the monuments recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) in the Republic of Ireland more generally, and as a result catalogues the sites from the Roscommon section of Uí Maine.

1.8 – Conclusions

The study area was introduced in this chapter and an outline of the aims of the thesis was given in it. The various sources and methods used throughout the thesis were introduced and explained in the chapter. In particular, in contrast to north Roscommon and other areas, it was

shown that little detailed archaeological and, for that matter, historical research has been published on the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine. This is despite the fact that the archaeology of the study area is very well preserved and, also, that good edited later medieval historical and literary sources survive for Uí Maine. In all, this lack of focussed research and the existence of good primary data, be it archaeological, historical, literary or toponymical, suggests that a PhD that attempts to understand aspects of the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine will be a significant contribution to furthering our knowledge of settlement and society in later medieval Gaelic Ireland.

Chapter 2 – Historical Background: Later Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordship of Tír Maine and Uí Maine

2.1 – Introduction

The medieval period in the study area has only received marginal interest from historians (1.7.5.1). To date, interpretations of the early and later medieval history of Uí Maine, and with it, the territorial area controlled by this group, and their principal offshoot, the Uí Chellaig, has traditionally depended on the 1843 map and description provided by O'Donovan (Fig. 2.1; *Tribes and Customs*, 5-6). A substantial quantity of published and privately-published material since then has readily accepted O'Donovan's boundaries of the territory of Uí Maine. O'Donovan's depiction of the geographical extent of Uí Maine was based on the late-fourteenth to early fifteenth-century poetic source *Triallam timcheall na Fodla*, composed by Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin, *saoi sheancadha ocus ollam* to the Uí Maine during his lifetime, and finished by Giolla-Na-Naomh Ó Huidhrín (*Tribes and Customs*, 4-6; see, also, Carney (ed.) 1943. For later acceptance of these extents, see, for example McGettigan 2016, 37, Map 1).

Figure 2.1 - A Map of Hy Many, with some of the adjacent territories in the counties of Galway and Roscommon. Taken from the Tribes and Customs of Hy Many, *these extents are routinely accepted as an historical reality when topics relating to the Uí Chellaig are discussed in scholarship. Red line has been added by the present writer, please note that the territory to the east and south of this line as far as the river boundary of the Shannon, is traditionally regarded as being O'Kelly Country.*

However, this source must not be accepted without interrogation, and Nicholls rightly outlines the level of scrutiny which must be applied to later medieval sources such as *Triallam timcheall na Fodla*, consulted by O'Donovan. Nicholls critiques these sources as such:

'A striking example of the techniques employed by politically-motivated antiquarianism is shown in the account of the boundaries of Uí Maine printed by O'Donovan (O'Donovan

1843, 4-6), which represents a conflation of the maximum extent of the Uí Maine of the pre-invasion period with the furthest limits of the conquests— or, indeed, in some cases the ambition—of the contemporary O'Kellys.' (Nicholls 1982, 392)

Therefore, prior to progressing to a more detailed inspection of the *cenn áiteanna* (i.e. lordly centres) of Ó Cellaig lordship in the later medieval period, it is necessary to construct a historical background to the latter area, by focussing on the surviving primary source material. This will be prefaced by a brief summary of the origins of Uí Maine to 1100, undertaken in the same fashion, in order to understand how the Uí Chellaig emerged to control this territory in the later medieval period. This approach will do two things. Firstly, it will help the present writer to locate the Uí Chellaig elites within the landscape, thus contributing to a number of the research questions of the present study, as well as adding to our understanding of the later medieval history of this lordship. Secondly, it will test O'Donovan's view of the boundaries of Uí Maine against the historical reality of the early and later medieval periods, and, in doing so, evaluate the usefulness of his map to historians and archaeologists.

2.2 – The early medieval origins of the Uí Chellaig

The term Uí Maine has been used thus far as the name of the lordship over which the later medieval Uí Chellaig presided. However, there is much confusion as to what Uí Maine represents exactly. It has routinely been used in three linked ways; firstly, to describe an early medieval tribal grouping; secondly, to name a territorial unit, known as a *trícha cét*,[31] from roughly the beginning of the later medieval period; thirdly to refer to the wider Ó Cellaig lordship throughout the later medieval period, no matter what its geographical extent. Furthermore, another term, Tír Maine, 'the land of Maine', will be used throughout this thesis, denoting another *trícha cét* which is referred to extensively in historical sources, and which was under the authority of the Uí Maine at different points during the medieval period as a whole.

The Uí Chellaig are one of a number of septs which originated from this common tribal grouping. The principal lordly septs that descended from the Uí Maine are the Ó Madadháin (O'Madden) sept of Síl Anmchadha, and the Uí Chellaig themselves, and both held lands in eastern Connacht throughout the later medieval period (Jaski 2013b, 10; Ó hAisibéil 2018, 163).

[31] *trícha cét* - lit. thirty hundreds, a unit of landholding in the latter part of the early medieval period.

The Uí Maine believed that their genesis was tied to an ancestor figure, Maine Mór, son of Eochaidh Ferdaghiall, reputed descendant of the three Collas, who were founders of the central Ulster kingdom of Airgíalla (Ó Muraíle 2008, 49; Jaski 2013a, 296; 2013b, 10). Ancestral claim from a real or mythical figure is a common motif in early Irish elite culture, as a means of strengthening an identity and legacy attached to a territory (see, for example, FitzPatrick 2004, 66-8; McCarthy and Curley 2018, 58-61).

Maine Mór is a reputed fourth-century personage who migrated from the northeast of the island with his people, in order to settle in *Magh Seincheineoil* (the plain of the ancient kin). His arrival and settlement in Connacht is recorded in the Life of St. Grellan, the patron saint of Uí Maine (*Tribes and Customs*, 8-14). Maine Mór migrated from *Clochar Mac Daimhin* (Clogher, Co. Tyrone) to *Druim Clasaigh* in Tír Maine (*Ibid*., 10). *Druim Clasaigh* is identifiable today as a ridge, 60m to 90m high, which crosses the parishes of Drum and Taughmaconnell in south Co. Roscommon (Devane 2013, 97).

The first annalistic entry to record the territory and tribe of Uí Maine occurs in 538 in relation to a battle in that year (*AT*; *AFM*; Kelleher 1971, 64). After this battle, Uí Maine was then incorporated into the Connacht over-kingdom, under the authority of the Uí Fiachrach kings of Connacht (Byrne 2004, 92). The position of Uí Maine as a subkingdom of Connacht would have corresponded with a levelling of tribute by the greater power onto the minor kingdom, in return for certain rights and privileges. It is possible that this was organised along similar lines to that described in the later *Lebor na Cert* (see 1.6.1.1) (*Lebor na Cert*, 49, 53, 57, 59, 145).

By the eighth century, Uí Maine authority was encroached upon by the expansion of the Uí Briúin. The Uí Briúin were a dynasty who originated in the central plain of Connacht, known as Magh nAí or Machaire Connacht, with its prehistoric landscape of Rathcroghan, in mid Co. Roscommon. It was from this dynasty that the Uí Briúin Aí emerged, and who claimed control over the latter region (Byrne 2004, 245-6). The expansion of the Uí Briúin Aí in the eighth century is seen particularly in the reign of Indrechtach mac Muiredaig (707-723), whose father was the originator of the dominant Síl Muiredaig sept of the Uí Briúin Aí. The Síl Muiredaig later produced the dynasty that monopolised the kingship of Connacht in the later medieval period, the Uí Chonchobair.

Records from the eighth century indicate that three rival ruling lines within the Uí Maine tribal group had emerged for control of Uí Maine at this time. Firstly, there was the Clann Crimthann, who resided in an area broadly consistent with the later barony of Killian, Co. Galway, plus

presumably some lands east of the River Suck, in Co. Roscommon. Then, secondly, there was the Clann Chommáin, who operated out of *trícha Máenmaige*, the later barony of Loughrea, Co. Galway, and finally the Cénel Coirpre Chruim, who came to reside in the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine (MacCotter 2014, 208, 141).

Between *trícha Máenmaige* and the Uí Maine lands east of the River Suck, lay a territory known in the early medieval period as *Tír Soghain*, named after the dynasty who resided in that area (Fig. 2.2). This *trícha* was absorbed into the wider Uí Maine lordship at some point in the early historic period, however, the Soghain retained a level of independence within Uí Maine, to the extent that they continued to elect their own chiefs until at least the twelfth century (Mannion 2006, 168).

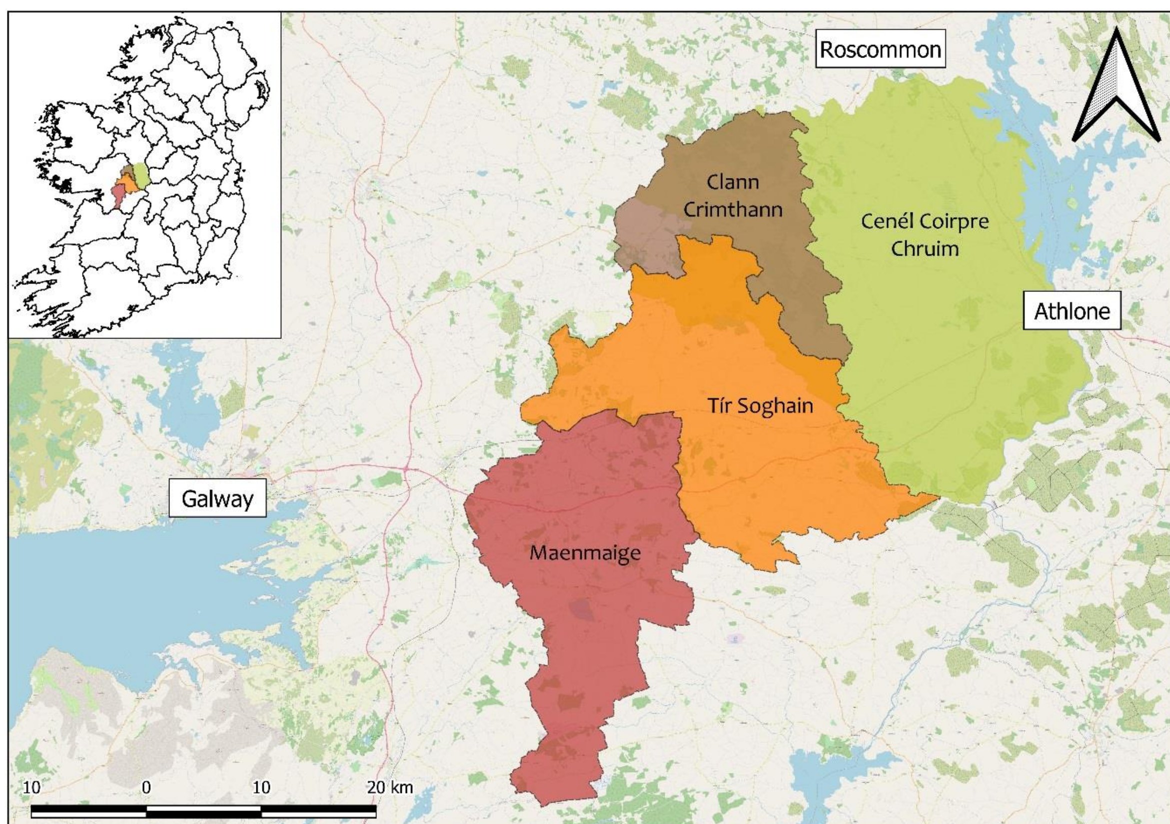

Figure 2.2 – Approximate territorial extents of the sept families related to Uí Maine, c.*800. Extents reproduced based on research by Mannion 2006; MacCotter 2014. It is presumed that this is the territory over which the dominant king of Uí Maine claimed control in* c.*800, with the annals recording Uí Maine kings from each of these lines.*

By the middle of the tenth century, the Clann Crimthann and Clann Chommáin had furnished their last kings of Uí Maine, meaning that from this point onwards, the kingship belonged nearly exclusively to the Cenél Coirpre Chruim (Kelleher 1971, 79). A period of relative stability seems to have played out in the annalistic record for Uí Maine throughout the majority of the tenth century as a result.

The other two suppliers of candidates to the Uí Maine kingship fell into relative obscurity after this time. The Clann Crimthann became overrun by an Uí Briúin Aí-related sept, the Muintir Máelruanaid, who were installed as kings in the late-tenth century in order to effectively annex their territory for the Síl Muiredaig kings of Connacht (MacCotter 2014, 208). *Nósa Ua Maine* later records three vassal kings of *Síl Crimtaind Cáeil*, two of the Clann Crimthann themselves: the Uí Mhugróin (O'Moran?) and the Uí Chathail (Cahill), as well as the aforementioned Uí Máelruanaid (*Nósa*, 537; *Tribes and Customs*, 73).

The Clann Chommáin also produced two vassal lineages in their later history. The Uí Nechtain (O'Naughton) and the Uí Máelalaid (O'Mullally) are recorded in *Nósa Ua Maine* as chiefs of the *trícha cét* of Máenmaige (MacCotter 2014, 141). However, both groupings were forced from this area at some point in the twelfth century, possibly due to Ó Conchobair pressure (Egan and Costello 1958, 59, note 32). The Uí Nechtain came to reside thereafter in the *Feadha* of Athlone, where tradition placed them at *Carraig Uí Neachtain* [Ballycreggan] and *Lissadillure* [Lisdillure], Co. Roscommon (*OS Letters, Roscommon*, 19), and by the late-sixteenth century, the Uí Máelalaid were settled at Tolendal [Tullinadaly/*Tulach na dála* – hill of assemblies] in the modern townland of Castletown, Tuam civil parish, Co. Galway (*Tribes and Customs*, 70-1, notes a – b; Ó hAodha 2017, 18). The Uí Máelalaid held prominent ecclesiastical positions in Uí Maine in the later medieval period (*Clonfert*, 303-4) while a member of the kindred served in a learned capacity to the Uí Maine in the late-fifteenth century (*AFM s.a.* 1487).

One of the most noteworthy tenth-century Uí Maine entries in the annals occurs for the year 962. This year saw the record of an attack undertaken by one Murchad Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine (*AFM*; Kelleher, 1971, 80). Murchad is the first Uí Maine king to have adopted the Ó Cellaig surname. *Ua/Ó*, anglicised to 'O', it translates most specifically to 'grandson', and Murchad's grandfather was Ceallach mac Finnachta, the namer for the sept. This is a phenomenon unique to Ireland, in that most royal and noble surnames are derived from a tenth-century ancestor (Ó Murchadha 1999, 33-5; Byrne 2004, xxxiv; Hammond 2019, 101). Byrne suggests that this adoption may have occurred in order to fulfil the function of denoting eligibility to kingship within the agnatic *derbfhine* – the four-generational kin group from which eligible candidates could be chosen for the role (Byrne 2004, xli). This approach effectively narrowed the number of potential contenders, introducing a level of control and exclusivity over the position going forward.

A small number of episodes are recorded in the annals from this point through to 1014, primarily concerned with the deaths of members of the Uí Maine. The only noteworthy incident prior to the Battle of Clontarf occurs in 1004, with a battle fought between Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig, assisted by Máel Sechlainn Mór, king of Mide, against the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne, with the assistance of *Iar Connacht*. It seems that this battle was fought for control of the *trícha cét* of Máenmaige, with the Uí Maine leaving the battlefield victorious (*AFM*; Kelleher 1971, 82-3).

Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig placed himself centrally within the politics of the island as a whole at the beginning of the eleventh century, owing to his alliance with Brian Boru. Tadg Mór gained the Uí Maine kingship in 1002, and with this, he attached himself to the Dál Cais high-king. As a result, Tadg Mór was closely allied, and acted as an advisor, to Brian Boru (Duffy 2014, 202), and his Uí Maine troops must have accompanied the Dál Cais on several military excursions, which gained the nickname – *lucht tige Taidg na taisteal* (the household troops of Tadg of the journeys), recorded in a contemporary praise poem *Beannacht, a Bruin, ar Brigit, fuil am thig rim nach anait* (Meyer 1912, 226; Mannion 2014, 8). This alliance was beneficial to Uí Maine interests also, as evidenced with the elevated status which Tadg Mór possessed when he could call upon Máel Sechlainn Mór as an ally in the battle against the Uí Fhiachrach Aidne in 1004 (Mannion 2014, 8).

Brian Boru's army at Clontarf in 1014 were made up primarily of his Munster forces as well as the support of Máel Sechlainn Mór, but only two Connacht kings were among his host: Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig, and the king of Uí Fiachrach Aidne, Máel Ruanaid Ó hEidin (Duffy 2014, 186). The Uí Maine and Uí Fiachrach Aidne are described in *Cogadh Gaedheal re Gallaibh* as taking on the Norse of Dublin, and by the end of the day, Tadg Mór was dead. His death assumed a mythical dimension in later times when tales were recounted about a mysterious dog-like animal appearing out of the sea to protect the dead warrior's body from the 'Danes' (Mannion 2014, 9).

Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig's legacy loomed large over his kin and descendants in later centuries, and his connection with Brian Boru was highlighted. This is seen with a possible contemporary or near contemporary praise poem *Samhoin so, sodham go Tadg* (Meyer 1912, 222-3; see 6.2). It is also seen in the Ó Cellaig genealogies, where Tadg is consistently referred to as 'Tadg of the battle of Brian' (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment i*, 49; *ii*, 53, 55), also, in *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, where the military assistance provided by the Uí Chellaig to the Clann Toirdelbaig was partially predicated on the links established between both dynasties by their

eleventh-century ancestors (*Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, 56-7). More than this, the prevalence of the personal name Tadg amongst the Uí Maine elite after this time may have been inspired by Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig and his career.

As the end of the eleventh century approached, and with it the close of the early medieval period, the bulk of Uí Maine-related entries in the annalistic record were associated with conflicts at neighbouring religious establishments, such as Clonmacnoise in 1038 and 1065 and Clonfert in 1045 and 1065 (*AFM*). Kelleher equates this with the successful attempts of the Uí Chonchobair to keep the Uí Maine weakened, and the corresponding Uí Maine attempts to retain a foothold in the politics of Connacht (Kelleher 1971, 90-1). The Ó Cellaig position in the wider region was heavily dependent on their relations with their ambitious northern neighbours in mid-Roscommon. At this time, the core of their territory likely corresponded with the region under the authority of the dominant Uí Maine sept, the Uí Chellaig lords of the Cenél Coirpre Chruim line. MacCotter reconstructed the Ó Cellaig territory at *c.*1100 as corresponding with the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine (Fig. 2.3). The extents of the lordship at this point included the former Clann Crimthann lands constituted by Killian Barony and the bulk of Athlone Barony. However, excluded from the territory at this time was the *túath* of Magh Finn, consistent with the later civil parish of Taughmaconnell and Barony of Moycarn, which MacCotter deduces had been taken into the control of the other lordly sept to emerge out of Uí Maine, the Uí Mhadadháin of Síl Anmchadha (MacCotter 2014, 208, 147-8). It is possible that the Uí Chellaig also retained real or imagined claims over the *trícha cét* of Máenmaige, but their main preoccupation must have been to retain Tír Maine in the face of growing Ó Conchobair pressure.

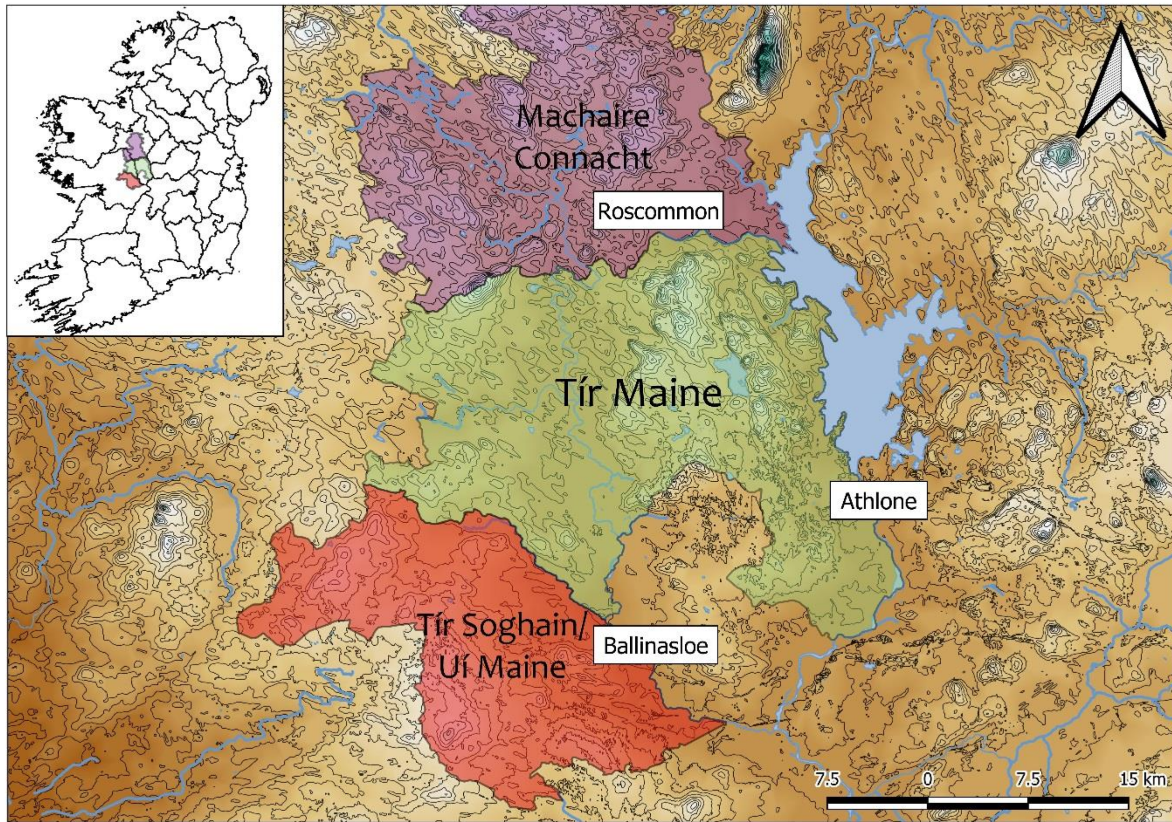

Figure 2.3 - Territorial extents Tír Maine, Tír Soghain/Uí Maine and Machaire Connacht, c.*1100, as reconstructed by MacCotter, 2014. Tír Maine represented the core territory controlled by the Uí Chellaig,* c.*1100. It is possible that the Uí Chellaig claimed overlordship of Tir Soghain at this date but this is uncertain.*

2.3 – The Uí Chellaig and the Lordship of Tír Maine, *c.*1100-1235

The late eleventh-century and early twelfth-century sources indicate that the now established Ó Cellaig sept were based at this time within their patrimonial *trícha cét* lands of Tír Maine, in what is now south Roscommon (see Fig. 2.3).

Donnchad Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine, died in 1074 on *Inis Locha Caoláin* (*AT*; *ACl*; *AFM*). This may have been a *crannóg* residence located somewhere on the double lakes of Cuilleenirwan Lough[32] and Coolagarry Lough in Tír Maine, just to the southeast of Lough Croan (Kelleher 1971, 92). However, no actual *crannóga* have been recognised on these connected lakes but three small natural islands (all *c.*25m in diameter) can be seen today on Coolagarry Lough. It has been noted that, at times, natural islands were used as defended residences in the same way as artificial *crannóga* (O'Conor 1998, 82-3; 2001, 336-7). It is

[32] The toponym of Cuilleenirwan may be a late introduction, possibly a landholding of the new English Irwin settler family, who arrived in Roscommon in the 1580s (Cronin 1980, 112). This may be the reason for the lack of survival of the place-name *Inis Locha Caoláin.*

possible that one of these islands was in use as an Ó Cellaig residence and *cenn áit* in the late eleventh century.

Thereafter, the sources are basically silent on the Uí Chellaig for sixty years, until 1134, when we hear of the death of Áed Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine (*AT*), who was then interred in Clonmacnoise, across the Shannon in modern Offaly (MacAlister 1909, 48). This suggests that Clonmacnoise, just beyond the southern limits of Tír Maine, continued to be used as the preferred location for interment of deceased kings from the Cenél Coirpre Chruim sept of Uí Maine into the twelfth century. This arrangement is traditionally regarded to have originated with the sixth-century endowment by Cairpre Crom, king of Uí Maine, of the nascent monastery of Clonmacnoise with lands and other rights in Uí Maine (*Reg. Clon.*, 454-5). The later right of the Uí Maine, especially the Uí Chellaig, to burial at Clonmacnoise is linked to this supposed gift (*Tribes and Customs*, 80-1). The Uí Chellaig had a strong relationship with Clonmacnoise in later times (see also 5.2.3). For example, in 1167, Conchobhar Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine, had the masonry church known as Temple Kelly (Pl. 2.1) built, and this may have replaced a timber oratory (*dearthach*) associated with the Uí Maine and their burial ceremonies (*AFM*; MacDonald 2003, 129-30). The annals also tell us of members of the sept being buried there into the thirteenth century and beyond (for example, *ACl. s.a.* 1284).

Plate 2.1 - Foundational remains of Temple Kelly, Clonmacnoise. This masonry church was reputedly built by Conchobhar Ó Cellaig in 1167 (Image courtesy of The Standing Stone blog).

On a wider scale, the political situation in early twelfth-century Connacht continued to be dominated by the expansionist policies of the Uí Chonchobair. While hints of this ambition were highlighted above (see 2.2), this sept was to reach the zenith of its power in the first half of the twelfth century, under the kingship of Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair. Toirrdelbach ascended to the kingship of Connacht in 1106. He is considered the most powerful king in Ireland by 1119, and in a long and impressive career that was to span five decades, he placed the Uí Chonchobair at the centre of power in Irish politics. His career is marked by predatory raids across Ireland (Lucas 1989, 144, 197-9), the construction of bridges and fortifications (Ó Corráin 1972, 156; Valante 2015, 51-2), the commissioning of high crosses, the Cross of Cong and much, much more (Lucas 1989, 144, 197-9; Manning 1997, 12; Murray 2014, 30-65; Moss 2015, 480-1; Valante 2015, 51-2). Ó Conchobair's actions during his reign did much to shape the landscape and the course of the history of Connacht, including Tír Maine – the then Ó Cellaig territory.

Some of Toirrdelbach's activities in eastern Connacht seem to have been attempted in order to directly subdue the Uí Chellaig, and restrict their power in the region. One of the clearest manifestations of this is the manner in which related junior septs of the Síl Muiredaig (of whom the Uí Chonchobair were the ruling sept) came to be installed in new locales, outside of their traditional areas. This had already been seen before with the insertion of the Uí Máelruanaid as vassal kings in what was Clann Crimthann territory in the tenth century (see 2.2). This tactic seems also to have been employed by Toirrdelbach in mid twelfth-century Tír Maine. For example, the Clann Uadach are mentioned as being located at Druim Drestan in 1137 (*AT*). Druim Drestan has been equated with the civil parish of Drum, south Roscommon, in Tír Maine (Connon and Shanahan 2012, 165). This strongly implies that the Clann Uadach, and more particularly their chief family, the Uí Fhallamháin (O'Fallons), had been placed in Ó Cellaig territory by the end of the 1130s at least.

The Clann Uadach was one of the dynastic families of the Síl Muiredaig, originally located to the east of Machaire Connacht in the *trícha cét* of Na Trí Túatha (i.e. the modern Strokestown area), particularly the area of Tír Briúin na Sinna, but possibly actually originating in a region surrounding Kilbride civil parish in the centre of modern Co. Roscommon (Anne Connon, pers. comm.). However, at some point in the early-twelfth century, the Clann Uadach seem to have been transplanted away from their homeland, and their new territory was within the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine, eventually coextensive with the parishes of Dysart and Cam, Co. Roscommon (MacCotter 2014, 208, 210).

A reference in 1169 provides some certainty as to the motive for this movement of a cadet branch of the Síl Muiredaig into Tír Maine. It relates to the death of one Ferchar Ó Fallamháin, chief of Clann Uadach. Ferchar is described as *maor Ua Maine* – the 'steward' of Uí Maine (*AFM*). In the twelfth-century, Irish kings gave the title of *máer* to their administrators in newly acquired territories. This suggests that the Uí Fhallamháin were installed as Ó Conchobair's representatives in Tír Maine to control the area, and by extension, subdue their principal local residents – the Uí Chellaig (Byrne 2008, 871). The movement of the Clann Uadach is only one of a number of local twelfth-century relocations which seem to have been orchestrated by the Uí Chonchobair (Connon Forthcoming, 2, 4-5). It might be added that other provincial kings throughout Ireland at this time regularly placed related vassal clans into subject territories to suit their own political needs (e.g. Breen 2005, 65; MacCotter 2014, 169).

The battle of *Óenach Máenmaige* (located somewhere in the *trícha cét* of Máenmaige) took place in 1135 and was fought between competing Ó Conchobair factions. The losing side, those of Áed mac Domnaill Ó Conchobair, were supported by Conchobar Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine, who was slain in the battle (*AT*; *ACott*, Post-Patrician). The victors, led by Conchobar Ó Conchobair, Toirrdelbach's son, exacted punishment on the Uí Chellaig for taking the wrong side, by removing them from the kingship of Uí Maine, with Ó Madadháin, the king of Síl Anmchadha, taking his place (*AFM*; Kelleher 1971, 95-6). It may be possible that the *trícha cét* of Máenmaige in east Galway was forfeited by the Uí Maine to the Uí Chonchobair at this time also, with the expulsion of the Uí Maine septs of Uí Nechtain and the Uí Máelalaid in the process, with the former family settling in the south-eastern part of Tír Maine, in the area known the *Feadha* of Athlone (see 2.2; 3.2.2). Interestingly, later that year witnessed the swift reversal back to the normal order of Uí Maine kingship, with the death of this Ó Madadháin king of Uí Maine, who was replaced by Tadg Ó Cellaig, son of the aforementioned Conchobar (*AFM*). Thereafter, from the 1130s onwards, the Uí Chellaig seemed to accept or at least acquiesce to Ó Conchobair overlordship. For example, in 1142 the Uí Maine accompanied Conchobar Ó Conchobair on a cattle raid to *Múscraige Tíre*, in what is now north Tipperary (*AFM*; Kelleher, 1971, 98-9).

Many of the annalistic entries over the next thirty years mention the Uí Maine forming part of the military hostings of Toirrdelbach, and then Ruaidrí Ó Conchobair, his son and successor (*AFM*, *s.a.* 1147; *AU*, *AT*, *AFM*, *s.a.* 1163; *AT*, *AFM*, *s.a.* 1170). These records are also interspersed with instances where any Ó Cellaig attempts at independence from the Uí Chonchobair were put down, as in 1158 (*AFM*). The Uí Chellaig were now occupying a space where they served their ascendant Uí Chonchobair overlords, much like many other regional kings or lords in Connacht at the time.

In attempting to reconstruct the territorial map of Connacht at this time, two church synods provide some insight. The synods of Rath Breasail (1111) and Kells (1152), in defining the medieval dioceses of Ireland, effectively served as a political and territorial map of the island at that time (Flanagan 2008, 915; Perros-Walton 2013, 288-91). Therefore, the diocese of Tuam at Rath Breasail, which was renamed and divided at the synod of Kells into the two dioceses of Tuam and Roscommon (later called Elphin) (Millett 1986, 8, 14), formed the area over which the dominant Uí Chonchobair exerted direct control. The diocese of Roscommon at this time included the traditional Ó Cellaig lands of Tír Maine, signalling that the Uí Chonchobair held effective control over the region. The diocese of Clonfert broadly corresponded with the *trícha*

céta of Tír Soghain/Uí Maine and Síl Anmchadha. The former area would become occupied more extensively by the Ó Cellaig elite as the century progressed (Fig. 2.4).

Figure 2.4 – Dioceses and Archdioceses of Ireland from (Mitchell 2009, 20)*, with the extents of the dioceses of Elphin and Clonfert co-extensive with the territories over which the Uí Chonchobair and the Uí Cellaig/Uí Mhadadháin held direct authority respectively.*

In terms of illustrating the shifting political situation between the Uí Chonchobair and the Uí Chellaig, relations warmed enough between the two septs for a united defence of their

Connacht territories from the incursions of Niall, the son of Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn, king of Ulster, in 1163 (*AFM*).

By contrast, 1180 saw the eruption of open conflict between the Uí Chellaig and the Uí Chonchobair, with the so-called 'Battle of the Conors'. This battle was contested between Conchobar Maenmaige Ó Conchobair and Conchobar Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine, and is recorded as having taken place at *Mag Srúibe Gealáin* near *Daire na gCapall*. The Uí Maine were defeated in this battle, and Conchobar Ó Cellaig was slain (*ALC*; *AFM*). His son, Tadhg Tailltenn, died at *Cnoc Gail* – 'Hill of Bravery', apparently during the same campaign (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 63). Ó Muraíle has identified *Mag Srúibe Gealáin* (alias *Ruba Gealáin*) with Roo townland, Kilmore parish, Co. Roscommon, while also suggesting that Knockhall townland, Kilglass parish, Co. Roscommon may be the *Cnoc Gail* of the sources (Ó Muraíle 1989, 173).

The location of the battle, well beyond Tír Maine, northeast of modern Strokestown, implies that Conchobar Ó Cellaig and the Uí Maine were the aggressors in this instance, perhaps signalling the desperation of the Uí Chellaig, railing against their marginalisation by the Uí Chonchobair. Animosity between the Uí Chellaig and the Uí Chonchobair continued for a period after this, with tit-for-tat kidnapping and killings occurring in 1185 and 1186 (*ALC*; *AFM*).

Memory of these grievances seems to have continued into the thirteenth century, as in 1200 a dynastic dispute between two branches of the Uí Chonchobair afforded the opportunity for the 'grandsons of Tadg Ó Cellaig' to side with Cathal Crobhdearg against Cathal Carrach mac Conchobair Maenmaige (Kelleher 1971, 104). This was the continuation of what was a transgenerational grapple for authority between the Uí Chonchobair and Uí Chellaig, which can be traced back at least as far as the battle of *Óenach Máenmaige*.

After the battle in 1180, the annalistic entries relating to the Uí Maine become sparse, until the year 1224, which saw the death of Domnall Mór Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine (*AFM*; *ALC*). This entry is significant, highlighting the declining fortunes of the Ó Cellaig lordship by the early-thirteenth century. Domnall is recorded in *Leabhar Ua Maine* as having died 'in his own bed' at *Eachdruim*, modern day Aughrim, Co. Galway (Nicholls 1969, 41). This is the first reference to Aughrim as a place of residence for an Ó Cellaig king. Aughrim was located within the *trícha cét* of Tír Soghain, which was a semi-independent territory of Uí Maine in the early medieval period (2.2). However, by 1224, it had become known as the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine.

This implies that at some time in the early-to-mid twelfth century, the Uí Chellaig elite migrated into this territory, displacing the Soghain in the process. The present writer believes that the migration of the senior branch of the Uí Chellaig from Tír Maine into what became Uí Maine must have been a direct response to the Ó Conchobair strategy of marginalising them, to such a degree that they sought to retain some level of autonomy in Connacht by establishing direct control over what was previously a sub-lordship of their wider territory (MacCotter 2014, 207). This ultimately led to the displacement of the Soghain elite themselves, the principal dynasty of whom were the Ó Mainnin. While these elite families were forced to migrate from their ancestral lands in order to retain control over a territory, it is important to remember that the bulk of these communities must have remained where they were, broadly unaffected by the machinations of the higher-ranking members of the society.

By the close of this period, the ruling branch of the Ó Cellaig seem to have lost full sovereignty over their patrimonial lands of Tír Maine, and their power base had shifted into the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine, albeit under Ó Conchobhair overlordship. In terms of the lineage of Uí Maine kingship into the thirteenth century and beyond, Domnall Mór Ó Cellaig and his descendants made up the central pillar of Ó Cellaig dynasts for the next number of centuries.

2.4 – The arrival of the Anglo-Normans to Connacht until the Death of the Brown Earl, 1225 – 1333

The early decades of the thirteenth century saw the entrance of a new power onto the Connacht stage. For much of this period, Cathal Crobhdearg Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, sought to retain control over the province. His attempts included negotiating with the English king John, and then his successor, Henry III, for the security of his title and lands, as well as making efforts to maintain these privileges for his son and chosen heir, Aedh (Lydon 2008a, 161). In 1215, Cathal Crobhdearg secured a charter, agreed at Athlone, granting him all of Connacht to be held directly of the king. However, on the same day, King John granted a similar charter of Connacht to the Anglo-Norman magnate Richard de Burgh (*CDI*, i, Nos 653-4). This was an attempt by John to establish an insurance policy, based upon the likelihood of Cathal Crobhdearg reneging on the terms (Finan 2016, 43).

Upon the death of Cathal Crobhdearg in 1224, the kingship of Connacht passed to Aedh, and similar terms were provided to him, as had been granted to his father. However, Aedh engaged in a number of violent acts as the newly inaugurated king, which led the Anglo-Norman administration to charge him with infidelity, which culminated in the forfeiture of his lands in

Connacht. With this, Richard de Burgh's 1215 grant was enacted (Finan 2016, 43). The terms of the grant to de Burgh were such that the king retained five cantreds[33], named the 'King's Cantred's' for his own purposes (*CDI*, i, Nos 1403, 1518, 1863, 1976). These were the five cantreds closest to the River Shannon, corresponding in large part to the modern extent of Co. Roscommon, and some adjoining areas (MacCotter 2014, 207-11; Finan 2016, 48-51). From north to south, these were *Moylurg & Tyrelele* (Maigh Luirg & Tír Ailello), *Moyhee* (Magh nAí), *Trithweth* (Na Trí Túatha), *Tyrmany* (Tír Maine) and *Omany* (Uí Maine) (Fig. 2.5).

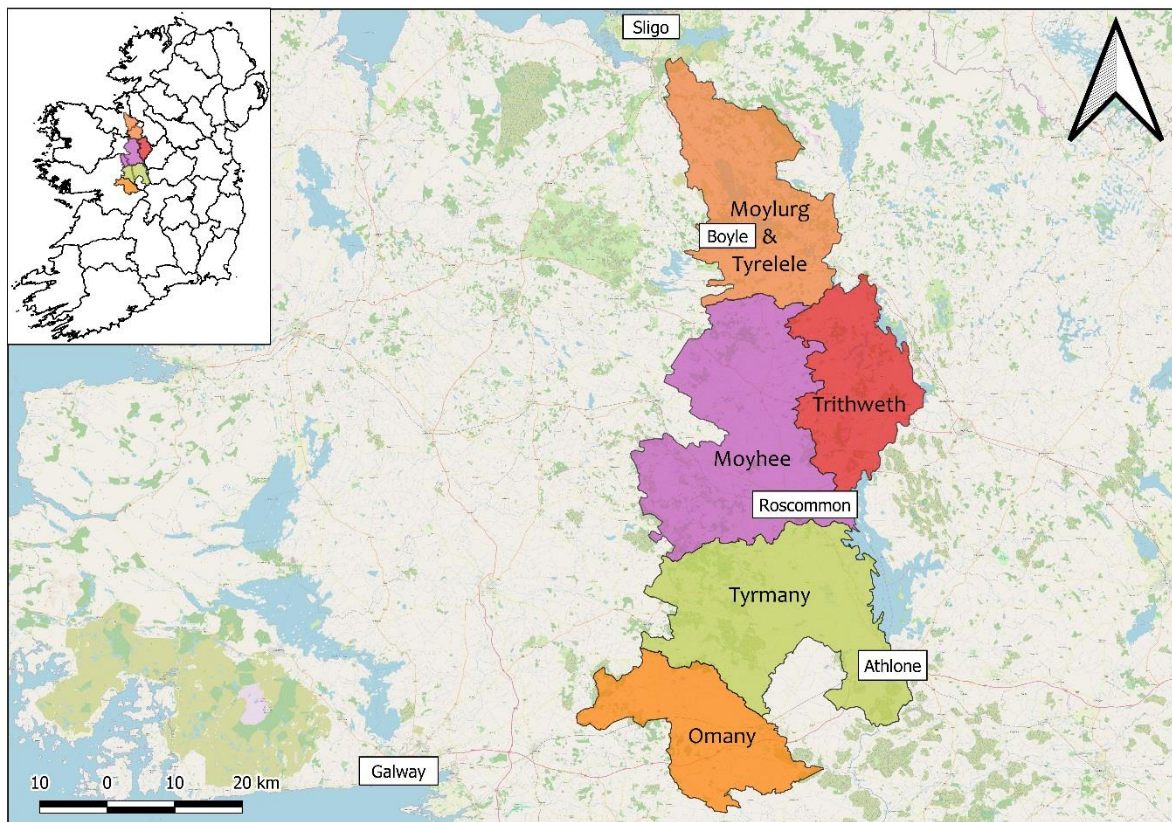

Figure 2.5 – The territorial extents of the King's Cantreds, as reconstructed from MacCotter, 2014,

The following number of years saw Richard de Burgh exercise his grant through military action, backed by the crown in Ireland, and through alliances with compliant candidates for the Ó Conchobair kingship. De Burgh sought to secure his claim over the twenty-four cantreds which constituted his grant, while in the King's Cantreds, land was granted, and new settlements were established in the cantreds closest to the royal castle of Athlone, in Tír Maine and Uí Maine. After a turbulent time in the late 1220s and early 1230s, a period of stability set in during the reign of Feidlim mac Cathal Ó Conchobair as king of Connacht. Feidlim was

[33] An Anglo-Norman land-unit, the general equivalent in Ireland to the earlier *trícha cét*.

granted the King's Cantreds in 1230, under the same terms of fee and good service as his predecessors were granted for Connacht as a whole, and this was twice reinstated after a break down in relations in 1233 and 1237 (Finan 2016, 45-6). The improved relations were such that Feidlim Ó Conchobair even supported Henry III in 1245 on campaign against the Welsh (*AC*).

This growing Anglo-Norman presence in Uí Maine and Tír Maine was to directly affect Ó Cellaig fortunes also. In 1253, Richard de Rupella (de la Rochelle) was granted twenty librates[34] of land in Omany, and was approved of a grant to erect a gallows in his manor of *Haghedrium*, now Aughrim, Co. Galway (*CDI*, ii, Nos 223-224). It is apparent that 29 years after the death of Domnall Ó Cellaig, the Uí Chellaig had lost control of their mensal lands in the cantred of Uí Maine. Having been removed from their *cenn áit* at Aughrim, the sons of Domnall Ó Cellaig seem to have dispersed in a number of directions. This was a low point in terms of Ó Cellaig power, however it is possible to piece together the origins of their later history from this point. Consultation of the place-name and locational evidence surviving in the Uí Maine genealogical tracts in *Leabhar Ua Maine* indicates that branches of the Ó Cellaig sept migrated west and east of Aughrim, while others remained within the immediate area.

2.4.1 – Clonmacnowen Migration

Dealing first with the third son of Domnall Ó Cellaig, Eoghan, he was the originator of a junior sept of the Uí Chellaig in his own right. The *Clannmhaicne Eoghain*, which survives in the later barony of the same name, inhabited the areas surrounding the ford of the River Suck at Ballinasloe, an important point on the communication route linking Dublin to Galway (Geissel 2006, 93-5). The chief residences of the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* are described in the genealogies as being *Áth Nadsluaigh* (Ballinasloe) and *Tuaim Sruthra* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment i*, 41).

The precise location of the stronghold of *Áth Nadsluaigh* will be considered below (see Appendix 4), but even the recorded toponym indicates that this site served as an important fording place from an early period. Another fortification was also located in this area, known as *Caislen Suicin*, which was built in 1245 by the Anglo-Normans (*AFM*). *Tuaim Sruthra* is recorded in *Onomasticon Goedelicum* as consistent with Tisrara, Co. Roscommon (Hogan 1910). However, the *Logainm* Database equates *Tuaim Sruthra* with the townland of Ashford,

[34] A librate is defined as a unit of land with an annual value of one pound, with an area of 4 oxgangs of 13 acres each.

just to the northwest of the ford of the River Suck at Ballinasloe (https://www.logainm.ie/en/17581).

2.4.2 – Migration beyond Uí Maine

The youngest of Domnall's recorded sons, Lochlainn, and his kin, described thereafter as the *Síol Ceallaigh Cladaigh*, established strongholds at *Cluain Cuill* (Clonquill, Kilkerrin parish, Co. Galway), *An Bhearna Dhearg* (Barnaderg, Co. Galway), *Cluain Buaráin* and *Dún na Mónadh* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 68). The final two place-names have proven elusive to identify, but all seem to be located to the west of Aughrim. Lochlainn and his descendants did not become central players in the kingship succession of the Uí Chellaig.

2.4.3 – Tír Maine Migration

Domnall's second son, Tadhg Fionn, is recorded at *Magh Rúscach* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment i*, 65). *Magh Rúscach* is identifiable with the townland of Rooskagh in south Roscommon. As with the sons of Lochlainn, Tadhg Fionn's descendants were not notable in later historical entries. What is apparent is that the Ó Cellaig elite were residing alongside their Anglo-Norman counterparts in Tír Maine. The cantred of Tyrmany seems to have been the most settled of the King's Cantreds by Anglo-Norman colonists (Fig. 2.5). Castlenaughton (possibly constructed in 1214 by Geoffrey de Constentin), Onagh (constructed as a 'stronghold against the men of Connacht' in 1235) and other potential sites such as the possible earthwork phase at Castlesampson present possible evidence of Anglo-Norman fortifications being constructed in Tyrmany, with settlement in mind. New settlements, in the form of land grants, were designed to reward favourites of the Anglo-Norman court, while also serving to solve the problem of having a substantial Gaelic population to pacify (Fig. 2.6; Walton 1980, 217-8).

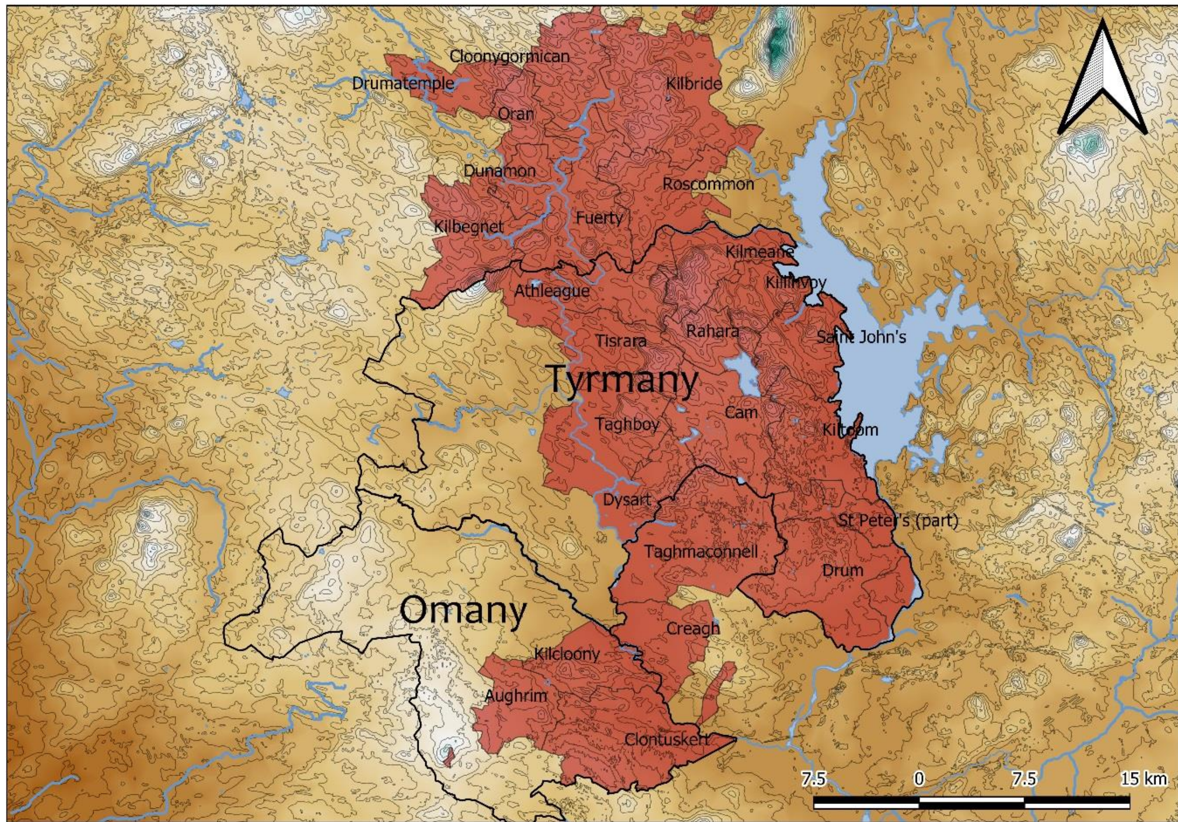

Figure 2.6 – The parishes in the King's Cantreds in which land was granted to English (Anglo-Norman) Tenants (Walton 1980, 568, Map IX)

2.4.4 – The fortunes of Conchobhair Ó Cellaig and his Successors

The most telling indication of the position of the Uí Chellaig within thirteenth-century Connacht is seen with the career of Domnall Ó Cellaig's eldest son Conchobhair, who became king of Uí Maine in 1224. Conchobhair's reign lasted at least three but possibly four decades (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 64), during which time the annals record that the Uí Chellaig assisted the Uí Chonchobair in military encounters against Anglo-Norman lords, such as at the First Battle of Athenry in 1249, and against the de Burghs in 1256 (*AC*).

Before this, Conchobhair Ó Cellaig was included in a list of the Irish kings summoned by Henry III in 1244 on his expedition against Scotland. Conchobhair was recorded as 'Macthulaner O'Kellie de Ochonyl' (*Foedera*, 150). This is a mutilated reference to 'Mac Domnall Mhór Ó Cellaig of Kilconnell', and in the sixteenth century, this list is copied and expanded upon in order to refer to 'Mac Domnall Mhór' as 'Okealy de Imayne', meaning Ó Cellaig of Uí Maine (*CSPI,* ii, part iii, 1). The reference implies that the Ó Cellaig chief still resided in the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine at this time, at a presumed *cenn áit* at or near Kilconnell. Given that this is prior to the 1253 land grant to Richard de la Rochelle, the entry is the last

instance we have of the Uí Chellaig holding a position of authority in the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine in the thirteenth century.

The next information we have on Conchobhair comes in 1260, when his *longphort* or stronghold, location unknown, was destroyed by a party of Áed mac Feidlim Ó Conchobair's followers (*AC*). Feidlim Ó Conchobair was king of Connacht at the time. Judging by the evidence to be outlined below, it is likely that Conchobhair's *longphort* was located within Tír Maine.

In terms of locating the late-thirteenth century Uí Chellaig on the landscape, one place-name in the genealogies is informative. Recorded as *Gráinseach Chairn Bhuaileadh* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 64), it is referenced as the place of death in 1268 of Maine son of Conchobhair, a king of Uí Maine who reigned just half a year. This name translates as 'Grange/granary of the cairn of the booley/cattle-enclosure'.[35] The modern 'Grange' townland names in the study area provide one possible candidate in Athlone Barony, Co. Roscommon, and two other candidates in Co. Roscommon more generally. Due to the speculative nature of this idea, a variety of other townlands, containing both the *Gráinseach* and the *Chairn Bhuaileadh* elements were considered as alternatives. One alternative considered is the *Carnebooley* referred to in 1608 (*Cal. Patent Letters*, 1800, Pat 6, 126), also referred to as *Grange-Mulconry* in both the aforementioned source, and in the Dissolution extents of 1569 (Stout 2015, 41). This is now the townland of Grange, Kiltrustan civil parish, Barony of Roscommon (*c.*25km to the north of the River Hind), and contains a mill but no evidence of cairns or burial mounds suggested in the place-name. The other alternative is *Cornebole* (*Ibid*, 41), now the townland of Curraghnaboley, Kilronan civil parish, Barony of Boyle (*c.*51km to the north of the River Hind), which was also listed on the Dissolution extents.

However, Grange (*An Gráinseach*) contains five burial mounds of various classes, including a substantial bowl barrow, which may be the physical manifestation of the toponym. Half a kilometre to the south of this barrow is a large univallate ringfort, with substantial earthworks surrounding its interior. Grange townland is located immediately to the north of the former lake of Lough Croan, increasing the likelihood that the seat of Ó Cellaig kingship had now returned to a much-changed Tír Maine. There are seven ringforts in the townland, one of which may have served as residence and place of death for Maine Ó Cellaig. Therefore, while there are a

[35] Ó Muraíle, N. pers comm.

number of candidates for *Gráinseach Chairn Bhuaileadh*, Grange townland beside Lough Croan is, for a variety of reasons, the most likely candidate.

Further evidence corroborates a return of the main branch of the Uí Chellaig to Tír Maine in the thirteenth century. An entry for the year 1255 reads as follows:

> 'Godfrey de Lezignan…granted to him in fee the cantred of Tyrmany in Connaught (where the Oscalli dwell)...' (*CDI*, ii, No. 478).

The term 'Oscalli' in this instance is a mutation of Uí Chellaig.

Throughout this period the power of the Ó Cellaig elite diminished within Uí Maine and Tír Maine. They were living within a region which was now effectively granted to Anglo-Norman lords. These Irish lords continued to live within these landscapes, possibly still at a remove from the manorial or encastellated centres, but presumably paid rent, tribute, and contributed military service to the Anglo-Norman overlords that managed to exercise their claim in the area. Certainly, the Uí Chellaig were summoned to fight for Henry III on his 1244 campaign in Scotland, along with other Irish leaders, however, most of them never served (Lydon 2003, 87). Although it isn't elicited in the historical sources, it is quite possible that the main branch of the Uí Chellaig sought permission from the Uí Chonchobair and the Anglo-Norman powers in the region to be allowed to return to their ancestral lands, and may be the reason why we see them appearing in familiar parts of the *trícha cét* by 1268.

The second half of the thirteenth century saw the beginning of a general change in mind-set on the parts of some Gaelic lords. These chiefs capitalised on a combination of factors, including a situation where a host of Anglo-Norman lordships were without male heirs, or their heirs were in minority (Lydon 2008c, 247). This period also saw a growing self-confidence amongst the Gaelic elite, who began expressing themselves in ways designed to enhance their dynasties ancestral prestige and underpin their territorial claims (Simms 2018, 273). One of the early exemplars of this political recovery was Áed 'na nGall' Ó Conchobair, son of Feidlim. Whereas his father practiced diplomacy on many occasions when engaging with the Anglo-Normans, Áed sought to use the sword. Even prior to his ascent to the Ó Conchobair kingship, he harassed and raided the colonists (Lydon 2008c 248-9). The volatile career of Áed Ó Conchobair, which ended with his death in 1274, started the decline of centralised Anglo-Norman power in Connacht.

Returning to the Uí Chellaig, in 1268, the kingship passed upon the death of Maine to another son of Conchobar Ó Cellaig, Domnall. We know that Domnall Ó Cellaig marched with John de Sandford, Justiciar for Ireland, in 1289, against the 'Irish of Meath' (*ACl.*). Aside from this, his reign was not noteworthy, however he is recorded as dying in 1295 at the Cistercian monastery of Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway (*AC*). Interestingly, directly after this entry, the next one records:

'Conn Mac Branain, chieftain of Corca Athclann, was killed by O Cellaig's sons as he was tracking his horses, which had been stolen from him.' (*AC*).

Mac Branain was chieftain of *Corcu Achlann*, one of the *túath* which made up the *trícha cét* of Na Trí Túatha (cantred of *Trithweth*) (Fig. 2.5). Domnall Ó Cellaig's successor was his brother Donnchad Muimnech Ó Cellaig, and this entry may provide evidence for the practice of a *creach ríogh* or king's raid for the newly inaugurated Donnchad Muimnech, often the first expected duty of a newly elected chief in later medieval Gaelic Ireland (Lucas 1989, 146; FitzPatrick 2004, 6, 11).

The sources remain silent on the Uí Chellaig once more until 1307, the year of Donnchad Muimnech's death. In this year, the Ó Cellaig settlement of *Áth Eascrach Cuan* – Ahascragh, Co. Galway, situated within the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine, was burned by Edmund Butler (*AC*). Edmund was the second son of Theobald Butler, one of the most prominent Anglo-Norman magnates in thirteenth-century Ireland. By 1282, the Butler lordship extended to include the former de la Rochelle estates of Aughrim, and Edmund claimed the Butler lordship in 1299 (*Cal. Ormond Deeds*, i, 122). In retaliation for the burning of Ahascragh, Donnchad Muimnech defeated a great force of the 'English of Roscommon' (*AFM*). This attack itself may have been retaliation on the part of the Butlers, for in 1307 the following is also recorded:

'Aughrim was burned by some of the Ui Maine, its own princes.' (*AC*)

With the Gaelic Ó Cellaig settlement of Ahascragh, and the now Anglo-Norman manorial settlement of Aughrim located 10km from each other, this episode highlights the close area within which both the Gaelic Uí Chellaig elites, and their usurpers as lords of this area, operated in. As a result, hostilities were unsurprising.

Donnchad Muimnech was succeeded to the kingship in 1307 by his nephew Gilbert. Progressing into the 1310s, Gilbert Ó Cellaig and his brother Tadg were in competition for the kingship, and in doing so, became embroiled in the wider political disputes of the Uí

Chonchobair relating to which branch held the kingship of Connacht. Gilbert sided with one Fedlimid Ó Conchobair, who was inaugurated at Carnfree in 1310 (*AC*). Tadg supported the claim of Ruaidrí Ó Conchobair, a rival from the Clan Murtagh line. By 1315, Tadg Ó Cellaig had deposed Gilbert from the kingship of Uí Maine, with the assistance of Ruaidrí, as the reputation of Gilbert, and his ally Fedlimid, were tainted due to their seeking refuge with the 'Red Earl' Richard de Burgh, lord of Connacht and earl of Ulster (Simms 2018, 287). Tadg used the opportunity provided by his alliance to use Ó Conchobair troops to burn the Butler manor and demolish the castle at Aughrim, and to plunder and burn the cantred of Máenmaige (*AC*).

Tadg's actions brought the Uí Chellaig into the wider political picture in early-fourteenth century Connacht, which saw the continuation of a steady decline of centralised Anglo-Norman influence in the region. Outside forces, such as the arrival and campaign of Edward Bruce from 1315, led to the defeat of the once powerful 'Red Earl'. Prior to this, in 1298, a bitter struggle between the de Burghs and the Geraldines saw the disappearance of the latter lords from Connacht entirely (Simms 2018, 286-7).

The following year, Tadg changed sides, joining Fedlimid Ó Conchobair when he gained the kingship of Connacht in 1316, at the expense of a murdered Ruaidrí. Tadg's military prowess may have been part of the reason why he was able to retain his status as king of Uí Maine after the demise of Ruaidrí, as opposed to him being overthrown in favour of Gilbert. This military acumen was far-reaching, and Tadg provided service to one of the Uí Bhriain factions during their civil war in Thomond (*Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, 9, 56-8, 71). More than this, one of the few surviving administrative accounts from the early fourteenth-century records Tadg Ó Cellaig leading a cohort of light cavalry and infantry as part of a wider Connacht force into the Leinster Mountains, under the ultimate command of the deputy justiciar, William *Liath* de Burgh, in late 1308 (P. Connolly 1982, 3). Plainly, Tadg was a prominent military figure in this period, and it is likely that his credentials as candidate king were reliant on this martial prowess.

Buoyed by his ascent, Fedlimid united the Irish chiefs of Connacht under his authority, and turned his attention onto Anglo-Norman settlements. This culminated in the second Battle of Athenry, a disastrous defeat, which saw Fedlimid and Tadg slain (Simms 2018, 288), along with twenty-eight other Ó Cellaig nobles, and countless others. However, much of the land recovered by this Gaelic uprising was not subsequently resettled by the Anglo-Normans, particularly in our study area, and the defeat at Athenry played a role in the decline in power

of the Uí Chonchobair into the late medieval period also. Both occurrences came to be capitalised on by the Uí Chellaig (Nicholls 2003 170-1; Simms 2018, 288).

Upon Tadg's death, he was replaced by his brother Conchobar, who ruled until his death in a skirmish at Fossakilly, Co. Sligo in 1318. This in turn paved the way for Gilbert to return to the kingship, which he held until his death in 1322 (*AC*; *ALC*). The instability of the kingship of Uí Maine continued after Gilbert's death, as he was succeeded by his cousin, Áed mac Donnchadh Muimhnigh. Áed was in turn succeeded to the kingship by Ruaidhrí mac Mathghamhna Ó Cellaig, who was the only member of the *Clannmaicne Eoghain* sept to attain the Uí Maine kingship. Ruaidhrí's reign ended in 1339 (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 54).

At this time, Connacht more generally was occupied by the growing divisions within the de Burgh family. Various claimants to the Ó Conchobair kingship became embroiled in this internecine struggle, culminating with the death in captivity of Walter *Liath* de Burgh, lord of Mayo, in 1332. This was followed by the retaliatory murder of the 'Brown Earl', William de Burgh, lord of Connacht and earl of Ulster, and grandson of Richard, in the following year, by his own kin. Thereafter, the de Burgh lands in Ulster were overrun and lost to Gaelic lords, and in Connacht, this turbulence ultimately led to the establishment of the two de Burgh lordships, the Mac Uilliam *Íochtar* (Mayo lordship), and the Mac Uilliam *Uachtar* (Galway or *Clann Ricaird*) Burkes (Nicholls 2003, 170-3; Simms 2018, 288-90).

By the close of this period, the extents of Ó Cellaig lordship are likely to have remained largely within the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine, again effectively under the authority of the Uí Chonchobair. However, the predations of Tadg Ó Cellaig in the early-fourteenth century indicate that the Butler lordship of Omany was still viewed as Uí Maine territory, and attempts to recover control over it may have begun in earnest at this time.

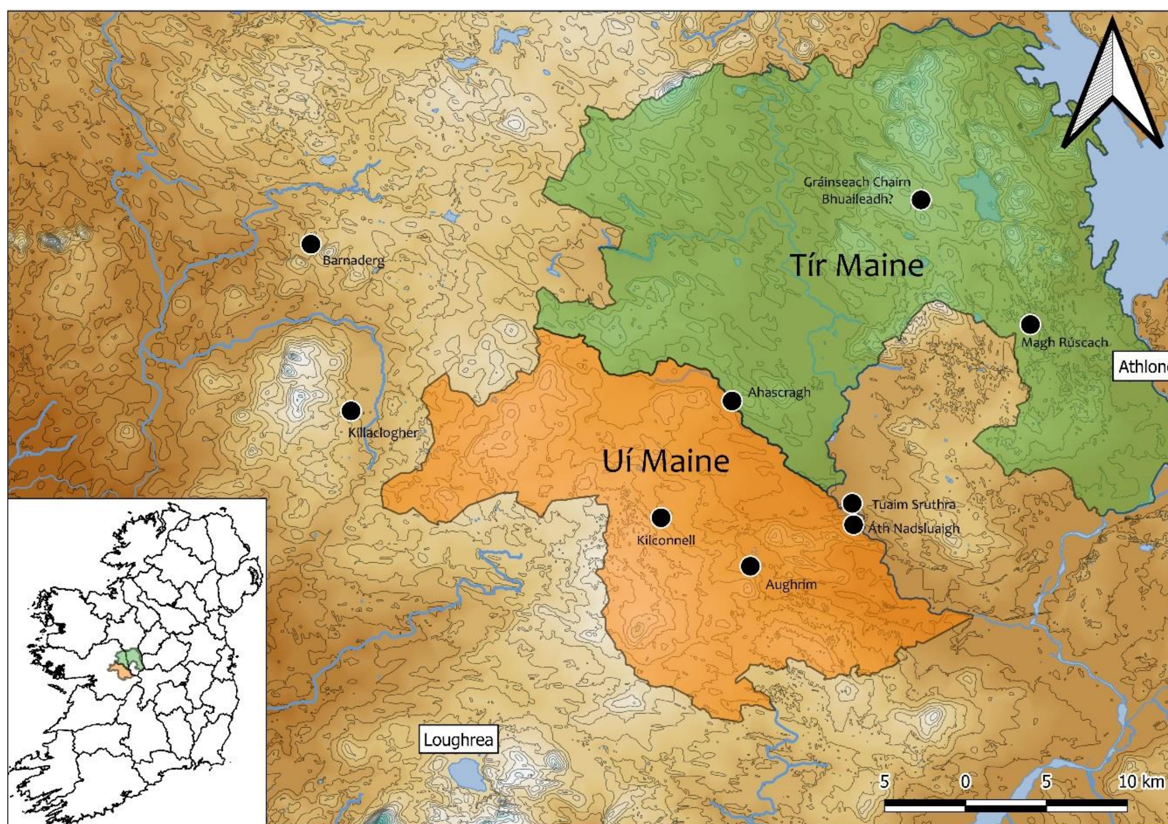

Figure 2.7 – Reconstructed extents of the Ó Cellaig trícha céta *of Uí Maine and Tír Maine during the high medieval period, with principal locations mentioned in the text indicated. The earlier part of this period saw the senior Uí Chellaig elites claim authority over the* trícha cét *of Uí Maine, while by the beginning of the fourteenth century, the historical sources indicate that senior line came to reside in Tír Maine once more.*

2.5 – The Late Medieval lordship of Uí Maine – the height of Ó Cellaig power

During the late 1320s and 1330s, a series of incidents took place between the Uí Chellaig and the Uí Chonchobair, probably as a result of the Ó Cellaig alliance with the Mac Uilliam *Íochtar*, a chief rival to Ó Conchobair ambitions. Beginning in 1329, Cathal Ó Conchobair, brother of Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, was:

> 'forcibly expelled from the Faes and from Tir Maine by the Clann Cellaig and the Ui Maine, acting under the orders of Walter Burke' (*AC*).

This action was retaliated upon in 1333, when Toirrdelbach took Donnchadh, son of Áed Ó Cellaig, prisoner (*AC*). In 1337, Toirrdelbach is recorded as building a *foslongphort* or stronghold at Athleague, Co. Roscommon for defence against Edmund de Burgh, most likely Edmund *Albanach* Burke, or Mac Uilliam Burke as he became known (*AC*; Simms 2018, 290). However, later that year Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair was taken prisoner by the Uí Chellaig (*AC*). This may have been in response to the construction at Athleague, which was located in what was a contested borderland between the *trícha céta* of Tír Maine and Machaire Connacht.

This indicates that the newly ascendant Ó Cellaig were willing to show their might in re-establishing themselves as the principal lords in their ancestral lands of Tír Maine.

Áed's successor, Ruaidhrí Ó Cellaig, met his end as a result of this conflict with Ó Conchobair in 1339, when *Leabhar Ua Maine* records that he was:

'treacherously killed by Cathal Ó Conchubhair in Cill Mhiadhan' (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 65)

The annals record that Ruaidhrí was killed while going from Ó Conchobair's house to his own (*AC*). *Cill Mhiadhan* is identifiable with the civil parish of Kilmeane, Co. Roscommon. Kilmeane is bounded immediately to the north by the River Hind, which served as the northern limit of Tír Maine. This indicates that Ruaidhrí Ó Cellaig resided at some location within the re-established lordship (see 6.5).

Ruaidhrí was succeeded to in the lordship of Uí Maine in 1339 by Tadhg Óg mac Taidg Ó Cellaig, and he was the preferred, and presumably compliant, candidate of Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair (*AC*). Tadhg Óg identified his first cousin once removed, Uilliam Buide mac Donnchadha Muimhnigh Ó Cellaig, as his rival to the kingship, and in 1340, attempted to remove this obstacle. Tadhg Óg banished Uilliam Buide from the territory of Tír Maine (*AFM*), again highlighting this *trícha cét* as the powerbase of these fourteenth-century Uí Chellaig lords. However, this act backfired on Tadhg Óg, with Uilliam Buide rounding on his rival, killing him (*AC*; *Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 66).

Uilliam Buide did not directly succeed Tadhg Óg as lord of Uí Maine however. Tadhg Óg's successor was Diarmaid mac Gilbert Ó Cellaig, who reigned until *c*.1349. Diarmaid's most notable act was his hanging of Ó Mainnin, chief of Soghain, after which he seized the latter's 'castle' and estate of 'Clogher' (*Tribes and Customs*, 107). This is identifiable with Killaclogher, Co. Galway (Mannion 2004, 38), which is located outside of the traditional *trícha cét* boundaries of Uí Maine. Ó Mainnin's residence in this district is most likely to relate to the enclosure site in Killaclogher townland (Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 199).

It is calculated that Uilliam Buide ascended to the kingship of Uí Maine in 1349, and it is with his reign that we see the power of the Uí Chellaig reaching its zenith in the medieval period. The first annalistic reference to Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig as lord of Uí Maine was in 1351, with his hosting, along with his son Maolsechlainn, of a famous gathering known as 'Invitation Christmas' (*AC*; *ACl.*). This is described as a general invitation to all the poets in Ireland, and

the event is immortalised by a praise poem, entitled *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, in tribute of the patron (Knott (ed. and trans.) 1911). The location of this great festivity is recorded as *Fionngháille* in the poem, arguably identifiable with Galey, Co. Roscommon (see 6.3). This event is often cited as an indicator of the efforts undertaken by Gaelic and Gaelicised elites to patronise the secular learned kindreds (Simms 2018, 423), and Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig's actions can be viewed in this light. However, the political value of such an event cannot be understated either, as Uilliam sought to establish himself as a prominent figure in the politics of fourteenth-century Connacht (Simms 2020, 125).

In 1353, Uilliam founded the Franciscan Friary of Kilconnell (*AFM*), as well as the 'bawn' of Callow (*Tribes and Customs*, 104, 171). This latter reference is identifiable with Callow, Kilconnell parish, Co. Galway (see 5.3). This patronage and expansion by Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig was not without difficulty however, as continued Ó Conchobair interference in Ó Cellaig affairs nearly resulted in his death. Hostilities with the Uí Chonchobair were to re-emerge in 1356, and were the result of a personal dispute. Áed Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, is recorded as having been killed at Ballaghdacker by members of the Ó Cellaig dynasty and one of their vassal clans, the Clann an Baird. Áed Ó Conchobair was killed at the behest of Uilliam Buide (*AC*). Ballaghdacker is located in Athleague parish, on the Galway/Roscommon border, where there is a lake.

There is a record from 1424 in *Leabhar Ua Maine* which may also describe the physical remains at Ballaghdacker Lough as a place-name – *Móinín na hAibhle Léithe ag Loch an Dúin* is mentioned (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 68). This location was the place of death of Donnchadh Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine (*Ibid.*). Donnchadh was murdered by his nephews, the sons of Uilliam Ruadh Ó Cellaig, while attempting to get them to submit to his chieftainship (*AFM*). Ó Muraíle translates this name as 'the little bogland of the grey/green spark, or thunderbolt, at the lake of the fortress'.[36] Nicholls has identified this place as being near or on Ballaghdacker Lough (Nicholls 1969, 52) (see 5.4).

In the following years, Ó Cellaig became tightly allied to the Mac Uilliam *Íochtar*, and this alliance was tested in 1366, when Uilliam Buide lined up alongside his Burke son-in-law Thomas, as well as another Áed Ó Conchobair, against the *Clann Ricaird* Burkes. After three

[36] Ó Muraíle, N. pers. comm., 16th January 2018.

months of engagements, the Mac Uilliam *Íochtar* brought the *Clann Ricaird* to submission (*AFM*).

Two years later, in 1368, Uilliam Buide was imprisoned for a short period by his own vassal kinsmen, members of the Uí Chellaig of *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* and Ó Madadháin (*AFM*). After this imprisonment, Uilliam Buide removed himself from the active kingship of Uí Maine, in favour of his son Maolsechlainn. He didn't remove himself completely, however, and took the credit for the Ó Cellaig defeat of the de Berminghams or *Clann Mac Feorais* in 1372 (*AFM*). This clash may have resulted out of the territorial ambitions of the Uí Chellaig wishing to bring de Bermingham land under control to the east of Athenry (Nicholls 1969, 47).

Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig died in 1381, when he was remembered as a great patron of the learned classes (*AFM*), and as seen above, a very ambitious and capable later medieval Gaelic lord. We do not have a place of death or burial for Uilliam, however, it is possible that he was laid to rest in Kilconnell Friary, a likely repose, as he was its founder, as just noted. Uilliam Buide's successor, his son Maolsechlainn, reigned a further twenty years, and judging by his place of death, he actively sought to continue his father's ambitions. Maolsechlainn died in 1401 in his own stronghold at *Tigh Da-Choinne* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 67). This is identifiable with Tiaquin, Co. Galway (Mannion 2004, 57), beyond the traditional western limits of Uí Maine (see 7.4). With his death, father and son had presided over the Ó Cellaig lordship for a combined fifty-two years, an unprecedented level of stability during the turbulent later medieval period.

The extent of the Ó Cellaig lordship at the beginning of the fifteenth century included the entire *trícha céta* lands of Tír Maine and Uí Maine. By this time, however, the Uí Chellaig seem to have extended their influence further to include much of the cantred of *Clantayg*, as evidenced by their taking control of first Killaclogher, and then Tiaquin, and with it, influence over the Cistercian foundation of Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway.

The sixteenth century 'Indenture of Hymany' in the *Compossicion Booke of Connought* records the division of Tír Maine, Uí Maine, and beyond, into a number of 'Eraghts', from the Irish *oireachtaí* – 'patrimony *or* territory' (*Compossicion*, 168, 172-3). These divisions possibly date to the fourteenth century, as some names refer back to thirteenth and fourteenth-century Ó Cellaig dynasts, and their descendants. This includes the division named 'O Murry & mcEdmonds Eraght called the Heyny', whose title indicates that this region south of the River Hind was split between the MacEdmond branch of the Uí Chellaig and the Uí Muiredaig

dynasty. Another example is seen with 'Sleight Gillebirt aka Eraight Huigh Toehaleage', which corresponds with the civil parishes of Athleague, Tisrara and Taghboy (Nicholls 1969, 265). The principal lordly centres of the Uí Chellaig discussed throughout this thesis primarily occupy Ó Cellaig *oireachtaí*, and these centres seem to have originated as *cenn áiteanna* of the senior Ó Cellaig sept, even if by the sixteenth century they are in the possession of related junior branches of the dynasty.

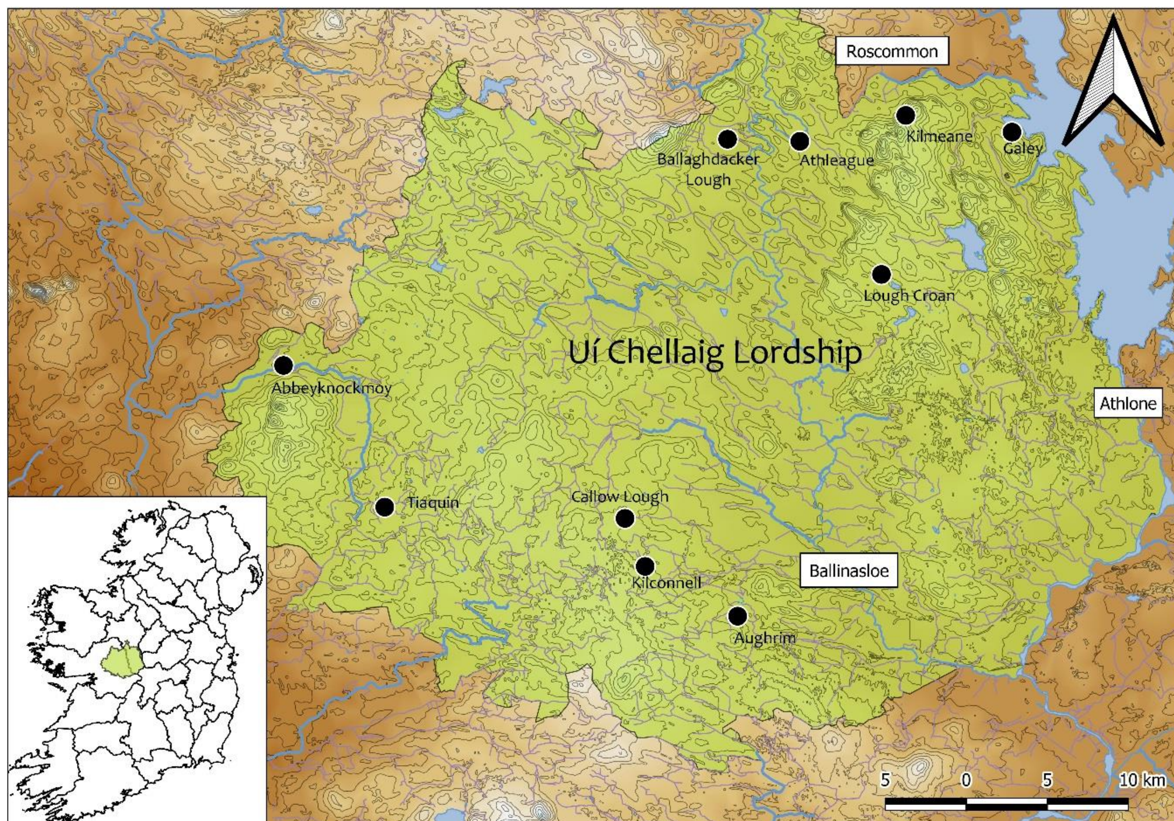

Figure 2.8 – Reconstructed extents of the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine by the beginning of the fifteenth century, with principal locations mentioned in the text indicated. By contrast with the earlier maps, it is clear that by this time, the Uí Chellaig had come to exercise power over a large expanse of eastern and central Connacht.

2.6 – The slow decline of the Ó Cellaig lordship

According to the historical sources, the early years of the fifteenth century did not see the continuation of this upward trajectory. In 1403, Conchobar Anabaidh Ó Cellaig, son of Maolsechlainn, lord of Uí Maine, died at *Loch Cróine* [Lough Croan, Co. Roscommon] (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 67) and was buried at the Hospital of St. John the Baptist at Rindoon (*ALC*). Conchobar was followed in comparatively quick succession by his brothers Tadhg Ruadh (died 1410 at Athleague) (*Ibid.*), Uilliam (died 1420, and buried at Kilconnell Friary (*AC*)) and Donnchadh (died 1424, near Athleague) (Byrne 2011, 227).

While we have little information on either Tadhg Ruadh or Donnchadh, Uilliam Ó Cellaig possessed a similar ambitious streak as that of his father Maolsechlainn, and his grandfather and namesake, Uilliam Buide. The year 1413 saw Uilliam Ó Cellaig and the Uí Maine ally with the Ó Conchobair Ruadh to attack the Ó Conchobair Donn stronghold of Roscommon Castle. This was one of a series of attacks and sieges on Roscommon which took place over the next five years, culminating with Uilliam Ó Cellaig constructing what is described as a *caislen becc* or 'small castle' (*AC*), presumably a timber siege castle, beside Roscommon Castle. Interestingly, there is an entry for the year 1413, connected to the Roscommon Castle episode, which records the place-name *Fearann na Síthe* (*AC*). Although this location is unidentified, it translates as the 'land of Síthe', and judging by the entry more generally, it is likely to be located in or near Kilbride civil parish. *Fearainn na Síthe* may be consistent with the surviving townland name of Fearmore, adjacent to the south of Cloonarragh, but this is inconclusive. The reason why this entry is under consideration relates to another reference for the year 1451:

> 'A great war *broke out* among the Hy-Many; and O'Conor Don went to protect O'Kelly, who gave up his son and two other hostages to him, as pledges for the perpetual payment of twenty marks *annually*, viz. fourteen marks for the land of Sith [*fearainn na Síthe*], which the Hy-Many had purchased some time before from Turlough Oge, and which Hugh O'Conor now redeemed; and six marks due by Makeogh in this war. And he defended O'Kelly on that occasion' (*AFM*).

This entry indicates that the Uí Chellaig effectively rented *Fearainn na Síthe* from the Ó Conchobhair Donn from at least as early as the very late-fourteenth century, given the reference to the beginning of this agreement being consistent with the reign of Toirdhealbhach Óg Ó Conchobair Donn (r.1384-1406). The purpose of this rental is difficult to conclude. One speculative suggestion relates to who were actually in residence in this landholding. The name of the townland may refer to a military service kindred who were settled on this land, possibly a branch of the *Clann Síthigh* (MacSheehy) galloglass family. The Clann Síthigh were one of a number of early Scottish galloglass kindreds that migrated to Ulster in the thirteenth century (McInerney 2015, 25), and annalistic references survive for the Clann Síthigh serving in the armies of Connacht lordships during the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (*AFM*). A traditional factional adherence amongst galloglass kindreds became established in Connacht by the late-fourteenth century, whereby branches of the Clann Somhairle, from whom the Clann Síthigh claimed descent, supported the Mac Uilliam *Íochtar* and the Ó Conchobair

Ruadh, the Connacht faction which the Uí Chellaig followed (Nicholls 2007, 101, 97). More than this, another offshoot of the Clann Somhairle, the *Clann Dubhghaill* (MacDowell) galloglass kindred, were hereditary captains of galloglass to the Uí Chellaig (*AC s.a.* 1377; 1419; 1521; *ALC s.a.* 1557; *CSPI*,. v, 521; Nicholls 1969, 68; 2007, 102), strengthening the Clann Somhairle connection. With this in mind, it would not be surprising that the Clann Síthigh could have been a part of an Ó Cellaig chief's military force, in return for land in the region. The *Mac Duill*, for their part, are recorded as in possession of 'castles' at *Beallagalde* and *Cornegihy* in 1573 (Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019). The Mac Dubhghaill possession at Ballygalda corresponds with the heavily degraded remains of a castle of likely tower house form in the adjacent Derrineel townland (RO041-102-). The presence of this galloglass kindred may also be the reason why the townland (*Béal átha gallda* – mouth of the foreigners ford) is named as such, perhaps indicating that the Mac Dubhghaill were positioned here effectively to act as sentries over a communication route through the northern borderlands of the Ó Cellaig lordship (see 3.3 below; Appendix 3). The only visible archaeological remains in Cornageeha townland (*Cornegihy*) are that of a ringfort (RO048-105-) and a well-preserved cashel (RO048-106-). It is possible that the cashel, or a no longer extant structure which once stood within the cashel, may be the physical manifestation of this 'castle' from the State Paper list.

Returning to the joint attacks led against the Ó Conchobhair Donn at Roscommon, ultimately, this alliance was unsuccessful in their efforts, and later attempts by the combined force to impose themselves on another rival, the *Clann Ricaird* Burkes in 1419, also ended in defeat (Cosgrove 2008, 578). Despite this, Uilliam Ó Cellaig's career serves as an illustration of Uí Maine ambitions into the early-fifteenth century.

Uilliam died in 1420, and was buried at Kilconnell Friary, a religious house which he patronised extensively. His brother and successor, Donnchadh mac Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, is regarded by O'Donovan as having resided at Tiaquin (*Tribes and Customs*, 118), indicating a continued Ó Cellaig presence in this area. Donnchadh died in 1424, and his demise seems to have led to a period of over four decades of instability amongst the Uí Chellaig and their vassal clans. The evaluation of this period is exacerbated by a general lack of recording of Ó Cellaig events in the Irish annalistic record until 1464 (*Tribes and Customs*, 109). During this period of uncertainty, a more junior branch of the Ó Cellaig family took advantage of this instability and ascended to the lordship of Uí Maine. This branch of the family later became known as the Uí Chellaig of Athleague (*Tribes and Customs*, 108-11).

In total, eight descendants of Brian mac Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig (the originator of the Athleague Uí Chellaig line) became chiefs of the Uí Maine from the mid-fifteenth century through to the end of the sixteenth century. The first of these was Aodh mac Brian Ó Cellaig (r. 1424-1467) (*Tribes and Customs*, 108-9), and it is with his reign that the fragmentation of the Ó Cellaig lordship, and the decline in their fortunes, is adjudged to have begun.

This decline is typified by the recording of a number of periods during the late-fifteenth century when the lordship was divided between two relatively distant and opposing branches of the family. The River Suck served as the dividing line between these two halves of Uí Maine (*AFM*, *s.a.* 1472; 1486; 1487; 1499). This resulted in a number of instances in the annalistic record for a chief being appointed for *Iarthair Uí Maine* (west) and *Airthir Uí Maine* (east). This internal strife amongst the Uí Chellaig in the later-fifteenth century and sixteenth century is perceived to have sent the dynasty into an inevitable decline in power that they never recovered from (Nicholls 2003, 177).

One of the more noteworthy series of events during this period to involve the Uí Chellaig spans the last years of the fifteenth century, and culminated in 1504, with the Battle of Knockdoe. The episode seems to have begun in 1487:

> 'An army was led by Mac William of Clanrickard (Ulick, the son of Ulick of the Wine) into Hy-Many, by which he destroyed the bawn of Athliag Maenagan, and destroyed much corn and many towns throughout Hy-Many and Machaire-Chonnacht…' (*AFM*).

The lord of *Clann Ricaird* in this instance was Ulick Fionn Burke (r. 1485-1509), who was a notably aggressive warlord, while the Uí Maine lord in 1487 was Maolsechlainn mac Aodh Ó Cellaig. It is likely that Burke's attack was on Maolsechlainn's own residence.

Burke returned to Athleague in 1499, and proceeded to further meddle in the title of chief of Uí Maine. Burke's strength was such that he was able to imprison the lord of *Airthir Uí Maine*, Conchobhar Óg, hand the castle of Athleague to the sons of William Ó Cellaig, Maolsechlainn's brother, and installed another Maolsechlainn, son of Tadhg son of Donnchadh Ó Cellaig (died 1424), as a presumably compliant lord of Uí Maine (*AFM*). This obedience on the part of Maolsechlainn mac Tadhg was not to last, owing to Ulick Burke's own territorial ambitions over Connacht. These ambitions included wider Uí Maine as well as the territory of his now distant kin, the Mac Uilliam *Íochtar*, as seen by his military actions in 1503 (*AFM*). This hostile front was to continue on the part of Ulick Fionn Burke into 1504, when he attacked and defeated the Mac Uilliam *Íochtar* and their Ó Cellaig allies at *Bél Átha na nGarbhán* (*AFM*)

(unidentified location), after which he turned his attention directly on the Uí Chellaig. Burke demolished three of Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig's castles located respectively at Garbally (*Garbh dhoire*), Monivea (*Muine an mheadha*) and Gallagh (*Gallach*), Co. Galway (*AFM*; see 7.4.4).

Due to this potentially debilitating attack on Uí Maine, Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig approached the Lord Justice of Ireland, Gearóid Mór Fitzgerald, 8th Earl of Kildare. His plea for assistance from the Lord Justice led to the military encounter on the 19th August 1504, the Battle of Knockdoe. Fitzgerald's army won the day, and celebrated the victory by marching on Galway and Athenry as a means of exercising control over these two wealthy towns (Hayes-McCoy 2009, 65), in the face of *Clann Ricaird's* erstwhile ambitions in the region.

Ultimately, as the sixteenth century progressed, the power of the Ó Cellaig lords in the wider Connacht landscape was to stagnate and decline. Indicative of this loss of authority can be seen with the destruction laid on the Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* of Turrock Castle by a group of Connacht families, on the southern shore of Lough Croan, in 1536 (*AC*; see 5.2.1).

In this instance, the lord of Uí Maine, Donnchadh Ó Cellaig, placed himself as a hostage as a means of ensuring that the Ó Cellaig lands were not destroyed, thus illustrating the nadir in the fortunes of these eastern Connacht lords. The distance through which the Ó Cellaig title was now travelling is noted by the fact that the Donnchadh's predecessor was his second cousin once removed, Domhnall mac Aodh *na gCailleach*, while his direct successor was his third cousin, Ceallach mac Domhnall (n.a. 2011, 161).

Donnchadh's son, Aodh, reigned as the last of the unbroken line of Ó Cellaig lords, attaining the title in 1580, and possessing it until his death in 1590. An English state paper list of 1573 records Aodh Ó Cellaig's residence as *Lysdallon* – Lisdaulan, Co. Roscommon (Nicholls 2008, 406, 3; see 7.3). He was laid to rest at the nearby parish church of *Cill-Finnbhuidhe* (*ALC*) – Killinvoy, rather fittingly within the region that his ancestors claimed as their sovereignty throughout the later medieval period, Tír Maine.

At this time, the wider political landscape of Connacht was beginning to change, as English Elizabethan rule began to be imposed. Galway, Mayo, Sligo and Roscommon were originally shired into counties in 1569, the first step towards the establishment of English common law as the legal reality in the province (Mannion 2012, 64). Branches of the Uí Chellaig became active adherents to, and indeed promotors of, the growing English influence on Irish affairs from the mid-1570s, and Galway's first Gaelic sheriff was Tadhg mac William Ó Cellaig of Mullaghmore. This closeness to English affairs had its benefits for these Uí Chellaig septs, as

both Tadhg, and his kinsman Maolsechlainn ‘mac an Abba’, were granted the offices of seneschals for life of Tiaquin and Kilconnell baronies respectively in 1578 (Mannion 2012, 71). This is evidence of the transition of members of the Uí Chellaig lordly families from chiefs of their communities, towards adopting the role of English-style landlords.

While this was to provide short-term benefits for the Ó Cellaig septs involved, when it came to retaining, or being permitted to re-establish the title of lord of the Uí Maine at the end of the sixteenth century, the English administration was less generous. As stated above, the last holder of the title was Aodh mac Donnchadh of Lisdaulan. Upon his death, the title was abolished by the English as part of the terms of the *Compossicion of Conought*. The *Compossicion* was a series of indentures, usually divided into five sections, between the deputy and the landowners of the Connacht lordships, including Uí Maine. These indentures comprised surveys of the estates in question, the agreement of rent to the Crown, and the abolition of Gaelic titles, customary divisions and elections (Ellis 1998, 322-5; Lennon 2005, 251-3). Therefore, when Tadhg mac William Ó Cellaig of Mullaghmore led a petition to challenge for the title for himself in 1590, it led to a collective incarceration of all family connections with Tadhg, in order to mitigate against the Uí Chellaig going into rebellion for their now defunct title (Mannion 2012, 78-9).

A further claimant to the title came a year earlier, in 1589, in the form of Feardorcha Ó Cellaig of Aughrim. Feardorcha also vainly petitioned at the English court for the lawful inheritance of the name of Ó Cellaig (*Act. Privy Council*, xvii, 233-5). In the same year, Feardorcha was forced to seek a lease from the earl of Ormond for thirty-one years for his lands in the barony of Kilconnell (Curtis 1932/1933, 125), with the earl of Ormond the re-established landowner in the area, based on the Butler claim to estates in Omany from the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries (see 2.4.4).

In 1595, Feardorcha provided support to Red Hugh O’Donnell, who in turn appointed him with the title of ‘lord of Uí Maine’ (*AFM*). The following year, he was deemed to have broken the conditions of the lease to the earl of Ormond, and the lands were then leased to the earl of Thomond (Curtis 1932/1933, 126). However, Feardorcha used the Nine Years War (1593-1603) to lay waste to his former lands. In 1607, his lease was restored, upon agreeing to pay reparations to the earl of Thomond (Egan 1960-1, 78). Upon his death post-1611, Feardorcha Ó Cellaig was effectively a landlord presiding over the barony of Kilconnell, under the greater authority of the earl of Ormond and the English administration.

While Feardorcha Ó Cellaig offered some resistance to the advancement of English interests in the 1590s, other branches of the family, such as Conor *na gCearrbhach* of Gallagh, and the sons of Shane *na Maighe* of Clonmacnowen, were described as loyal subjects of the Crown (Mannion 2012, 79). This uneven pattern of submission and resistance was seen throughout the various branches of the family in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, beginning with the aforementioned Aodh mac Donnchadh of Lisdaulan, who in 1585 accepted his territory as a life-interest only, in return for rents and services (*Compossicion*, 169).

This is also seen with the contrasting approaches taken by Brian Óg mac Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig of *Cluain na gCloidhe*, later Mount Talbot, and that of Colla O'Kelly of nearby Skrine, Co. Roscommon. Brian Óg marched to Kinsale with Red Hugh O'Donnell, while his kinsman Colla, whose father, Roger O'Kelly of Aghrane, served as Sheriff of Roscommon in 1590, joined with Elizabeth I's army as a captain of foot under the lord of *Clann Ricaird* for the same conflict (P. Connolly 2014, 15). After Kinsale, Brian Óg travelled to Spain along with other members of the Gaelic nobility in search of military assistance, while Colla was granted 9,450 acres in south Roscommon and east Galway, in return for his loyalty in the Nine Years War (Cronin 1977, 176; Connolly 2014, 16; Lenihan 2018, 263).

2.7 – Conclusions

Based on the historical background outlined above, a number of Ó Cellaig lordly centres, or *cenn áiteanna* have been identified for further analysis. These lordly centres were the elite residences of Uí Chellaig for at least part of the later medieval period, and are identifiable with discrete complexes of archaeology in the landscapes of south Roscommon and east Galway. Over the course of the following chapters, each of these *cenn áiteanna*, and their cultural landscape settings, will be inspected in order to reconstruct these past environments, and thus build a picture of elite society in later medieval Uí Maine.

The Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* which presents with the greatest longevity through the entire medieval period is the now turlough of Lough Croan. This lakeland environment first appeared in historical sources in the eighth century, and retained its Ó Cellaig associations until the sixteenth century, in the guise of Turrock Castle, located on the southern shore of the lake (see 5.2).

Aughrim (see 7.2) and Kilconnell (see 5.3) are identifiable in the thirteenth century as places of importance to the Uí Chellaig, as their authority declined in Tír Maine and was transferred into the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine. The early-to-mid fourteenth century saw Ó Cellaig sovereignty

slowly return to Tír Maine, at Galey Bay (see 6.3) and possibly Kilmeane (see 6.5). The careers of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig and his son Maolsechlainn led to the establishment of *cenn áiteanna* at Callow Lough, Ballaghdacker Lough (see 5.4) and, later Tiaquin (see 7.4.2). Fifteenth and sixteenth-century evidence indicates that initially Athleague (see 6.4), and then a series of castles in the periphery of the territory, particularly at Tiaquin, Monivea, Garbally and Gallagh in central Galway (see 7.4.2; 7.4.4), and in the traditional heartland, at Mote and Lisdaulan in south Roscommon (see 6.5; 7.3), served as the physical manifestations of Ó Cellaig lordship at the latter end of our study period.

Further to this, the wider sept lands of *Clannmhaicne Eoghain*, and particularly the settlement of *Áth Nadsluaigh* (see Appendix 4), now Ballinasloe, served as a key location in eastern Connacht at this time, and worthy of inspection.

As can be seen from the historical background to Uí Maine and Uí Chellaig, this later medieval lordship is a geographical entity which has been difficult to successfully identify, as it changed through time. Through analysis of the primary source material, it has become apparent that the extents of Ó Cellaig lordship were by no means fixed through the later medieval period. The growth and decline in authority of these eastern Connacht lords from the period of 1100 through to the commissioning of the *Compossicion Booke of Conought* in the late-sixteenth century is reflected in the geographical extents of their lordship at any given time.

The first part of the later medieval period shows that the dominant Uí Maine offshoot, the Uí Chellaig, residing in their patrimonial lands of Tír Maine. By the early decades of the thirteenth century, their power in Tír Maine had declined in the face of Uí Chonchobair dominance in the region at large. This resulted in a migration of at least some of the Ó Cellaig elite into what was previously a subkingdom of their overall territory, once known as Tír Soghain, and now broadly the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine.

The mid-thirteenth century witnessed the arrival of a sustained Anglo-Norman presence in the region, which led to the multiplicity of movements of the sons of Domnall Mór Ó Cellaig outlined in 2.4.1 – 2.4.4, during which time they seem to have operated within a political landscape dominated by Anglo-Norman lords and the Gaelic Uí Chonchobair. The early decades of the fourteenth-century coincided with a re-emergence of Ó Cellaig authority in Tír Maine, and this served as the starting point for a period of growth, which was to see the greatest extents of the lordship realised in the historical sources by the late-fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (see 2.5).

However, from the mid-fifteenth century, firstly internal instability, and later, Tudor ambitions in Connacht more generally, are perceived by historians as the major factors in the gradual decline of the Ó Cellaig lordship, whereby in the late-sixteenth century, the title of Ó Cellaig had been abolished, and compliant branches of the wider kin group transitioned from Gaelic chiefs presiding over their communities, towards English-style landlords within a Tudor administration (see 2.6).

The identification of Ó Cellaig lordly centres in this chapter has effectively shown that John O'Donovan's 1843 map (Fig. 2.1), which is based on the late fourteenth-century Ó Dubhagáin poem, is incorrect. There are two main points of criticism concerning this map (and, indeed, the original poem). It is clear, firstly, that the territorial extent of the lordship of Uí Maine was not fixed in time, as it expanded and contracted with the fortunes of each individual Ó Cellaig lord. Secondly, even at its most extensive in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century (Fig. 2.8), the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine was clearly far smaller than was suggested by O'Donovan on his 1843 map (Fig. 2.9). It would appear that the original Ó Dubhagáin poem reflected Ó Cellaig ultimate territorial ambitions in the late fourteenth century, rather than reality. It seems that O'Donovan accepted the contents of the poem at face value in 1843 and failed to see that much of its content was Ó Cellaig propaganda.

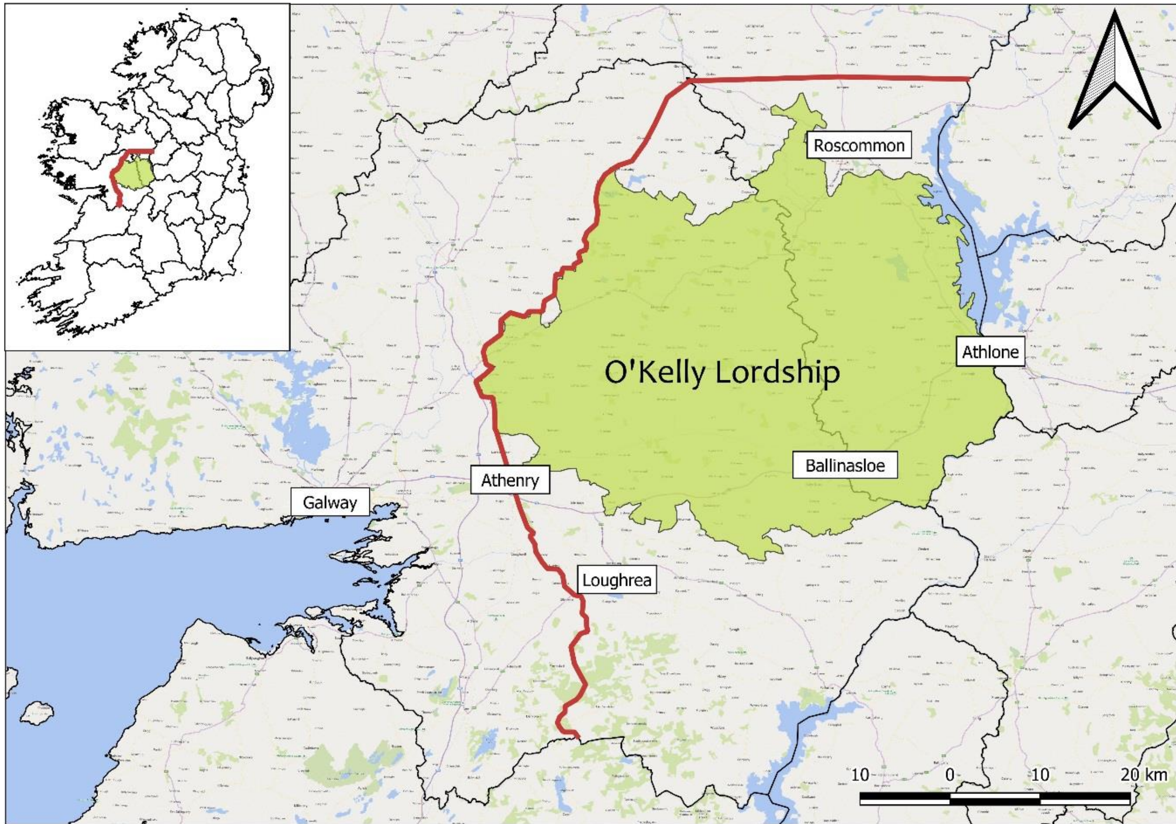

Figure 2.9 - Composite map outlining the widest extents of the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine in the fifteenth century (Fig. 2.8), in contrast with the conflated boundaries of Uí Maine, marked by the red line, as illustrated by O'Donovan in 1843 (Fig. 2.1).

Chapter 3 – The Landscape and Economy of Uí Maine during the Later Medieval Period

3.1 – Introduction

This chapter will bring together the available source material in order to reconstruct aspects of the medieval landscape within which the Ó Cellaig lordship operated. Understanding the physical landscape, as well as the ways in which later medieval society interacted with and manipulated the natural environment, is key to understanding where and why elite locations were chosen and developed within the wider territory. This chapter will therefore be divided into sections which focus on the physical landscape, communication routes, places of assembly, and the economic circumstances which predominated in this region in the later medieval period, and how it may have underpinned the prosperity of the Ó Cellaig lords.

3.2 – The Physical Landscape

A general account of the present-day physical landscape in what is south Roscommon and east Galway has been treated above (see 1.2). What is apparent from across a broad spectrum of source material is that this region is much changed today from how it would have appeared in the later medieval period, and certain parts of this landscape were more and less suitable to human settlement and economic activities. In the study area, the physical features which dictated where and why society developed are as follows: soil, bogland, woodland, rivers and lakes.

3.2.1 – Soils and Bogland

Focusing first on soil quality, the types of soils which are conducive to settlement and agricultural activity in later medieval Uí Maine are soil associations defined primarily by fine or coarse loamy drift, underserved by limestones. A soil association is a group of soils forming a pattern of soil types characteristic of a geographical region. Teagasc categorisations of soil types (http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/soilguide.php) are used here to indicate the relative soil quality, and grade the agricultural viability of zones within the study area.

The most productive soil found within the study area is an Elton soil association, which is a fine loamy drift, with good calcium content, and modern land use would describe it as improved grassland, but may have been suitable for arable in the past. This soil association is characteristic of a large expanse of south Roscommon, as well as a substantial zone located south of Ballinasloe. Coarse loamy drifts such as Mullabane, Rathowen and Baggotstown soils

occur adjacent to these areas, and would be regarded as being of similar soil productivity (see http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/map.php).

However, contrasting the high yields of grassland (and arable) that could be generated from the above soils, large zones of the study area are dominated by bog or peatland, as well as what today would appear as improved and drained, but nonetheless, peaty soils, created out of what was originally bogland. The more modern land improvement works sometimes disguise the true nature of the landscape in this region, but Griffith's early nineteenth-century Bog Commission map records (1.6.1.5), prior to improvement, what appears to be the extent of bogland as they would have occurred during later medieval times (Fig. 3.1). Some of these bogs are not extant today.

Figure 3.1 - Griffith's Bog Commission map, recording the extant bogland to the northwest and northeast of Ballinasloe, Co. Galway at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Plotting the distribution of ringforts and cashels on a soils map of the study area shows, not surprisingly, that settlement distribution patterns conform very strictly with soil quality. The aforementioned Elton soil association sees the greatest density of archaeology, with the coarse loamy soil associations showing a slightly more dispersed distribution. Peatland, by contrast, is nearly devoid of settlement. As a result, the substantial zones of peatland in the very south of Roscommon, coupled with some discrete areas in the generally fertile landscape of central south Roscommon, and large pockets of bog both immediately west and east of the River Suck

were not permanently occupied in the later medieval period (Fig. 3.2). Similarly, communication routes, which will be discussed in greater detail presently (see 3.3), would have avoided peatland, or at least developed specific routes through it, with a view to safe transition through what would have been a naturally treacherous landscape. Therefore, the soil quality and the presence of bogland in this landscape would have played a major role in dictating where settlement activity was located.

Bog wasn't completely devoid of use, as resources would have be derived from all contexts. In the case of bogland, there is evidence to indicate that turf was cut to serve as a fuel for cooking and heating in later medieval Ireland, and by at least the late-thirteenth and fourteenth century, harvesting peat was specified as a labour duty amongst manorial tenants on Anglo-Norman manors, and the fuel was used throughout all levels of society, in both rural and urban contexts (Lucas 1970; Glasscock 2008, 210).

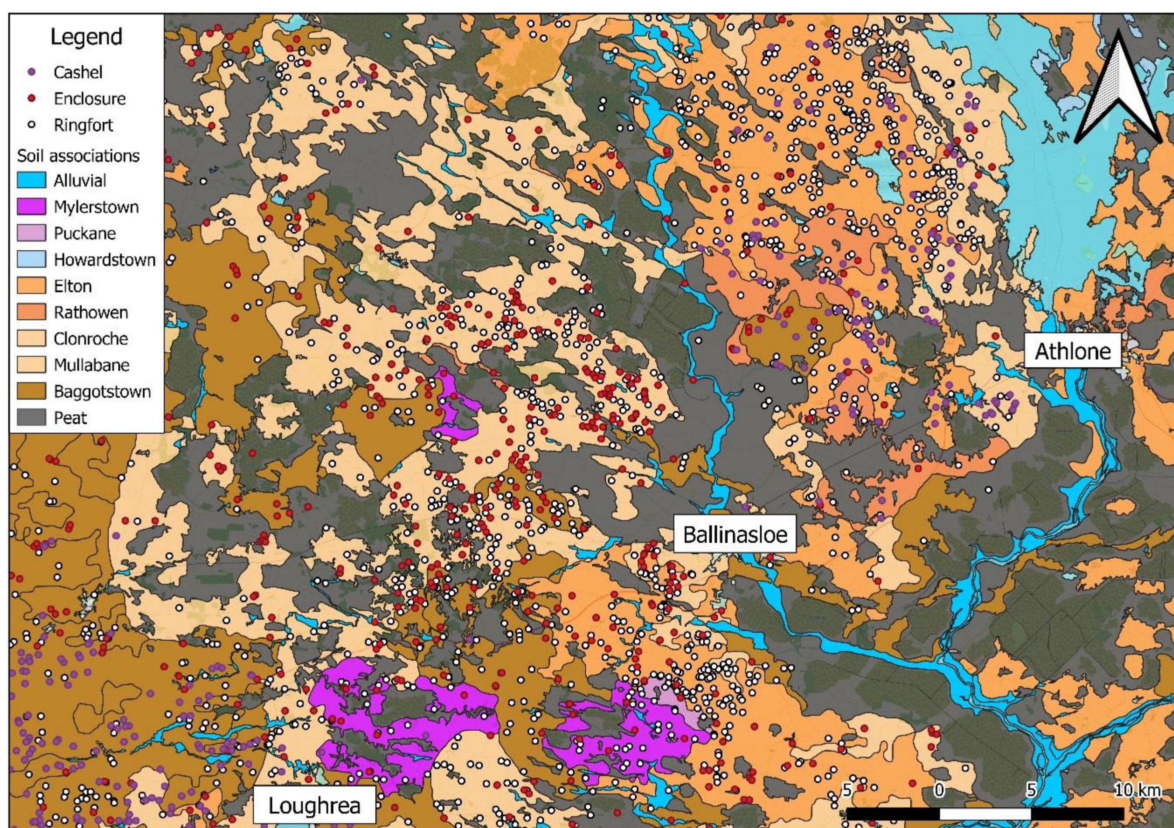

Figure 3.2 - Soil association map derived from Teagasc soil classifications, with National Monuments Service data plotted on top (Soils data courtesy of Teagasc) This map indicates that the most productive soil associations, particularly the Elton soil association, presents with the greatest concentration of ringforts and enclosures, while peat soils are nearly devoid of settlement.

3.2.2 – Woodland

Woodland and forest were important components of the physical landscape of later medieval Uí Maine. As outlined in 1.2, native woodland has nearly disappeared from the region today, having been cut down since the early-seventeenth century, however, in the later medieval period, woodland was much more extensive. These were not primordial forests, they were likely managed for their resources, and their extents did not remain fixed through time (Hall and Bunting 2001, 208; Nicholls 2001, 181-2). The rates of woodland cover in Ireland in the medieval period are difficult to estimate, but it is calculated that about 12% of the island was still wooded in 1600. This is a drop from a conservative estimate of 20% in the twelfth century. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Glasscock deduces that about 15% of the island was still afforested (Glasscock 2008, 209; see, also Nicholls 2001). These forests would have looked very different from today, and would have been largely composed of deciduous trees, such as oak, hazel, ash and birch, devoid of conifers (with the exception of Scots Pine), or the more recent deciduous introductions.

The historical decline of woodland cover for the island at large is representative of the situation in the study area more specifically. This is borne out by the data collected from the, admittedly few, pollen analyses conducted in and near Uí Maine by the Paleoenvironmental Research Unit at NUI Galway. The pollen profile from Ballinphuill bog, located 19km to the west of Ballinasloe (on the fringes of the study area), indicates that for the period 400 – 600AD, agriculture began to expand in the area, but was initially extensive rather than intensive in character, identified through an increase in hazel pollen. Pastoral and arable farming increased substantially in the period 600 – 800AD, with hazel clearance, and the demise of yew and Scots Pine, while in the later medieval period (1250 – 1500), ash and elm became largely extinct and oak and hazel were greatly reduced in numbers, as a result of intensive farming with a strong cereal-growing component (Molloy, Feeser and O'Connell 2014, 117).

By comparison, a series of pollen profiles were established in the vicinity around the watermill at Kilbegly, Co. Roscommon, which lay within the territory of the Cenél Coirpre Chruim during its main period of use (see 2.2). The mid-profile values (820 – 960AD) of one of the pollen cores indicates that there was a strong pastoral farming economy in the area, with hazel becoming less important and yew probably becoming extinct at the time. Higher in the profile (960 – 1120AD), farming seems to have gone into decline, seen with a regeneration of oak. The end of the profile indicates a strong increase in farming once more, with woodland

clearance resuming *c.*1150AD (Overland and O'Connell 2013, 69-71). It is clear that certain zones within the study area saw a steady reduction of woodland cover through time from the early medieval period onwards, and these cleared areas were then managed for both pastoral and arable farming in the later medieval period (*Ibid*.). The fact that these cleared woods lay in the vicinity of medieval routeways may have facilitated their degradation and transition into farmland (3.3).

Historical accounts strongly indicate, however, that the study area continued to be occupied by a number of major expanses of woodland during the later medieval period, the most prominent being the *Feadha* of Athlone, the woods to the west and east of Athleague, and the woods of *Bruigheol*. The Fews, Faes or *Feadha* of Athlone are referred to from as early as the ninth century, with their mention in *Cormac's Glossary* (Stokes (ed. and trans.) 1862, 109). The level of afforestation in this area changed throughout the whole period, but an interesting calculation of the area of ploughable land available in Kilbegly totalled only *c.*60 acres in the fourteenth century from an overall area of 393 acres in the townland (*Reg. Clon.*, 454). The availability of this relatively small area of agricultural land at Kilbegly may be an indication that the wider environment and surrounding countryside here was not only pasture but contained substantial amounts of forest and bog (Devane 2013, 109).

The *Feadha* (woods), also known in the early-thirteenth century sources as the cantred of *Tirieghrachbothe* or *Tír Fhiachrach bhfeadh*, was an extensive area of woodland that existed to the northwest and southwest of Athlone throughout the later medieval period (Walton 1980, 34). These woods are depicted on late sixteenth and early seventeenth century maps, taking up a considerable portion of the south-eastern part of Uí Maine (Figs. 3.3; 3.4). The Civil Survey of 1654-6 records that in its entirety, Roscommon possessed 6% woodland cover at that time, and the district to the west of Lough Ree, i.e. the *Feadha*, made up a considerable portion of this (Doran 2004, 60). The woods are described in the early nineteenth century as still being extant, mostly comprised of oaks, with some hazel (Lewis 1837, 522; McCracken 1959, 278).

Figure 3.3 - Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) indicating the extent of woodland, known as the Feadha *of Athlone, in the region under inspection in the present chapter at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Note what appears to be cleared land located to the south of the forest, which could be interpreted as agricultural land. However consideration of this map in combination with Fig. 3.2, shows it to be bogland. The extent of bogland outlined in Fig. 3.2, coupled with the quantities of woodland indicated in Fig. 3.3, suggests that very little pre-modern settlement was located in south Roscommon, below the modern N6/M6 roads between Athlone and Ballinasloe (TCD, MS 1209/68. Copyright 2011 Courtesy of the Board of Trinity College Dublin.)*

The collection of townland names that survive for this part of south-eastern Roscommon provides important information when attempting to reconstruct the geographical extents of the *Feadha*. A predominance of townland names in the area of modern southeast Roscommon relate to woodland. Moving north from Athlone, for example, there is Cornaseer – *Cor na soar* (round hill of the carpenters), Feamore – *Feádh mór* (great wood), Carrownderry – *Ceathramhadh an doire* (quarter of the derry or oak wood), Carrownure Upper and Lower – *Ceathramhadh an iubhair* (quarter of the yew), Killoy – *Cill luaighe* (wood of the lead), Kileenrevagh – *Coillín riabhach* (grey little wood), Kilmore – *Coill mór* (great wood),

Barnacullen – *Bearnaidh chuillinn* (holly-oak), Kilglass – *Coill glas* (green wood), Kilcash – *Coill a chois* (wood of the foot) and Killea – *Coill liath* (greywood). Similar place-names exist to the southwest and west of Athlone.

Coupling these with townland names relating to rough ground, wasteland or weirs providing access through difficult or wet terrain indicates a landscape of restriction in terms of communication, transport and agriculture. Examples include Bogganfin – *Bogán fionn* (white bog), Corramore – *Corra mhór* (big weir), Corraclogh – *Corra chloch* (stony weir), Carnagh East and West – *An Charnach* (abounding in heaps or cairns), Carrigan More and Beg (the little rock[s]), Curraghalaher – *Currach a' leathair* (moor of the leather), Scregg – *Screag* (rocky land), Creggan – *Creagan* (rocky ground), Carrigeens – *na carraigínídhe* (the little rocks), Curry – *Curraidh* (a moor), and Corgarve – *Cor garbh* (rough hill), among others (Fig. 3.4).

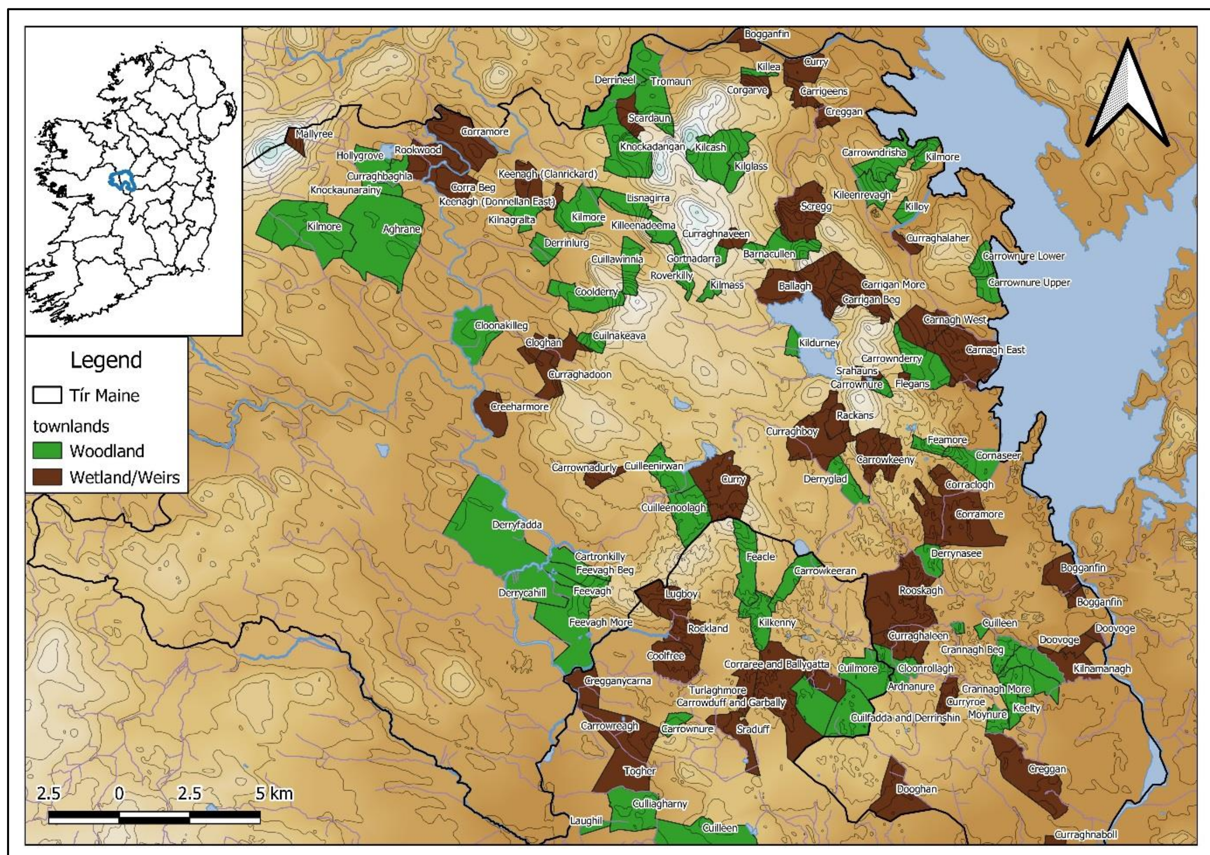

Figure 3.4 - A graphical representation of the townland names which denote woodland and difficult land in Tír Maine, consistent with the historical and cartographic attestations to the wooded and treacherous Feadha *of Athlone, woods of Athleague and* Bruigheol *(consistent with the townlands of Derrycahill, Feevagh More and Beg, Cartronkilly, Cuileenoolagh, Feacle and Carrowkeeran).*

The historical sources indicate that the *Feadha* were a natural obstacle to overland journeys between Athlone and Roscommon. Evidence of the nature of this obstacle is seen in 1273-74,

when a pass is cut through the dense forest of the *Feadha*, undertaken for security reasons, in order to provide access between the Anglo-Norman castles of Athlone and Rindoon (Anon 1904, 41). This was one of a series of infrastructural projects commissioned at this time by the then justiciar of Ireland, Geoffrey de Geneville. Other projects included the repair of the bridge at Athlone, the construction and purchase of boats for Athlone and Rindoon castles, the repair of a causeway near Ballymoe, modern Co. Galway, as well as cutting a pass through the *Feadha* (Walton 1980, 256).

Annalistic references to the *Feadha* of Athlone also support the afforested nature of the area, and the difficulties that individuals and armies endured as they attempted to navigate these woods (*AFM, s.a.* 1268, 1535; *AU, s.a.* 1225; *AC, s.a.* 1268). Gaelic military strategy throughout the later medieval period utilised the natural landscape as a weapon of war and territorial defence (Ó Domhnaill 1946, 41-2; O'Conor 1998, 98-100; Nicholls 2001, 187). The *Feadha* was presumably an ideal location within which the Ó Cellaig could mount a resistance to Gaelic, Anglo-Norman, and later, English advances through their territory. Furthermore, during times of war, livestock and non-combatants could be hidden away in this large wood, and protected from attack (O'Conor 1998, 98-100). This obstacle obviously remained into the late medieval period, as the mid-sixteenth century English state papers refer to the need to recruit large numbers of men to cut the woodland passes beyond the River Shannon near Athlone, as well as conferring the Ó Cellaig chief with the title 'Governor of the Great Pass beyond the water' (*CSPI*, i, 88-90).

The second stand of native woodland which is historically and cartographically attested to in later medieval Uí Maine are the woods surrounding Athleague (see Figs. 3.5; 3.6). Contemporary records tell us that these woods were of mature oak, but also included species such as crabtree, hawthorn and hazel, suggesting that these woods were quite difficult to traverse (Nicholls 2001, 189).

Figure 3.5 – Map of the study area and beyond, as recorded in Boazio's Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio (1606). *This map is oriented with north to the right. Boazio illustrates the presence of an area of woodland south of Athleague on the eastern bank of the River Suck, encircled in red. Note also the* Feadha *of Athlone, indicated by the red arrow, extant north and south of Athlone (Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA)*

Figure 3.6 – Map of the study area, as recorded in Speed's The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine… (1611). *Speed illustrates a stand of woodland to the east of the River Suck, encircled in red, which matches with what was recorded in Boazio's earlier map (Atlas.2.61.1, Cambridge University Library).*

The townland name survivals for this area again place a strong emphasis on describing aspects of the wooded environment. Taking just the civil parish of Athleague, which straddles the two counties of Galway and Roscommon, one can see a series of names that record wooded and wetland locations. These names include, but are not limited to Derrineel – *Doire an aoil* (oakwood of the limestones), Kilmore – *Coill mór* (great wood), Lisnagirra – *Lios na giorra* (fort of the scrub), Curraghbaghla – *Corr Bhachla* (rounded hill of the sticks) and Knockaunarainy – *Cnocán na Raithní* (the hillock of the bracken). Bellagad – *Béal Átha Gad* (the mouth of the ford of the withes/wattles) (see Fig. 3.4). It is possible to speculate that an additional townland name, Knockadangan – *Cnoc a dainginn*, recorded by O'Donovan as the 'hill of the fastness', may have been a place where the wooded landscape was used for defence in the Athleague area in the medieval past, as discussed above (see also *ALC s.a.* 1557).

The final extensive stand of historically-attested woodland in the study area were the woods of *Bruigheol* (Pl. 3.1; see *AFM s.a.* 1490; *ALC s.a.* 1558). These were located on an east-west ridge in the south of Athlone Barony, between the *túath* of Magh Finn and the lands further north, broadly represented today by the parish boundary between Taughmaconnell and Dysart,

Co. Roscommon. This wood was deemed to have still been extensive in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and seems to be broadly co-extensive with a discrete area of scattered boulder karst, known now as the Killeglan Karst Landscape, which may have assisted in the preservation of the woods of *Bruigheol* to such a late date (Nicholls 2001, 193; Parkes, Meehan and Préteseille 2012, 47-9; Meehan and Parkes 2014, 14). Four townlands, among many, named Feevagh, Feevagh Beg and Feevagh More – *Fíodhbhach* (woody place) and Derryfadda – *Doire Fada* (the long oak-wood) highlight the former presence of the woods of *Bruigheol*. Other toponymical survivals for the woods of *Bruigheol* are evident in Figure 3.4.

Plate 3.1 - Unimproved rough pasture in the midst of this scattered boulder karst zone, in the townland of Breeole, Co. Roscommon. This modern-day survival represents a small section of the degraded remains of the once extensive woods of Bruigheol *(Author's photograph).*

The Galway section of the study area is more difficult to reconstruct, and one of the few sources to survive for the period indicates that for the most part, the area between the rivers Suck and Clare possessed little woodland by *c.*1600, so little that O'Sullivan Beare lamented the lack of cover or areas to retreat into in the hinterland around Aughrim in 1602, instead the region was composed largely of open ground, leaving him and his people prone to attack (see McCracken 1971, 41).

The presence of woodland in the study area played a role in terms of limiting development and communication, and would have been viewed with fear by outsiders (Finan 2016, 58), but by contrast to the limitations provided by bogland environments, they did not result in the general

avoidance of these zones. Combining this with bogland, this indicates that large parts of the study area, particularly its south-eastern quadrant, was either uninhabited or lightly settled.

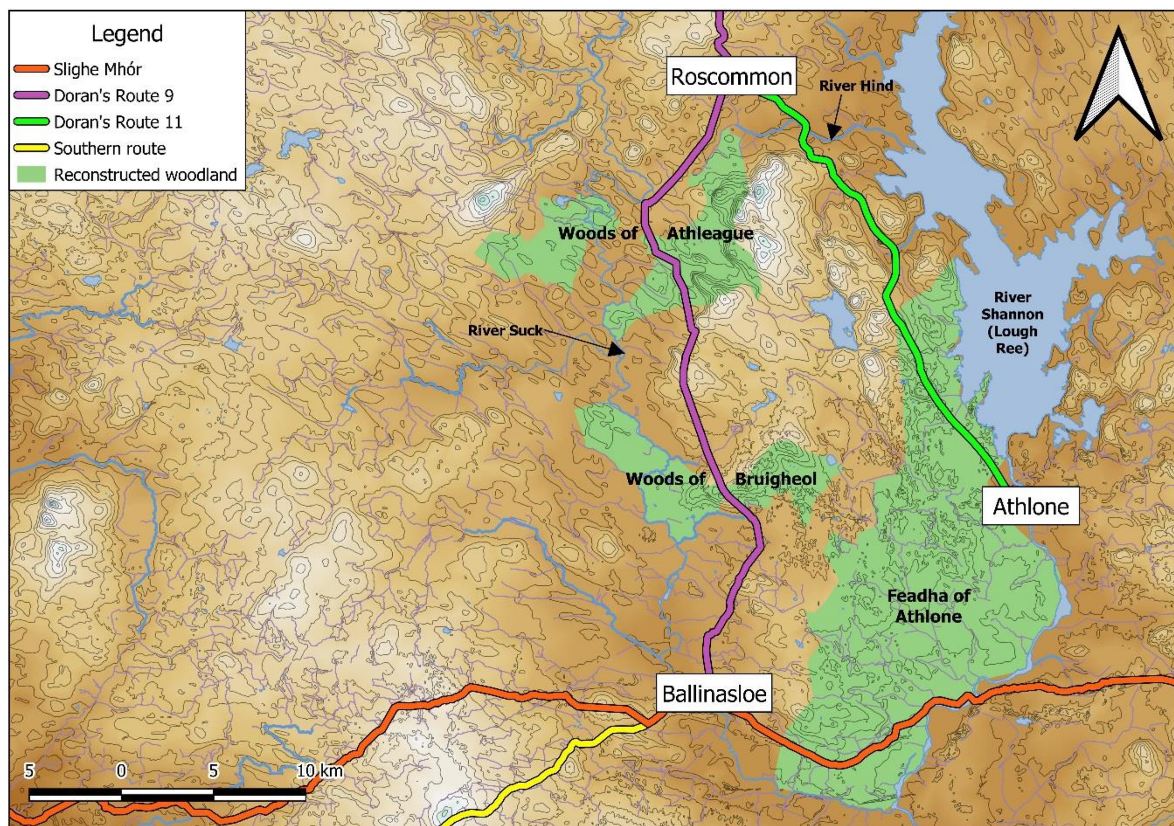

Figure 3.7 - Map of the reconstructed woodlands of Uí Maine, based upon a combination of late medieval/early modern cartographic sources, and the surviving toponymy. Rivers and lakes to be discussed in 3.2.3 and some of the principal overland routes (3.3) overlaid on the reconstructed physical landscape.

3.2.3 – Rivers, Lakes and Turloughs

The riverine network of the study area provides some of the most characteristic features of Uí Maine, and the district is drained by two substantial regional waterways, the River Shannon, including Lough Ree, and the River Suck. The historical background outlined above gave some indication of the role that these rivers served as boundaries, and they both undoubtedly served an important economic role within later medieval Uí Maine. As both were and are still navigable, they were a vital economic and communication resource also (see O'Conor and Naessens 2016a). A third river also played an important role in the study area, the River Hind, which served in a general way as the physical boundary between the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine and the Ó Conchobair heartland of Machaire Connacht. This river runs eastwards from its source near Athleague, and empties into Lough Ree near Galey Bay.

Apart from Lough Ree, the lakes of the study area are characteristically small in size, and they include Callow Lough and Ballaghdacker Lough in east Galway, and the former lake of Lough Croan, and Lough Funshinagh, Co. Roscommon (see 1.2). Along with these relatively small bodies of water, the study area presents with a phenomenon known as the turlough, which is a low-lying area on limestone which becomes flooded in wet weather, particularly in winter, through the welling up of groundwater from the bedrock. There are a number of turloughs located in what was later medieval Uí Maine, particularly to the east of the River Suck (Meehan and Parkes 2014, 21-7).

3.3 – Communication Routes through the Lordship

Medium to long-distance overland communication through the study area was provided primarily by a small number of regional routeways. Travel through the landscape was not limited to these routeways, and a matrix of minor routes must have snaked through the lordship, however, information on these subsidiary routes is lacking.

Academic research into the pre-modern, medieval and perhaps prehistoric road systems of this part of the island is limited to two papers (Ó Lochlainn 1940; Doran 2004). The principal overland routeway through the study area was the *Slighe Mhór* or *Eiscir Riada*, a road which linked the east of the island through to Galway Bay (Ó Lochlainn 1940, 470). Eskers and drumlin belts provided a natural, dry linear platform which provided easier access through a region which was otherwise characterised by much bogland, wetland and river floodplains, which would have been naturally treacherous or impassable at certain times of the year (Meehan and Parkes 2014, 28-34). This communication route east-west linked large parts of Connacht with the lands further to the east, across the Suck and Shannon rivers, with their broad and treacherous callow wetlands. Geissel plotted the most likely course of the *Slighe Mhór*, and this serves as a useful reference point when attempting to understand where and why settlement developed in the study area (Geissel 2006) (Fig. 3.8).

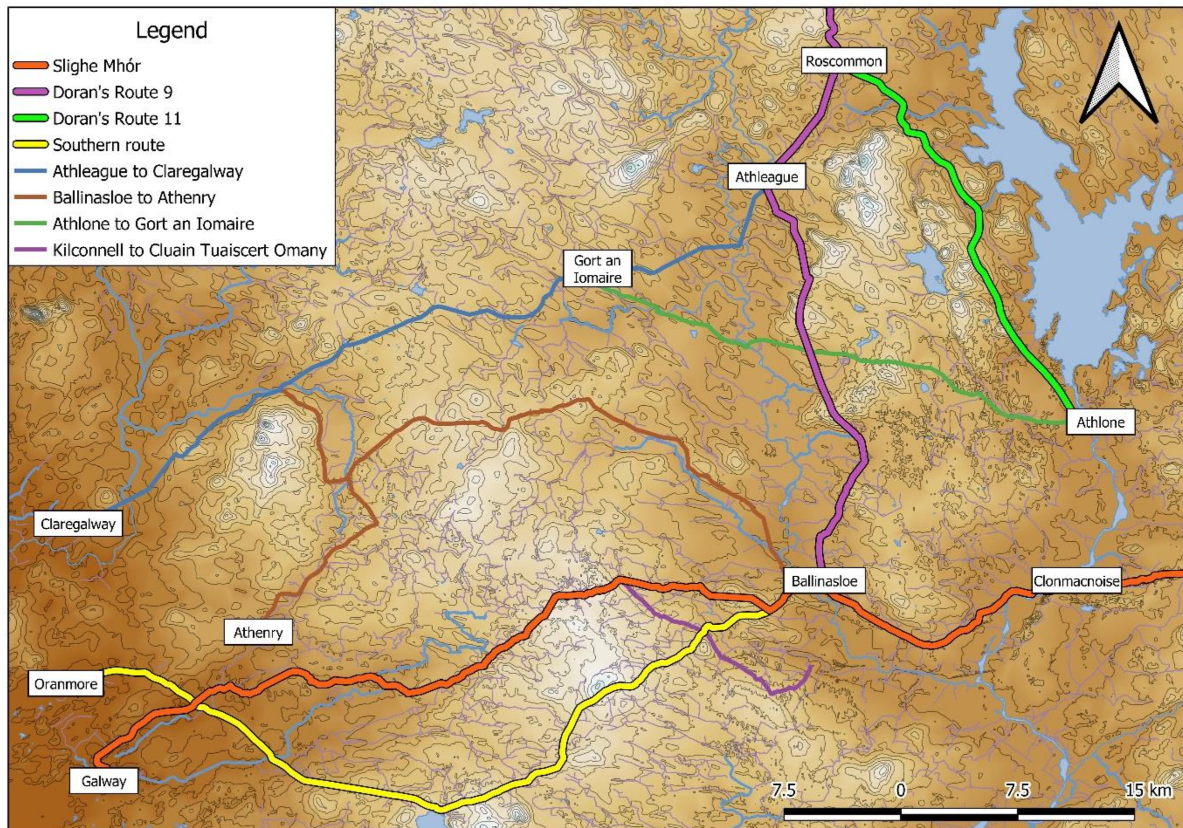

Figure 3.8 - Medieval routeways through the Ó Cellaig trícha céta *of Uí Maine and Tír Maine, as per their territorial extents in* c.*1100, with the principal settlements from the text indicated.*

Major natural fords and bridges existed along the *Slighe Mhór* across the Suck at Ballinasloe and across the Shannon at Athlone (see 6.2; Appendix 4) Reconstructing the more regional routes of Uí Maine, Doran highlights the presence of two secondary routes which connected the south Roscommon area with the other major east-west route through Connacht, the *Slighe Assail*. The first, which she termed 'Route 9', left the *Slighe Mhór* at Ballinasloe heading north, via *Tochar-choille-an-chairn* (Togher townland, Taughmaconnell parish), through the woods of *Bruigheol*, past Lough Croan, on to Athleague, then Roscommon, and finally connecting with the *Slighe Assail* at Tulsk (Doran 2004, 72). The townland names of the district surrounding Athleague support the presence of a long-established communication route through woodland and bog, as seen in the cases of Derrinlurg – *Doire an loirg* (derry or wood of the track) and Tibarny – *Toigh beárna* (house of/in the gap), located next to one another.

Doran's 'Route 11' left Athlone, went north through the *Feadha* of Athlone, passed through the medieval settlement of *Baile Gáile*, present-day Knockcroghery (see 6.3.3.1), before connecting up with Route 9 at Roscommon (Doran 2004, 72). It is presumably this route which Geoffrey de Geneville had a pass cut through in 1273-4 (see 3.2.2). Plainly, sections all along

these routeways, especially parts which went through bog and wood, required constant maintenance, and in some cases, the construction of wooden causeways, or *tóchair*, in order to traverse bogland areas. A number of *tóchair* are recorded in the annalistic record as having been required in order to cross bogland along the River Suck corridor during the later medieval period (Lucas 1985, 50).

The manner in which access along these roads was restricted or even blocked in the later medieval period is also demonstrable in numerous annalistic entries (see O'Conor 1998, 98-100). One example of this is seen near Athleague in 1425 and 1560 [*Áth gallda*], showing how a combination of physical features, namely bogland, river and narrow communication route, and their manipulation, could be used to devastating effect in military encounters (*AC*; *ALC*). These references suggests that there was a ford over a modified River Hind on Route 9, between Athleague and Roscommon. Another entry, in 1489, records a skirmish between the Uí Chonchobair and Uí Chellaig, at the pass of Cluainin – *bealach an Cluainin*, which seems to have been a point on Route 9 also (*AFM*).

Cluainín is identifiable today as Clooneen townland, and lies directly to the north of Athleague, the townland split by the modern N63, the continuation of the medieval routeway. There is a bog at Clooneen today, and the word *bealach* may suggest a *tóchar* through a relatively substantial marshy area in this period. Given the vulnerable nature of such a communication route, access could have been restricted, or closed entirely, under certain circumstances. This reference could also be an inference to the tactic of 'plashing', the bending and interweaving of branches and twigs to form defensive thick, hedge-like obstacles across a line of march (Ó Domhnaill 1946, 41; Cronin 1980, 116; O'Conor 1998, 98-100; Everett 2014, 20).

This intersection of river, woodland, bogland, and routeway presents itself as a bottleneck to travel north-south on Route 9, and its role in this regard dates to much earlier than the fifteenth century. Route 9 would have crossed over Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair's 1139 engineering works, which by joining the River Hind with the turloughs of Correal and Ballinturly, and then digging a ditch between the latter lakes and the River Suck, created a barrier which defended his ancestral lands from attack to the south. It also created a boundary between the *trícha céta* of Tír Maine and Machaire Connacht. It is highly likely that the three fifteenth-century skirmishes mentioned above took place at crossing points across this canal-like feature (*AT*; Ó Corráin 1972, 151; Barry 2007, 38; Valante 2015, 51, 60-1). This canal, which included much of the natural River Hind, must have been used by boats, particularly cots, to travel for either

military or trade reasons, from Athleague on the Suck to Lough Ree on the Shannon. This 13km-long canal-like feature would have saved travellers a boat journey of about 70km down the Suck and then up the Shannon, into the latter lough (see Appendix 3).

Another regional routeway branched off the *Slighe Mhór*, in this instance charting an alternative journey to Galway Bay than that of the latter major road. Simply termed the 'Southern Route' in this research, it was broadly consistent with the modern R446 (the old N6). Connecting Ballinasloe with Aughrim, Kilreekill, the later medieval town of Loughrea, Craughwell and on to Oranmore (Fig. 3.8), this road provided access through a diverse series of landscapes between modern east Galway and the coast, thus facilitating trade, travel and martial activities for centuries (McKeon and O'Sullivan 2014, 6-7).

Minor roads through this study area must have existed, but identifying them through the historical or archaeological disciplines is difficult. However, the present writer believes that consideration of these sources allows us to believe that some of the modern minor road network through this region existing in the later medieval period. The basis for this statement relies on the siting of prominent archaeological sites close to these roads today, coupled with the fact that certain entries in the historical record relate to incidents which took place due to them seemingly being close to a known routeway (see, for example, 4.6; 7.2.1). As a result, the present writer would like to posit the following minor roads as having been in existence throughout the medieval period:

R363: Athlone to *Gort an Iomaire* or Cruffon, modern-day Newbridge, Co. Galway, via Brideswell, Dysart and Ballyforan.

N63/R354: Athleague, Co. Roscommon to Claregalway, Co. Galway, via Mount Talbot, Ballygar, Newbridge and Abbeyknockmoy.

R358/R339/L3107: Ballinasloe, Co. Galway to Athenry, Co. Galway, via Ahascragh, Caltra, Castleblakney, Menlough and Tiaquin.

L3415/3413: Kilconnell, Co. Galway to Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Co. Galway, via Aughrim and Callaghan's Loughs.

Water-based travel through the region in the later medieval period is more difficult to identify, as it is not as regularly attested to in the historical record. However, it is well understood that the entire course of the River Shannon, from Lough Allen, near its source in Bréifne, to where

it meets the Atlantic Ocean near Limerick, was navigable, albeit potentially with some portage involved, and it was an important communication and transport artery throughout the entire period (O'Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015, 85). For example, waterborne traffic, both naval and trade, is attested to on Lough Ree in the surviving thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sources, while Garton has theorised on the amount of influence and ideas, along with merchandise, which was transmitted as part of the routine navigation of the Shannon system during the high medieval period (Garton 1981, 36, 54; O'Conor and Naessens 2016a, 238-9). It is clear that the Shannon saw plenty of waterborne traffic during early medieval times and, probably, the prehistoric period (Murtagh 2015, 192-3; O'Conor and Naessens 2016a, 239). The survival of a later medieval slipway and dry-stone built jetty-features on Safe Harbour has been noted at Rindoon on Lough Ree in the study area (O'Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015, 86; O'Conor and Naessens 2016a). It might be added that, further south along the Shannon system, the presence of quay and harbour features were noted at a series of late medieval castle sites on the shores of Lough Derg (Stark 2012, 54-6; Hall 2016, 75-6). The existence of these features at Rindoon and Lough Derg perhaps offer an indication of the high level of water traffic that must have occurred along the Shannon during the later medieval period.

Navigation on the River Suck is difficult to chart, but one of the indicators that this river was readily accessible in the later medieval past can be concluded from another episode in the career of Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair. There is historical attestation for Toirrdelbach possessing a fleet of ships which were burned on Lough Loung in 1146 (*AU MacN*; *AFM*). *Loch Long* – 'lake of the ships', is a small lake located just off, and connected to, the River Suck between Ballymoe and Dunamon, some 12km to the northwest of Athleague. Plainly, Toirrdelbach's fleet at Lough Loung was in place to facilitate military action and the transfer of troops, presumably operating up and down the River Suck corridor as required, indicating that this river was readily navigable to relatively large vessels throughout the later medieval period. Furthermore, this fleet could have easily accessed the 1139 canal-like waterway mentioned above (see, also, Appendix 3).

What type of vessels and boats were used on the Shannon and Suck Rivers? Clinker-built, oared galleys, which developed from early medieval Norse longships, were a feature of later medieval Gaelic Ireland, being used along coasts, rivers and lakes (Breen 2001, 429-35; Etchingham 2015, 79-87; Murtagh 2015, 194). Smaller vessels, such as logboats, known as cots, and coracles/currachs, built of wattle and hides, were seemingly a commonplace sight on Irish rivers from prehistory, through the later medieval period, up until the recent past. Cots

could actually be quite large if carved out of a substantial tree trunk. The mid-fourteenth century praise poem *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach* also describes the use of galleys and coracles in the waterways of the lordship at this time (Lanting and Brindley 1996; Murtagh 2015, 192-201; *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*, stanza 7). Somewhat smaller than galleys, there is also evidence along the Shannon for the use of plank-built wherrys – effectively a large rowing boat with perhaps one sail (O'Conor and Naessens 2016a, 239). Collectors for the Irish Folklore Commission recorded the common crafting of single-person vessels out of rushes for use on the River Suck near Dysart and Ballyforan, Co. Roscommon in the last century. These craft were once a common sight on the latter river, and their manufacture may be of considerable antiquity on this and the other rivers of the study area also (Mac Philib 2000, 1).

As can be seen, communication and travel through Uí Maine in the later medieval period would have taken many forms, but was dictated by both natural and man-made influences on the landscape. The area was well supplied with roads, and it is clear that both the Suck and Shannon were navigable at this time. This would have facilitated the movement of people and merchandise.

3.4 – Focal Points of Assembly in Later Medieval Uí Maine

Settlement in the later medieval lordship was essentially rural and dispersed in character. As a result, society routinely operated around the premise of gathering for a particular purpose. The motive of the gatherings could be martial, however, by and large, these communal events were social, economic and administrative in nature. These events primarily came in the form of an assembly or seasonal fair (Ir. *óenach*). The *óenach* was an event which seems to have had origins in prehistory (MacNeill 2008, 68-9). This institution seems to have evolved through the centuries, but the concept of communal gatherings remained in later medieval times (MacNeill 2008, 106-39; FitzPatrick 2015a, 54-5). These assemblies served a number of roles in Gaelic society, chief among them festivities, feasting, the racing of horses and chariots (Gleeson 2015, 104), as well as the payment of tax, the provision of tribute (*cís*), the settling of inter-territorial disputes, trade and market activity (FitzPatrick 2015a, 54; Simms 2020, 467-70).

There is evidence to indicate that vestiges of these assemblies continued to be celebrated right up into the post-medieval period and beyond (Simms 2020, 464). The late medieval mythological tale of *Cetharnach Uí Dhomnaill*, set in sixteenth-century Ireland, includes a sequence where the protagonist attended an *óenach* convened by the historically-attested Tadg

Ó Cellaig at his residence, indirectly indicating that the Uí Chellaig elite continued to host these assemblies into that period at least (O'Grady (ed. and trans.) 1892, 320).

MacCotter advocates that each *trícha cét* possessed its own assembly site, and this place remained fixed through time (MacCotter 2014, 50). Based on what has been uncovered over the course of this research, the present writer would argue that there were a number of assembly sites in each *trícha cét*, possibly serving separate purposes or seasonal periods, or which fell in and out of use over the course of time. This conclusion is supported by the research conducted at three case study locations in the north of Ireland, which advocates that the late-*túatha* or vassal lordships which constituted the *trícha cét* would also have had routine communal places of assembly (Logue and Ó Doibhlin 2020, 160). However, in attempting to identify assembly landscapes in the *trícha céta* of Tír Maine and Uí Maine, there is not a hard and fast template one can use. The difficulty in trying to identify and interpret the archaeological character of assembly practice is marred by the transient nature of these events, and the vagaries of their survival in the landscape (MacCotter 2012, 1).

However, consultation of the available toponymical, archaeological, topographical, historical, literary and folkloric sources can be combined to yield information which helps in identifying a place of assembly (Logue and Ó Doibhlin 2020, 172). These identifications provide insights into the way in which later medieval Gaelic society was ordered and organised in this time and place (FitzPatrick 2004, 13). This approach has uncovered a number of assembly locations in the Ó Cellaig lordship by the present writer. Identifying these sites is also beneficial in terms of understanding where the *cenn áiteanna* of the Ó Cellaig were located, what forms they took, and how they may have interacted with these assembly locations within the landscape through time. The assembly landscapes which will be considered over the course of the coming chapters are illustrated below (Fig. 3.9).

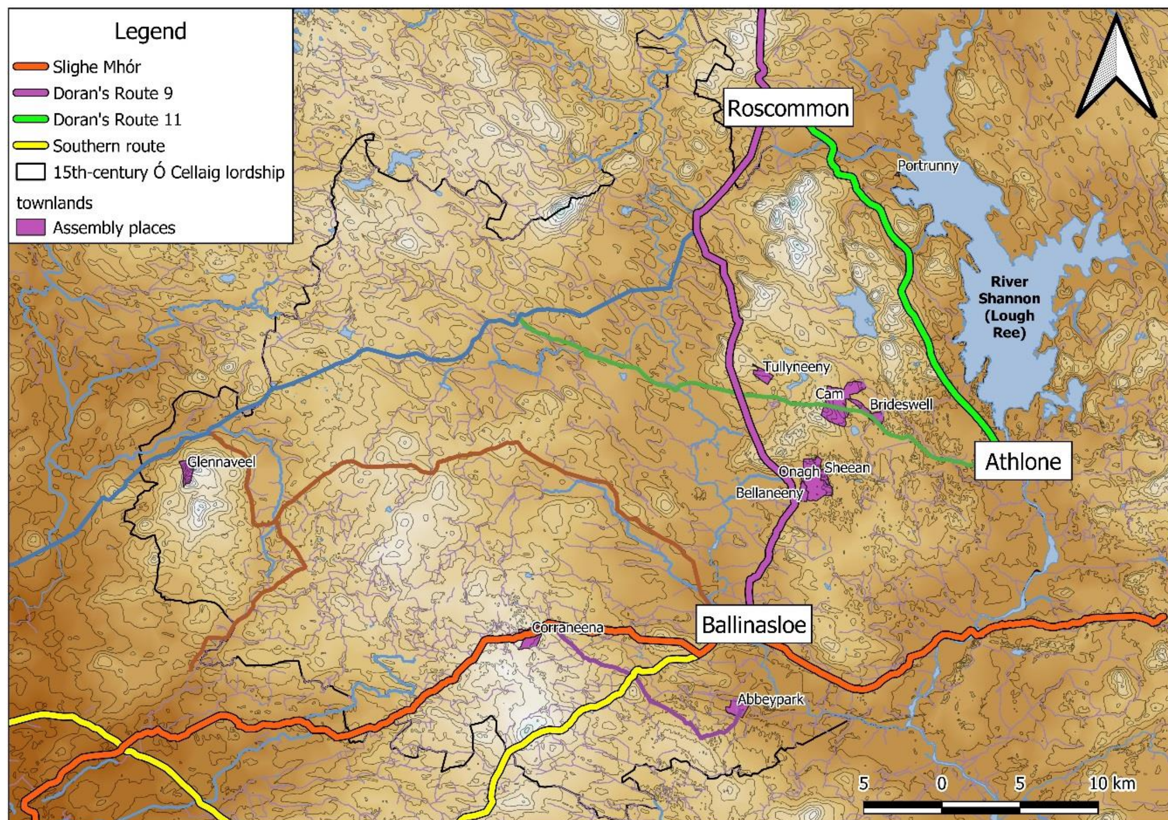

Figure 3.9 - Location of the assembly and inauguration landscapes under discussion in the thesis, as well as their relationship with the identified cenn áiteanna *of Tír Maine and Uí Maine.*

3.5 – The Economy of the Lordship

When studying the economic situation in later medieval Gaelic Ireland, it is pertinent to quote Nicholls:

> 'No other aspect of medieval Irish life and society is more scantily served by the surviving evidence than the economic basis of society, the cultivation of the land' (Nicholls 2003, 131).

Thus, reconstructing the economy of later medieval Gaelic Ireland, and of this inland lordship in particular, is a difficult, but not impossible, task. While Gaelic Irish administrative documents are generally lacking for this period, other sources can assist in informing our understanding of how wealth was generated and distributed at this time.

3.5.1 – Pastoral Agriculture

Pastoral farming served a very important function in later medieval Gaelic Ireland, and a considerable part of this society depended on cattle, and the resources derived from their herds. The main breeds of cattle herded in later medieval Ireland may have been the ancestors of the modern Kerry and Dexter breeds, short in stature, black or dark brown in colour, which, if their

descendants' physical traits can be used as a comparison, had a relatively strong milk yield for the period, and a profitable carcass (Nicholls 2003, 137; Walsh 2017, 47). North of our study area, in the northwest of Ireland, the *Moiled* cattle were once a prominent native breed, and these may also have been found amongst the herds in eastern Connacht. *An Bhó Riabhach* was an equally prominent native type, once a normal part of Irish herds up until recent times, particularly along the western seaboard (Walsh 2017, 29, 37). These dual-purpose animals were well suited to grazing marginal and less profitable land, and the milk product of these animals was a vital supplement to the medieval Irish diet. This milk was turned into butter, cheese, buttermilk and sour curds, while the animal's blood was also collected, when required, in order to mix it with oatmeal to create a blood pudding for sustenance. Beef was obviously consumed, with more regularity by the aristocracy than the lower classes, while tallow was an important product for candlemaking (Lucas 1989, 200-22; Nicholls 2003, 137; Kelly 2016a, 47-8). From the early medieval period, there is strong evidence that cattle were regarded as one of the principal expressions of wealth and status in Ireland. As such, one of the more routine entries from the annalistic record indicates that cattle raiding, as a means of acquiring wealth, but also as a means by which to test the military skills of young men, to lessen the power of rival lords, and thus increase your own status, were primary objectives for many later medieval Gaelic elites (Lucas 1989, 125-99).

The farming of cattle, particularly in the less productive lands in the west of Ireland, practiced a form of transhumance, called 'booleying', from *buaile* – cattle enclosure. This involved the cyclical movement of cattle from winter pasture, close to the settlement centres of the area, to summer pasture, whereby grazing was undertaken in upland, woodland and bogland environs, or in the areas vacated by the seasonal flooding in turloughs (Watt 2008, 331; O'Flaherty 2014; Costello 2020). Place-name survivals in the study area, such as Boleyduff, Cloonboley and Corboley in Athlone Barony, Boleymore and Knocknaboley in Kilconnell Barony, and Shanboley in Clonmacnowen Barony, may all be relics of this farming practice. It has been suggested that the cultivation of oats was often a complementary practice to transhumance, with the spring-sown oats occupying the areas where the cattle had resided the previous winter (Watt 2008, 331).

Pastoralism is traditionally seen as the predominant form of agriculture practiced throughout the medieval period in Gaelic Ireland, with cattle management overwhelmingly seen as the primary activity, for dairy produce, meat and hides (McCormick 2008, 209-11; Bhreathnach 2014, 21-2; O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney 2014, 180). This did not remain fixed

through time, however, and it has been demonstrated that farming practice evolved through the early medieval period. It is now accepted that crop cultivation played an important role from an early date. The diversification of agricultural activities, the increase in importance of other species of livestock, and even the development of lordly centres in good arable areas, is noted in the archaeological record from around the ninth century (O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney 2014, 180). In the study area, however, the prevalence of cattle-related place-names, coupled with contemporary documentary evidence and modern agricultural practice, would argue that the economy of the region in the early medieval period depended to a considerable extent on cattle.

The data suggests that cattle production remained a primary economic driver in this region during the period under inspection also. The primacy of cattle and their resources in later medieval Connacht is easy to illustrate. One of the terms of the Treaty of Windsor (1175) agreed between Ruaidrí Ó Conchobair and Henry II, king of England, indicates that Ruaidrí was granted his lands as long as he paid fealty to Henry II and gave tribute of one cattle hide for every ten cows he possessed (*Foedera*, 13-4). An indication of the economic value that bovine-derived products had in later medieval Ireland can be illustrated with a surviving record from the year 1290, where *c.*51,000 cattle hides were exported out of Ireland (Campbell 2008, 918). What is apparent from the historical record of this time more generally is that one of the chief exports from later medieval Gaelic Ireland were cattle hides and tanned leather (O'Conor 2005, 216; Nicholls 2008, 413-4; Simms 2015, 102-3).

The importance of cattle to this lordship is seen in our earliest account of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig's ascension to the kingship of Uí Maine in *c.*1349, in *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*. One of the key motifs of this poem was cattle raiding, which served as an important indicator of Uilliam's martial eligibility for his new role. Stanzas 64-72 recount a series of successful cattle raids led by a young Uilliam to Athenry, Co. Galway, the islands of Lough Ree and *Breaghmhuine* (later barony of Brawney, Co. Westmeath), *Maonmaigh* (later barony of Loughrea), the parishes of *Liathdruim* and Duniry, all Co. Galway, and supposedly on to Limerick and east Munster (*Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*, stanzas 64-72). Although these raids were included in the poem in order to highlight his martial prowess, the fact that they are on identified locations and sought in every case to plunder cattle, would suggest that the raids themselves were not just a literary flourish.

The bone assemblages from two excavated ringforts in the study area, Loughbown I and Mackney, Co. Galway indicate that cattle made up the largest percentage of domestic bone. In the case of Loughbown I, the cattle were mainly kept to adulthood, meaning that they primarily functioned as dairy animals and for draught (Bower 2014, 178). At Mackney, the majority of animal bone is attributed to the early medieval period, however, 22% of the bone assemblage came from later medieval contexts. Again cattle and sheep dominated this assemblage both in early medieval and later medieval times. The cattle bones belonged to animals of a relatively low physical stature, not unlike the modern Kerry and Dexter breeds. The peak of slaughter was in the second and third years, indicating that more of these animals may have been reared, primarily, for meat production, rather than dairy, perhaps indicating the high status of the ringfort occupiers (Delaney 2014, 195).

Toponymical evidence from Uí Maine uncovers a series of townland names which point toward districts having been utilised extensively for the production, trade, and the processing of the resources derived from livestock in the later medieval past. Inspecting the environment around Lough Croan, Co. Roscommon, for instance, results in a list of names that point toward the organised production and routine trading of cattle in that area. Assembly or periodic livestock fairs are indicated by the place-name Tullyneeny – *Tulaigh an aonaigh* (hill of the cattle fair/assembly). Tullyneeny is located 2.5km due south of Lough Croan turlough, synonymous with a modified natural landmark known today as ‘Fair Hill’. To the east of Tullyneeny is Cornalee – *Corr na Lao* (the round hill of the calves). Immediately to the south are located the townlands of Lisseenamanragh and Carrowntarriff. Lisseenamanragh – *Lisín na mannrach* (little fort of the stalls or mangers), is a name which corresponds directly today with the, as yet, undated archaeological remains of a combination of masonry enclosures and field systems, designed to house livestock (Pl. 3.2). Carrowntarriff – *Ceathramhadh an tairbh* (quarter of the bull) is immediately to the south of Lisseenamanragh. This clustering of bovine-related townland names in such a discrete area cannot have been coincidental, and the division of the landscape according to the age and purpose of the animal seems to indicate that this area was given over to the intensive production of, and trade in, cattle attached to the lord of the area.

Plate 3.2 – Lisseenamanragh townland. Recorded as Ancient field system. Thomas Street, Roscommon, Ireland. CUCAP no.: BDO024, Photo date: 1970-07-15. (Image courtesy of Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography). A matrix of undated stone wall field boundaries underserve the modern land divisions, resulting in the townland name.

The present writer would like to speculatively include a further townland name to this list, the townland of Grange. Grange bounds the turlough of Lough Croan to the north. An elongated version of the name was posited above (see 2.4.4) – *Gráinseach Chairn Bhuaileadh* (Grange/granary of the cairn of the booley/cattle-enclosure).[37] If this is the location theorised, it carries the confirmation that this district was used as a monastic farm (Stout 2015, 39-45). This approach was highly organised, and may point to the seasonal movement of cattle into and out of this land unit, in unison with the growth and harvest of spring-sown cereals, probably

[37] Ó Muraíle, N. pers. comm. 16th January 2018.

oats, which were then stored in the grange of the townland name, an approach readily identifiable in other locations (Watt, 2008, 331). The speculative inclusion of Grange brings the total number of cattle-related townland names in the Lough Croan environs to five.

At Galey Bay, another Ó Cellaig elite centre (see 6.3) a continuation of this trend is apparent. The townland names of Cornamart – *Cor na mart* (round hill of the beeves or butchered cattle), Corboley – *Corbuaile* (odd booley or dairy, also possibly round hill of the dairy), Curraghalaher – *Currach a' leathair* (moor of the leather) as well as nearby Pollalaher – *Poll a leathair* (hole of the leather) all bear evidence of a predominance in the practices of cattle rearing, dairying and livestock movement, as well as butchery and processing of the associated resources, tanning and leather production, in the area.

Equating townland names with activities in the past environment in this manner can be undertaken with a relatively high degree of certainty. A comparable example can be seen in the possible relics of the practice of blood-letting of cattle which are found recorded in townland names, micro-toponymy and through local information gathered from as late as early twentieth-century Ireland. Examples of this specific practice, usually undertaken in times of food shortage throughout the history of Ireland, can be seen with *Poll na Fola* (hollow of the blood), *Gleann na Fola* (glen of the blood), and Cornafulla (*Cor na Fola* – round hill of the blood) (Lucas 1989, 216-7; Nicholls 2003, 137). The latter townland lies within the study area.

The land units whose names describe a range of medieval cattle farming practices in Uí Maine strongly adhere to the high-yield soil associations outlined in 3.2.1. The underlying geology of this area, and indeed Co. Roscommon as a whole, is primarily one of Carboniferous Limestones (Parkes, Meehan and Préteseille 2012, 18), while the chemical composition of soils in most of these limestone regions contains an abundance in soil nutrients which are very complementary to high-quality cattle production (Collins 2016, 2; O'Conor 2018, xxviii). The location of these clusters of bovine-related names is also in close vicinity to Ó Cellaig lordly centres, which cannot have been by chance, and instead indicates that the generation of wealth in this part of later medieval Gaelic Ireland was still tightly aligned to cattle and cattle farming. The link between cattle and wealth did not diminish in later medieval Gaelic Ireland, and there are numerous instances in the historical sources where cattle were used as currency, gifts, in order to pay taxes and tribute, and as compensation for crimes under Irish law (Watt, 2008, 330. For historical attestation for the use of cattle as tax payment by the Uí Chellaig to the Anglo-Normans in 1281-2 see Walton 1980, 469). A section of a legal treatise, written by Giolla na

Naomh Mac Aodhagáin in *c.*1300, is illuminating for a number of reasons, not least the amount of cattle involved. The section specifies that a fine of 210 cows was due in the case of the secret murder of a king's son (Kelly 2016a, 44; for Mac Aodhagáin *brehon* kindred, see 5.4.3.1 below). Indeed, evidence for the late medieval period indicates that, due to a number of factors, average cattle prices increased at this time, and a correlation between this and the increased engagement in pastoral activity is strong also (Simms 2015, 104-8). More than this, seventeenth century sources indicate that it was not uncommon for members of the Gaelic elite to routinely be in possession of around two thousand head of cattle, while earlier accounts record some Gaelic lords owning as many as 6-8,000 cattle at a given time (Nicholls 2003, 136; Curtis (ed.) 1924 – 1927, 293; see also *ALC*, *s.a.* 1565).

Swift has provided persuasive evidence on how landscapes such as this may have been organised in a royal or lordly context as part of a paper dealing with the financial resources of the twelfth-century king of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchada. The tribute owed to such rulers were provided primarily as food render or livestock, and the seasonal convening of an *óenach* gave the opportunity for this tribute to be levied. It also served as the venue at which tribute could be redistributed, in the form of food provision to the assembled host, a mark of the lord's hospitality. Aside from this, these assemblies served as a focus for market and fair activity, enabling the lord to convert his livestock tribute into coin for his coffers (Swift 2015, 91-102), and a version of this economic model is likely to have persisted throughout the rest of the later medieval period in Gaelic Ireland.

Interpreting this cluster of cattle-related names surrounding Lough Croan would argue that the lands, particularly to the south of the lake, served as the venue for a significant and longstanding livestock market attached to the convention of a regular assembly in the Ó Cellaig lordship, and a key contributor to the lord's wealth in the process. In the case of the townland names which surround the sheltered bay and the Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* at Galey, we are looking at the possibility of an extensive butchery and leather producing complex, perhaps similar to the tanning complex uncovered south of the River Poddle in Dublin (Simpson 2004, 15-6, 32-4; Swift 2015, 100). These toponymical survivals may indicate that the excess livestock given in tribute to the Ó Cellaig lord at an assembly in Uí Maine could have been processed here with a view to it being transported down the River Shannon for trade or sale further afield, again to enrich the lord's wealth.

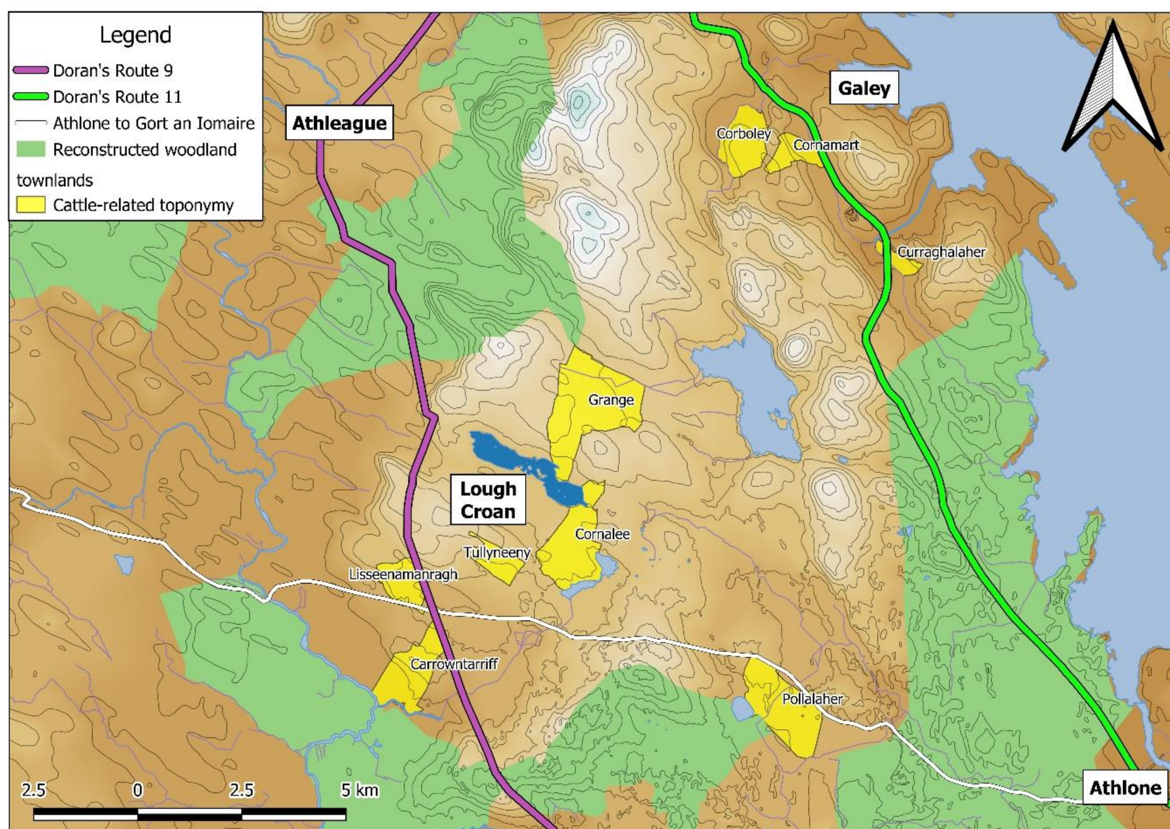

Figure 3.10 - Location of cattle-related townland names in relation to Ó Cellaig lordly centres.

Of course, cattle were not the only animal to have been intensively produced in this environment, and modern agricultural practices in what was Uí Maine routinely incorporate large numbers of sheep also, with mixed livestock farming particularly commonplace in what was once the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine (Soderberg and Immich 2010, 109-13). Whether this reflects anything of the later medieval past is debateable, but at Loughbown I and Mackney, the sheep bone assemblages correspond with the second largest percentage of domesticated animal bone in each case, with pig placed third (Bower 2014, 178, 182; Delaney 2014, 195-6).

Wool was plainly a key resource derived from sheep farming, and would have been the primary raw material used for clothing by society at large. One of the most visible expressions of the use of wool in later medieval Ireland is seen with the production of the characteristic Irish 'mantle' or cloak, which from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries had become a key export throughout Europe (Nicholls 2008, 415; Simms 2020, 475). The trade in sheep, wool and wool products (sheep skins, woolfell, mantles) must have formed part of an organised trade commodity in later medieval Uí Maine, however, outside of the estates of religious houses, this is unfortunately undocumented (3.5.3). Sheep and pigs played a more subordinate role in Irish

pastoralism in the later medieval period, particularly by comparison with Anglo-Norman areas (Nicholls 2008, 415).

3.5.2 – Horse Breeding and Trade

By contrast, horse breeding, and the retention of large herds of horses, seems to have been a regular preserve of the later medieval Gaelic elite, and historical references indicate that this was also the case in Uí Maine. A reference for the year 1295 highlights how the Uí Chellaig raided a chieftain of *Corcu Achlann*, with the specific intention of stealing his horses (*AC*). In 1337, Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, was defeated, wounded and taken prisoner by the Uí Chellaig, as well as having his horses and armour plundered, and many of his men killed (*AC*). In both cases, it was deemed noteworthy that the Uí Chellaig acquired their opponents' horses. Horses were bred for a multiplicity of purposes, for transport and travel, for farming endeavours, for war, and for sport (Nicholls 2008, 416; Gleeson 2015, 35). According to the literature, all Irish chiefs of any standing kept studs, and the horse-trade could be a considerable source of wealth (O'Neill 1987, 104; Watt 2008, 330).

For specific information relating to the importance of the horse in later medieval Uí Maine, we have some faint insights. *Nósa Ua Maine* anachronistically records the Cenél Áedha na hEchtghe as the kindred in charge of rearing Ó Cellaig's horses (*Nósa*, 545). In 1308, a considerable number of Ó Cellaig light horse, of the *hobelar* type, accompanied William *Liath* de Burgh on campaign in the Leinster Mountains (P. Connolly 1982, 3-5). The horses used by the *hobelar* were called 'hobbies'. These were a small, nimble horse bred for scouting endeavours and for operating in rough terrain (Bolger 2017, 93-6; see Pl. 3.3; Fig. 3.11). Presumably the Uí Chellaig operated a number of studs throughout the lordship in order to breed such horses that operated effectively in the often wet or boggy lowland landscapes of Uí Maine. An entry for the year 1558 indicates that the Ó Fallamháin of Clann Uadach (see 5.2.1.2), by that time a vassal clan of the Ó Cellaig lordship, maintained a horse stud on their lands (*ALC*), while a fiant from 1585 lists pardons granted to 'Hugh O Kelly of Lisdalone' and his company, a number of which are described as 'horsemen' (*Fiant* II, 673 [4661]). Finally, the survival of the Ballinasloe Horse Fair as a significant regional annual horse fair from at least as early as the mid-eighteenth century, and arguably a lot earlier (see Appendix 4), within what was the study area, suggests that horse breeding and trading may have been one of the normal economic practices underpinning the Ó Cellaig lordship in the later medieval period.

Plate 3.3 – A probable fifteenth-century wall painting of the figure of an armoured Gaelic lord on horseback, riding in distinctive Irish fashion without a saddle, from Clare Island Cistercian Abbey, Co. Mayo. The horse breed depicted is small in stature, and is likely to be a pictorial example of the Irish 'hobby' breed (Image source: agefotostock).

Figure 3.11 - Art Mór Mac Murchadha Caomhánach riding to meet the earl of Gloucester, as depicted in an illustration to Jean Creton's Histoire du roy d'Angleterre Richard II. *Note the small size of the horse used by Mac Murchadha Caomhánach,*

a likely depiction of the 'hobby' horse breed used by the later medieval Gaelic Irish. Hobbies were specifically bred to operate in rough terrain, be it boggy lowland areas or uplands. (Image permissions: British Library Harleian MS 1319).

3.5.3 – Arable Farming

Evidence for arable farming in later medieval Gaelic Ireland is difficult to establish, due to the relative lack of archaeological excavation and historical pollen analyses in these areas, and the reliance on surviving historical documentation. Analysis of historical sources indicates that pastoral products provided the larger portion of the Irish diet, however, it wasn't the exclusive source of food. The Gaelic Irish seem to have grown large quantities of oats, some barley and wheat, as well as considerable amounts of flax, for the production of linen. Oats and oatcakes were a staple food, as attested to in both Irish and overseas accounts (Nicholls 2008, 411). This farming practice was apparently undertaken on a relatively small-scale, and tephra-dated pollen evidence from Gaelic Ulster supports the argument for this regime (Hall and Bunting 2001, 220-2). As indicated above, (3.5.1) this cereal production may have coincided with the transhumance cycle. There is suggestion of long-fallow cultivation occurring in these areas, in order to allow the soil to recover suitably for replanting (Nicholls 2008, 411).

The prominence of cereal production as a routine farming practice in later medieval Uí Maine is more difficult to demonstrate. The cereals processed at early medieval Kilbegly were not grown in the immediate area, and the production or acquisition of this product was likely controlled by Clonmacnoise (Jackman and O'Keeffe 2013, 149-52). By contrast, the later medieval pollen profile collected in Ballinphuill bog indicates that this immediate area was intensively farmed, and possessed a strong cereal growing component (see 3.2.2). More than this, the excavations at nearby Loughbown I and Mackney ringforts uncovered corn-drying kilns at both sites (Bower 2014, 177; Delaney 2014, 194-5; see 4.3.1). So while there is little in the way of surviving historical documentation describing the level of arable cultivation in later medieval Uí Maine, the pollen and archaeological evidence, such as it is, is hinting that cereal cultivation was more prominent in this later medieval Gaelic lordship, at least, than historians such as Nicholls believe.

The late-fourteenth century praise poem *Fá urraidh labhras leac Theamhrach*, in its ode to Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, is careful to highlight the bounty of the land provided by Maolsechlainn's reign by describing the presence of 'dark corn in the white fields' surrounding Athleague (*Fá urraidh labhras leac Theamhrach*, 14). The slightly earlier poem, *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, also has an allusion to crop production in the vicinity of Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon in the mid-fourteenth century (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 61). This indicates

that by the late medieval period, cereal production was seen as an important resource to the people of the lordship. More concrete evidence of this development of cereal production in Uí Maine is seen in two late fifteenth-century annalistic entries (1487 and 1489) relating again to Athleague and its environs. These clearly indicate that corn was grown in the area at that time (*AFM*). The presence of a mill within the building complex at Athleague Castle may assist in further understanding the economic character of this part of the lordship. While the earliest record we have for a mill on the site comes from the mid seventeenth-century Strafford Survey, it is not beyond reason that milling at the site was a long-standing activity (http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Athlone&c=Roscommon). Mills were commonly associated with tower houses and their estates, and are indicative of economic growth and cereal production in any given area (McAlister 2019, 78-80).

We have already seen that cereal production could also be theorised from toponymical information, and in the survival of 'grange' townlands in the lordship, they correspond with the outfarm estates attached to, usually, a Cistercian foundation in the region. The grange was an economic unit designed to provide a food surplus for the use of the monastic order, and particularly in the south-eastern part of Ireland, they are synonymous with cultivation, cereal production and sheep farming (Stout 2015, 28-9, 66-7). Two 'grange' townlands attached to Boyle Abbey, Co. Roscommon are located in Tír Maine, the aforementioned Grange (see 3.5.1), and the *Grange of O'Fallon*, which corresponds with the townland of Milltown (Stout 2015, 45). Milltown, with the remains of a castle of unclassified form (RO047-058001-), the wall footings of a surrounding castle bawn (RO047-058022-), houses and field systems, was a late medieval *cenn áit* of the principal family of Clann Uadach, the Uí Fhallamhain (see 2.3; 5.2.1.2). The toponymical reference to milling in this place-name may corroborate the earlier point that cereal production was far more common in the Ó Cellaig lordship than it initially seems.

3.5.4 – Resources Derived from the Natural Environment

3.5.4.1 – Timber Resources

Substantial zones of woodland were to be found in the region during the later medieval period (see 3.2.2). These semi-natural stands of native woodland would have provided a variety of resources to society in Uí Maine. Cattle and sheep were routinely grazed in woody pasture, and the 'mast' (acorns and other nuts) harvest was a vital food source for keeping pigs (Nicholls 2008, 415; Finan 2016, 75). The bark of certain trees would have been used for tanning leather

(Everett 2014, 17). Timber resources from these woods were a very valuable commodity to the lordship also, and may provide a reason why the *Feadha* were briefly defined in early-thirteenth century Anglo-Normans grants as a named cantred, *Tirieghrachbothe* or *Tír Fhiachrach bhfeadh* (*CDI*, i, No. 137). Timber from these woodlands would have provided the raw materials for the great majority of buildings constructed in Uí Maine, as well as providing a ready source of firewood and building materials for both domestic and industrial purposes, while charcoal was another commodity which would have been derived from these areas, all suggesting managed woodland (Nicholls 2003, 198-202; see Gardiner and O'Conor 2018, 150).

Many of the previously outlined townland names denoting woodland describe the natural environment solely, however, one name illuminates the value that these woodlands possessed for construction purposes. Cornaseer – *Cor na soar* (round hill of the carpenters) is located on Doran's Route 11 between Athlone and Roscommon. It is interesting to note that William de Prene, the king's carpenter, was granted a manor at Moyvannon in 1286, the next townland directly to the north of Cornaseer (*CDI*, iii, No. 528). Perhaps the king's carpenter was granted this manor to be in a position to provide seasoned and worked timber from the *Feadha* for maintenance works on local royal castles, such as Roscommon, Rindoon or Athlone. It might also explain why de Prene was fined £20 for wasting timber in the same year (Stalley 1978, 38; Walton 1980, 282-3).

Although undocumented, it is likely that the region benefited from a trade in timber throughout the period under inspection. Certainly the river network would have assisted in the transportation of large quantities of timber out of the territory and further afield (Nicholls 2001, 198-200). Irish oak was prized for church construction in both England and France in the later medieval period, and there was a steady export reported of Irish timber to England and Wales. This trade in timber was apparently largely managed by Gaelic Irish lords like the Uí Chellaig (O'Neill 1987, 99-100).

Other resources could be derived from the wild animals who used these areas as their habitat. Deer would have been hunted for its meat and antlers, while there was a brisk trade between Ireland and England in the later medieval period in animal pelts, both wild and domestic (O'Neill 1987, 98). Attaching this hunting and trade specifically to Uí Maine is difficult, however, the toponymy does point to what were traditionally good loci for hunting within the lordship, examples such as Glennanea – *Gleann an fhiadh* (vale of the deer or stag), Feacle –

Fiadh-choill (deer wood) and Skeanamuck – *Sgiatha na muc* (shrubbery of the wild pigs), all found within the *túath* of Magh Finn. The survival of the place-name of Clonbrock – *Cluain Broc* (meadow of the badgers), Co. Galway may also directly reflect this area to be a former hunting environment. Early medieval sources regarded the badger as one of the three principal game-animals during the period, and suggest that they were hunted for food (Kelly 2016b, 282). It is also likely that they were hunted for their pelts and for sport. For its part, *Nósa Ua Maine* records Ó Cellaig's 'otter-hunting and fishing' (*Nósa*, 547).

3.5.4.2 – Freshwater Fish

The latter reference shows that organised fishing did take place in later medieval Uí Maine. Again documentation is lacking in terms of the economic value which freshwater fish may have provided to the lordship in the later medieval period, however, the number of viable fishing rivers and lakes in Uí Maine must have been utilised. The fish trade was important to the later medieval economy, particularly when considering the religious dietary restrictions imposed on the population (O'Neill 1987, 38). Organised harvesting of freshwater fish for the table would have been undertaken. Athlone Castle was recorded as operating a fishery in 1284 (*CDI*, ii, No. 2329). More than this, two fish weirs survive on the archaeological record for the region. The 'Old Weir' on the River Suck at Mount Talbot was extant in 1837, and the second is located at the ford over the River Shannon at *Raghra*, modern-day Shannonbridge, and was historically-attested to in 1620 (Mac Cuarta 1987, 178-9).

The principal fish sought were salmon, trout and eels, while an early seventeenth century source refers also to bream and pike, which once caught, were an important component of trade locally, or were salted or pickled for longer distance trade (McInerney (ed.) 2012, 36). Merchants from as far afield as Bristol routinely travelled to the ports of the west of Ireland to acquire salmon, while fish merchants regularly brought eels from Athlone to Dublin, where they were a valuable foodstuff (O'Neill 1987, 38-43). Commercial or semi-commercial trout and eel fishing is attested to on Lough Ree in recent centuries, with the fishermen selling their produce in Athlone and at other local markets (O'Brien 2015, 225-6). This hints that the rich fisheries of Lough Ree, the Shannon, and the Suck were utilised in later medieval times. One indication of this is that a later-medieval iron fish hook (Pl. 3.4) was found during the excavations at Loughbown I ringfort (Bower 2014, 179).

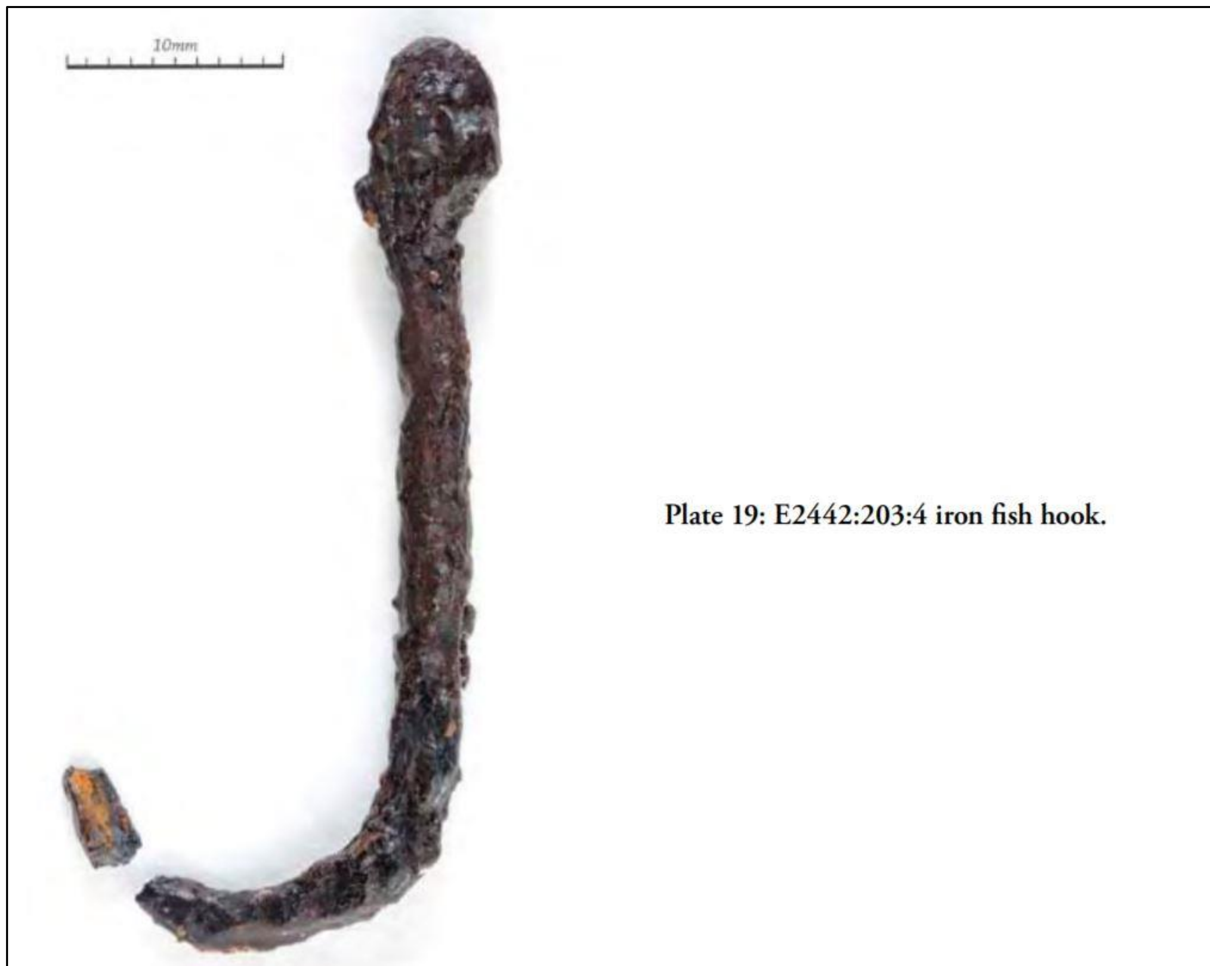

Plate 3.4 – Iron fish hook from Loughbown I ringfort excavation. Image from Archaeological Excavation Report E2442 - Loughbown 1, Co. Galway (Bower 2009, 69).

3.5.4.3 – Mineral Extraction

There is a possibility that other resources were derived from the natural environment of the region, albeit the evidence for it is slight. Evidence of occasional metalworking was uncovered at both Loughbown I and Mackney ringforts, in the form of quantities of charcoal, slag and iron ore (Bower 2014, 176-7; Delaney 2014, 194). This iron ore must have been sourced somewhere in the region, and the excavations indicate that there was a demand for these minerals.

Mineral acquisition, or perhaps surface or open-cast mining is indicated by a number of townland names. Killoy – *Cill luaighe* (wood of the lead), Co. Roscommon may point to the surface mining of lead in the area in the historic past. We have widespread evidence of lead being worked in Ireland from the early medieval period onwards (Edwards 1990, 90-1, 187; O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney 2014, 227). Excavations in advance of the M6 infrastructural project in Treanbaun townland, Co. Galway, some 40km to the southwest of

Killoy, uncovered a large (7m in diameter, 2.2m deep) circular mine pit, from which were recovered a series of radio-carbon dates ranging from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age period. An additional radio-carbon date, albeit anomalous, may point to the use of this open-cast mine through to the seventh and ninth centuries AD. The mineral that was extracted at Treanbaun is known as *galena*, which is a lead-ore, and which is associated with lead and silver mining (Muniz-Pérez 2014, 130-1). The evidence in the townland name of Killoy suggests that similar mineral extraction may have taken place in this location during the later medieval period.

Cloghnashade – *Cloch na séad* (stone of the jewels), Co. Roscommon speculatively provides evidence of mineral acquisition or extraction between Lough Croan and Athleague. Another nearby townland, Cloonruff – *Cluain Ruibh* (the meadow of the brimstone or sulphur), 5km to the west, has been postulated as a 'Seefin' boundary location linked to the mythologically-derived Finn landscapes of medieval Ireland. These Finn landscapes have been argued to originate as boundary markers and wilderness zones within a territory, often reserved for hunting activities, and associated in some cases with mineral extraction for economic purposes (FitzPatrick and Hennessy 2017, 32, 34, 37). Research into this part of the medieval Gaelic economy is little understood, but the presence of these names in the landscape is intriguing as regards their use in the historic environment nonetheless.

3.5.5 – Wealth and its Expression

What is apparent from the preceding sections of this chapter is that a considerable diversity of commodities were available to the society of later medieval Uí Maine. Historians would have us believe that these commodities were traded and utilised in a largely coinless economy (Watt 2008, 330-1). However, archaeological investigations both within the study area and in its near vicinity presents a different picture. Later medieval coinage has been uncovered at both Loughbown I and Mackney ringforts, while a substantial early-fourteenth century coin hoard was uncovered in 1969 at the Ó Conchobair inauguration venue of Carnfree, Co. Roscommon, a focal point of their lordship. In 2019, excavation nearby on a previously unidentified ringfort in Gortnacrannagh townland, in advance of the N5 Bypass project, uncovered another Edward I or II silver penny (Dolley and Murphy 1970; Bower 2014, 179; Delaney 2014, 195; John Channing, pers. comm.; Pl. 3.5). Excavations at Kilteasheen, Rockingham Demense, the Rock of Lough Cé and Trinity Island, all within the Mac Diarmada lordship of Maigh Luirg, Co. Roscommon, uncovered late-thirteenth and fourteenth century coins in both burial and

settlement contexts (Clyne 2005, 57, 68-9; Read 2010, 58; Thomas Finan, pers. comm.). Furthermore, a substantial hoard of 234, primarily English minted, coins of mid-thirteenth century date was uncovered at Drumercool, Co. Roscommon in 1941, also within the limits of the Maigh Luirg lordship, which could have been deposited for safekeeping by either the local Irish or Anglo-Normans operating in the area (Kenny 1983, 171). All of this evidence indicates that coinage was commonplace throughout Gaelic society in later medieval Connacht. These findings are unsurprising, when considering the proximity of the study area to the Anglo-Norman towns of Athlone, Athenry, Loughrea, Rindoon, Roscommon, and the port of Galway, and the trade which undoubtedly occurred with these settlement hubs. This in turn created a wealth which ultimately benefited the Ó Cellaig lords, as it returned to them directly, or via tax, rents and tribute (Nicholls 2003, 34-40). However, prior to engaging in a discussion about how prosperous this made the Gaelic lords of Uí Maine, consideration must be given to those who generated the wealth.

Plate 3.5 - Medieval coin, Gortnacrannagh 2, N5 Road Project, Co Roscommon. (Photo John Channing, provided courtesy of AMS, TII & Roscommon County Council).

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with the archaeological manifestations of lordship in later medieval Uí Maine, this section makes it apparent that beneath the elite were several strata of lower-status communities, whose work and lives were responsible for creating the environment within which the lords could operate. These people are nearly invisible, and thus easily forgotten. There has been little archaeological investigation of their settlements (O'Conor 2002a; Gardiner and O'Conor 2017, 146-8). If, however, we use the evidence from the excavations at Ballyhanna, Co. Donegal as proxy for understanding how rural communities in

a Gaelic region lived and died, it creates a compelling image of the lives of lower-status communities in later medieval Uí Maine. This includes, among other things, the relatively high-levels of young adult male mortality, the common instance of accidental death, and how vulnerable these communities were to changes in the wider environment, such as disease and famine (McKenzie and Murphy 2018, 106-14). This is in contrast with the later medieval Gaelic elite, whose obits indicate that, aside from death in battle or assassination in succession disputes, the lordly class routinely lived much longer. For example, Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig was politically active by 1339, but his father died in 1307, and Uilliam himself didn't die until 1381, meaning that he was at least in his early seventies, if not much older, upon his death. His son Maolsechlainn first appeared in 1351, and did not die until 1401, meaning it is quite possible that he also lived into his early-to-mid seventies. Maolsechlainn's great grandson and namesake, Maolsechlainn, lord of Uí Maine and builder the castles at Garbally, Gallagh and Monivea (see 2.6), was at least seventy-one upon his death in 1511. Ultimately, their status and resources played a role in securing this longevity, with access to better quality and quantities of food, as well as their ability to call upon professional medical care. The landholdings of hereditary physician families can be identified in some instances close to the residence of a chieftain in later medieval Gaelic Ireland (FitzPatrick 2018, 170-1), and evidence for a service family operating in this capacity for the Ó Cellaig lord will be outlined below (see 5.3.4.2).

It is from the lower-status communities that the herders and farmers of the lord were derived, those who milked the vast dairy herds, made the butter, cheeses and curd, and worked the wool into clothing. These people slaughtered, skinned and butchered the livestock and wild animals for the table and trade, and engaged in the toil of processing skins into cattle hides and tanned leather. It is also from this strata of society that the tree fellers, foresters and construction teams of the elite's buildings came from. We must not forget the groups who sought to generate an income from hunting, fishing and fowling in the lord's territory. It is these people who underpinned the economy of the Ó Cellaig lordship, and we must be aware of their stories as we piece together the lordly centres of this region. In the future, hopefully excavation can answer questions relating to these lower status communities.

The wealth derived from the economic activities outlined above is difficult to calculate. The lack of detailed socio-economic and administrative records for Gaelic Ireland makes it hard to get an accurate understanding of the prosperity of a region. One source which bucks this trend is the Ecclesiastical Taxation of Ireland, 1302-1306. However, as outlined above (1.6.1), even this source does little to accurately inform us of the wealth of Uí Maine at the beginning of the

fourteenth century. Chevallier has argued against using the Ecclesiastical Taxation as an unbiased indicator of wealth in later medieval Ireland. He also argues that the accepted belief that the later medieval Gaelic Irish were economically disadvantaged is misplaced, rather that the economic organisation of early-fourteenth century Gaelic lordships meant that they did not produce easily countable surpluses. Chevallier has pointed out that the Gaelic economy is not readily identifiable in the taxation, owing to it being primarily a pastoral economy, with the transfer of earnings routinely occurring through the provision of gifts, the use of barter, the billeting of troops, as well as direct consumption, all of which are difficult to measure. These traits, along with the exclusion of unsold livestock and pastoral landholdings from assessment, have created a skewed impression of the wealth of later medieval Gaelic lordships. The absence of these surpluses meant that they did not contribute to the valuations of the parish churches in their respective dioceses to the same extent as was seen in other regions, rather than it being an indication that the Gaelic Irish were poorer than their Anglo-Norman counterparts (Chevallier 2019, 21).

So, in the absence of detailed written indications of wealth in the Ó Cellaig lordship, information must be sought elsewhere. One of the most visible displays of wealth and prosperity in the study area corresponds with the foundation and/or patronage granted to religious houses in the lordship. Four of the principal religious houses in the study area associated with the Uí Chellaig are Kilconnell Franciscan Friary, the Augustinian priory of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine (Clontuskert, Co. Galway), the Cistercian monastery of Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway, and the Hospital of the Crutched Friars at Rindoon, Co. Roscommon.

The most heavily patronised of the four religious foundations by the Uí Chellaig was Kilconnell. The year 1353 records the foundation of Kilconnell Franciscan Friary by Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig (*AFM*), while historically-attested patronage and remodelling works during the fifteenth century correspond with the majority of the surviving architectural remains. However, this has also led to the erroneous date for its foundation being ascribed to 1414 by some scholars (e.g. Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 251; Harbison 2005, 58-9). Numerous highly decorative tombs are found within the friary buildings, and although the occupants of some are unidentified, some are likely to be members of the Ó Cellaig family, with one of them possibly holding the remains of Uilliam Buide himself (see 5.3.4.3). Ó Cellaig patronage at Kilconnell also came in the form of more portable items. These include numerous chalices, illustrated books and other religious pieces. A number of the items retained inscriptions indicating that

they were donated by Ó Cellaig lords in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Jennings 1944; see 5.3.4.3). The patronage at Kilconnell echoes the wider interest amongst the ascendant fourteenth and fifteenth-century Ó Cellaig lords in showing off their prestige and surplus wealth to the world. This was also achieved through the patronage of poets and the commissioning of praise poetry, the convention of feasts, the recording of *Nósa Ua Maine*, the collating of *Leabhar Ua Maine*, amongst other endeavours.

Historical record for the continued use of Kilconnell Friary as a place of burial for the Uí Chellaig can be seen into the fifteenth century, with the burial of another Uilliam, lord of Uí Maine. It is unsurprising that Uilliam was buried here, considering as he is remembered as a prominent patron of the site, along with his wife (Smith 2014). The mid and late-fifteenth century (*c.*1450-1475) saw the substantial programme of rebuilding as well as the introduction of Observant reform at Kilconnell, both commissioned by Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, an undertaking that contributed to the bulk of the surviving remains on the religious house. The best surviving of these remains include the tower, nave, choir and south transept and aisle (*Ibid.*).

A second religious foundation which came to be extensively patronised by the Ó Cellaig was Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine. Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine was a house of the Augustinian Canons Regular, deemed to have been founded in the mid-to-late twelfth century (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 165; Fanning 1976, 97, 100). One of the first records of the sobriquet of Cluain Tuaiscirt 'O Máine' is found in a Papal Petition of 1379 (*Clonfert*, 283; Molloy 2009, 52), indicating that it was regarded as under Ó Cellaig patronage at this time. The year 1404 saw the religious house 'burned by lightning' (*MacC*; *Clonfert*, 33-4), an unfortunate incident which most likely initiated the major programme of rebuilding seen at the priory throughout the fifteenth century, seemingly funded by the Uí Chellaig, concluding with the erection of the western doorway in 1471 (Fanning 1976, 102; O'Mahoney 2014). The surviving remains, much of it fifteenth century in date, include the nave, chancel, rood screen, transepts, cloister arcade, chapter room, sacristy, cellars, and an oven. Elaborate decoration is also seen on the eastern traceried window and, particularly on the carved stone panels of the western doorway, which was the main entrance for the lay congregation, and likely to have been the work of a prominent local sculptor known as Johannes. All this work shows the prosperity of the religious house under its Uí Chellaig patrons (Moss 2015, 194). In this century, the wealth of the priory can be seen increasing thanks to the evidence surviving from the Papal Letters, a growth that was matched by the development, and eventual supremacy, of Ó Cellaig patronage and monopoly over the

priory (Fanning 1976, 102-3). The Papal Registers record a number of reported offences, nearly exclusively undertaken by Ó Cellaig priors. In 1445, prior Odo (Aodh) Ó Cellaig was accused of simony, and in 1473 prior Donatus Ó Cellaig was accused of keeping a concubine, and of committing homicide (*Clonfert*, 80, 153-4). Judging from these historical entries from the fourteenth century onwards, it can be deduced that Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine was effectively under Ó Cellaig control, presumably with some access to the wealth that this brought also.

Abbeyknockmoy – *Mainistir Chnoc Muaidhe*, is a twelfth-century Cistercian foundation established by Cathal Crobhdearg Ó Conchobair (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 124; Stalley 1987, 133, 183, 188, 240; Moss 2015, 203). Abbeyknockmoy was one of a number of foundations associated with a group of masons known as the 'School of the West' (Moss 2015, 481). The majority of the buildings date from the early thirteenth century, with some building work in the late medieval period. By at least the mid-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Uí Chellaig had overtaken the Uí Chonchobair as the principal patrons of Abbeyknockmoy, however members of the senior Ó Cellaig line had used the religious house as a place of retirement and burial from at least as early as 1290 (*AC*; Moss 2015, 204). From the late-fourteenth century onwards, the lords of Uí Maine, as well as the younger Ó Cellaig sons who went into the religious orders, heavily patronised this Cistercian foundation, as Ó Cellaig territorial ambitions came to fruition at nearby Tiaquin (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 67; Smith 2014). Ó Cellaig displays of wealth at Abbeyknockmoy can be seen with the early fifteenth-century tomb to Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig and his wife Fionola, and the wall paintings that once adorned both this area and other locations within the abbey (Morton 2004, 342-6; Moss 2015, 204). With Abbeyknockmoy, the Uí Chellaig used their new position to exercise authority over what must have been another wealthy resource in their expanded lordship.

The Hospital of the Crutched Friars at Rindoon, Co. Roscommon was also patronised by the Uí Chellaig, particularly from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. This would coincide with the increased authority which these lords now held in Tír Maine from this period (see 2.5). The hospital was presumably founded by Henry III in the late 1220s, at the same time as the Anglo-Norman town was established, but it continued to be patronised by the local Gaelic elite after the desertion of the town in the early-fourteenth century (O'Conor and Shanahan 2018, 19). All that remains of this foundation today is what has been interpreted as the hospital's infirmary, however, this would have been accompanied by a church and other friary buildings, which would have served a range of functions for the religious community and its dependents here (O'Conor and Shanahan 2018, 21). Evidence for Uí Chellaig involvement at the hospital is seen

with the retirement and death of Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin, *saoi sheancadha ocus ollam* to the Uí Maine, at Rindoon in 1372 (*AU; AFM*) and the burial of Conchobhar Anabaidh Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, at the religious house, on which he had bestowed many benefits, in 1403 (*AC*; *ALC*). It is clear that the Hospital was heavily rebuilt, under Ó Cellaig patronage, at some stage in the fifteenth century. This seems to have included the insertion of fine traceried windows, the re-building of the cloister arcade and the erection of a tower, amongst other things (Fig. 3.12; O'Conor and Shanahan 2018, 40-1)

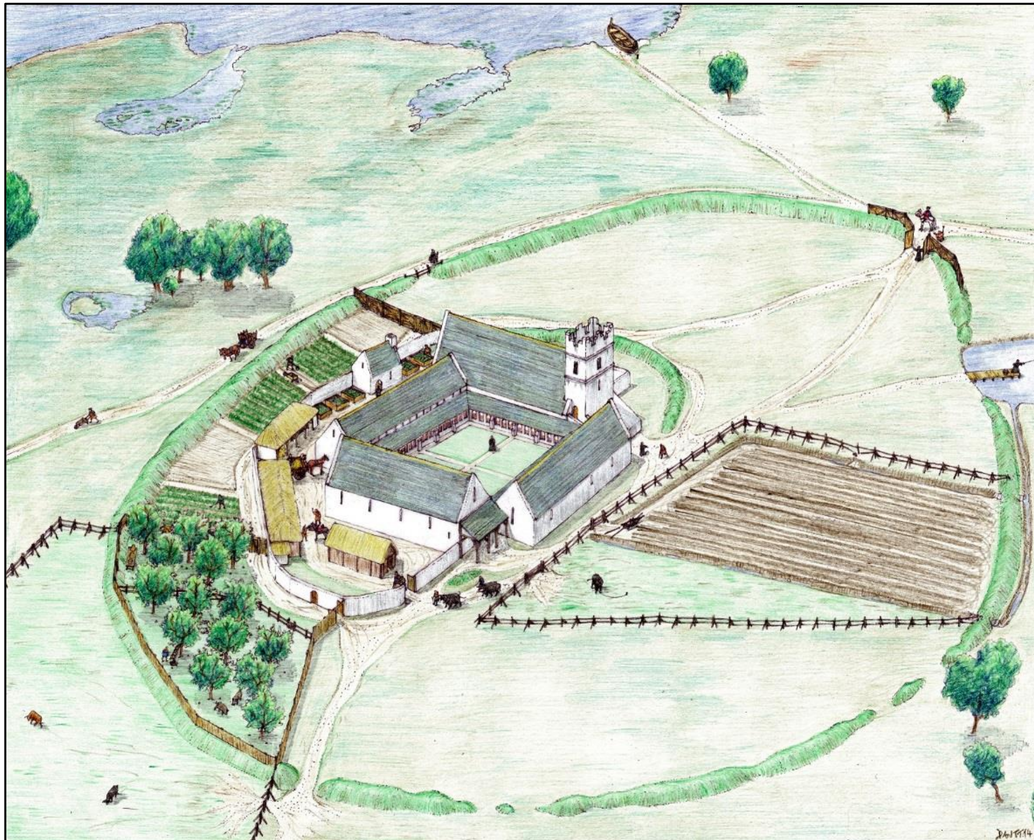

Figure 3.12 – Reconstruction illustration of the Hospital of the Crutched Friars at Rindoon, c.*1500, after its rebuilding under Ó Cellaig patronage (Reconstruction drawing by Dan Tietzsch-Tyler, commissioned by Roscommon County Council.)*

It is therefore clear to see that one of the ways in which wealth was both displayed and accrued by the Gaelic elite was through patronage and involvement in religious foundations. Plainly, this investment was beneficial to the Uí Chellaig also, in that it served as a suitable location to place younger sons and junior branches of the family, but the wealth generated by these religious houses would also have been considerable, and may have entered the coffers of the lord, either directly or indirectly. There are indications more generally that by the beginning of the fifteenth century, monasteries and priories in Gaelic lordships were becoming increasingly under the control of the local secular elite. This was part of a nuanced evolution of the church in Gaelic Ireland during the whole later medieval period, whereby abbacies and priorships

became quasi-hereditary to particular families, and, as has been demonstrated here and elsewhere, there are a number of examples where the lord's kin, or indeed the lord himself, profited from involvement in the Church (Nicholls 2003, 123-5).

Public displays of wealth could also manifest in the construction of lordly residences and feasting halls. A noteworthy example of this is seen with the moated site of Cloonfree, Co. Roscommon, the historically-attested residence of an early-fourteenth century king of Connacht. Two poems record the presence of a substantial and elaborate post and wattle constructed feasting hall in the interior of the moated site, showing the level of detail in a building for the purpose of public display (Finan and O'Conor 2002, 83-6). While elsewhere in medieval Europe such constructions, and their settings, were seen as being out of fashion, building practice in Gaelic Ireland seems to have espoused the patronage of fine craftsmen, but in order to construct residences which were deliberately archaic looking.

In our study area, the residences of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig are similarly described. In *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, the poet sets out the interior of Uilliam's residence at Galey as follows:

'The choice of stone and timber is the spacious court of the Spark of Cualu; the beams of his domed court are of oak, joined without splitting,

There is much artistic ironwork (?) upon the shining timber; on the smooth part of each brown oaken beam workmen are carving animal figures.' (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 61, 63)

Similarly, stanzas 14-21 of *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach* records another of Uilliam's residences, the description of which implies an island or *crannóg* siting, and the opulence of the interior is used in the poem to highlight the subject's wealth and prosperity (*Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*, stanzas 14-21). While these locations cannot be regarded as impressive in a European sense, they likely result out of the practicalities of how Gaelic society operated at that time, and they were nonetheless to be experienced by a select cohort of guests, including other Gaelic lords, vassal chiefs, political rivals and local freeholders. Therefore, the appearance and decoration of these residences and feasting halls was designed to highlight the affluence and power of the patron. Certainly it seems that the creation of environments which retained a real or imagined antiquity and timelessness was a major preoccupation of later medieval Gaelic lords, presumably with the continued use of older elite settlement forms, and the incorporation of deliberate anachronisms into these public theatres a means by which the

lord could demonstrate his longstanding legacy and legitimacy in the landscape (O'Conor 2018, 164-5; Fig. 6.4).

These are just two of a number of ways in which the Gaelic elite expressed the wealth and power which they derived primarily from the economic activities of their lordship. Other expressions of this wealth included the convening of regular feasts and outdoor assemblies (see 3.4), the patronage of a retinue of learned professions, particularly poets, brehons, physicans and historians, but also musicians (see, for example 5.2.3.2; 5.3.4.2; 5.4.3.1), the keeping of armed retainers (see 3.5.2; 5.3.4.3), and the maintenance of large herds of cattle and horses (see 3.5.1; 3.5.2), which all served as demonstrations of the wealth and aristocratic status of a lord of Uí Maine (O'Conor 2005, 219). Further evidence of these various attributes will be outlined in the coming chapters.

3.6 – Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that careful interrogation of a range of source materials can result in the successful reconstruction of many aspects of the physical landscape, society and economic activities which evolved in later medieval Uí Maine.

The physical landscape played a major role in shaping society and how it sustained itself in this eastern Connacht lordship, as the attributes and limitations of the landscape dictated settlement and economic endeavours. Outlined above is the range of economic activities from which the Uí Chellaig lords would have profited, from farming regimes through to the exploitation of the resources of the natural environment.

What is apparent from this chapter is that the Uí Chellaig lords became more prosperous and powerful in the study area from the early-to-mid fourteenth century onwards, with an increase in the number and diversity of displays of wealth. These correspond with the historical narrative of earlier chapters, and indicate that the increase in authority over larger and more economically prosperous areas within the lordship resulted in a parallel increase in wealth. This affluence was then expressed through a range of lordly undertakings, some of which are still apparent in literary survivals, as well as in upstanding architectural and archaeological remains. Piecing this information together answers one of the research questions attached to the central aim of this thesis, but more than this, it has set the scene from which an effective study of the lordly centres of this territory can take place, and is thus a vital component of the overall research.

Chapter 4 – The Settlement Archaeology of Later Medieval Gaelic Uí Maine

4.1 – Introduction

One of the key questions which this research seeks to address is understanding what settlement forms were constructed and occupied by the Ó Cellaig elites throughout the later medieval period (see 1.3). In a general way, an attempt to start answering this question is undertaken in this chapter and this lays the foundations for the more detailed analyses of case studies of selected Ó Cellaig lordship centres seen in the next three chapters of this thesis. This chapter will also chart the changes in settlement forms selected by the Uí Chellaig lords of Uí Maine throughout the period, between 1100 and 1600. The chapter will discuss the following settlement forms: high-medieval castles in Uí Maine; ringforts and cashels; high-cairn *crannóga*; the *bódhún*; Gaelic moated sites; the amorphous *pailís*; and finally, late-medieval tower houses.

4.2 – High-Medieval Castles in Uí Maine

The origins of the castle in medieval Irish archaeology is a topic which creates much debate. The castle is traditionally regarded as having been introduced into Ireland with the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. However, some scholars believe that the origins of castle-building predate 1170, and depend largely on historical references and morphological similarities in order to prove their point. These scholars are helped with a broad definition that could be applied to the castle. In its simplest terms, a castle has been be defined as the seriously defended residence of someone of lordly status in medieval society (e.g. King 1988, 1-13; De Meulemeester and O'Conor 2008, 323-4). This definition incorporates a substantial diversity of castle types from a morphological point of view. This has led to the superficial and erroneous labelling of a number of high-medieval Gaelic lordly sites as castles, when their morphology and setting indicates that they are, in fact, an evolution of a series of native site types, and are more complex and nuanced than the label implies. An example of this which impacts upon our understanding of the Ó Cellaig study area concerns the term *caistél*, which is found in a small number of historical entries, particularly in the twelfth century. A number of these fortifications are recorded as having been constructed by Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair, particularly in the early part of his reign (Ó Corráin 1972, 150-1). One of these occurred within the study area – the *caistél* of *Dún Leodha*.

4.2.1 – The caistél *of* Dún Leodha

In 1124, Toirrdelbach is recorded as constructing a *caistél* fortification at *Dún Leodha*, now Dunlo townland, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway (*AFM*). Previously a fortification on this site was described as a *dún* in 1114 (*AFM*). What form, or forms, these *caistél* took has been the source of much debate in archaeological circles for a number of years, owing in large part to the lack of immediately identifiable examples in the Irish landscape today (Nicholls 1982, 389; Graham 1990, 233-5; O'Keeffe 1998, 187-9; Barry 2007; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 34-40; Naessens and O'Conor 2012). As regards the morphology of *Dún Leodha* specifically, most studies cite the same primary source, Samuel Molyneux's *Journey to Connaught, April 1709* (Smith 1846). Molyneux provides the following description of a monument located in Ballinasloe at the beginning of the eighteenth century:

> 'Here is a Danes-mount, with a large trench round it: 'tis so flat one might allmost take it for a fort: this, with one more, were the only mounts I saw on all ye road between Killeglan [townland in Taughmaconnell parish] and Gallway, tho' their forts were all along mighty frequent.' (Smith 1846, 166)

According to O'Keeffe, Molyneux used the term 'Danesmount' when describing high, motte-like mounds (O'Keeffe 1998, 188; 2019, 122-3; 2021, 38-43), a description that has its own difficulties. In this respect, it has been suggested that the *caistél* built at *Dún Leodha* in 1124 was a motte castle. Furthermore, it has recently been suggested that all of these pre-Norman *caistél*/*caislen* sites were also motte castles, being a type of fortification recently imported into Ireland with the ideology known as feudalism (O'Keeffe 2019). However, other research has concluded that at least some of these pre-Norman strongholds, while more imposing and utilising mortar in their construction, were really a hybrid of the native ringfort, *crannóg* and cashel-building traditions (Naessens and O'Conor 2012, 266-7). Notable examples which incorporated aspects of, particularly, the *crannóg* and cashel can be seen at Iniscremha Island and *Caislen na Circe* on Lough Corrib, Co. Galway, *Caislen na Caillighe* on Lough Mask, Co. Mayo, the Rock of Lough Cé and possibly *Loch Cairgín* [Ardakillin Lough], both Co. Roscommon (Shanahan 2008, 9; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 21-40; Naessens and O'Conor 2012, 263-6; see Fig. 4.1).

Unlike these *'caistél' crannóga*, however, which have survived intact in some form to present day, the physical manifestation of the 'dryland' *caistél* is more elusive. One noteworthy characteristic of these constructions is the pairing of a fortification with a bridge, something

that is seen at Athlone (1120), Killaloe (1170), and also, in the present context, *Dún Leodha* (1120) (*AFM*; Flanagan, 1997, 63). Therefore, as regards the complex of features that were constructed, the presence of a bridge or fortified river-crossing is telling. As regards the morphology of the 'dryland' *caistél* specifically, however, there is further debate.

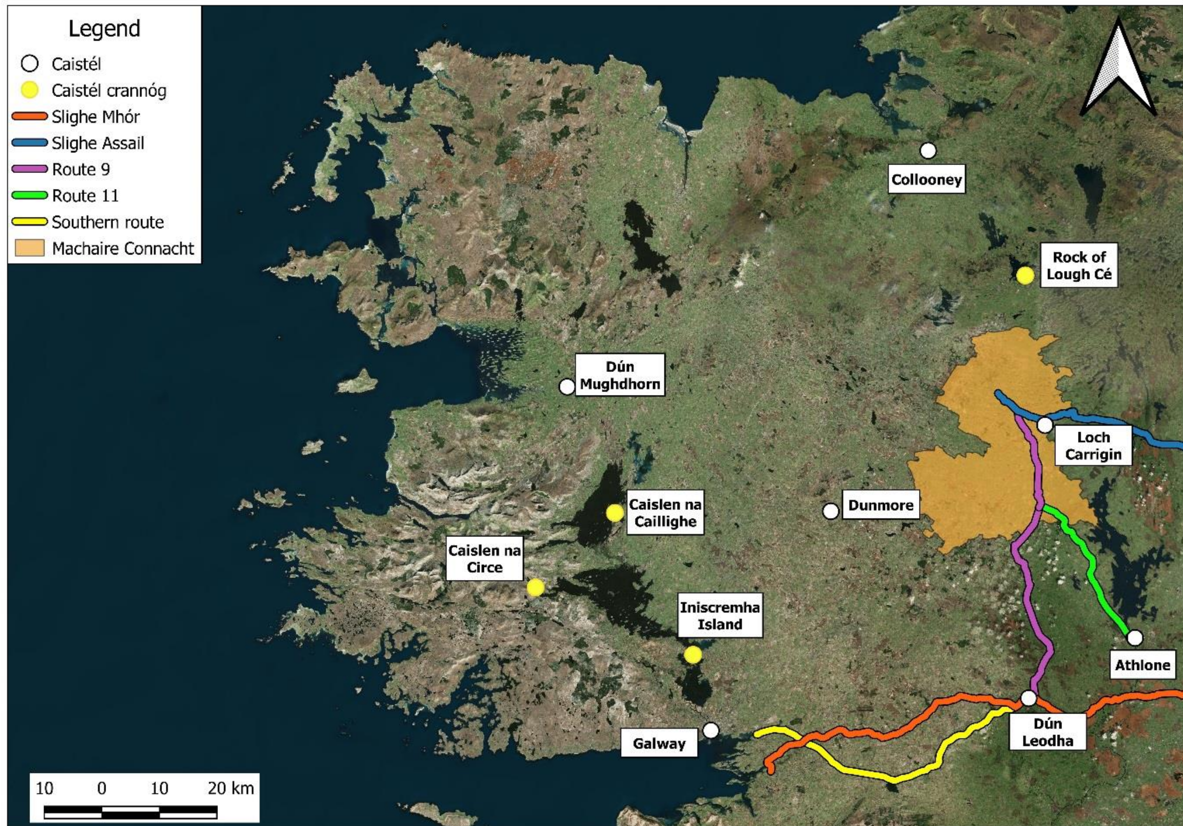

Figure 4.1 – The locations of the caistél fortifications constructed by Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair during his twelfth-century reign as king of Connacht. The other caistél crannóga referred to in the text are also indicated.

Many 'dryland' *caistél* are likely to have been constructed of a combination of stone, earth and timber, as perhaps evidenced by the annalistic records for them being burned on numerous occasions, such as at Athlone in 1131 and again 1155 (Leask 1941, 6; Sherlock 2016, 5), and when *Dún Leodha* itself was burned by casual fire in 1131 (*ACl*). Returning to the earthen remains at *Dún Leodha*, as described by Molyneux, there is an issue. The site of *Dún Leodha* does not survive above ground today, and there is even some confusion as to its location. As a result, other monuments must be considered as a means of providing a comparison. Candidates for this investigation have been proposed in the past, such as the flat-topped mound and enclosure at Dunmore, Co. Galway (GA017-069001-), as well as a number of excavated raised ringforts, particularly in Co. Down. The excavated evidence indicate that they are multi-period in date (with some dating to as early as the later eighth and ninth century), with the later horizons consistent in broad chronology with the historically-attested *caistél* of the twelfth

century (O'Keeffe 2000, 27-9; O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney, 2014, 78-9). These sites provided better defence and a suitable level of elevation over the wider landscape than what could be deemed for ‘flat’ ringforts, and it has been suggested these sites indicate the pre-Norman adoption by the Gaelic elite of motte castles for defence and habitation in the twelfth century, following a wider European trend in the process (Nicholls 1982, 389; Graham 1988b, 117; O'Keeffe 2000, 29; 2019). Other research, as noted, into these twelfth-century structures argues that the new fortifications, associated with the terms *caistél* and *caislen*, were inspired from a fusion of native traditions as opposed to influence from abroad, which therefore suggests that these fortifications were an Irish development from their own building practices, possibly a result of changes in societal and military needs during the preceding centuries (Naessens and O'Conor 2012, 267).

In the absence of surviving archaeological remains for *Dún Leodha*, an interpretation of the site can only be attempted based upon its presumed location. Barry has suggested that *Dún Leodha* may have stood where the later medieval masonry castle now resides, on the eastern bank of the River Suck (Barry 2007, 38). However, this ignores the fact that Dunlo townland is located entirely to the west of the river. More recently, O’Keeffe has suggested that the site of *Dún Leodha* is located beneath the nineteenth-century St. John the Evangelist church in Ballinasloe (O'Keeffe 2019, 122-3). However, this identification is suspect. Firstly, again, the latter church is not in Dunlo townland. More than this, however, O’Keeffe’s identification is especially suspect when one considers the notes taken by O’Donovan in 1838, when he writes that:

> ‘This name (Dunlo) it received from a fort which stood over the Suck where the present Roman Catholic chapel stands, but which is now just destroyed’ (*OS Letters, Galway*, 127)

The ‘Roman Catholic chapel’ referred to in the letter is consistent with the ‘R. C. Chapel’ marked on the western side of the river in the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map (which dates to 1838), now the site of St. Michael’s Catholic Church, which was completed in 1858. Should O’Donovan’s information be correct, then this, coupled with the place-name evidence, would tell us that *caistél Dún Leodha* was located on the western bank of the River Suck, on the boundary between the modern townlands of Townparks to the northwest, and Dunlo to the southeast.

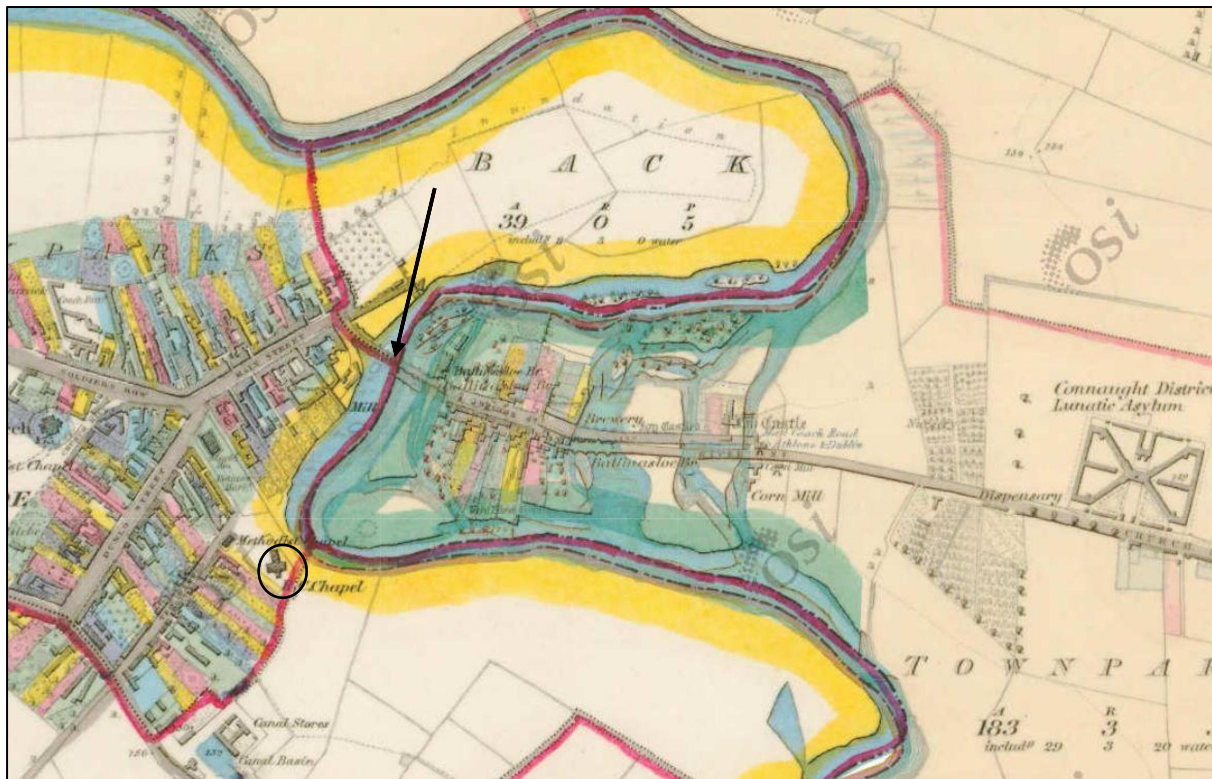

Figure 4.2 - 1st Edition Ordnance Survey illustrating the number of islets that made up the fording place of Áth Nadsluaigh. The R.C. Chapel referred to by O'Donovan is highlighted by the black circle. The location of the late medieval stone bridge is indicated by the black arrow. Another candidate visible on the map is the hachured circle on the islet immediately eact of the R.C. Chapel, however, this is adjudged to be small sand-pit or quarry (Image courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland).

In evaluating the likelihood of *Dún Leodha* being sited where St. Michael's Church is now, we must interrogate the extent to which this landscape has changed over time. The modern course of the River Suck through Ballinasloe is somewhat modified from how it once flowed, even as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map highlights the presence of a series of islets between the eastern and western banks of the river, which have since become consolidated as a single, much larger, island on the river in the twentieth century (Fig. 4.2). Judging from the cartographic source, the river once flowed in multiple courses through the settlement that built up around this ford. Two main courses are identifiable on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, with the more westerly and wider of the two original courses flowing beneath the late-medieval stone bridge, and right next to where St. Michael's Church is located. Therefore, if the fortification of *Dún Leodha* was sited here, it would once have been strategically located, and in effect, be in the best position to control all riverine navigation down the River Suck and overland transportation across the ford at this point. Thereafter, one can only theorise that perhaps *caistél Dún Leodha* served as an impressive earthwork, which cast a shadow over the ford of *Áth Nadsluaigh* (Fig. 4.3), in much the same way as the combination of bridge and fortification served the Shannon ford of Athlone

at the same time. Molyneux's description of what may be *Dún Leodha* seems to be describing a monument that was morphologically somewhere between a mound and an ordinary ringfort – perhaps best described as a low mound. Was this a motte castle? Without excavation, this is at the very least uncertain. Arguably, it could have been an earthwork fortification in the tradition of the 'raised' *ráth* but even this is uncertain as another way of interpreting Molyneux's description is that the site was a flat 'ringfort' with a slightly raised interior. Nor were raised *ráthanna* just eleventh and twelfth century in date and examples of this form of ringfort had been in existence in the Irish landscape since the later eighth and ninth century (O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 37-9; O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney 2014, 65-6; see Appendix 4).

It has been shown that the things that made a raised *ráth* different in physical terms from a motte or, for that matter, a substantial ringfort from a ringwork castle, were the scale and complexities of defences and buildings seen on these sites when in use. They may at times look similar today to one another but excavation and the historical sources from across Europe have shown that motte and ringwork castles carried much larger timber (and cob) buildings within them and had far more complex defences than what was seen on different forms of ringfort, even ones constructed by great princes (O'Conor 2002b, 175-80; De Meulemeester and O'Conor 2008, 323-31; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 39-40; see, also, Higham and Barker 1992; 2000; Mittelstraß 2004). Higham and Barker (1992, 348-52) have argued that it was these complex defences and great wooden buildings that distinguished mottes and ringworks as castles, not their earthworks. So, arguably, mottes and ringworks looked physically very different when occupied to fortifications such as the different forms of ringforts (including contemporary ones), moated sites and *crannóga*. So O'Keeffe's (2019, 122-3; 2021, 38-43) decision to interpret Molyneux's rather vague early eighteenth-century description of the now-levelled earthwork at *Dún Leodha* as definitely being a motte is dangerous without excavation or, failing that, better evidence. Furthermore, O'Keeffe (2019, 119-20) seems to be of the view that any earthwork fortification built and occupied by the elite in Ireland during the hundred or so years prior to 1169 has to be a motte or ringwork castle, simply because Irish society had 'adopted' the hierarchical social structure known as feudalism. Leaving aside the fact that certain historians argue that 'feudalism' never existed (e.g. Brown 1974) or was very different to what is the accepted view of this construct by most historians (Reynolds 1994), it would appear that O'Keeffe is saying that pre-Norman Irish society had evolved in more or less the same way as contemporary Norman England and so had similar settlement forms, most

notably the castle, as a form of elite residence. However, while Gaelic Ireland from even before 1100 down to *c.*1600 had many of the characteristics of contemporary European society and in certain ways developed along similar lines, native Irish society, which was a clan- or lineage-based society with a very distinct law code, was different in many respects to contemporary 'feudal' Anglo-Norman, English and Western European society (Nicholls 1972; 1987; 2003; Richter 1988, 189-93; O'Conor 1998, 74-5). In this respect, it would be dangerous to assume that the Gaelic Irish response to, for example, fortification was precisely the same as in the contemporary Norman and Angevin world, especially as there is now considerable evidence for the continued usage of *crannóga* and different forms of ringforts during the later medieval period, as will be shown throughout this thesis. Given the fact that it has been argued that at least some of the pre-1169 *caistél*/*caislen* seem to have evolved from the cashel/*crannóg* tradition, one viable argument, as noted above, is that the 1124 *caistél* built at *Dún Leodha* was some form of well-defended ringfort that, however, did not carry the same complexity of defences seen on contemporary Norman timber castles in Wales and England, such as Hen Domen on the present English/Welsh border.

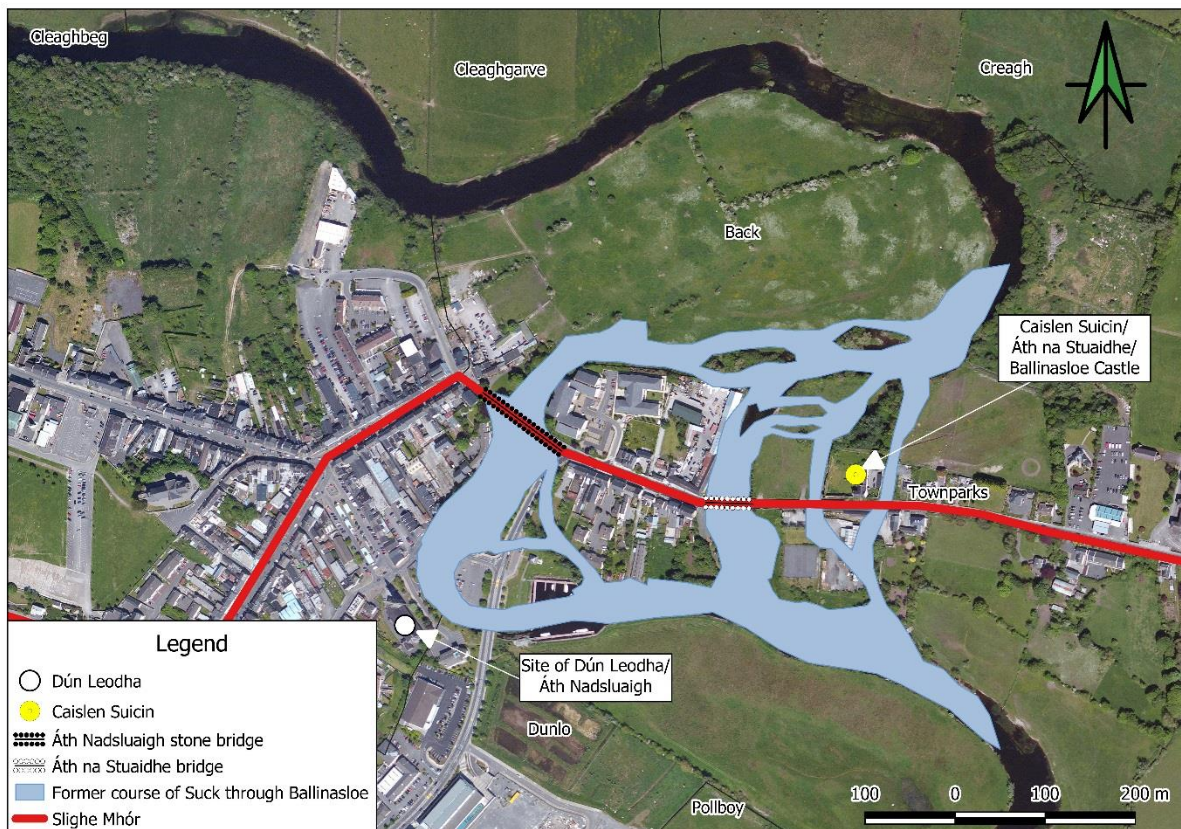

Figure 4.3 - Reconstruction of former, much more extensive, course of the River Suck at Ballinasloe in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the proposed location of caistél Dún Leodha (Base aerial image: Bing Maps).

Nonetheless, the strategic siting of this fortification would have resulted in the *caistél* of *Dún Leodha* being a highly-prized location of elite residence into later periods, and it is likely to have served as a principal residence of a cadet branch of the Uí Chellaig, the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain*, into the thirteenth-century and beyond, as they grappled for control of the important ford over the River Suck at *Áth Nadsluaigh* (see Appendix 4).

4.2.2 – The Anglo-Norman Baronial Castles of Uí Maine

As outlined above (see 2.4), for much of the thirteenth century, and the early decades of the fourteenth century, the King's Cantreds of Omany and Tyrmany, within the study area, saw manorial settlements develop as Anglo-Norman lords sought to benefit economically from their speculative grants in the region. As a result, a series of baronial settler castles are recorded in historical sources as having been constructed to serve as the administrative focal point of these manors. These references serve as an indication of the power now being exerted by Anglo-Norman barons west of the River Shannon in this area, resulting in a constriction in power of the traditional Ó Chellaig lords as a result.

The year 1245 saw the construction of *Caislen Suicin* (*AC*). It is difficult to conclude from this single, spartan reference where *Caislen Suicin* was located, what form it took, and who constructed it, however, a reference in 1300-1301 indicates that the manors of both *Aththrym* (Aughrim) and *Suthkyn* (Suicin) were part of the landholdings of the Anglo-Norman Butler family by the beginning of the fourteenth century (*CDI*, iv, Nos. 765-7, 814; Walton, 1980, 472). Walton has suggested that *Caislen Suicin* was constructed in order to command the river-crossing at Ballinasloe (Walton 1980, 446), which would suggest that the fortification in question may have been located on the eastern bank of the River Suck in Townparks townland, on the site of, or in close proximity to, the remains classified as an 'Anglo-Norman masonry castle' (GA088-040-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 418).

In 1258, Richard de la Rochelle was granted the entire cantred of Omany, and was granted permission to construct a castle at Aughrim, and to host 'markets, fairs and warrens' wherever in the cantred he saw fit (*Cal. Ormond Deeds*, I, 55-6). This was offered to de la Rochelle as a means of promoting settlement in the cantred (Walton 1980, 467), and provides the first mention of the intention to construct a castle at Aughrim.

In 1282, these lands in Omany, including Aughrim and Suicin, were granted by Philip de la Rochelle, Richard's son, to his cousin, Theobald Butler (*Cal. Ormond Deeds*, I, 101-3; Curtis (ed.) 1932-3, 123; Walton 1980, 470). By the 1290s, there was a castle recorded at Aughrim,

but what form it took is difficult to ascertain from the present remains. Walton states that Aughrim Castle is one of only three castles (aside from the royal castles of Athlone, Rindoon, Roscommon and presumably Onagh) recorded as being constructed by Anglo-Norman settlers in the King's Cantreds, with the other two constructed at Athleague and Dunamon, Co. Roscommon (Walton 1980, 404). To this list of colonial castles should be added the aforementioned *Caislen Suicin*. In all cases, these thirteenth-century fortifications are no longer extant, however, it has been suggested that the construction at Dunamon was of an earthwork character (RO038-010001-), primarily due to the lack of above ground thirteenth century remains. These thirteenth-century colonial castles, as distinct from the royal castles of Athlone, Rindoon and Roscommon, may not have been constructed initially in stone. A likely comparison to the morphology of these earthwork castles comes with the earthen remains that form part of the Dundonnell Castle complex, Co. Roscommon, which likely constitute the physical remains of the historically-attested thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman fortification of 'Onagh Castle' (Curley 2018, 138-41). Arguably, Dundonnell may have been a ringwork castle modified out of an existing bivallate ringfort, *c.*48m northwest/southeast by *c.*41m northeast/southwest in internal diameter (Fig. 4.4; *Ibid.*, 149-50; Barry 1987, 52-3; Graham 1988a, 28-9; Sweetman 2000, 197-8). It is also clear that when taken altogether, most of these Anglo-Norman castles in the study area occur along major regional roads, and often at fords on navigable rivers (Fig. 4.5).

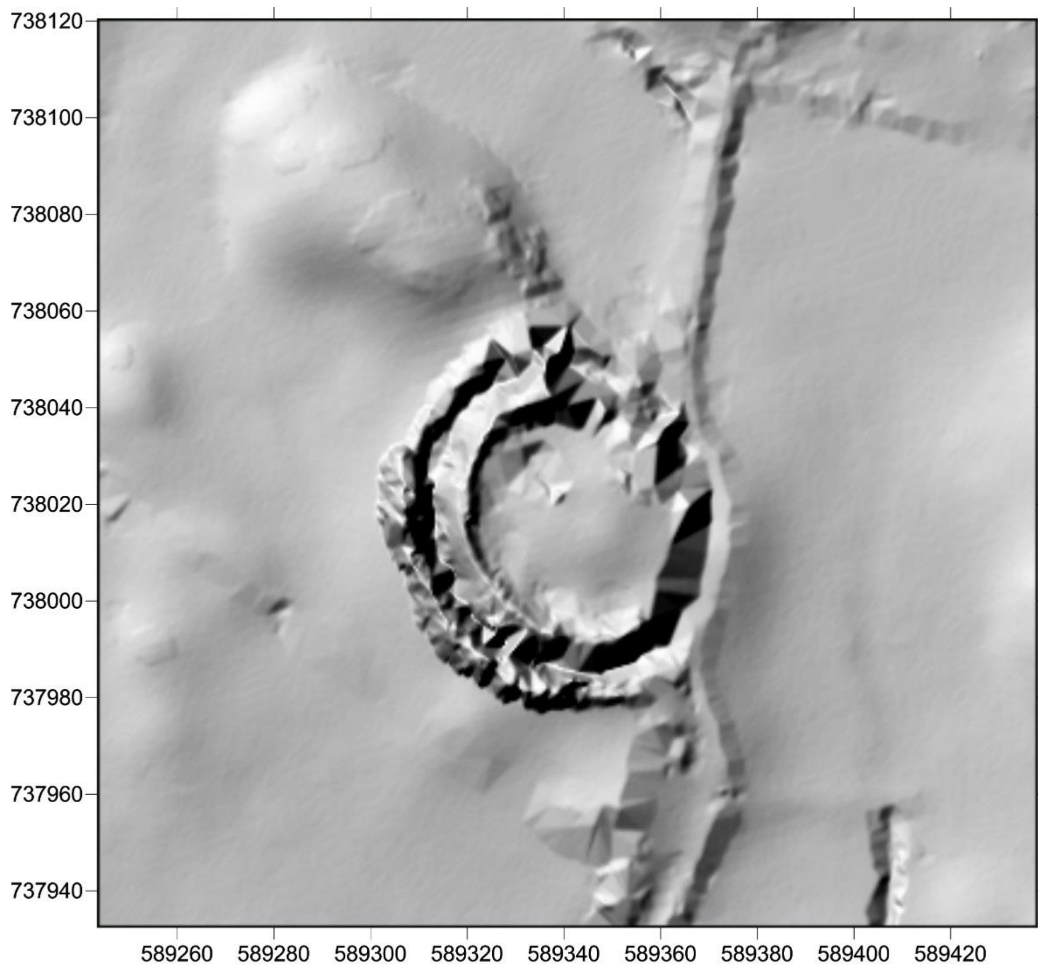

Figure 4.4 - LiDAR visualisation of the earthwork remains at Dundonnell Castle, Co. Roscommon. Note the raised area to the northwest of the earthwork proper, which may be a bailey-type enclosure attached to the modified ringfort/ringwork (Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland; visualisation courtesy of LGS)

The reason why these colonial castles are being considered as part of this chapter at all relates to their later history, and the evidence indicates that these sites were later occupied, re-

occupied, and remodelled by members of the Uí Chellaig and their vassal clans into the late medieval period.

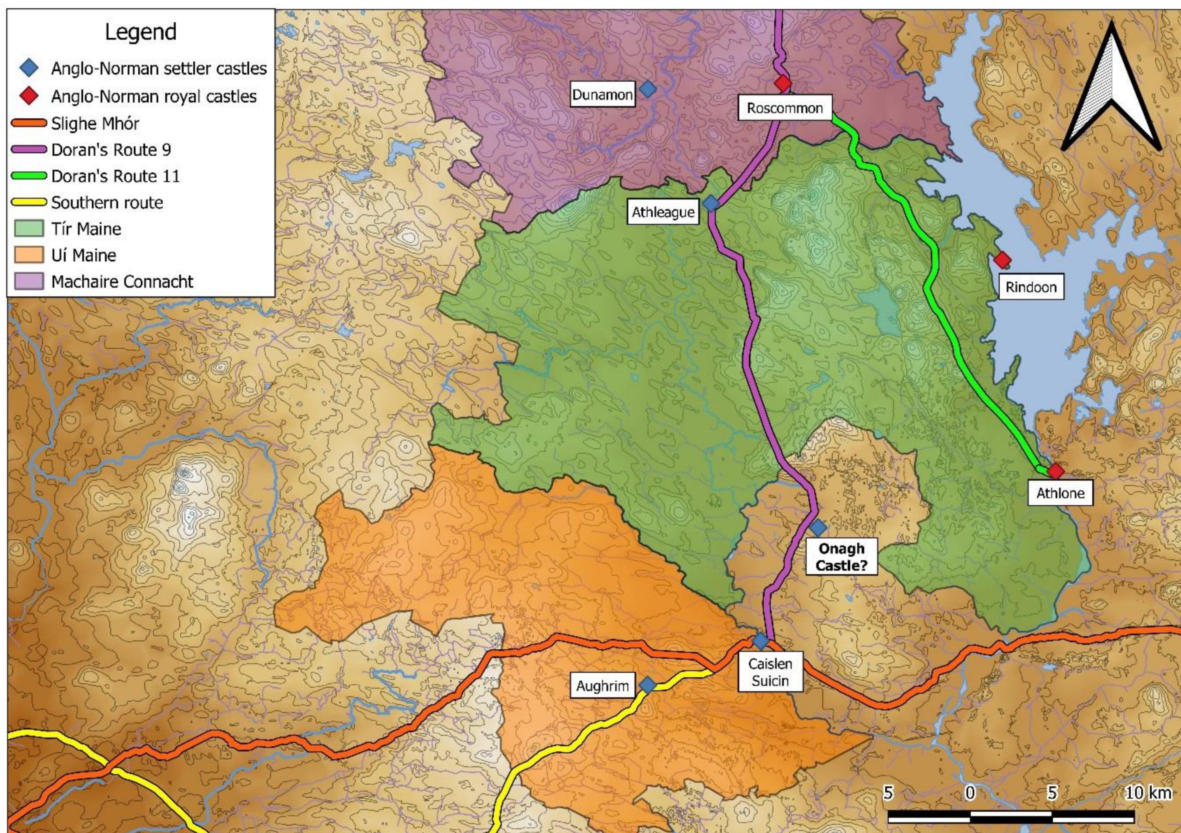

Figure 4.5 - The Anglo-Norman baronial settler and royal castles in and near the study area. The location of these castles in the vicinity of major regional routeways indicates that one of the undoubted reasons for their siting relates to their proximity to access roads through the eastern Connacht landscape.

4.2.3 – The Erroneous Labelling of High-Medieval Gaelic Lordly Sites as 'Castles'

Finally, when investigating the evidence relating to the construction of high-medieval castles by the Ó Cellaig elite, the researcher must be wary of issues in terminology especially in the case of the translation of historical sources. There is a commonplace practice amongst medieval Irish historians and linguists to insert the term 'castle' when translating literary and historical sources when the original Irish refers to the stronghold as a *dún* (*Ir.* Fort), *ráth* (*Ir.* earthen rampart, ringfort), *longport* (*Ir.* Stronghold; fortified residence), *caiseal* (*Ir.* Stone fort), *cathair* (*Ir.* Circular dry-stone fort, dwelling place) or a similar term. Ringforts and dry-stone walled cashels would not be considered castles by either contemporaries or modern scholars. The moated sites at Rockingham and Cloonfree in Co. Roscommon, for example, are both referred to as *longport* in the sources (Finan and O'Conor 2002; O'Conor and Finan 2018, 116-22). Again, moated sites would not be considered to be castles in a physical sense during the later medieval period or by modern archaeologists and architectural historians (e.g. O'Conor 2015,

335-6). Another example of this is seen in the case of the Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* of Galey, Co. Roscommon.

While the location of Ó Cellaig's residence at Galey is in little doubt (see 6.3.1.2), the same cannot be said of the form this site took when originally mentioned in the fourteenth century. One issue which must be grappled with is the perceived form of the residence. A number of scholars equate the surviving masonry remains, the remnants of a tower house, with Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig's 1351 residence mentioned in a praise poem of that general date (Pl. 4.1; *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 57; Simms 1978, 91; Kerrigan 1996; C. M. O'Sullivan 2004, 221). This belief that the castle extant today is the same residence mentioned in the mid-fourteenth century praise poem is also stated at the public information plaque at the site today. However, there are a number of compelling reasons why the standing remains are best interpreted as later in date than the praise poem.

The possible origins for this misidentification can be traced to Knott's 1911 translation of *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*. The English translation repeatedly refers to Ó Cellaig's residence as a 'castle' (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 57, 59, 61). However, the original Irish portrays a different picture. Where the original poem uses variations of the terms *brugh* (dwelling, mansion), *dún(adh)* and *cathair* (i.e. dry-stone walled fort or cashel) to describe the residence, the translation, mistakenly, inserts the English word 'castle'. Thus this misidentification seems to have been born, a classification which, as we have seen, has subsequently been blindly adopted by a number of authors. Interestingly, Knott's preference in translating the latter words as 'castle' is seen in other poetic translations (Simms 2001, 247). It is always dangerous to equate a date which comes from an historical or literary reference with a standing building, such as a castle, without excavation and/or a detailed architectural survey. Very often, as sites are inhabited for centuries, the standing remains of any given structure were constructed at far later dates than the first historical reference to it (Meyer 2011, 234; O'Conor Forthcoming).

Plate 4.1 - Earthworks and tower house castle remains at Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon, viewed from the north. An historically-attested cenn áit *of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig (Author's photograph).*

The mortared masonry remains of the castle at Galey consists of a tower house, which seems to be either fifteenth or sixteenth century in date (Pl. 4.1; see 6.3.2.2). This means that there is no evidence at Galey for what modern scholars or, indeed, contemporaries would classify as a castle in the mid-fourteenth century.

In summary, both the historical and physical evidence suggest that most castles built in the study area between the twelfth century and late-fourteenth century (when tower houses start to be built), were few in number and erected in some way by the Anglo-Normans. *Caistél Dún Leodha* may have been a pre-Norman castle but other interpretations exist for the morphology of this site.

4.3 – Ringforts and cashels

The most readily identifiable archaeological evidence of secular settlement in early medieval Ireland comes in the form of ringforts, cashels and enclosures. The term 'ringfort' embraces a number of different types of enclosure, which differ from one another in size, morphology and construction material. The majority consist of a circular enclosure, *c.*30m in internal diameter

on average (with smaller and larger examples seen), defined by an earthen bank and outer fosse. These are known as univallate ringforts and are sometimes referred to as *ráth* in the literature. Predominantly in rocky landscapes, the enclosed area is defined by a dry-stone wall and this form of ringfort is known as the cashel. These dry-stone enclosures tend to be slightly smaller in internal diameter to earthen univallate ringforts or *ráthanna*. Most ringforts and cashels are defined by one earthen bank or dry-stone wall. However, between 15% and 20% of *ráthanna* have two or more banks around them, being bivallate and trivallate enclosures. Some cashels also have a second or even third dry-stone wall around them (e.g. Edwards 1990, 6-33; Stout 1997, 15-8; O'Conor 2015, 332-3). It has been argued that this multivallation was a physical manifestation of societal hierarchy (Stout 1997, 17-8). This is an argument that is now generally accepted (O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney 2014, 82), with the more complex sites having been constructed and occupied by members of the local or regional elite.

Looking at the numbers of ringforts, cashels, and monuments described as enclosures, which were probably originally ringforts, for the two *trícha céta* of Tír Maine and Uí Maine provides a clear indication that this region was extensively settled throughout the medieval period. Seventy-six cashels, two hundred and fifty-eight enclosures, which in many cases may actually be degraded ringforts, and seven hundred and sixty-seven ringforts are located in the study area (Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 32-257).[38] The highest densities of ringforts are evident in the parts of the landscape with the highest potential agricultural yield (Fig. 3.1).

Ringforts and cashels are traditionally deemed to be the principal settlement forms of the early medieval period. The height of occupation of these monument types seems to occur between the seventh and ninth centuries, and certainly the majority of the sites enumerated above were probably constructed, occupied and abandoned during that time (Stout 1997, 22-32). An evolved form of the site type, the more elevated platform or raised ringfort or *ráth*, seems to possess a later chronology, AD750-950. This chronology for ringforts and cashels must be tempered by the fact that it is derived from a small, and probably not fully representative, sample size (O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney. 2014, 65-6). However, there is growing evidence from throughout the island of Ireland, including that which is outlined in the later chapters of this research, that ringforts and cashels continued to be occupied and perhaps constructed, even by members of the minor elite, throughout the later medieval period and down to the seventeenth century (O'Conor 1998, 84-7, 89-94; FitzPatrick 2009).

[38] https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/

O’Conor investigated the archaeological expression of the *longport*, a term used regularly in the *Caithreim Thoirdhealbaigh* in order to describe the lordly residences of the elite of what is now Co. Clare. Using a range of historical and archaeological material uncovered in north-western Munster more generally, coupled with the references from *Caithreim Thoirdhealbaigh* itself, O’Conor demonstrated that these *longphort* regularly presented a physical manifestation as cashels and ringforts (O'Conor 2004, 246-50). Further evidence from Clare, in the form of the excavations at Caherconnell, are equally significant in that the dating evidence suggests that the site was occupied continuously from the tenth-century through the early-seventeenth century (Comber and Hull 2010).

Despite the considerable numbers of ringforts and cashels that survive in the Uí Maine study area, hardly any of these monuments have ever been subjected to archaeological investigation. Of the few to have been inspected in this manner, as stated above, three ringforts excavated as part of the National Roads Authority (NRA) M6 road infrastructural project presented with later medieval dates: Loughbown I and II, and Mackney ringforts, Co. Galway. These three sites are important to our understanding of the settlement forms in use in the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship.

4.3.1 – Loughbown and Mackney ringforts

Loughbown I is a large, bivallate ringfort located 3.2km to the east of Aughrim, on the brow of a hill, with open views north and east across the Suck Callows. The maximum external diameter of the ringfort was *c.*60m, with two ditches, and presumably two banks, although neither survive. Dateable material from a variety of contexts throughout the site contributed a broad date range, from the fifth century through to the fifteenth century, suggesting that the site had a very long period of habitation (Bower 2014, 175).

Access to the site was granted via a causewayed entrance to the southeast. Within the interior there was evidence of a souterrain, two structures, and a number of corn-drying kilns. Evidence was also uncovered of what has been interpreted as ‘occasional metalworking’, an activity which was concentrated between the two ditches, and is understood to have been conducted late in the use of the ringfort, occurring between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries (Bower 2014, 175-7). The artefactual assemblage for the later medieval period included a wooden comb, a bone weaving tool, a fish hook (Pl. 3.4), an iron knife, and an iron pin. The only securely dated later-medieval find was a silver Edward I coin, probably minted in Bristol in 1280 or 1281. However, this was found in topsoil, somewhat lessening the diagnostic value of

the artefact (Bower 2014, 179). Loughbown II was a much smaller example, located 500m to the west of Loughbown I. There is very little evidence that this ringfort was ever inhabited, and the excavators have interpreted it as a stockyard for animals. However, a knife blade of later medieval date was recovered from the excavation, which again highlights the continuity of use of these monuments beyond the period accepted for ringfort construction and use (Bower 2014, 180-3).

Mackney ringfort – possibly connected to *Conmaicne* [a legendary ancestor of the Uí Maine] (Delaney 2014, 199-200), located 2.5km to the southwest of Ballinasloe, was a very substantial univallate earthwork, with a maximum external diameter of *c.*61m, marked by a single ditch, which measured 5-6m in width and was over 3m deep. The excavation suggests that the largely removed internal bank would have been an impressive barrier to intruders, and presents evidence of having had an internal stone revetment (Delaney 2014, 188-90).

The entrance was located to the east of the site. A total of nine possible buildings were uncovered within the interior of the ringfort through excavation, the most substantial of which was a 5.4m diameter round-house, which was sited centrally in the interior. An L-shaped, two chambered souterrain was uncovered to the west of this, and thus furthest away from the entrance onto the ringfort interior, adding to the complexity of the ringfort (Delaney 2014, 192-3). Dateable material from a variety of contexts throughout the site contributed a date range from the eighth century through to the sixteenth century, with the later dates in particular coming primarily from corn-drying kilns, as well as hearths and a post-hole.

There are also a number of diagnostic artefacts for Mackney relating to the later medieval period, including a possible Henry III silver coin, dateable to between 1247-72, a Henry VIII silver coin minted in 1546, and a socketed, iron arrowhead of ‘bodkin’ type, typically of tenth to thirteenth-century date (Delaney 2014, 194-5). Combining this information, Delaney has concluded that Mackney ringfort was an impressive habitation site still in use in the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine well into the later medieval period. Delaney also speculated on the possible place-name associations that could point to Mackney being an important seat of the later medieval Uí Chellaig in the region (Delaney 2014, 199-200). Gardiner and O’Conor have noted that at least some of the TII-excavated ringforts throughout Ireland present clear evidence of continued occupation into the later medieval period, and that the results of these particular excavations mirror the archaeological findings at Caherconnell. However, they also note that the excavators of these sites have tended to downplay the evidence for later medieval

occupation within them, presumably because of the strong traditional and embedded narrative amongst professional archaeologists that ringforts and cashels were ‘only’ occupied during early medieval times (Gardiner and O'Conor 2017, 147-8).

While the present writer is not convinced by the importance of the place-name in the case of Mackney, the evidence from these two sites, which are not documented in the surviving historical sources, would nonetheless indicate that the ringfort occupants in both cases are likely to have been relatively affluent members of later medieval society. The people from both sites may represent members of a prosperous farming community in later medieval Gaelic Uí Maine (see 3.5.1), who were still choosing to reside in ringforts and cashels.

The value that these excavations have for this study relate to the fact that the historical research conducted as part of this thesis has uncovered a significant number of locations of residences of members of the Ó Cellaig elite, as well as their service kindreds and vassal clans. Where these locations for the latter septs correspond with identifiable townland names, in most cases the only monument type to be found in the landholding is a ringfort or cashel (see, for example 5.2.3.2; 5.3.4.2; Appendix 4). The information from the excavations of Loughbown and Mackney seem to suggest that the historically-attested residences of these elites and minor elites correspond with the ringfort or cashel within the townland, although only excavation will confirm this. This strengthens the argument that these monuments were certainly still occupied, and may have been constructed in Uí Maine during the later medieval period. These individual sites will be identified and discussed over the coming chapters.

It is highly significant that Mackney, Loughbown I and Loughbown II were the only three ringforts excavated along the course of the M6 road that occur within the study area. Noticeably, all three turned up evidence of some description for later medieval occupation and use, hinting that many of the other hundreds of ringforts within the Ó Cellaig lordship were inhabited during later medieval times.

4.4 – High-cairn *crannóga*

Crannóga are mostly artificial or sometimes modified natural islands, constructed using stone, timber and soil, and particularly found in the lakes and former lakes of the drumlin belt that ran from Mayo across northern Connacht, south Ulster, and the north Midlands to Co. Down (Edwards 1990, 34-41; O'Sullivan 1998, 103-47; O’Conor 1998, 79-84; 2014 333-4; O’Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney 2014, 58). While small artificial islands were built close to certain lakeshores in the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, *crannóga* proper, defined

as being mainly artificial islands which have an average living space of 20m to 25m in diameter, being located out in lakes, first start to be built during the Late Bronze Age. However, the great majority seem to have been first built from the fifth and sixth centuries AD onwards during the early medieval period (Edwards 1990, 34-7; O'Sullivan 1998, 103-47; 2001, 399; Fredengren 2002; O'Conor 2015, 334). The size, artefactual assemblages and complexity of some of these sites indicate that they operated as high-status and even royal residences in the early medieval period, offering a degree of protection, exclusivity and privacy (Edwards 1990, 41; O'Sullivan 1998, 103-47; O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr and Harney 2014, 61-2; O'Conor 2015, 334).

The evidence for *crannóga* in early medieval Uí Maine is limited, not least by the relative absence of the characteristic small lakes that these monuments are usually found on. However, where the small lakes do occur, *crannóga* are to be found. As such, Callow Lough, in what was the early medieval *trícha cét* of Tír Soghain, has a large *crannóg* constructed at its centre (GA073-032-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 30). Ballaghdacker Lough, in what was the *trícha cét* of the Clann Crimthann, possesses two *crannóga* (GA020-001-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 29; GA020-011-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 31), which may have been focal points for elite settlement amongst that branch of the Uí Maine in the early medieval period. The Clann Chommáin branch of the Uí Maine, styled *rí Locha Riach*, implies that their centre was located on or near Loughrea Lake (MacCotter 2014, 141). The fortress of *Locha Riach* was destroyed in 802 (*AU*). This may have been a *crannóg*. Indeed, thirteen *crannóga* are recorded on the lake today, and the most substantial example, Reed's Island (GA105-196-), which measures *c.*50m north/south by *c.*35m east/west, may have been the site recorded as having been destroyed in 802. In the territory of the Cenél Coirpre Chruim, there are hints from the mid-eighth century that a pre-Uí Maine group known as the *Delbna Nuadat* may have had a centre on Lough Croan, before being supplanted by the latter sept, possibly with their *cenn áit* taken over also (*AT*; *AFM*; Kelleher 1971, 70-1; Ó Corráin 1972, 13; Byrne 2004, 92; Devane 2013, 101). Five *crannóga* occur on this former lake (RO044-088-; -089-; -094-; -107-; RO047-031-).

However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the *crannóg* did not cease to be used as a settlement form of choice in the period post-1100, and there is mounting archaeological and historical evidence that *crannóga* were occupied, rebuilt and strengthened during the later medieval period, as defended lordly residences (O'Sullivan 1998, 150-6; 2001, 401-13; O'Conor 1998, 79-84; 2014, 333-4; 2018; Brady and O'Conor 2005). Furthermore, a series of

radiocarbon and dendrochronological dates from Fermanagh *crannóga* indicate clear evidence for the widespread occupation of *crannóga* during the whole later medieval period (Foley and Williams 2006). The excavation of Drumclay *crannóg*, in this county, has provided further evidence of *crannóga* being used as defended residences during the later medieval period. This *crannóg* was built in the eighth century but was continuously occupied down to the late-sixteenth or early seventeenth century (Bermingham, Moore, O'Keeffe, Gormley 2013; Bermingham 2014). Very recently, a series of nine radiocarbon dates derived from eight *crannóga* in Co. Leitrim have been published, which show clear evidence for later medieval occupation and activity on them. Furthermore, this evidence is supported by historical references in the annals, which also show *crannóg* occupation in the Leitrim area right down to 1600 (O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 91). It might also be added that there is historical and excavated evidence for later medieval *crannóg* occupation in the *trícha céta* of Machaire Connacht, Na Trí Túath and Maigh Luirg in north Roscommon (O'Conor and Finan 2018, 113-6). The ASI database records a total of eleven *crannóga* for the Uí Maine study area, which is a small number by comparison with the quantities recorded in the rest of Co. Roscommon and further north.

There are two forms of evidence which point to *crannóga* being occupied and possibly modified in later medieval Uí Maine. Firstly, a number of entries in the annalistic record, the Ó Cellaig genealogies and in the literary sources confirm that the Uí Maine lords were operating on and in the vicinity of these aforementioned small lakes of the lordship (see 2.3; 2.5), all lakes which possess *crannóga*. Secondly, the archaeological remains of these Uí Maine *crannóga*, in terms of their morphology, as well as the artefactual assemblage uncovered at two of these sites in particular, point to their construction or reconstruction in the later medieval period (see 5.2.1.1; 5.2.5). In each of the three case studies in Chapter 5, a particular type of *crannóg* is discussed in the lakeland setting. Known as a high-cairn *crannóg*, this monument type was coined by Fredengren while examining *crannóga* on Lough Gara in south Sligo/north Roscommon. These *crannóga* are generally quite large, and are up to 2.5m high above the present water level, with a dense stone packing in the top layers. Some of these sites also present with jetties and small harbour features (Fredengren 2002, 83-6; Fredengren, Kilfeather and Stuijts 2010, 146-7). The evidence suggests that the uppermost stone dumps on these *crannóga* were put in place in the later medieval period, to act as occupation platforms (Fredengren 2002, 100-2, 272-6). The high-cairn *crannóga* seem to have been occupied by the later medieval Gaelic elite in any given area. For example, four *crannóga* identified by Brady

and O'Conor as being of high-cairn construction seem to have been important lordly centres in their respective regions (Brady and O'Conor 2005, 129). As noted, four high-cairn *crannóga* exist in the study area and these will be discussed more fully below.

4.5 – The *bódhún*

The term *bódhún*, which is later anglicised as 'bawn', occurs in historical entries in relation to a number of elite sites within the Ó Cellaig lordship (*Tribes and Customs*, 74; *AFM, s.a.* 1487), and its physical manifestation is something that has not been satisfactorily dealt with previously.

To begin with, the term 'bawn' is potentially problematic, in that a distinction must be made between the term used in the medieval historical and literary record, and the later archaeological monument referred to as such. The *bódhún*, from the medieval Irish *badhbhdhún/badhún*, translates from the Latin *Bawona*, meaning cattle fort/cow-fortress, which indicates the origin of the name and the root of its primary use. The supposed absence of the term from the early medieval law tracts and their commentaries suggests that the word, and thus presumably the construction itself, does not seem to have been pre-Norman in origin (Kelly pers. comm.). Fergus Kelly helpfully describes the enclosure as being 'where the cows of the whole neighbourhood could be brought for protection from cattle-raiders' (Kelly 2016b, 366). The term is in use more generally in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with references to the '*bódhún* of *Ath*' (Athlone – 1199AD), the '*bodhún* of *Luimnech*' (Limerick – 1200AD), and the *badún* of Rindoon (1236AD) being attacked by the Connachtmen (*ALC*; *AC*). Plainly these entries do not refer to the walled or defended courtyards, which are called bawns, surrounding the tower houses of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Nicholls addresses this point, indicating that the *bódhún* was one of a number of terms, alongside the *cenn áit* (chief or head place) and the *garrdha* (gardens), which were originally used to describe the fortified earthen 'enclosures' occupied by the high-medieval Gaelic elite. In some cases, these terms must have corresponded archaeologically with ringforts and cashels. The term *bódhún* was later appropriated to describe the defended masonry courtyards around tower houses (Nicholls 2003, 141-2; 2008, 405).

Comparison by Simms of an early fifteenth-century ecclesiastical record and two praise poems connected to the residence of Rudhraighe Mac Mathghamhna, later chief of Oirghialla (present day Co. Armagh), encounter his house being described in one instance as his *bódhún*, and separately as a *lios* (Simms 2001, 253). This reference informs us that the terminology used in

this period is very much fluid and interchangeable, depending on what the writer is attempting to achieve. Up until now, it has been uncertain what a *bódhún* looked like during the high-medieval period. The physical examples of two of these *bódhún* will be discussed below (see 5.3.3.2; 6.4.3.2).

4.6 – Gaelic Moated Sites

Moated sites mostly present as rectangular or wedge-shaped defended enclosures, defined by an external, often water-filled ditch, and an internal bank. These monuments were constructed in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries by prosperous peasants and minor Anglo-Norman lords in the southeast of the island of Ireland (Barry 1977; 1987, 84-93; O’Conor 1998, 41-3; 2014, 335-6; O'Keeffe, 2000, 75-6; Gardiner and O’Conor 2017, 138-9). However, it has been successfully demonstrated that the moated sites in what is now Co. Roscommon, particularly in the northern part of the county, were constructed by members of the Gaelic elite (O'Conor 1998, 87-9; 2000, 100-1; 2001, 338-40; Finan and O’Conor 2002; O’Conor and Finan 2018, 116-22).

Analysis of the available evidence for the moated site of Cloonfree, for example, including its recording in no less than three praise poems, with one of the poems even detailing its construction at the behest of king of Connacht, Áed Ó Conchobair, serves to further clarify the case for these sites being adopted as a residence type of choice by lords of the highest rank. (Finan and O'Conor 2002; McCarthy and Curley 2018, 53-5; FitzPatrick 2018, 179-87; O’Conor and Finan 2018, 119-21). What could be termed Gaelic-constructed moated sites are not limited to medieval Connacht either. Historical research and excavation conducted at a moated site in Clontymullan townland, Co. Fermanagh has demonstrated it to be a lordly residence of the Maguire lords of that region, a moated site that continued to be occupied into the sixteenth century (Logue, Devine and Barkley 2020). At least three moated sites have been built and occupied by members of the Gaelic elite in west Bréifne during later medieval times (O’Conor and Fredengren 2019, 87-8).

Turning our attention to the moated sites located in the study area, a total of eight are located across what once constituted the *trícha céta* of Uí Maine and Tír Maine. In Uí Maine, their distribution is dispersed. Two of the more prominent examples are the moated sites at Cloonigny and at Pallas, Co. Galway. Cloonigny (GA074-027001-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 389) is a large and well-preserved moated site, within which is located the remains of a castle of unclassified form. This later fortification, inserted into the moated site,

was recorded in the possession of Shane *na Maighe* Ó Cellaig of Clonmacnowen (see 2.6) in 1574, suggesting that the latter earthwork was built by an Ó Cellaig (Nolan 1900-1, 110). The moated site at Pallas (GA060-179-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 391) will be discussed at greater length (see 4.7; 6.3.1.2), but is also adjudged to have been used by the Ó Cellaig elite (FitzPatrick 2016, 204). While there was Anglo-Norman settlement within parts of the study area, as noted, it has been suggested that this has never been very intensive (Graham 1988a, 36; Finan 2016, 164-6; O'Conor and Finan 2018, 107). This makes it more likely that moated sites in the study area were Gaelic-built. This will be discussed in more detail below.

When considering the recorded moated sites within Tír Maine, three monuments survive. All three are located in the immediate environment around Lough Croan, in the adjacent civil parishes of Dysart and Cam, Co. Roscommon. These are Cuilleenirwan (RO047-028-) and Bredagh (RO047-059-) moated sites in Dysart, and Coolnageer (RO045-171002-) moated site in Cam. Located 212m east of Fair Hill (see 3.5.1; 5.2.3.4; Fig. 4.6) is the moated site of Cuilleenirwan – *Coillín Íriomháin* (Irvine's little wood). It is a well-preserved, slightly wedge-shaped example, has internal dimensions of *c.*42.4m northeast/southwest by *c.*39m northwest/southeast and presents with a causewayed entrance on its north-eastern side (Fig. 4.7; Pl. 4.2). This entrance breaks a flat-topped internal bank and corresponding external ditch, which survives all around the site with an average external height of *c.*2.5m (Pl. 4.3). A number of ground-fast stones revet the outer edge of the enclosure bank, as well as three discrete zones of ground-fast stones located within the interior, which may present the remains of either stone-built or dwarf-walled wooden buildings. These are consistent with the series of raised features visible in the LiDAR visualisation (Fig. 4.6), and bear a more than passing resemblance to a rectangular feature (length *c.*16m, width *c.*10m), oriented NNW-SSE on its long axis, and with a possibly sunken entranceway aligned with the moated site entrance to the northeast. It could be speculated that the feature may present the remains of a substantial rectangular house site or perhaps a feasting hall. The dimensions and location within the moated site compare well with the possible *pailís* or hall-type building identified by FitzPatrick on the Mac Firbhisigh landholding at Lackan in Tír Fhiachrach, Co. Sligo (FitzPatrick 2015b, 187-8).

It is important to notice also that there is a clear inter-visibility between this moated site and the prominence of Fair Hill, which will later be argued to have been an important part of the Lough Croan *cenn áit*, and the visual relationship between both monuments is something which must not have gone unnoticed by those considering the siting of the moated site (see 5.2.3.4).

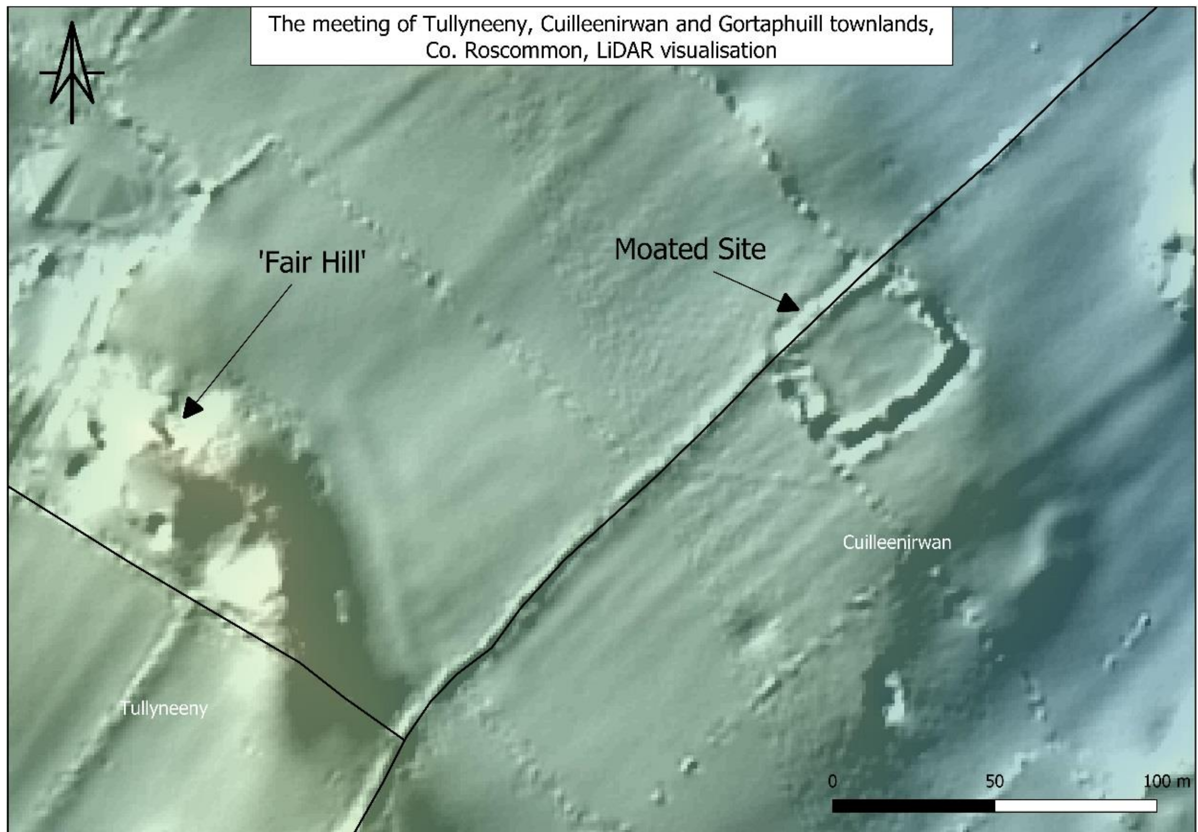

Figure 4.6 - LiDAR visualisation of Cuilleenirwan moated site, and its proximity to 'Fair Hill', on the townland boundary between Gortaphuill and Tullyneeny townlands. Note the subtle topographical features within the moated site platform, which may correspond with a sunken entranceway [on the eastern end of the interior] and hall-type building [towards the western end] (Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland, courtesy of the Royal Irish Academy).

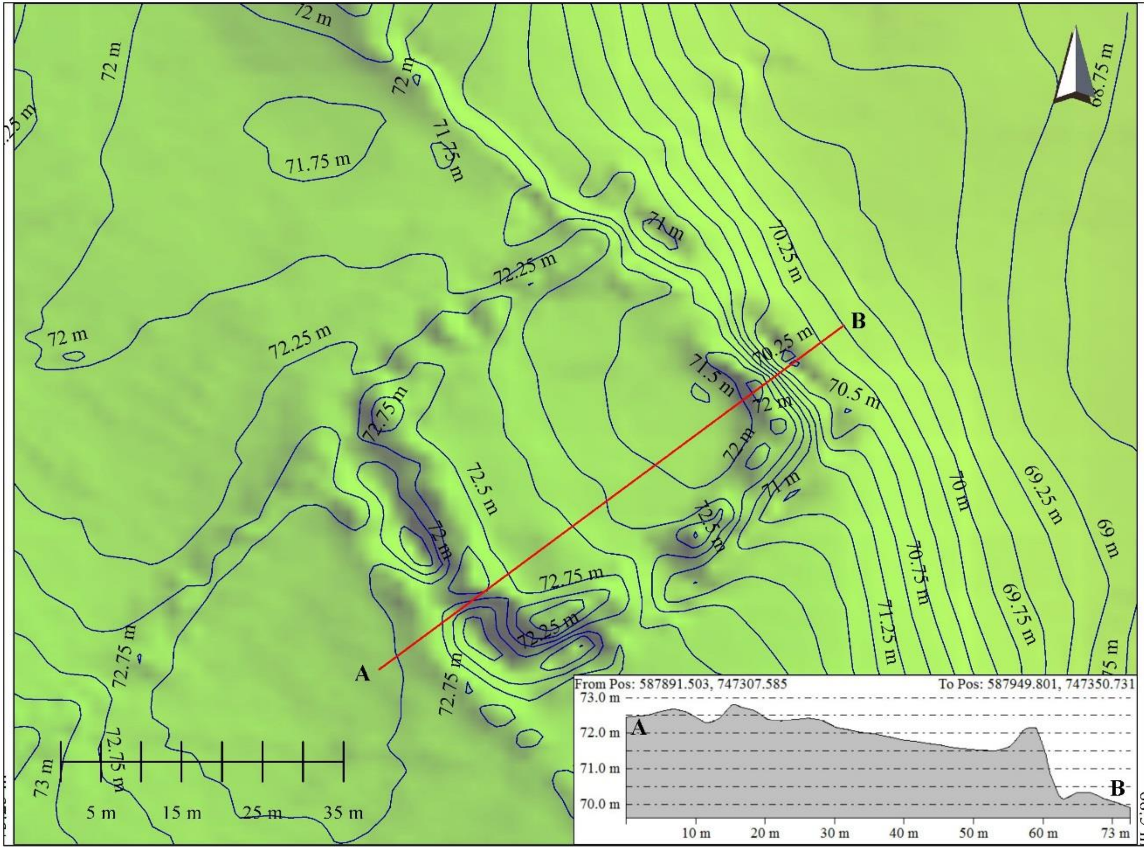

Figure 4.7 – Topographical plan and cross-section of Cuilleenirwan moated site, Co. Roscommon. (Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland, courtesy of the Royal Irish Academy)

Plate 4.2 - Cuilleenirwan moated site, viewed from the northeast. Entrance indicated by the red arrow. (Author's photograph)

Plate 4.3 - Bank height at corner of moated site, viewed from the north, Cuilleenirwan moated site (Author's photograph)

In light of this evidence, there may be merit in considering that the moated site of Cuilleenirwan as a possible Gaelic construction. A statistical analysis of the moated sites of Co. Roscommon, conducted by Finan, divided the monument type into five clusters, based on a series of distributional criteria. Key criteria included: location within a townland, proximity to transportation routes and proximity to, specifically, *crannóga* (Finan 2014, 178). Of the three moated sites located in close proximity to Lough Croan, two [Cuilleenirwan and Bredagh] are classified as Cluster 1 moated sites, indicating that they were near to a townland boundary, and were in close proximity to an identified medieval road and *crannóg* (Finan 2014, 179, Fig. 1). This is also the cluster into which the aforementioned moated sites of Machaire Connacht are categorised, sites which, in some cases at least, may be the physical manifestation of the *longphort* used when describing the locations of elite Gaelic settlement in the same period (O'Conor 1998, 87-8; Finan 2014, 178).

A purely speculative identification of the builder could be posited for this moated site thanks to a series of thirteenth-century annalistic references. In 1260, a party of Aed Ó Conchobair's followers burned the *longport* of Conchobar Ó Cellaig (*AC*). No location was recorded for the *longport* of this lord of Uí Maine, but his son, Maine seems to have died close by (see 2.4.4). The weight of evidence for Lough Croan being a fixed *cenn áit* of the Uí Chellaig through much of the medieval period does allow one to consider the Cuilleenirwan moated site in this light (see 5.2). With its location within the territory defined from the twelfth century as belonging to the Clann Uadach, it is also possible that this was one of a small number of moated sites constructed by the Uí Fhallamháin.

The other moated site in this area is in Bredagh townland, 2km south of Cuilleenirwan. The archaeological remains in Bredagh and Milltown townlands in particular are of considerable interest when attempting to understand the past landscape of this part of Tír Maine. Bredagh contains the remains of two barrow monuments, a possibly prehistoric mound, one cashel, and a substantial univallate ringfort, in addition to the moated site, evidence of a long history of settlement in the area. To its south is Milltown, which in the late medieval period was the *cenn áit* of the Uí Fhallamháin of Clann Uadach (see 3.5.3; 5.2.1.2). Bredagh appears in the historical record for the year 1159, when Donnchad Ó Máel Sechlainn, king of Mide, raided into Tír Maine until they reached *in Breuadh agus Durudh Mainnin* (*AT*; Kelleher, 1971, 100). This location is also mentioned on two occasions in *Nósa Ua Maine*. The second reference is the more informative of the two:

'The Brétach[39] is responsible for his (the king of Uí Maine's) battle implements, the preserving of his treasure and the keeping of his hostages' (*Nósa*, 549).

Bredagh is situated in close vicinity to what was likely to have been an important medieval crossroads in the region, now marked by the village of Dysart. The location of Bredagh on a routeway may be at the heart of why it was raided by Donnchad Ó Máel Sechlainn in 1159, and also why it is described as a central place for the Uí Maine in *Nósa Ua Maine.* Plainly, Bredagh as a place retained an importance to the Uí Chellaig, and perhaps the Clann Uadach, from the twelfth century through to at least the fourteenth century, something that is reflected in the archaeological evidence. The substantial ringfort in the townland may have played a role in the above events, while the moated site indicates the continuation of elite settlement activity, possibly of Gaelic-construction, into the later medieval period.

The final recorded moated site in Tír Maine is located in Coolnageer townland. In much the same way as Cloonigny moated site was occupied in the late medieval period by a member of the minor Ó Cellaig elite, so to was Coolnageer. In the north-eastern corner of what is a much degraded moated site is located the remains of a castle of unclassified form, which was in the possession of 'Edmund mc Brene O'Kelly' in 1573, and owned by 'Egnaham McDonell O'Kelly' in 1617 (Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019, 57; Moore 1978, 59). This later evidence linking an Ó Cellaig to the site may suggest that the primary moated site at Coolnageer was originally built by a member of this sept at some stage in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.

To add to the catalogue of moated sites in Tír Maine, the site of a previously unrecorded example of this monument type was recognised in the vicinity of Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway, identified earlier as a lordly centre of the Uí Chellaig (2.5; 5.4.2.1). Combining the information relating to the eight known moated sites in the study area, particularly their location in relation to known Ó Cellaig centres and the lack of intensive Anglo-Norman settlement in the whole region, would suggest that, in the study area, they were of primarily Gaelic construction (Fig. 4.8).

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[39] The Brétach = Uí Máelbrigde vassal lords of Magh Finn [parishes of Taughmaconnell and Moycarn, Co. Roscommon] prior to the majority of the Ó Cellaig-related *Meic Eochadha* [Mac Keogh] sept as lords of the area.

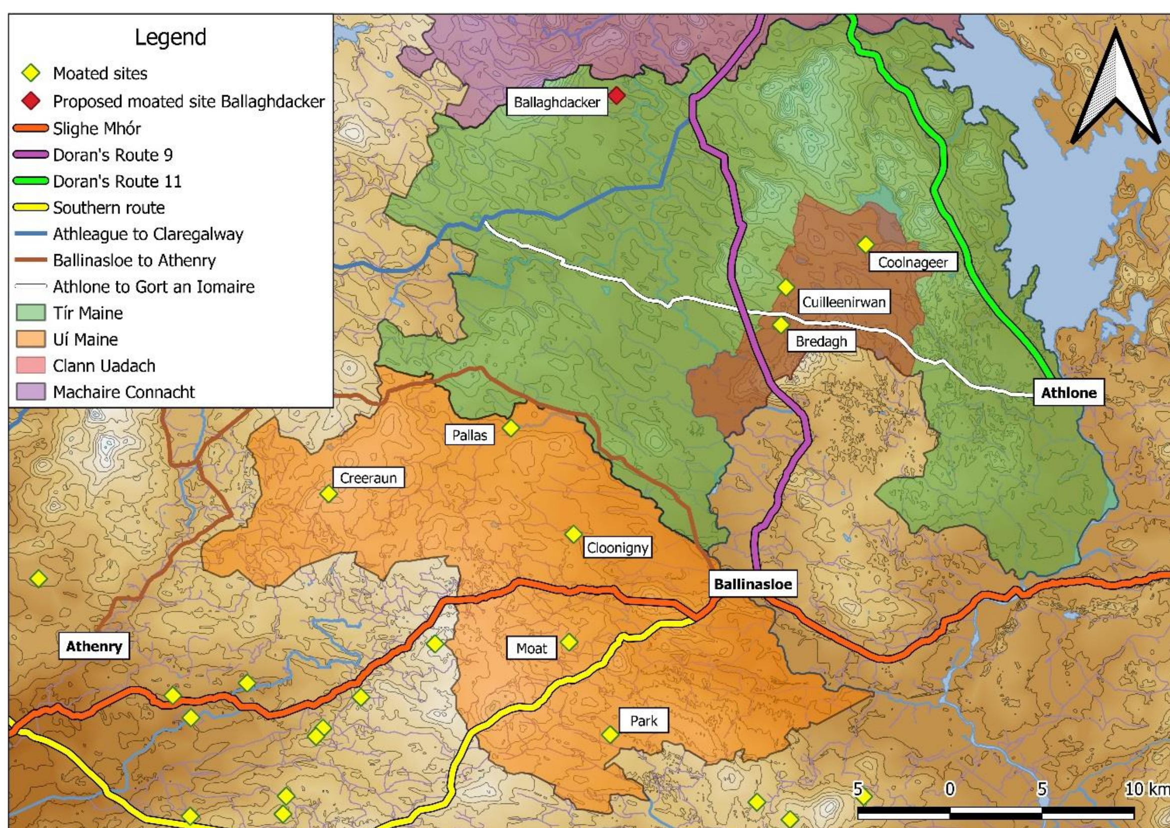

Figure 4.8 - Moated sites within the Uí Maine study area. The sites in the trícha cét *of Uí Maine are of a dispersed distribution, while the three confirmed examples in Tír Maine are all located within what was the territory of the Clann Uadach. The candidate moated site at Ballaghdacker Lough is the only example in the study area to be sited on a lake shore, and may be a dryland site attached to the* crannóga *of this lake.*

4.7 – The *Pailís* Sites of Later Medieval Uí Maine

Building on the information outlined above on the ringfort/cashel and moated site settlement forms, there is one elite construction that appears in the historical record for later medieval Gaelic Ireland which is amorphous in form. This is known as the *pailís*, anglicised as Pallas or Pallis, and it is conventionally translated as a palisade or stockade (eDIL *s.v.* pailis). FitzPatrick has theorised that this translation may be oversimplified, and argues that some of the surviving place-name examples may actually be a descriptor applied to an elaborate timber hall commissioned and used by Gaelic lords in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These halls possessed the combined roles of hunting lodge and feasting hall, are were routinely located in the boundary locations of territories (FitzPatrick 2016, 202; 2018, 180). A place-name search of what was the *trícha céta* of Tír Maine and Uí Maine presents with three townland names which carry the *pailís* descriptor. These are Cornapallis – *Corr na Pailís* (the round hill of the *pailís*), Tisrara civil parish, Co. Roscommon, Caltrapallas – *Cealtrach na Pailíse* (the *pailís* of the old burial place), Killosolan civil parish and Pallas – *An Phailís*, Fohanagh civil parish, both Co. Galway (see Fig. 4.9).

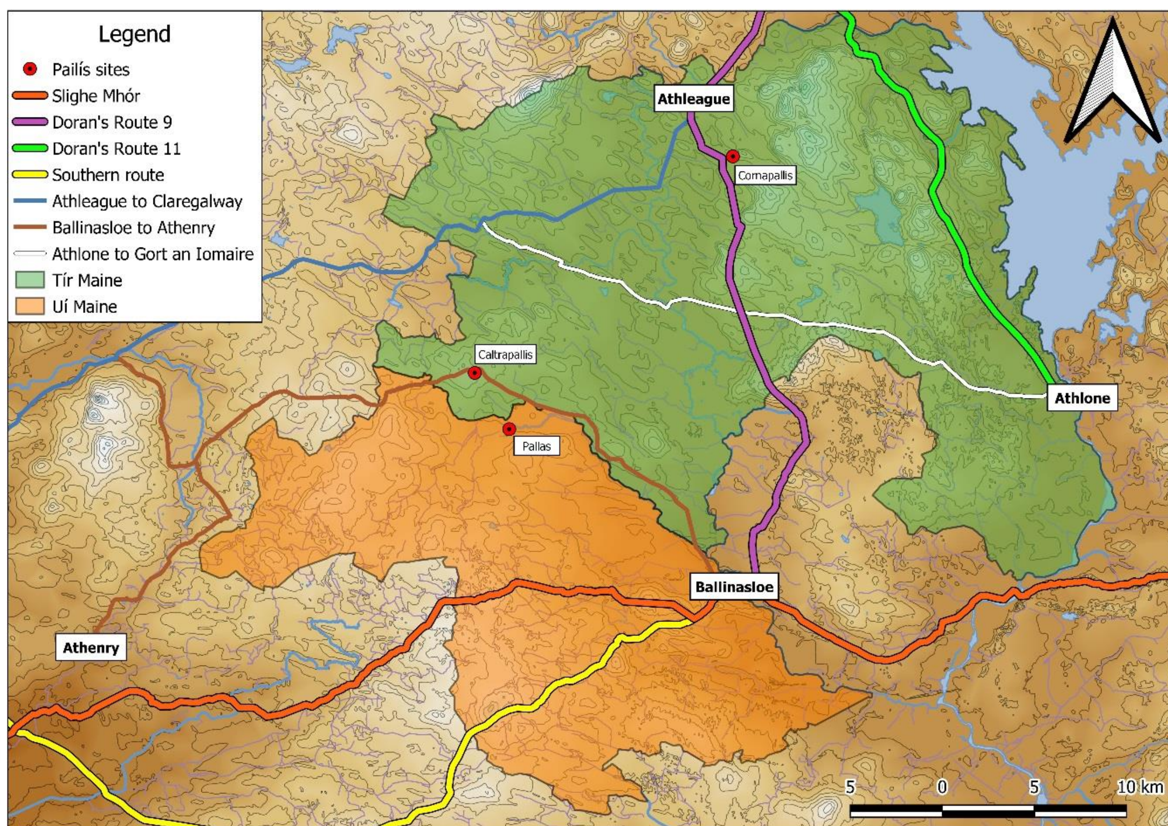

Figure 4.9 - Location of the three pailís *sites in the* trícha céta *of Tír Maine and Uí Maine.*

Of these three townlands, Caltrapallas is the most difficult to interpret. There is a record of a friary having been founded here by the de Berminghams in *c.*1320 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 288). However, nothing survives in the archaeological record for the townland today and the remains were not extant to be marked on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map for the area. Basically, there are no visible surface remains of any archaeological site in the townland today. Consequently, two townlands remain in the study area which can be considered with the *pailís* theory in mind.

Dealing firstly with Pallas, Co. Galway, it is in an area that is taken up by a substantial zone of bogland, particularly on its western boundary, adjacent to Fohanagh townland. Two monuments, an enclosure (GA060-178-) and a moated site (GA060-179-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 391), are located on comparably good ground, close to the eastern townland boundary between Pallas and what is now Clonbrock Demesne. The most likely location for a timber hall which would fit the description of a *pailís* from among the two extant sites is, as has been argued, the moated site (FitzPatrick 2016, 204), which is labelled 'Lismore' in the nineteenth-century cartographic sources. However, FitzPatrick identifies this site as being the location of the famous fourteenth-century Christmas feast of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig, a point

which will be discussed below. While the present writer is suggesting that this feast was held elsewhere, it is highly likely that FitzPatrick's identification of Pallas moated site as an important *pailís* site of the Uí Chellaig is correct (see 6.3.1.2). Considering the peripheral location of Pallas townland within the catchment area of the Callow Lough and Kilconnell *cenn áit* (see 5.3), this suggests that the moated site at Pallas was the location of a lordly feasting and hunting lodge used by the Ó Cellaig lords (FitzPatrick 2016, 210-1). There are a number of factors that further suggest that Lismore/Pallas is a potentially suitable location for elite gathering and feasting activity in later medieval Uí Maine. Firstly, Pallas townland is located close to the boundary of the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine. The border of Ó Cellaig country lies 7km to the west of Pallas, where it meets with the eastern boundary of the *trícha cét* of Clann Taidg and Uí Diarmata. In the later medieval period, Clann Taidg and Uí Diarmata became the cantred of Clantayg and was held by the Anglo-Norman de Bermingham barons of Athenry (MacCotter 2014, 134-5). Mapping the distribution patterns of *pailís* place-names indicates that these sites tend to be located in boundary zones between territories, with FitzPatrick suggesting that they may have been used as high-status indicators in the configuration or reaffirmation of Gaelic sept boundaries as a result (FitzPatrick 2016, 205).

The physical environment that surrounds Pallas, and the adjacent townland of Clonbrock Demesne, contains relatively extensive bogland, wooded areas and streams, a landscape more of use to the production of game animals than agriculture. Griffith's Bog Commission map of the area depicts the survival of substantial woodland within Clonbrock Demesne, showing the survival of this sylvan landscape into the modern period (Fig. 4.10). More than this, the survival of the place-name of Clonbrock – *Cluain Broc* (the meadow of the badgers) may also directly reflect Clonbrock to be a former hunting environment for badger pelts and possibly meat (3.5.4.1).

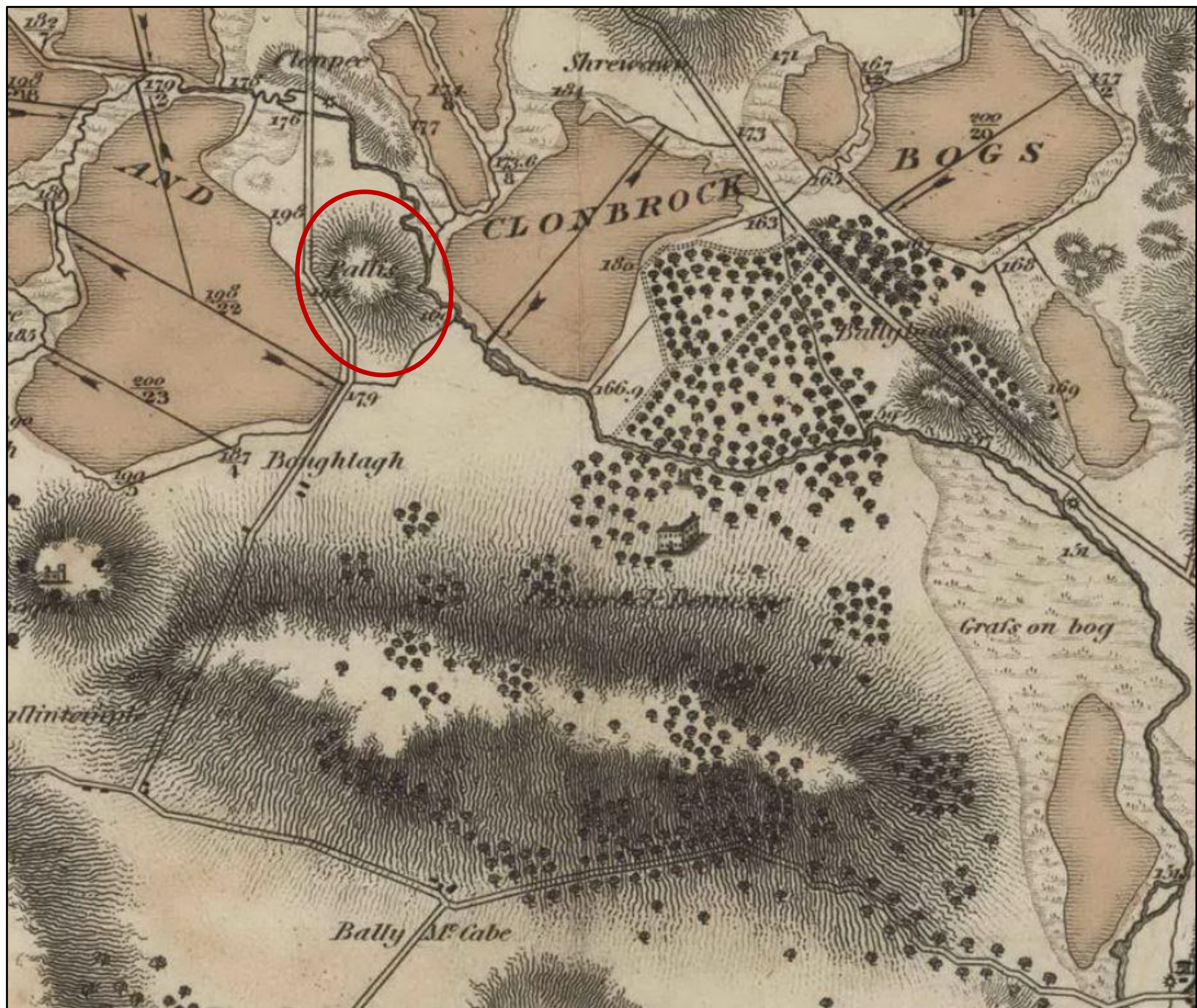

Figure 4.10 - Bog Commission map of the district around Pallas townland, encircled in red, and Clonbrock Demesne, Co. Galway, highlighting the continued presence of woodland in the area into the nineteenth-century (Griffths 1809-1814). *This map shows a landscape ideal for hunting. The presence of river and marsh is a duck-friendly habitat; bog attracts red grouse and snipe, while woodland and scrub would have been common locations to find woodcock and deer. Deer thrive in areas of grassland and wood/scrub. A more than suitable location to construct a* pailís *hunting lodge and feasting hall in later medieval Uí Maine.*

As a result, Pallas and its vicinity is an area that may have served as a suitable hunting district within reach of the lordly centre. The moated site of Lismore is located 5.3km to the north of Callow Lough itself, and with the presence of a series of landholdings of Ó Cellaig-associated service kindreds in the vicinity of the latter lake (see 5.3.3), Pallas would be a likely location for a hunting lodge and feasting hall in the wilder and less cultivated border districts of Uí Maine.

Cornapallis townland is located 4km to the southeast of the settlement at Athleague, and no more than 5km to the south of the northern territorial boundary of Tír Maine itself, represented by the River Hind. Served by Route 9, the townland is located between two historically-attested Ó Cellaig lordly centres, Lough Croan and Athleague. It contains two monuments, categorised

as ringforts, either of which could conceivably be the site of a *pailís*. The toponymy of the area around Cornapallis presents a case for the immediate surrounds of the townland being populated with extensive areas of woodland, particularly to the north, named above as the Woods of Athleague (see 3.2.2). It could be speculated that, once more, hunting was an activity that could have been practiced in such an environment. To the south, however, townland names such as Lenanamalla – *Leana na meala* (meadow of the honey) and Cloghnashade (see 3.5.4.3) speculatively provide evidence of beekeeping, honey harvesting, mead production, and perhaps even mineral acquisition or extraction. Cloonca townland (*Cluain Cath* – the *cluain* or lawn of battle), located nearby to Cornapallis, provides place-name remembrance for a former site of battle in this area also. Much like at Pallas, Cornapallis is situated adjacent to one of the major service kindreds of the Uí Chellaig. The Ó Dubhagáin family of hereditary poets and historians are recorded at *Culdaire*, where there is a large ringfort (RO044-037----) (*Reg. Clon.*, 456; see 5.2.3.2). *Culdaire* is identifiable with the townland of Coolderry, located less than 2km to the south of Cornapallis.

A speculative second learned kindred landholding may also be identifiable in close vicinity to the *pailís* site at Cornapallis. Two townlands named Liscoffy – *Lios Cobhthaigh* 'Ó Cobhtaigh's fort' originally one larger townland, are located to the northeast of Cornapallis. The Uí Chobhtaigh were a prominent poetic family in Gaelic Ireland, and in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries they were settled in the Barony of Rathconrath, Co. Westmeath (Moore and Ó Cróinín 2004). However, a branch of this family was located in Uí Maine into the seventeenth century, particularly at *Tuaim Cátraige*, today known as Kellysgrove, Co. Galway (Breatnach 1967, 82; *Tribes and Customs*, 39-40). The fourteenth-century praise poem *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach* is said to have been composed by an Ó Cobhtaigh poet for Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig (Breatnach 1967, 82). The setting of Uilliam's court in the poem is reminiscent of the elite settlement archaeology seen at nearby Lough Croan (see 5.2.2), which strengthens this argument. Liscoffy (Madden) townland possesses two ringforts (RO044-023-; RO044-026002-), and one or both of the ringforts may have served as a residence of an Ó Cobhtaigh poet in the fourteenth century (Fig. 4.11).

The presence of these learned families, particularly those whose duties were tied into performance at feasting events, in the vicinity of both Pallas and Cornapallis townlands adds weight to the argument for their consideration as *pailís* sites. The location of these sites at a slight geographical remove from the lordship and settlement centres, with possible feasting, hunting and mineral acquisition associations, display a series of traits that provide a convincing

argument for them being focal points for the hunt and the feast, situated within marginal landscapes but in close proximity to their established lordly centres.

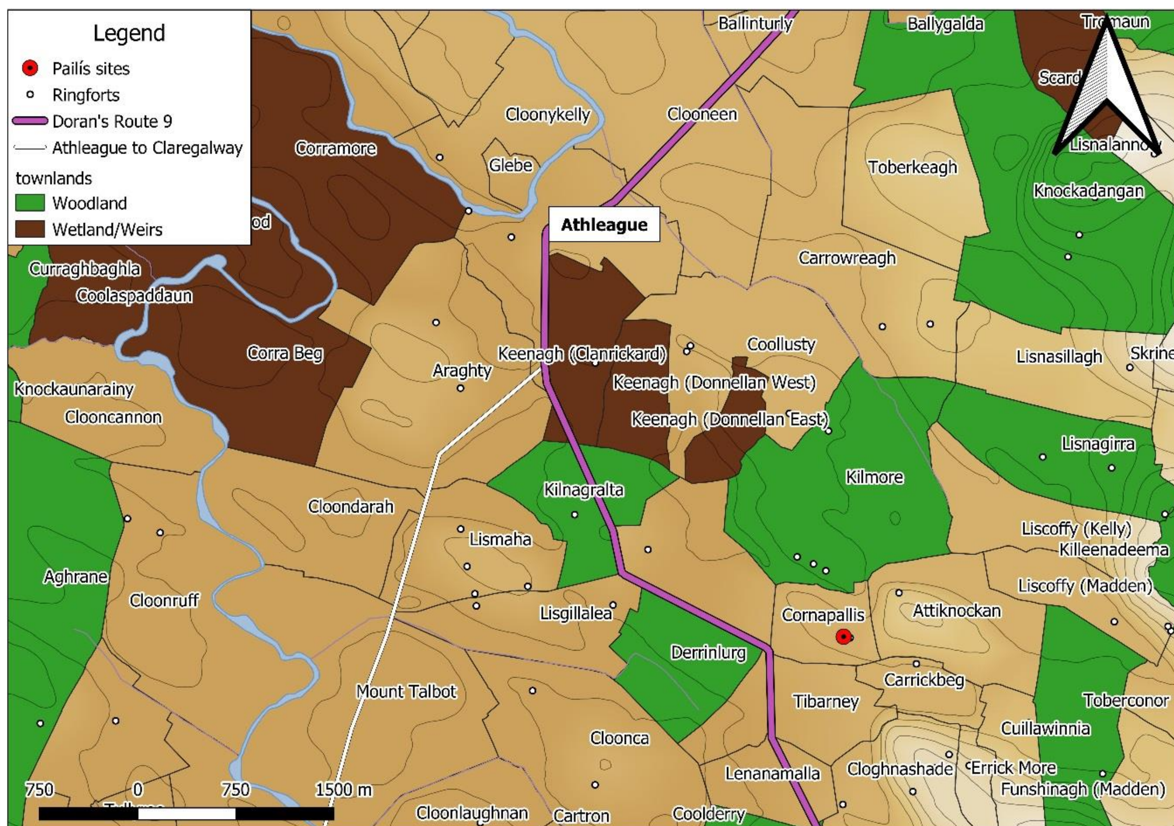

Figure 4.11 - Location of Cornapallis townland in relation to Coolderry, Liscoffy, Clooncа, Cloghnashade, Lenanmalla townlands, and the Ó Cellaig cenn áit *of Athleague.*

4.8 – Tower House castles

The final settlement form which can be identified as having been utilised by the Uí Chellaig is the tower house castle. The tower house is a monument type which was constructed across Ireland over a period from potentially the later fourteenth century to the 1640s, with the vast majority, particularly the ones built by Gaelic lords, constructed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Cairns 1987, 9; Sherlock 2011, 131; 2013, 21-3). They are generally constructed of masonry, however historical sources indicate that timber versions were also built (Donnelly, Logue, O'Neill and O'Neill 2007; Logue 2018, 271-2). They are usually rectangular in plan, with a ground floor entrance, and were built four to five storeys in height. The upper floors were generally more commodious. Despite this, they routinely possess little ornamentation, either internally or externally, but evidence suggests that they were frequently 'harled' and lime-washed upon construction and through their occupation. The castles were internally plastered, and there is some evidence for decoration with wall paintings (Morton 2002; 2004,

327; 2010). Quite a number of these sites would have possessed a defended courtyard, known as a 'bawn' (see 4.5), whose walls were constructed of stone or, sometimes more organic materials such as wood, although only twenty percent of tower houses have extant examples or can provide evidence for one (Cairns 1987, 16-7; Leask 1941, 75-112; McNeill 1997, 222; Sweetman 2000, 158; McAlister 2019, 11-4, 22). Such things as halls, along with administrative and agricultural buildings, lay within the bawn and these seem to have been mostly built of timber or, perhaps cob (Barry 1987, 188-9; Cairns 1987, 24; O'Conor 1998, 33; McAlister 2019, 65-89). Tower houses were constructed by both Anglo-Irish and Gaelic lords, and their construction was one way of displaying wealth in late medieval Ireland. The distribution of tower houses is not uniform across the island, and in some, particularly Gaelic, areas, such as west and south Ulster, they are notable by their scarcity (O'Conor 1998, 102; Sherlock 2015, 354; McAlister 2019, 14). Nevertheless, across much of Ireland, tower houses represent the first large-scale evidence for the Gaelic Irish building what English and European contemporaries then, and modern scholars now would accept as masonry castles (O'Conor 1998, 102). Much has been written about the Gaelicisation of families of Anglo-Norman descent during the fourteenth century. Yet the adoption of tower houses by the Gaelic Irish elite from an Anglo-Norman milieu, especially from *c.*1380-1400 onwards, is an indication that this was a two-way process and that native Irish lords were taking on elements of contemporary Anglo-Norman/English culture too throughout the course of the fourteenth century and later (O'Conor 1998, 103-4). Arguably, this amalgamation of ideas produced the very rich culture of Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland seen throughout the fifteenth century and up to at least the mid-sixteenth century (see 3.5.5; Cairns 1987, 9; Simms 1987, 99-101).

Evidence for the construction and occupation of tower houses amongst the Uí Chellaig in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is difficult to quantify. The ASI database records twenty tower houses in the area defined as Ó Cellaig territory as it appeared *c.*1534 (Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 393-418; Fig. 4.12).[40]

The surviving tower house castles of the study area can, in most cases, be attributed to either the Ó Cellaig themselves, members of their vassal clans, such as the Meic Eochadha of *Magh Finn*, and the Uí Mainnin of Soghain at Killaclogher, Co. Galway (GA071-042-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 410), or prominent service kindreds. For instance, the degraded remains of two tower houses in the modern parish of Taughmaconnell, Co. Roscommon, at

[40] https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/

Cloonbigny (RO050-019001-) and Castlesampson (RO051-017001-) were referred to in the possession of the Meic Eochadha in the lists compiled of Galway and Roscommon castles and their owners in 1573-1574, in advance of the *Compossicion of Conought* (Nolan 1900-1; Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019), as is the partially extant Ó Cellaig tower house at Galey (RO042-045001-), referred to earlier (see 4.2.3, also 6.3.2.2).

Tower houses can also be seen at a small number of historically-attested Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna*, such as at Garbally (GA059-037-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 409) and Monivea (GA071-064001-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 415), both Co. Galway, and these will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 7.

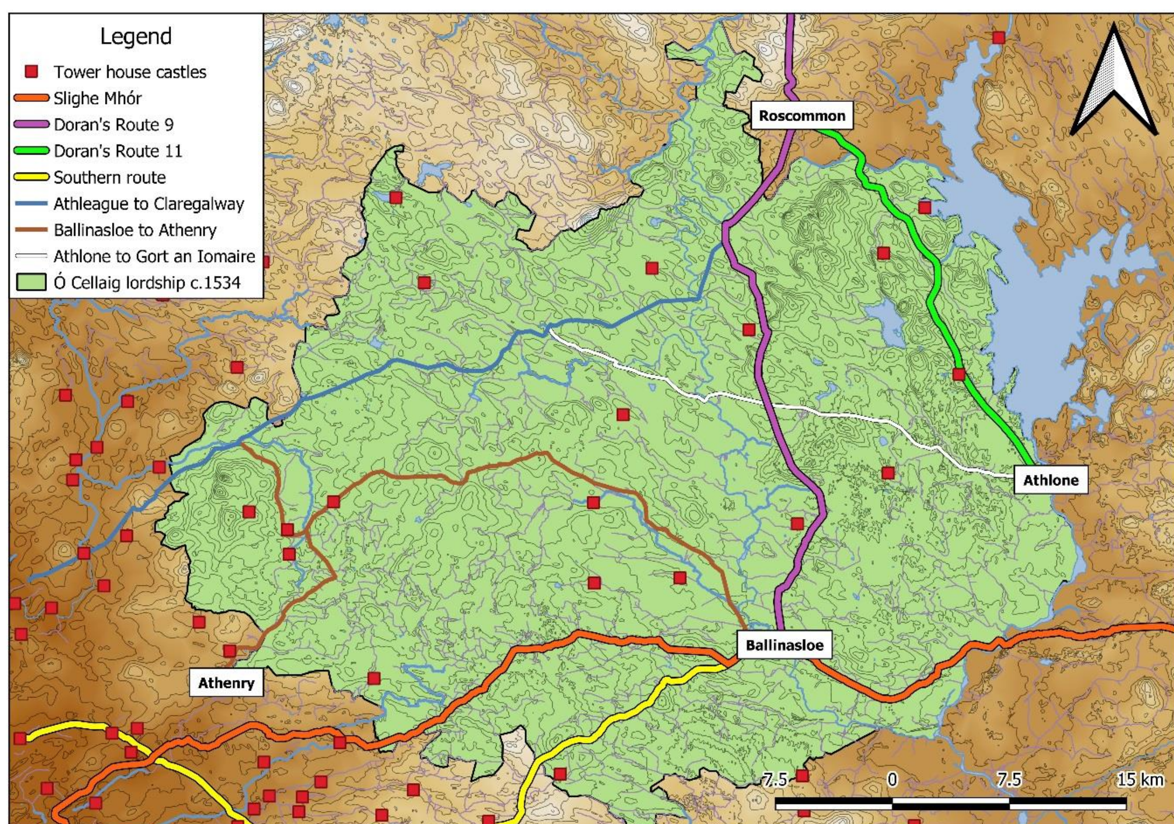

Figure 4.12 - Distribution map of the surviving tower house castles located within the Ó Cellaig lordship study area in c.*1534.*

4.9 – Conclusions

This chapter has succeeded in outlined the variety of settlement forms which were constructed and occupied by the Uí Chellaig elite, their vassal clans, and their service kindreds, through the period from *c.*1100 to *c.*1600. This has been divided primarily between high medieval and late medieval settlement forms. It will be demonstrated, however, over the course of the coming

chapters, that in many instances, a continuity of settlement occurs at these Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna*.

Two main issues relate to the high medieval settlement forms used by the Gaelic elite. The first concerns the construction of castles in the period prior to the advent of the tower house castle. In the case of the Uí Maine study area, there is no definitive evidence for the construction of castles, of earth and timber or masonry form, by the high medieval Gaelic Uí Chellaig (see 4.2).

Some scholars have suggested that the more powerful Gaelic Ó Conchobair kings, who extended their overlordship over all of eastern Connacht in the early twelfth century, were the first to construct castles in the study area, but the evidence for this is nowhere near as clear as has been argued for in the case of the *caistél* of *Dún Leodha* at least (see 4.2.3).

The second issue relates to what settlement forms were advocated for by the Ó Cellaig elite, if they were not building what are interpreted by modern scholarship as castles. A series of site types, some of which are traditionally regarded as belonging to an earlier historical milieu: ringforts, cashels and *crannóga*, present with persuasive evidence for their continued use, and possible construction during the later medieval period (see 4.3; 4.4). Added to this is the adoption of the moated site as a settlement form of choice amongst the Gaelic lords of eastern Connacht (see 4.6).

Aside from this, two additional site types have been proposed by the present writer, in the form of the *bódhún* (see 4.5) and the *pailís* (see 4.7), and these will be discussed in greater detail in the coming chapters. Finally, the late medieval period witnesses the adoption of the tower house castle as one of the principal elite settlement forms of the Irish landscape, and this is also true in the case of the Uí Chellaig (see 4.8).

The successful identification of lordly centres, and an understanding of how these manifested at a given point in time, are crucial to understanding how the Uí Maine elite lived throughout the later medieval period. Understanding the evolution of elite settlement practice among the Gaelic Irish is also vital in determining where they were located, how they viewed themselves, and wished to be viewed. These insights can now be used to reconstruct something of the culture and social organisation of later medieval lordly centres of the Ó Cellaig lordship. The coming chapters will thematically reflect the different settlement environments which have developed as elite focal points in Uí Maine during the period under investigation.

Chapter 5 – Lakeland Elite Settlement in Later Medieval Uí Maine

5.1 – Introduction

The first settlement environment which presents itself to the researcher of later medieval Uí Maine is lordly centres and associated elite landscapes which have developed around lakeland settings (see 1.2). The multidisciplinary approach taken in this research has uncovered three elite landscapes which centre on either a current or former lake within the study area: Lough Croan, Co. Roscommon, Callow Lough and Ballaghdacker Lough, both in Co. Galway. None of these three landscapes have been explored in terms of its archaeology or history prior to the present work.

5.2 – Case Study: Lough Croan and Environs, Co. Roscommon

Lough Croan has emerged from the historical background outlined above as a location of importance for both the early medieval Uí Maine, and one of their principal later medieval offshoots, the Uí Chellaig (see 2.3; 2.4.4; 2.6; 4.4; 4.6). As a result, the area surrounding the turlough of Lough Croan has been identified as a key location for investigation as part of the present research. This former lake is located in what was once the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine. Lough Croan and its environs are shared by four civil and, therefore, later medieval parishes, those of Cam to the east, Dysart to the south, Tisrara to the northwest and Taghboy to the northeast. This is the heartland of Tír Maine, buffered sufficiently from the more northerly Ó Conchobair *trícha cét* of Machaire Connacht by a distance of over 12km, where the boundary of Tír Maine is located, marked by the natural border of the River Hind (see 3.3). By the beginning of the fifteenth century, Lough Croan was split between the two *oireachtaí* of Túath Áth Liaig and Clann Uadach (2.5; Fig. 5.1).

The turlough has an approximate area of 106.9ha (Goodwillie 1992, 148), and there is considerable evidence to support the use of turloughs as vital summer grazing, due to the annual liming of the soil (O'Flaherty Forthcoming). The turlough measures 3.4km in length at its furthest extents, and 0.570km at its widest point. The elevation in the basin of the turlough is approximately 66m OD, while the elevation of the surrounding glacial hills approaches 104m to the south and 106m to the north of the turlough, located in the townlands of Cronin and Correal respectively.

The underlying geology of the Lough Croan area is primarily one of Carboniferous Limestones (Parkes, Meehan and Préteseille 2012, 18), which, as we have seen, provides a very beneficial

environment for the production of high-quality livestock, so good farmland exists in the vicinity of the lake (see 1.2; 3.2.1; Collins 2016, 2; O'Conor 2018, xxvii). The soil composition of the turlough bed is primarily peaty, with silt and an impure marl in places (Goodwillie 1992, 149). Most of the Lough Croan turlough is today open to summer grazing, particularly of sheep, but its reed beds are generally protected by field fences and boundary banks (*Ibid*., 149). In winter, the potential of Lough Croan as a hunting locale must be taken into account also, particularly for wildfowl. Around the margins of the turlough, grassland is dominant, with calcareous grassland at the southern end, where the shore rises sharply, and elsewhere the grassland is more nutrient-enriched and less species diverse (DAHG 2013).

Communication through the Lough Croan landscape was provided primarily by its close proximity to Doran's Route 9 (see 3.3). From a logistical point of view then, the communities settling Lough Croan were very centrally placed in terms of accessing trade and transport routes both to the south, and to the north of them. This routeway was of vital importance, considering as substantial areas to the west and east of Lough Croan possessed zones of bog and woodland (see 3.3).

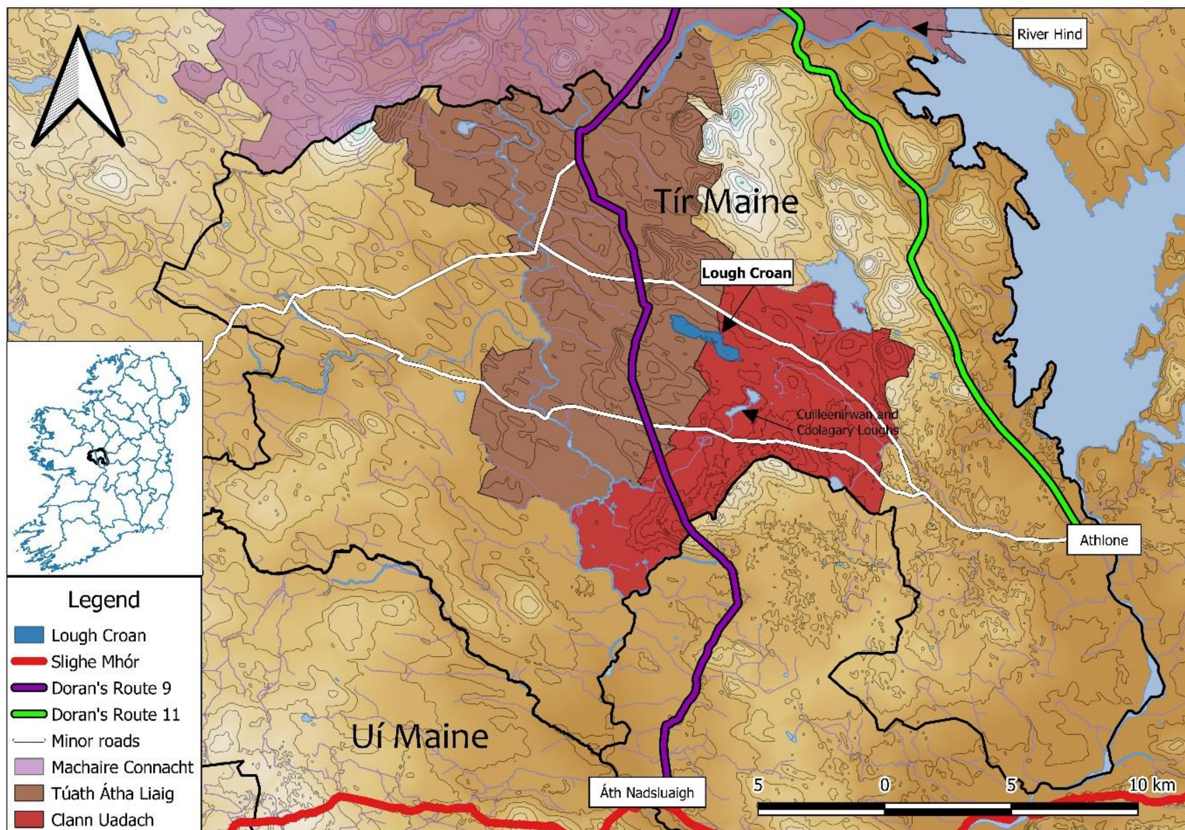

Figure 5.1 - Location of Lough Croan turlough within the medieval trícha cét *of* Tír Maine *in modern south Roscommon and east Galway, the patrimony of the* Ó Cellaig *lords of* Uí Maine. *Boundaries of these territories in* c. 1400*, defined after Nicholls (1969) and MacCotter (2014).*

5.2.1 – The Toponymy, History and Archaeology of the Lough Croan **cenn áit**

Considering the toponymy in a thematic fashion, and where the townland names are not describing physical features of the landscape, the names are primarily concerned with martial associations, assembly, landownership, and the aforementioned predominance of names associated with cattle production (see 3.5.1).

The martial associations are most readily seen with the townlands of Lisnagavragh – *Lios na gCabhrach* (enclosure/fort of the embossed shields *or* huts) and Turrock – *An Turrac* [also *Caisleán an Turraic*] ([the castle] of the attack/onslaught). Lisnagavragh townland contains eight recorded monuments, with four of these categorised as ringforts. The largest and most prominent of these ringforts, and presumably the one which gives the townland its name, possesses a considerable internal space of 52m diameter, a possible entrance to the ENE and is surrounded by a well-preserved ditch and bank system at a combined width of *c.*8-10m (RO044-072001-; see Fig. 5.3). The LiDAR topographical data (Fig. 5.2 right) records a faint circular feature attached to the east of the extant remains. This enclosure is of a comparable size to the extant monument, with an external diameter of 55m, and seems to have possessed an entrance to the south, consistent with a pair of bulbous terminals. This enclosure underlies and potentially predates the upstanding remains.

Local information records the ringfort as being the site of a Children's Burial Ground. However, no archaeological remains can confirm this at present. The interior of the ringfort does contain the foundations of two rectangular stone house sites of indeterminate date, and these may be evidence for the continuous usage of this substantial ringfort as a settlement site into the high or perhaps even late medieval period. Similar suggestions have been made in other Gaelic lordship research areas, not least for the later medieval O'Sullivan Beare lordship in west Cork (Breen 2005, 54), which may assist in our quest to understand where the elites of the pre-tower house period lived in the area.

Figure 5.2 - Lisnagavragh Fort (RO044-072001-), Satellite aerial image (left) courtesy of Bing Maps. DTM of fort (right), data courtesy of OSi. Note rectangular house site in the left-hand side of the site (RO044-072002-), and a second rectangular feature immediately south (RO044-072003-), up against the internal bank.

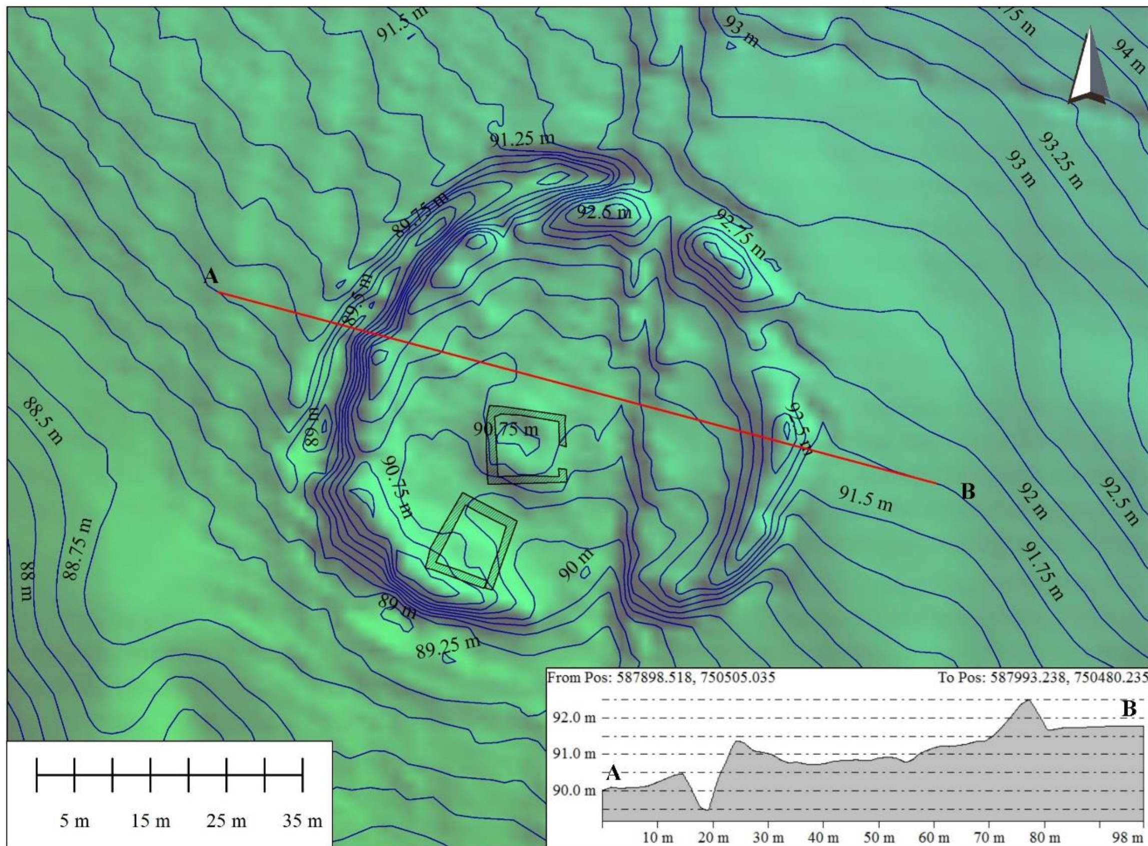

Figure 5.3 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Lisnagavragh Fort. Plan incorporates the foundational remains of the two house sites of indeterminate date which are located within the western side of the site, which may indicate that this ringfort continued in use into the high or perhaps late-medieval period (Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland, courtesy of the Royal Irish Academy).

Turrock townland contains eleven monuments of various classes, with the settlement archaeology being split between a substantial ringfort (RO047-018001-) with an external diameter of 50m labelled 'Turrock Fort' on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map, and a small cluster of monuments in the vicinity of Turrock House. A monument categorised as a seventeenth-century house serves as the focal point of the precinct (RO044-114-). Aside from this, there are two enclosures in the near vicinity of the house which may indicate landscaping features contemporary with or associated with the latter house, or perhaps some earthwork construction which at one point surrounded the historically and cartographically-attested castle (RO044-084001-; RO044-085-; see 2.6).

Turrock Castle is recorded in relation to Donnchadh Ó Cellaig, who was attacked at what is regarded as his residence here in 1536 (*AC*; *ALC*). The year 1545 records another incident among the Uí Chellaig, with Turrock Castle again the setting (*ALC*). Later in the sixteenth century, a number of individuals bearing the Ó Cellaig surname were to be found residing in the townland, while it was also part of an estate leased by the Dublin government to the Ó

Fallamháin in this century, but it is unclear if this lease was acted upon (*Fiants* II, 174 [1361], 206 [1569], 464 [3382], 519 [3753]). Interestingly, the 'ornamented' door of Turrock Castle was so prized that it was stolen and brought to Sligo Castle by the aggressors in 1536 (*AC*; *ALC*). O'Keeffe discussed the importance that doors and doorways may have had in the medieval mind-set, particularly in relation to the acceptance of visitors into a tower house castle. The removal of the front door of Turrock for use in Sligo Castle by the Uí Chonchobair *Sligigh* would have been an embarrassment to the victims of this theft, hinting at the role such an object may have had beyond its physical form (O'Keeffe 2015, 97, n51).

The government's list of castles and their owners in Co. Roscommon for 1573 records *Turuk* Castle in the possession of 'William & Connor O Kelly', likely the last historical entry for Turrock being in the ownership of the Uí Chellaig (Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019). Turrock Castle is marked on the Strafford Survey map of *c.*1636, when it was most likely in the possession of Michael Pinnocke, who retained the holding throughout the Cromwellian period (Cronin 1980, 110). The site of Turrock Castle, presumably consistent with the remains of Turrock House, retains a number of punch-dressed stones, which are incorporated into the building fabric of the later seventeenth-century house, adjacent field walls and a substantial two-storey outbuilding, the latter possibly once functioning as a grain store or mill (Pl. 5.1). Punch-dressed stones are a feature of late medieval masonry buildings in Ireland, particularly friaries and tower houses (Leask 1941, 75-124; McAfee 1997, 28; McNeill 1997, 201-2; O'Conor 2008, 331-2; O'Keeffe 2015, 75-9; O'Conor and Williams 2015, 62). These traces of punch-dressed stone in the vicinity of the site of Turrock Castle indicate that a late medieval castle was likely once located at the site and this seems to have taken the form of a tower house (see 4.8; 5.3.3.3).

Plate 5.1 - Some examples of the range of punch-dressed stones, indicated by the red arrows, which have been incorporated into the building fabric of an outbuilding attached to Turrock House (Author's photographs).

Assembly or periodic fairs may be recorded in the place-name Tullyneeny – *Tulaigh an aonaigh*. The name has not yet been fully analysed, but O'Donovan, in 1837, in the Ordnance Survey Parish Namebook, suggests, quite reasonably, that its original Irish name was *Tulaigh an Aonaigh* which he interprets as 'the hill of the cattle-fair' (https://www.logainm.ie/en/42638?s=tullyneeny). This would be in keeping with the later understanding of the words *tulach* and *aonach*. In the earlier language, however, *tulach*, while basically meaning 'a hill, a mound', came in many cases to be understood as 'royal hill, hill of assembly', etc. (see *DIL* T 377), and *óenach* meant primarily 'a reunion' and, by extension, 'a popular assembly or gathering' (see *DIL* O 103). Tullyneeny is located 2.5km due south of the turlough, on a prominent rise on a NNW-SSE esker ridge, and is bounded to the north by the townland of Gortaphuill – *Gort a phoill* (field of the hole). Within Gortaphuill townland there is a landmark known as 'Fair Hill', 74m OD, and which is topped today by a nineteenth-century stone cross shaft. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map locates a standing stone at this location, and 'Fair Hill' is located *c*.0.212km west of Cuilleenirwan moated site (see 4.6). This group of features is worthy of further investigation (see 5.2.3.4).

The townland name of Liswilliam – *Lios Uilliam/Lios Liam* (William's enclosure/fort – 'Liam/ Uilliam' being a copy of an Anglo-Norman Christian name) records a personal name, and refers to a substantial oval-shaped ringfort with impressive external dimensions of 66m (RO044-065001-; Fig. 5.4). It is located in the north-western quadrant of the townland, and contains evidence for a souterrain. Liswilliam is located to the west of Lough Croan, and the townland of Turrock.

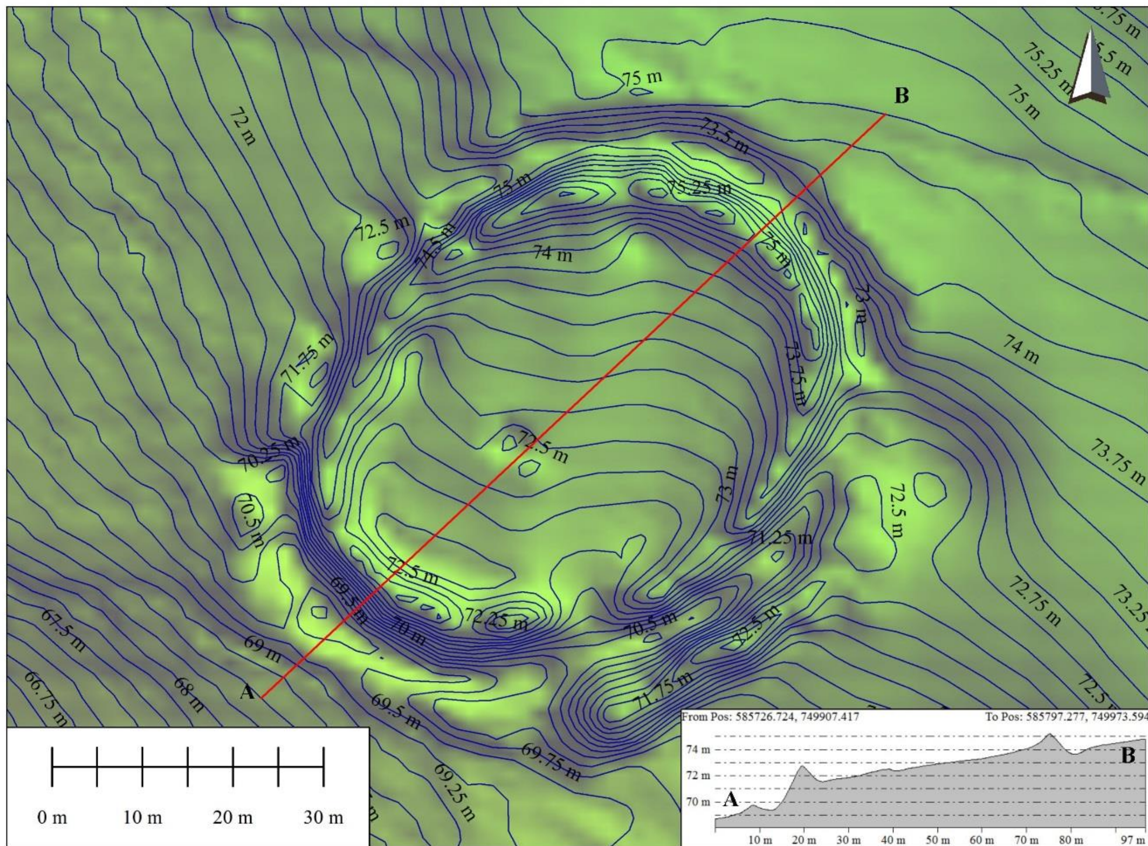

Figure 5.4 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Liswilliam Fort ((RO044-065001-). The depression slightly west of centre represents the remains of the souterrain (RO044-065003-) recorded for the site (Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland, courtesy of the Royal Irish Academy).

The ringfort is the only such monument in the townland, and the townland name could potentially refer to one of three Ó Cellaig lords of Uí Maine (Uilliam Buide, lord of Uí Maine 1349-1381; Uilliam mac Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine 1410-1420; or William, lord of *Iarthair* Uí Maine 1472–1476 and all of Uí Maine 1476–1487). If the place-name refers to any of the three, then it is most likely to have referred to Uilliam Buide, who perhaps constructed or modified the ringfort at some point during his long fourteenth-century reign. The Anglo-Norman personal name William seems to be first adopted by the Ó Cellaig dynasts with the aforementioned Uilliam Buide. This is yet another indication of the cultural borrowing between the native Irish and the Anglo-Normans that took place over the course of the fourteenth century (see 4.8).

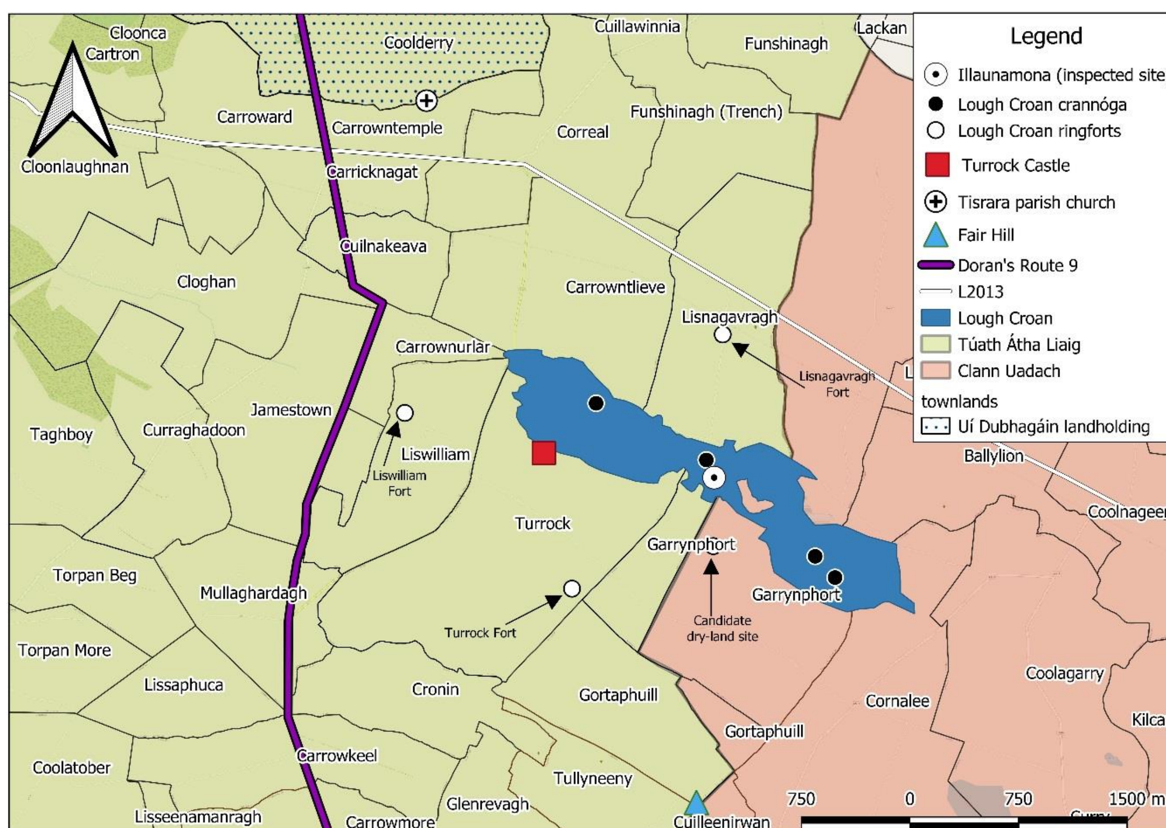

Figure 5.5 - The townland names of the Lough Croan cenn áit*, indicating the location of the pre-modern routeway through the landscape, as well as the principal monuments discussed in 6.2.1. The individual* crannóga *are marked in greater detail in Fig. 5.6.*

Lough Croan turlough itself contains a number of place-names relating to the natural and man-made islands located on the former lake. Firstly, there is the townland name of Garrynphort – *Garraí an Phoirt* 'the garden/court of the bank/landing-place'. An alternative translation for the prefix *garraidh*, which MacCotter outlines is a colonial import (from the Norse *garth*), would be 'chief house' or 'chief enclosed residence' (MacCotter 2018, 86). This would give the translation of *Garraí an Phoirt* as 'the chief house of the bank/landing place'. Located on the southern shore, two adjacent townlands bear this name, and indicate that this area may have served as a routine, possibly elite, location from which watercraft were launched in order to access the islands of the lake. The site of a ringfort (RO044-092-) is located close to the shoreline of the lake here, and although it does not survive for inspection today, as there are no visible surface remains of the site, it may have been the monument referred to in the townland name. This could be evidence of a dry-land service site associated with one or more of the *crannóga* on the former lake, presumably operating as the administrative and agricultural centre for the occupants of the Lough Croan *crannóga* (see O'Conor 2000, 94, 100; 2001, 339,

O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 31-2; O'Conor and Finan 2018, 118-9; Finan 2018, 145; O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 95).

Turning to the islands themselves, all of their names are preserved on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map. Working from west to east, the first island name recorded is Edward's Island. This is identifiable with the site of a *crannóg*, one of five *crannóga* recorded on the ASI database for Lough Croan. It is unclear who is being referred to in the island name, but it may relate to the father of a sixteenth-century Ó Cellaig lord of Uí Maine, Éamonn Ó Cellaig, whose son Donnchadh was attacked at Turrock Castle in 1536 (*AC*). As noted, Turrock House was likely constructed on the site of the now ruined Turrock Castle, and situated less than 500m from the *crannóg*, on what was once the shoreline of the lake. Irrespective of the connection between the place-names in this instance, there is a strong likelihood that Turrock Castle and Edward's Island were linked in terms of use. The tower house could have operated as the dry-land residence for the *crannóg* in the sixteenth-century, with the latter acting as a refuge, guest accommodation, or location for feasting for the occupiers of the tower house, as well as a legitimiser of their antique origins in the area (see O'Conor 2018; Logue 2018). The advent of the tower house as the residence type of choice amongst the late medieval elite doesn't result in the wholesale abandonment of what was previously used, and this may also be true of the pairing of Edward's Island and Turrock Castle.

Edward's Island *crannóg* (RO044-107-) survives as a circular grass covered mound, measuring *c.*26m in diameter. Within this is a raised area, *c.*16m in diameter, *c.*0.6m in height above the wider platform. It is divided today by a substantial drain, 5.5m wide at the top, which runs through the centre of the site, a drain which continues the length of the former lake, and would have been partly responsible for the turning of the lake into a turlough. The upcast material from the excavated drain has been interpreted as having contributed to the height difference at the centre of the *crannóg*, and has obscured much of the archaeology of the site as a result. Luckily, an artefactual assemblage survives for Edward's Island, and this will be discussed presently (see 5.2.1.1).

The next named island is Inchnaveague Island – *Inse na bhFia* (the island of the deer), which is also categorised as a *crannóg*. The description attached to this monument (RO044-088-) records elements of a wooden palisade protruding through the sod around the perimeter to the west, south and east. Located roughly at the centre of the turlough, Inchnaveague Island is in line of sight of the ringfort of Lisnagavragh. Located 200m to the east of Inchnaveague Island

is the named island of Illaunnamona –*Oileán na Móna* (Turf Island). It is marked on the ASI database but no longer deemed to be an archaeological site, instead a natural island, and is named for its physical appearance. There are two further named islands located in the south-eastern end of the turlough, Inchnagower – *Inse na nGabhar* (Island of the Goats), and Inchnagreeve – *Inse na gCraobh* (Island of the Bush). Local information states that bones were found at Inchnagower, while there was a 7.9m long dug-out canoe discovered and kept in situ between Inchnagower and Inchnagreeve (NMI I.A./167/66), which confirms that these two islands were likely in use at some point in the past.

5.2.1.1 – Artefactual Assemblage Uncovered at Lough Croan

There is a significant artefactual assemblage in the care of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) for the *crannóga* of Lough Croan. A total of twenty-four items form the collection on record, and twenty two of these items are concentrated on two locations. The majority were found through illegal metal-detecting, and they are recorded as being discovered at the *crannóg* named Edward's Island, and at Illaunamona. The collection at Edward's Island comprises ten items: one Jew's harp (NMI 1991:23), one possible tool fragment (NMI 1991:22), one knife with a curved blade (1991:21) [all iron], one decorative flat round button (NMI 1991:20), one possible gun fragment (NMI 1991:19), one ingot (NMI 1991:18), two decorative mounts (NMI 1991:17 and 1991:14), two trapezoidal buckles (NMI 1991:16 & 1991:15), and one decorative annular brooch-pin (NMI E 499:40 – Not a part of the collection donated in 1991) [all copper alloy or bronze]. One of the copper alloy mounts, (NMI 1991:14), is described by Murray as a twelfth-century 'clasp' with red and yellow *champlevé* enamel work, and he has deduced that it was probably produced in the same Roscommon workshop that created the Cross of Cong (Murray 2014, 138-9). This hints at high-status occupation of this *crannóg* during the twelfth century at least.

The assemblage from Illaunamona comprises eleven items: one nail (NMI 1991:33), one possible awl fragment (NMI 1991:32), and one hook (NMI 1991: 31) [all iron], one small lead vessel with looped handles (NMI 1991:30), one decorated vessel rim fragment (NMI 1991:26), one decorated disc (NMI 1991:27), one decorated square button (NMI 1991:25), one decorated mount with floral design (NMI 1991:24), and two unidentified objects (NMI 1991:29 and 1991:28) [all copper alloy or bronze].

Aside from these artefactual assemblages, there are two other items which complete the extant collection on Lough Croan. One is a bone pin or needle (NMI 1977:2350), which was found in

Garrynphort townland, in a location described as ‘A Crannóg on Lough Croan’. The second is a carved stone head (NMI 1971:952), which was found in Coolnageer townland. Rynne published the carved stone head, identifying it as a king, and surmised it to be part of a king-bishop-queen unit, usually found in Gothic churches, meaning that it post-dates the very late twelfth century. This carved head seems have served as the right jamb of a window within a church. Rynne also suggested its place of origin may have been a burial ground and ecclesiastical enclosure in Coolnageer known locally as Caltragh (Rynne 1966-71, 92-3), which is located 2.2km east of the eastern shoreline of Lough Croan. There are no church remains extant at Caltragh, but this was likely once the case, consistent with a monument recorded as a burial ground in Coolnageer (RO045-167002-).

While this assemblage is quite extensive for an unexcavated archaeological landscape in Co. Roscommon, it is difficult to interpret. The discoveries are, in the main, the result of metal detecting, and do not provide a representative sample selection of the material culture surviving in these locations. Another issue with this collection is the lack of a reliable find circumstance for any of these artefacts, despite the information on file for the collection. Taking into account these limitations, there are still conclusions to be drawn from the available evidence.

If we accept that Edward’s Island and Illaunamona Island are the genuine find locations for these items, then it confirms that these two locations were inhabited in past times. The items seem to indicate that the *crannóga* were inhabited in the later medieval period. Combining the assemblage, and evaluating the material composition of the largest group (Copper-alloy/bronze, 14/24 – 58%), leads us to argue that the character of these items portrays elite habitation on these two sites, with the presence of a number of decorated copper alloy and bronze artefacts mixed in with the everyday tools and implements. Comber highlights the significance of bronze as a high-status metal in a later medieval context (Comber 2018, 100), and such a conclusion can also be advocated for in respect of Lough Croan. The discovery of the possible gun fragment (NMI 1991:19) also points towards late medieval occupation or use of the *crannóg* of Edward’s Island, considering as the introduction of firearms to Ireland seems to occur in the late fifteenth century, although ownership of guns is much more common in the sixteenth century (Hayes-McCoy 1938, 47). The discovery of the enamelled clasp (NMI 1991:14) can date one phase of the *crannóg*’s occupation to at least as early as the twelfth century.

The site of Illaunamona is more difficult to interpret from the artefactual assemblage, due to an uncertainty over its location. The present writer has encountered an inconsistency locally over the location of Illaunamona, with local information advocating for a different location to that of the island labelled as such in the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map of the area. Irrespective of this, the items uncovered suggest settlement activity, and the working of material for making clothes, as well as the personal ornamentation provided by the mounts and decorated disc. The presence of the vessel fragments in the Illaunamona assemblage could point toward later medieval occupancy at this site also. More than this, the artefactual assemblage extant for this site suggests that the National Monuments Service's Archaeological Survey were wrong to de-list Illaunamona as an archaeological site. Natural islands can be used as *crannóga*, if they are about the same size and morphology (O'Conor 1998, 82-4; 2001, 336-7).

5.2.1.2 –The Territory of the Uí Fhallamháin of Clann Uadach

The centrality of this landscape from a geographical point of view, as well as its agricultural value, clearly made Lough Croan and its immediate surroundings a much sought after territory in the later medieval period. As a result, it is unsurprising that a number of polities competed for control in the area surrounding Lough Croan. As outlined above (see 2.3), the Uí Fallamháin sept of the Síl Muiredaig were moved into the area consistent with the civil parishes of Dysart and Cam, with the Dysart parish limits corresponding to the eastern part of the southern shore of Lough Croan itself (Figs. 5.1; 5.3; MacCotter 2014, 208, 210). This movement seems to have occurred in the twelfth century, as a means of limiting the authority of the Uí Chellaig in the *trícha cét*, and the Uí Fhallamháin remained in their new lands for the duration of the period under inspection, and later.

By 1267, the area, which had become known in historical sources as Clann Uadach, had been granted to Richard de la Rochelle (Walton 1980, 473). The townland of Breeole in the parish of Dysart was donated by the Uí Chonchobair to St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin, no later than 1236, and de la Rochelle confirmed the same grant upon the confirmation of his lands, in around 1270 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 144). However, there is little evidence to suggest any kind of Anglo-Norman settlement in Clann Uadach more generally (Walton 1980, 473-4).

Cathal Crobdhearg Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, died at *Disert Briole* in 1223 (*recte* 1224), a Cistercian establishment possibly founded by Cathal himself (*ACl.*). The ability of the Uí Chonchobair to donate lands in Tír Maine to St. Mary's Abbey indicates that they continued to

exercise overlordship over the region into the mid-thirteenth century. From the fourteenth century through to the end of the later medieval period, the Uí Fhallamháin do not feature prominently in the historical sources, and when they do, they seem dependant on the fortunes of initially, the Uí Chonchobair, and later, the Uí Chellaig, becoming vassal lords (for example, *AC, s.a.* 1260; *ALC, s.a.* 1558; also Connolly 1982, 5).

The settlement archaeology of the Uí Fhallamháin of Clann Uadach is most immediately seen with the castle of unclassified form, footings of a surrounding bawn wall, house clusters and field boundaries located in the townland of Milltown (RO047-058001-; RO047-058022-; RO047-058023-; 024-; 025-; 026; RO047-058020-), and this represents the historically-attested late medieval *cenn áit* of the Clann Uadach referred to in 1424 (*AC*) and 1557-1558 (*ALC*). It could be suggested that the three moated sites that are also located within their territory, at Cuilleenirwan, Bredagh and Coolnageer (see 4.6) were also of Ó Fallamháin construction, perhaps copying the Ó Conchobair trend in constructing moated sites within their territory from the later thirteenth century onwards (see Finan and O'Conor 2002; O'Conor and Finan 2018, 116-22).

The Uí Chellaig and the Uí Fhallamháin, therefore, resided in close proximity to one another in Tír Maine throughout the later medieval period, a relationship that seems to have been originally created specifically with the intention of limiting Ó Cellaig control over an important part of their ancestral *trícha cét* at Lough Croan. From the mid-fourteenth century onwards, the Uí Chellaig came to again exercise control over Tír Maine, an authority which, judging by the near absence of the Clann Uadach from the historical sources, must have included the area to the south and east of Lough Croan. It seems that the Uí Chellaig operated as the Uí Fhallamháin's overlords from this period onwards. An example of this seen with a state papers entry for 1566, in which the then Ó Fallamháin chief is referred to as a 'tennant' of Brian Ó Cellaig (*Haliday Privy Council*, 158). Moreover, the 1573 list of Roscommon castles and their owners records a series of Ó Cellaig possessions within what is traditionally Clann Uadach territory, namely at *Coroghboye* (Curraghboy), *Culleghary* (Coolagarry), *Kulnegear* (Coolnageer) and *Raharow* (Rahara) (Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019). Coolnageer and Rahara are also recorded as the domiciles of prominent local members of the Uí Chellaig and associated families in a 1583 fiant, showing their continued control over the area in the late sixteenth century (*Fiants* II, 584 [4170]).

5.2.2 – The Focal Point of the Lough Croan Landscape

The cataloguing of this extensive diversity of toponymical and historical evidence has led the present writer to conclude that the Lough Croan landscape was worthy of further archaeological investigation, and this was initially undertaken via the acquisition of 18km² of processed LiDAR data, at a posting of one reading per 0.5m, from the OSi, thanks to a Royal Irish Academy Archaeology Research Grant, funded in 2018. This data was used to create a Digital Terrain Model (DTM) of the former lake of Lough Croan and its immediate environs.

The acquisition of this topographical data has enabled the present writer to garner an extremely valuable insight into the Lough Croan landscape. It has provided highly accurate dimensions of the turlough, as well as uncovering links between monuments that fieldwork, an aerial photograph or cartographic source is unable to provide. One of the key questions which this data has been able to address involves the digital re-flooding of the turlough of Lough Croan, in order to get an idea of the precincts of the former lake shore, as well as ascertain the true extents of the collection of *crannóga* that survive on the turlough, in terms of size, shape above the water level, and inter-visibility (Fig. 5.6).

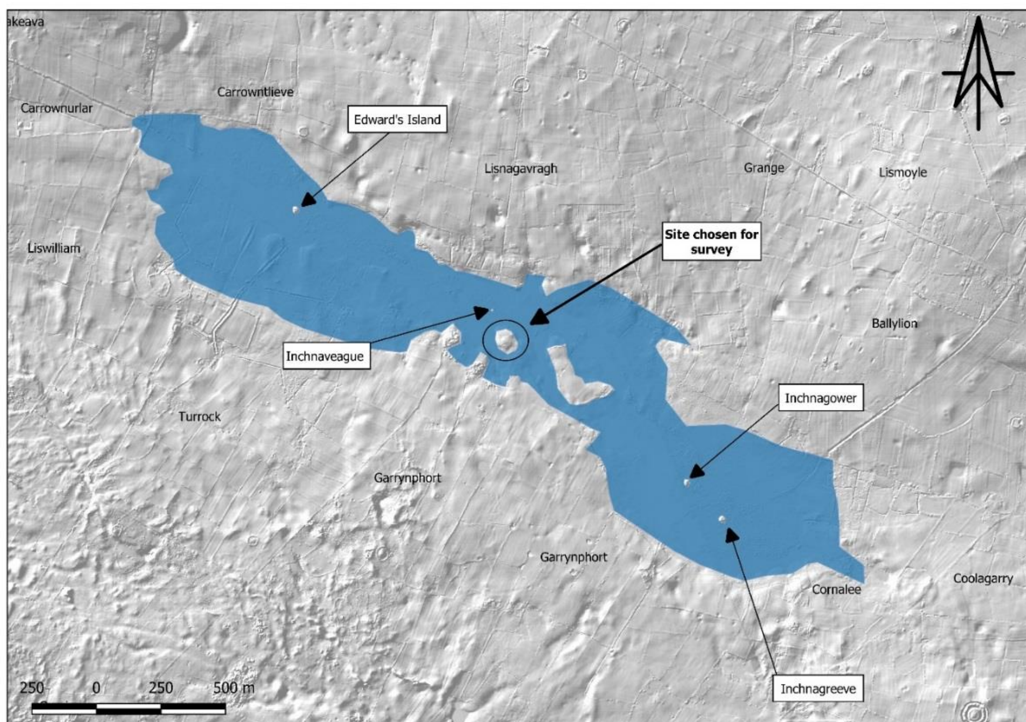

Figure 5.6 - Extents of a digitally reflooded Lough Croan turlough, with the water level raised to 69m OD, recreating the former lake. This is draped over the OSi-derived LiDAR DTM for the landscape. Illaunamona is the site marked by the black circle (Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland).

The software utilised in digitally modelling the raise of water levels to 69m OD revealed in its processing a natural island, appearing centrally on the former lake (ITM 587885; 749494). This island, with the faint impression of a circular enclosure on it, is also visible on the CUCAP photograph [APH034] (Pl. 5.2), along with other features, some of which can no longer be identified on the ground. The island has been described locally as 'Illaunamona' which is not consistent with the cartographic information available for the area. The Ordnance Survey maps mark it elsewhere. This also throws some doubt on the find spot for the assemblage of artefacts donated in 1991 for the named location. Perhaps these artefacts were found on and near this island, rather than the island marked as 'Illaunamona' on the Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map for the area.

Plate 5.2 – Aerial photograph of the turlough and former lake at Lough Croan. Looking west over Garrynphort and Turrock townlands. Recorded as Marsh vegetation. Lough Croan, Roscommon, Ireland. CUCAP no.: APH034, Photo date: 1966-07-

17. The natural island is visible in the centre of this oblique aerial photograph, with a circular enclosure indicated by the arrow (Image courtesy of Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography).

This feature was deemed worthy of reconnaissance, and it was believed that this site could present with the most potential of any of the remains in the area, in terms of identifying and understanding the attested later medieval activity at Lough Croan. Alternative candidates, such as the ringforts at Lisnagavragh and Liswilliam, the site of Turrock Castle, or one of the recorded, but less substantial *crannóga*, such as Edward's Island, were ruled out as being less diagnostic or insightful to this research at the present time.

As regards the island, the present writer noted that along with the elevation of the feature above the turlough bed, about 3m of a height difference, the perimeter of the summit of the island was marked by a circle of boulders (avg. $0.5m^3 – 1m^3$), 25m in diameter (Pl. 5.2), with further, higher concentrations of stones in adjacent areas also, visible in APH034. While there is no number ascribed to this feature on the ASI database, the nearest record is located 107m to the west, a monument classified as a *crannóg* (RO044-089-; Fig. 5.7). Its description is as follows:

'Marked as a small island on the 1915 ed. of the OS 6-inch map, and situated on a rise at the SW shore of the turlough Lough Croan (dims *c.*3km NW-SE; *c.*200-300m NE-SW). This is a circular spread of boulders (diam. 25m N-S; 25m E-W) on a grass-covered rise (H 0.45m) with some distinctive boulders on the perimeter, but there is no clear evidence of artificial construction. Crannog (RO044-088----) is *c.*100m to the N.'

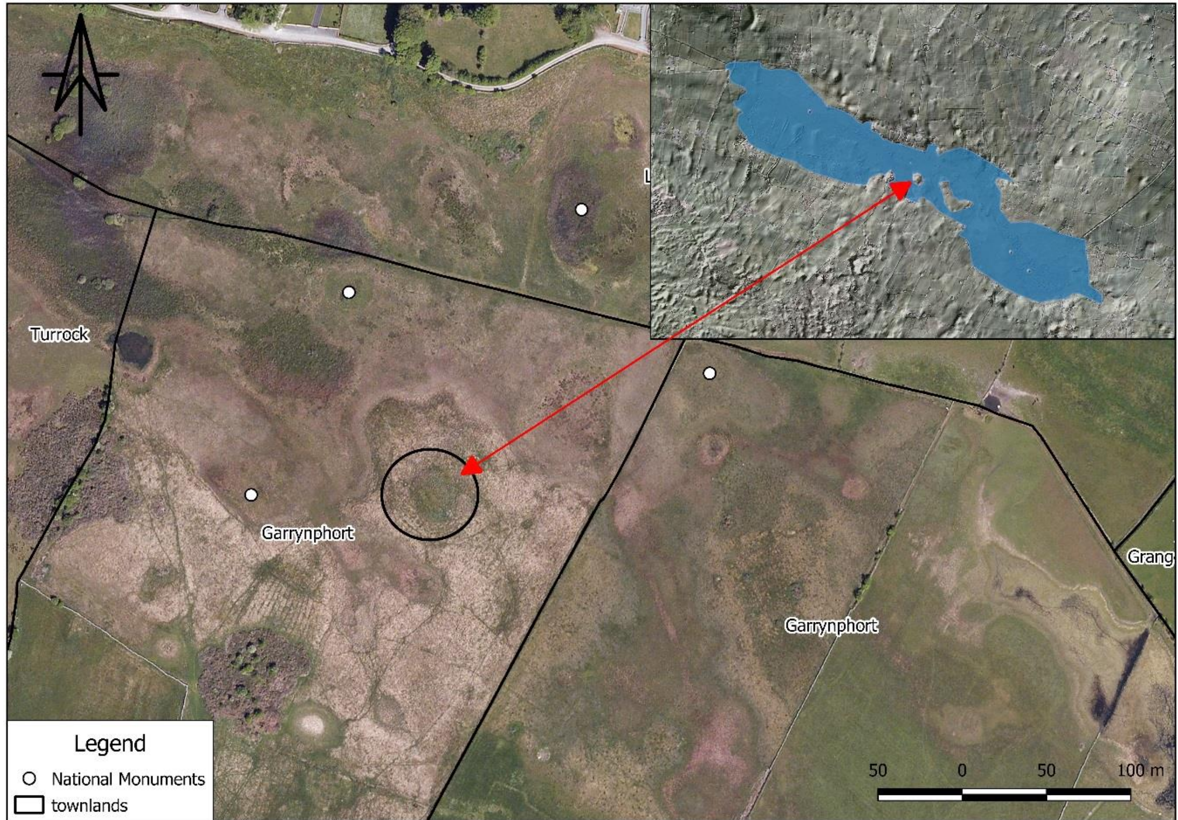

Figure 5.7 - Location of site inspected through the remote sensing surveys. Note the recorded monument immediately to the west of the inspected site, which contains the quoted description for (RO044-089-) (Base aerial image: Bing Maps).

Despite this description however, there is no evidence of this monument in the area that are suggested by the co-ordinates given by the National Monuments Service. Instead, the description relating to the number on the ASI database must actually refer to the prominent feature on the natural island noted from the topographical survey. Armed with this information, it was decided to apply a multi-method remote sensing approach to this unrecorded monument, in order to identify any structural and superficial components on the mound which may confirm it to be a *crannóg*.

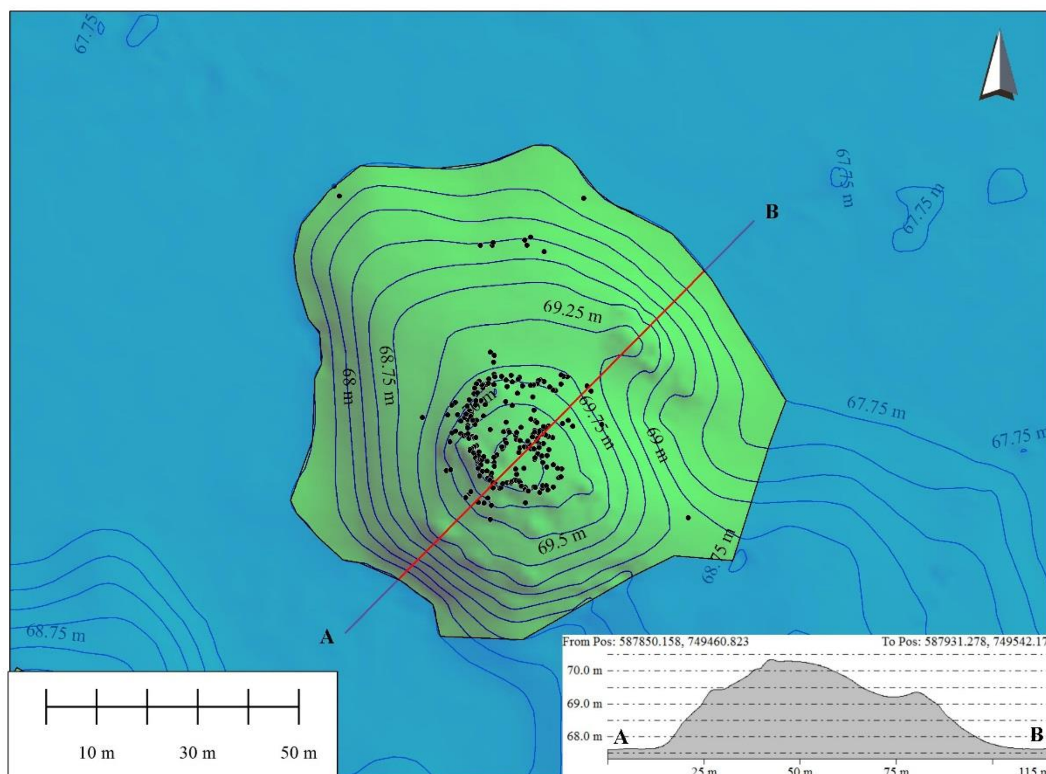

Figure 5.8 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of the target location of Illaunamona, derived from LiDAR data. This shows the natural island, as well as a central circular-shaped platform on the summit of the island. The ground-fast stones which remain on the site have been georeferenced, and a speculative reflooding of the lake water to the 67.75m OD contour (Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland, courtesy of the Royal Irish Academy).

A phased investigation of the natural island at Lough Croan was chosen (Fig. 5.8). The rationale for this was due to the absence of a recorded monument for the location in question, despite its morphology, which indicates the area is archaeologically prospective. Visits to the site provided a better understanding of the conditions. The feature was covered in thick grassy hummocks, with much of this grass growing over substantial quantities of scattered stone. The site was overgrown in places, with vegetation taking hold in some areas of the site. Due to the quantities of scattered stone evident on the feature, the first survey conducted was a reconnaissance survey of the ground-fast stones extant on the summit of the island, in order to ascertain if there was any pattern to this arrangement.

The approach was thus: A series of 10m x 10m survey grids were set out over the survey area. This was followed by a reconnaissance survey of the stones. We progressed then to an electrical resistivity tomography (ERT) survey, in order to better understand the composition of the natural feature. Finally, a magnetic susceptibility survey was conducted in parallel with an earth resistance survey (Figs. 5.11; 5.12).

Plate 5.3 - Earth resistance survey being conducted over the chosen site, with an example in the foreground of one of the many ground-fast stones georeferenced on the site (Author's photograph).

The reconnaissance survey of the ground-fast stones (see Figs. 5.8; 5.9) confirmed the existence of a sub-circular arrangement of stones on the summit of the island, which had an internal diameter of 25m. This is all markedly similar to the description given for RO044-089-

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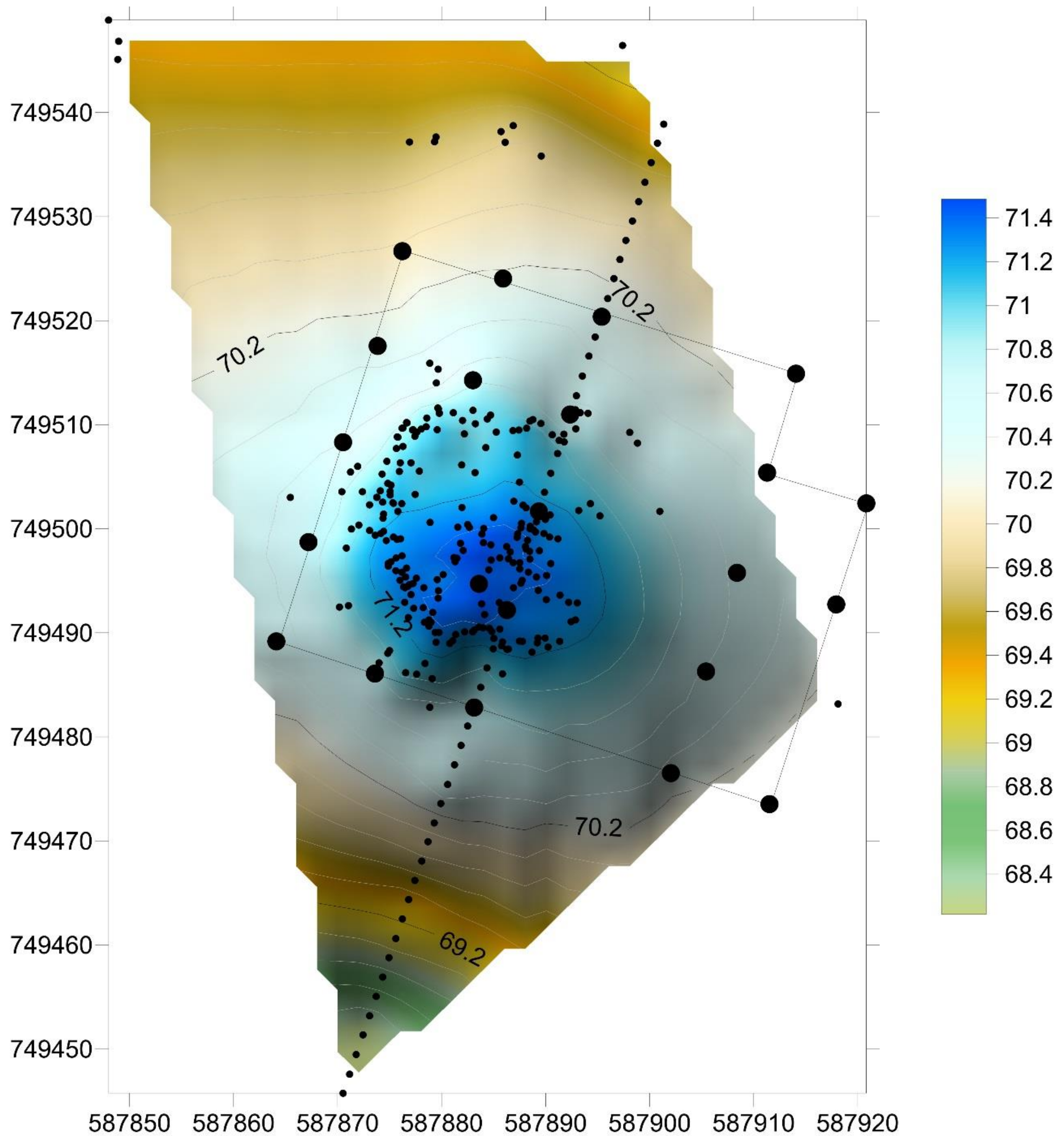


Figure 5.9 - Reconnaissance survey geo-referencing the groundfast stones on the summit of the island at Lough Croan, set within the survey grids. Note the dense concentration of recorded stones in a circular arrangement, broadly demarcating the summit of the island, and which may be the remains of a stone structure (Data source: OSi, image generated by LGS).

This survey was followed up by a 100m long Electrical Resistivity Tomography survey, located on a SSW to NNE axis, in order to divide the summit of the island, the location of which can be seen in Figure 5.9.

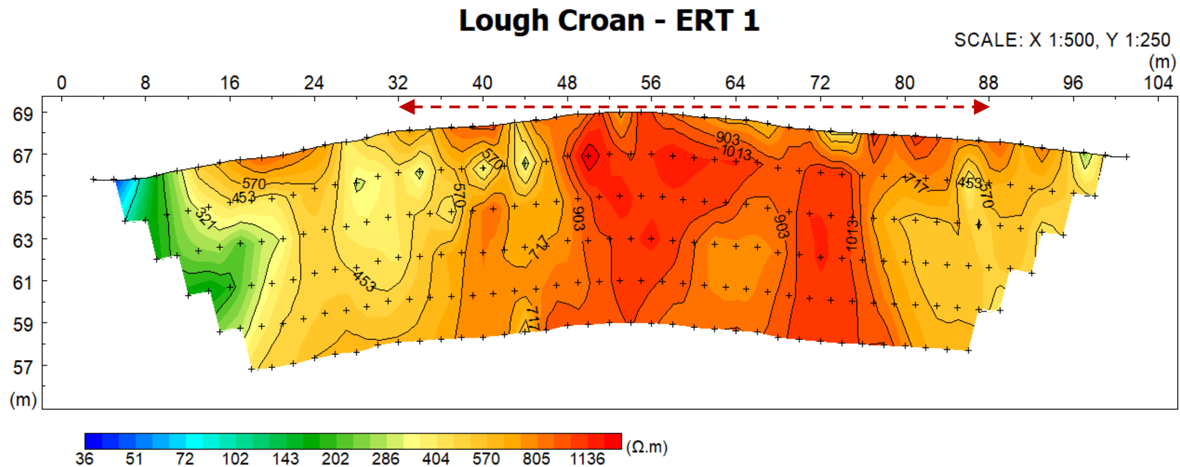


Figure 5.10 - Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) survey conducted over the summit of the island at Lough Croan. Arrow indicates the extent of the higher resistivity material on the summit of the surveyed site (Image courtesy of LGS).

This survey recorded a relatively dense, compacted core of higher resistivity material over a large section of the island, beginning at *c.*32m and continuing until *c.*88m along the survey line (Fig. 5.10). The depth of investigation highlights that this core of dense material persists with depth throughout the survey section. This may indicate that this natural feature is formed from an outcrop of limestone bedrock or a stony moraine located in the linear depression that forms the lake.

The combination of the Total Station and the ERT surveys informed the application of further techniques to the island. The project team decided to follow the initial surveys with an earth resistance and magnetic susceptibility survey over 190m² of the island summit.

The earth resistance survey uncovered a number of anomalies within the survey area (Fig. 5.11). The most prominent of the uncovered anomalies is a distinctive complex circular feature with a diameter of *c.*25m, in the western half of the survey area. This is accompanied to the east of the circular feature by an alternate banding of high and then low resistance values running in a north-south direction towards the eastern end of the survey area. The low resistance band to the northeast of the survey area may be evidence of a ditch surrounding the site.

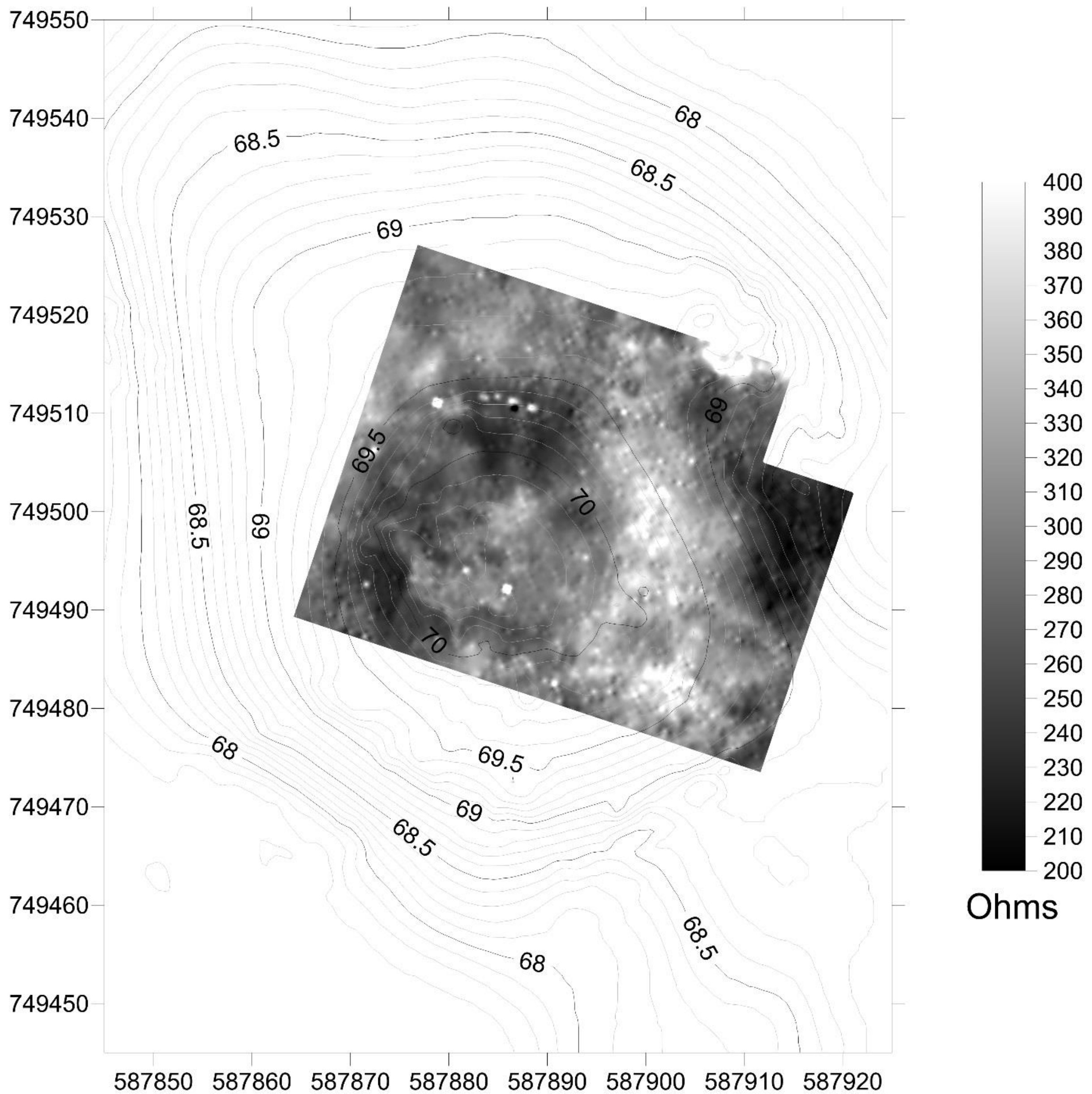


Figure 5.11 - Earth Resistance Survey conducted in 10m x 10m grids. The remains of a circular anomaly of low resistivity values is visible in the centre of the image, while further low resistivity values to the east of this may be evidence of a cut feature which once served as a modified perimeter to the site (Image courtesy of LGS).

The magnetic susceptibility survey at Lough Croan was simultaneously conducted over the same footprint as the earth resistance survey grids. This investigation revealed a pair of higher susceptibility zones within the 25m x 25m circular anomaly of the enclosure revealed by the earth resistance survey. Should these anomalies be the result of artificial processes, i.e. a hearth fire, then this unrecorded feature carries the hallmarks of a settlement site (Fig. 5.12).

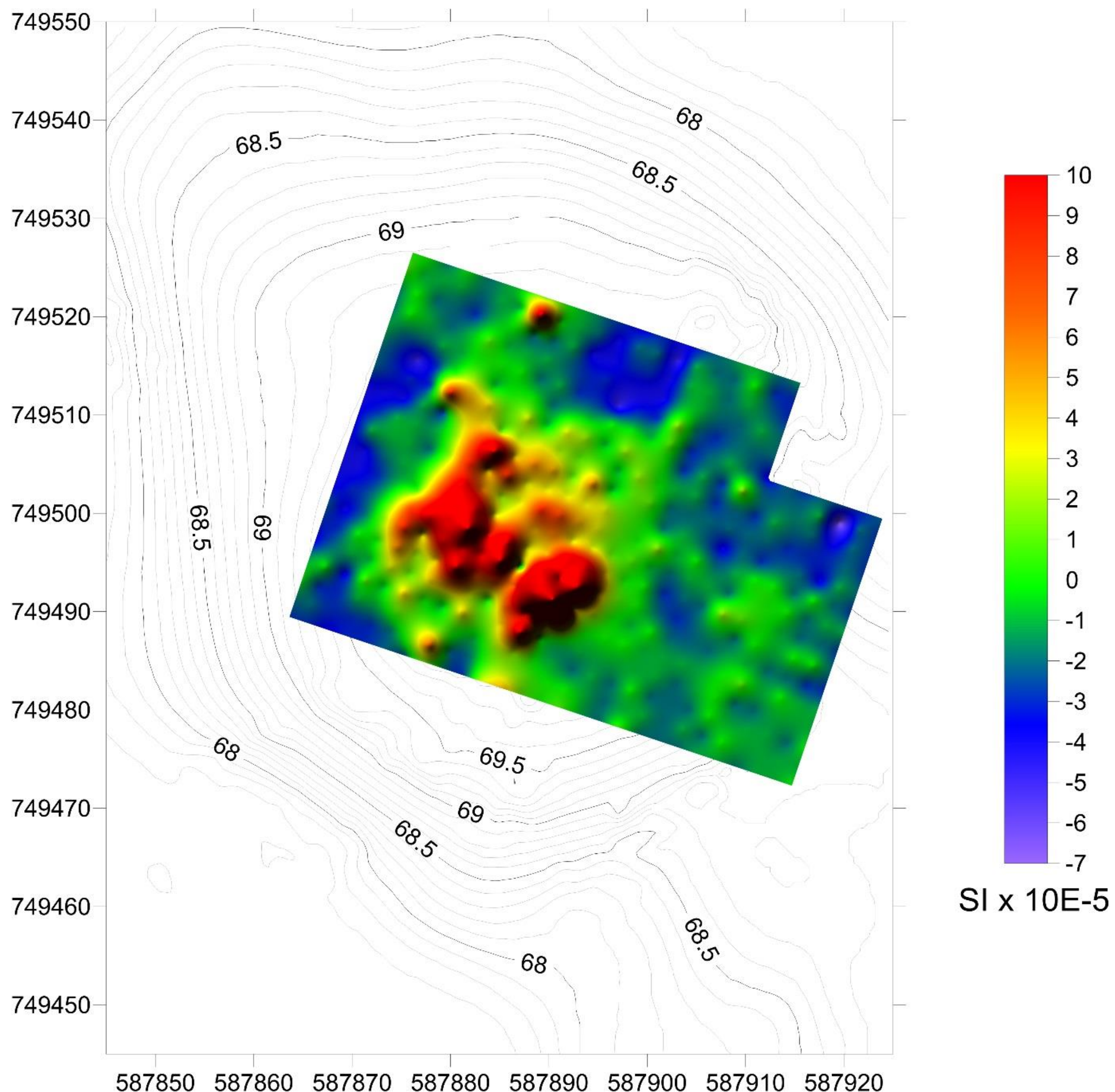


Figure 5.12 – Magnetic Susceptibility Survey conducted in 10m x 10m grids. The high susceptibility values are located within the circular anomaly from the Earth Resistance survey, and may be evidence for hearth fires and/or industrial activities. This would suggest that potentially two dwellings were located within the interior of the crannóg *(Image courtesy of LGS).*

The multi-method remote sensing investigations conducted on this location has revealed a wealth of new information which is consistent with elite settlement and industrial activity in this part of the Lough Croan landscape. The phased investigation of what was a modified natural island near the southern shore of the former lake was informed by a number of independent sources of information. The size and morphology of the island itself is broadly consistent with *crannóg* settlement sites more generally. The presence of a series of substantial artificially-set boulders in the shape of a circular enclosure highlight the presence of archaeology on the summit of the island. Local informants refer to this particular island as Illaunamona, which is also the place-name reported as the find spot for an artefactual

assemblage which indicates later medieval high-status habitation. More than this, an erroneously geo-referenced record with a description which matches the physical remains at Illaunamona is located 107m distant to the west of the site. The place-name of Garrynphort implies that somewhere on the southern shore of Lough Croan there was a dry-land settlement site or landing place which was paired with the islands of the lake, and the site of a ringfort within the townland limits may be the site referred to in the place-name. Historical sources provide a general understanding that Lough Croan was of particular importance to early medieval Uí Maine, an importance that remained for the later medieval Uí Chellaig dynasts, up until at least the middle of the sixteenth century.

The geophysical investigations themselves show that this island possesses a natural core and the remains of a substantial circular stone enclosure of cashel-like form (Fig. 5.13) with a complex interior. The magnetic susceptibility survey results suggest the presence of settlement hearths or industrial burning within the enclosure, while there is also evidence for the presumed modification to the lake shore to the east of the island.

The picture that then emerges for this site is that it bears some similarity to a high-cairn *crannóg* (see 4.4), which utilised the naturally formed high ground as a foundation upon which to build a cashel or cashel-like enclosure. The absence of substantial stone remains today may be explained by the abundance of dry-stone walls in the surrounding fields in the area. Presumably most of the original stones in this enclosure were robbed out in recent centuries to build these walls, while the earth-fast boulders which remain are the skeleton of the original cashel. This would tally with the growing evidence for the continued use of cashels (4.3), including cashels on *crannóga* and natural islands, in parts of Gaelic Ireland during the later medieval period (Brady and O’Conor 2005, 134; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010; see, also, O’Conor and Naessens 2012; Comber 2018). This list of evidence all indicate that the island of Illaunamona was probably a major site within the later medieval Tír Maine landscape, likely operating as a pre-tower house centre of the Uí Chellaig at Lough Croan, while potentially continuing to be occupied into the late medieval period.

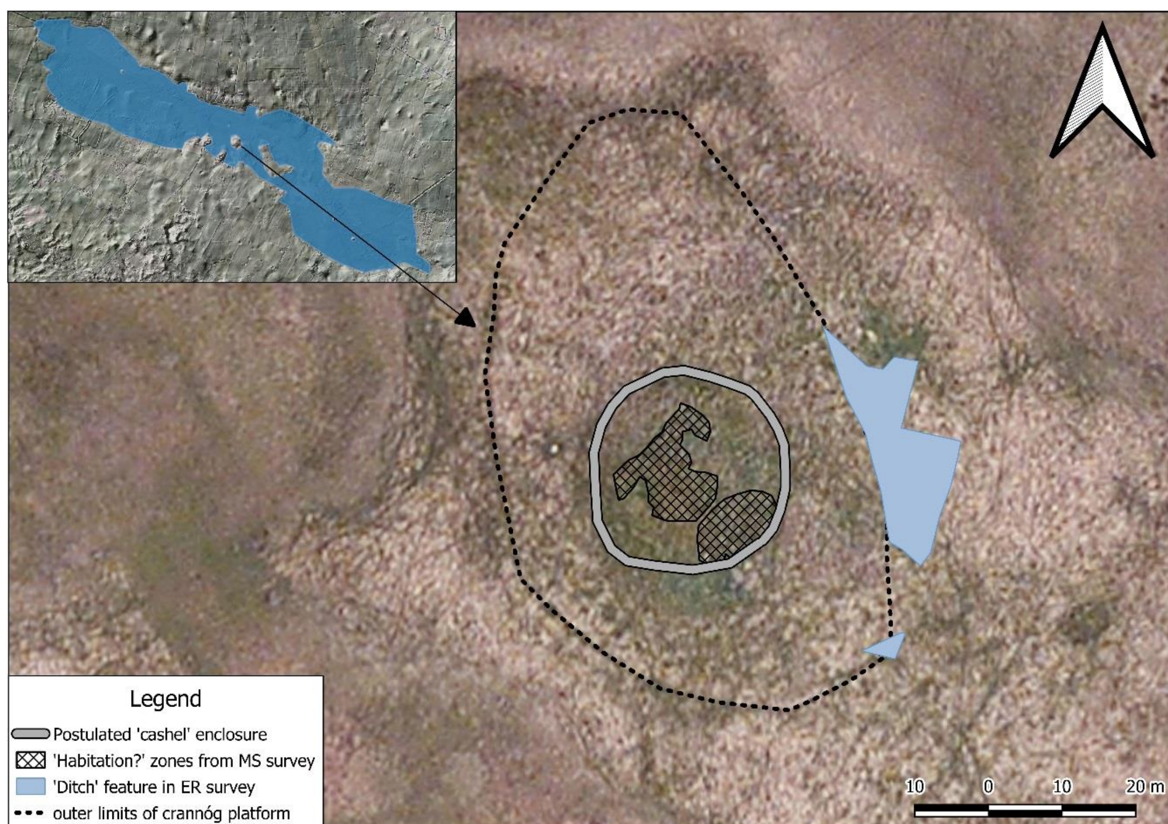


Figure 5.13 – Summary interpretation of the combination of topographical data and remote sensing investigations undertaken at the island at Lough Croan. The results of the multi-method survey has enabled us to conclude that this was a natural island fortress similar in its morphology to a crannóg *of high-cairn construction, being once topped by a dry-stone cashel enclosure,* c.*25m in diameter.*

It has been demonstrated that while this area has to date been overlooked from an academic perspective, it was, without doubt, of particular significance to the Uí Maine, and their dominant offshoot, the Uí Chellaig, throughout the early and later medieval period. While it is impossible to ascribe direct historical references to this site, there are a number of entries within the historical sources which may correspond with a high-status Ó Cellaig residence on the shores of Lough Croan.

One has been referred to already. The unidentified site burned on Conchobar Ó Cellaig in 1260 could as easily taken the form of a *crannóg* as a moated site (4.6). O'Conor referred to this incident in relation to the use of the term *longport* in the annals, which may be used to describe a stronghold of cashel, ringfort or moated site morphology (O'Conor 1998, 85). It is possible that the *longport* in question may have been the Lough Croan *crannóg*. Based on the previously outlined historical information, it is highly likely that at this point in the thirteenth century, the Ó Cellaig elites resided in their ancestral *trícha cét* of Tír Maine once more, quite likely at Lough Croan.

There is also an interesting reference in mid-fourteenth century poem *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach* that suggests that one of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig's residences was surrounded by water and that the main building within it was constructed of post and wattle (*Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*, stanzas 14-19; Simms 2020, 455). This description seems to imply a *crannóg*, quite possibly the ones on Lough Croan, either Illaunamona or Edward's Island (see Pl. 5.4 for a general comparison).

Plate 5.4 – Digital reconstruction of a medieval crannóg *at Coolure Demesne, Lough Derravaragh, Co. Westmeath. This depiction resembles in part the results of the archaeological investigations at Illaunamona. Two probable dwellings are located within the interior, and it likely possessed some form of post and wattle fencing. As has been outlined, these locations served as residences for the Gaelic elite throughout the later medieval period (courtesy of Conor McDermott and Aidan O'Sullivan, UCD School of Archaeology).*

The last historical reference is brief but illuminating. Conchobar Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, died in 1403 at or on Lough Croan in Clann Uadach (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 67; see 2.6). His death record in the annals describes him as dying after 'Unction and Penance', indicating that he died at his residence as opposed to on a battlefield (*AC*). This entry implies a residence either on the lake, or by the lakeshore of Lough Croan, and the Illaunamona site, a natural island utilised in a *crannóg*-like fashion (Brady and O'Conor 2005; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010), on the southern shoreline of the lake, may just be the

location intended. The artefactual assemblage which survives for the lake corroborates the chronology outlined by these historical references. More than this, the mention of Clann Uadach may be directly referring to the island site, since it is located off the shore of the adjacent Garrynphort townlands, the parish boundary between Dysart and Taghboy (see Fig. 5.5). This boundary is likely to have been the effective border between the Ó Cellaig *oireacht* of Túath Átha Liaig and the Ó Fallamháin *oireacht* of Clann Uadach.

5.2.3 – The Cultural Landscape of the Lough Croan cenn áit

The substantial body of archaeological and historical evidence demonstrates that Lough Croan was a place of considerable importance to the Uí Chellaig throughout the later medieval period. The inspection of the cultural landscape which surrounds the lake only serves to further demonstrate this place as a later medieval Gaelic *cenn áit.*

5.2.3.1 – Churches Associated with Lough Croan

A number of churches are located in the vicinity of Lough Croan, and the most notable of these is the medieval parish church of Cam or Camma. The townlands of Cam and Brideswell possess strong associations with the cult of St. Brigid. The origin of the name 'Cam' is *Camach Brighdi* or *Bhríde* (Brigid's crooked plain), and an early monastery of nuns in the area was referred to by the same name (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 375). Local tradition describes that Brigid's mother was a native of the area, thus establishing the link with the saint (Kissane 2017, 150).

Cam is 9km to the southeast of Lough Croan (RO048-099001-). The later medieval parish church is located on the NE-facing slope of Cam Hill, and the present remains seems to have been constructed on the site of an earlier church. The parish church here seems to have had its origins in the early medieval period, as the remains of a large ecclesiastical enclosure, measuring *c.*150m in diameter, the modern graveyard is within this large enclosure (RO048-099003-).

Nósa Ua Maine and O'Donovan record that the Coarb of *Camach Brighdi* was one of the seven principal coarbs of the Uí Maine, and that this Coarb had the privilege of baptising members of this group, indicative of a traditional link between the Uí Maine elites and this foundation (Nósa, 537; Tribes *and Customs*, 77-9). Brideswell – *Tobar Bhríde* (St. Brigid's Well), in the adjacent townland to the east, is the site of an attested annual fair, traditionally held on the last Sunday of the summer, despite the veneration of St. Brigid, whose feast day is the 1st February,

corresponding with the beginning of Spring and the festival of *Imbolc*. The fair of Brideswell was held from at least as early as the first years of the seventeenth century (MacNeill 2008, 633-4), and an annual pattern day survives for Brideswell to the present day, routinely taking place around the 27th – 30th July. These dates match with the routine celebration of the festival of *Lughnasa*, the celebration of the harvest, which may indicate that the pattern day, and the fair that preceded it, are of considerable antiquity, far earlier than the seventeenth century and were quite possibly in existence during later medieval times.

The closest actual church to Lough Croan was located 5km to the northwest, in the townland of Carrowntemple. Much like at Cam, the later medieval parish church of Tisrara at Carrowntemple is believed to be an early medieval foundation, owing in part to the presence of *tempul* in the place-name. The use of *tempul*, from the Latin *templum*, meaning church, enables us to posit an early medieval date for this religious foundation (Ó Cróinín 2013, 37; Ó hAisibéil 2018, 168). There was a tradition up to recent times of waking high-ranking corpses at this place overnight, before continuing the journey from Tír Maine to Clonmacnoise to be interred (*OS Letters, Roscommon*, 8; Whelan 2018, 87). The presence of a number of grave memorials in remembrance of wealthy eighteenth century O'Kelly/Kelly deceased, as well as an O'Kelly coat of arms carved in stone in the graveyard indicate that Carrowntemple remained an important traditional Ó Cellaig burial place into the early modern and modern period (M. B. Timoney pers. comm).

5.2.3.2 – Service Kindred Landholdings at Lough Croan

The Uí Dubhagáin learned kindred, who were employed as *ollamh* by the Ó Cellaig lords in the fourteenth century, are also visible in the Lough Croan landscape. Prior to the grant to them of their landholdings surrounding Callow Lough (see 5.3.4.2), in the townlands of Cartrondoogan and Ballydoogan particularly, the Uí Dubhagáin also had a residence at *Culdaire* (*Reg. Clon.*, 456). *Culdaire* is identifiable with the townland of Coolderry – *Cúl doire* (backwood [of oaks]), located immediately to the north of Carrowntemple.

The *Registry of Clonmacnoise* states that the Uí Dubhagáin served a role as keepers of the records of the Church of Clonmacnoise, which they may have acquired as a result of associations that the family originally had with the monastery of St. Enda on the Aran Islands, an ecclesiastical dependency of Clonmacnoise (Kehnel 1997, 214). It is clear, therefore, that the Uí Dubhagáin supplied members of their family to roles in both the secular and ecclesiastical locales of the territory in Uí Maine during the later medieval period.

Coolderry itself contains the remains of a substantial ringfort within its limits, the only identifiable evidence of past settlement in the townland (RO044-037-). The presence of the Uí Dubhagáin at Coolderry, in such close vicinity to the later medieval parish church and an early medieval ecclesiastical site at Carrowntemple, may be evidence of a link between the family and this church. A number of the Uí Dubhagáin held important positions within the church from the twelfth century through to the fifteenth century at least, in particular one Marianus Ó Dubhagáin, a parish priest in nearby Cam in the fifteenth century (Kehnel 1997, 214-5). More than this, Coolderry townland is only 1km west of Carrowntemple, and 5km northwest of Lough Croan and this relative proximity suggests a much earlier established relationship between the Uí Dubhagáin and their secular Ó Cellaig patrons, prior to the late fourteenth century, when the well-known Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin (d. 1372) was *saoi sheancadha ocus ollam* to the Uí Chellaig (*AU*; *AFM*).

5.2.3.3 – Lough Croan in the Literary Sources

As outlined above, Lough Croan as a locale is mentioned in a variety of historical sources throughout the medieval period (see 2.2; 2.4.4; 2.6; 5.2.1). However, there are also a small number of references to Lough Croan to be found in literary sources, and these are worthy of inspection, because it shows that the lake or settlement on or beside it was an important place from an early period.

The ninth-century Patrician hagiography *Vita tripartita Sancti Patricii* records 'Loch Cróine' very early in its Connacht sequence (*Vita tripartita Sancti Patricii*, 85-7). *Acallam na Senórach*, the most important of the Fenian Cycle tales, also refers to the lake. An episode in the tale, the first meeting of Patrick with Muiredach Mór, king of Connacht, takes place at Lough Croan (*Acallam na Senórach*, 33). Patrick performs his most powerful miracle in this location, raising Áed, the king's son, back to life following his collapse and death after a game of 'hurling' (*Ibid.*, 38). As has been outlined (see 1.6.1.1), Cathal Crobhdearg Ó Conchobair commissioned this saga, and, indeed, it has been suggested that he also constructed a royal centre on the southern shore of Lough Croan in the early thirteenth century (Connon 2014, 53). The construction of this royal centre associated with Cathal Crobhdearg, which may have taken the form of a *crannóg* such as Edward's Island, as well as his possible establishment of the Cistercian religious house at nearby *Disert Briole*, serves to bolster the argument that the main branch of the Uí Chellaig were forced away from this part of Tír Maine, consistent with the arrival of the Clann Uadach in the immediate area in the twelfth century (see 2.3; 5.2.1.2).

5.2.3.4 – Tullyneeny – **Tulaigh an Aonaigh** *– an Assembly Site at Lough Croan*

Tullyneeny (*Tulaigh an Aonaigh*) is located in undulating pastureland, 2.5km due south of Lough Croan. In Old Irish *tulach/tilach* implies a 'hill of assembly', with a number of instances surviving for the use of this term in describing assembly venues in Gaelic society (FitzPatrick 2004, 30-1; also 5.2.1). Within the southeast corner of the adjoining Gortaphuill townland is the landmark which gives the locality its name, known as 'Fair Hill', 74m OD, and which is topped today by a stone cross shaft, recorded by the Archaeological Inventory as a wayside cross (RO047-026-). The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Twenty Five-Inch map records a standing stone at this location in the late-nineteenth century, which is no longer extant (Pl. 5.5).

Plate 5.5 – 'Fair Hill' viewed from the north. The stone cross shaft is located close to the summit of this natural hillock, possibly sited in the same location as the previously recorded standing stone (Author's photograph).

Fair Hill itself is surrounded by a slightly elevated plateau, measuring *c.*720m², and the summit affords clear views north to Lough Croan, and a wide panorama over the wider region. There is little evidence of a surviving formal roadway communicating Fair Hill with Lough Croan itself, however two sections of pre-modern roadway are recorded between the two locations

(RO047-019006-; RO047-015006-), which enables us to suggest that it was possible to easily travel between the lake and the hill at one point in time.

The majority of the archaeological remains on this plateau portray the evidence of medieval settlement activity. There are a total of fourteen monuments recorded in a 3km² area around Fair Hill. Six ringforts and a cashel are recorded on the plateau, with associated features including a souterrain, a house of indeterminate date, and pre-modern field systems. Aside from this, the creation of a bare-earth model from the available LiDAR has identified a further ringfort. The slight remains visible in the topographical survey (at ITM 586764; 747418) could be categorised as a large bivallate *ráth*, with an internal space of 37m in diameter, and surrounding embankments measuring *c.*8m each, radiating out from the central area. There is a trace of an entrance gap to the interior visible on the north-eastern side of the earthworks. These impressive dimensions are the largest of any of the ringforts within the indicated survey area, and the size and location of this site in the landscape may present the remains of a high-status residence of the early or later medieval periods, or both (Fig. 5.14).

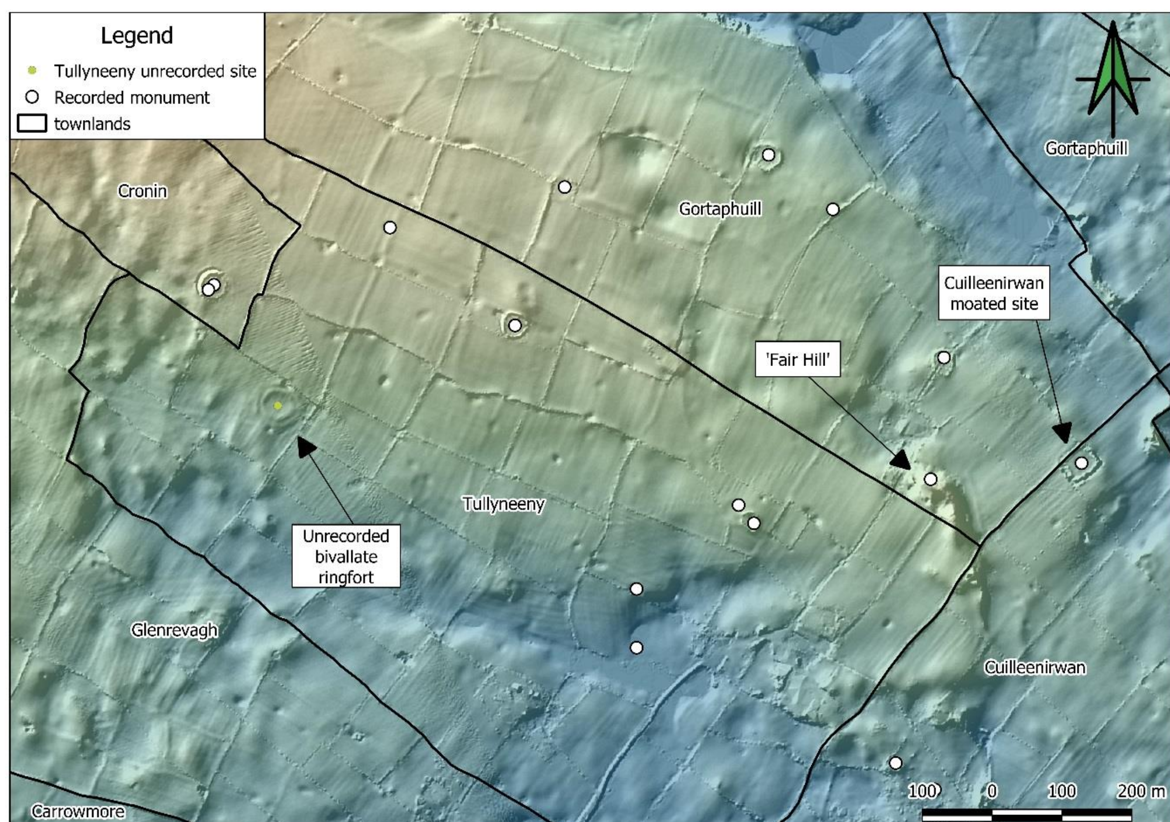


Figure 5.14 – LiDAR DTM of the Tullyneeny landscape, indicating the substantial, but unrecorded bivallate ráth *in the western part of Tullyneeny townland. Fair Hill and the Cuilleenirwan moated site are located to the immediate east of this* ráth *(Data source: Ordnance Survey Ireland, courtesy of the Royal Irish Academy).*

Later medieval settlement activity is identifiable around Tullyneeny at Cuilleenirwan moated site, discussed earlier (see 4.6). It can be concluded that the location of the moated site must have been informed somewhat by its closeness to the prominence of Fair Hill, with its fair, and the activities that presumably took place there in the medieval past.

Acallam na Senórach suggests that a mound or hill with a standing stone surmounting it lay somewhere in the vicinity of Lough Croan, reputedly marking the grave of a member of the Fianna (*Acallam na Senórach*, 33-5). This shows that it was a known place in the landscape, as well as creating a link to St. Patrick, thus giving it a venerable quality. There is no evidence at any other location surrounding Lough Croan for either a standing stone in its current position, or one recorded in any of the cartographic or antiquarian sources of the late nineteenth century, excepting the stone which once topped Fair Hill.

The described episode refers to Patrick receiving homage from the nobles of Connacht in his nearby tent, an action not dissimilar to elements that are known to have occurred at communal assemblies recorded from later medieval Ireland. With Fair Hill overlooking Lough Croan, and with this low hill (74m OD) commanding views over the now turlough, this area, could, in fact, be held up as a potential undocumented assembly venue for the later medieval Uí Chellaig lords of Uí Maine. A number of factors support this view: the hill's location in respect to the lordly centre, its landscape and environmental siting, as well as the toponymical (see 3.5.1) and literary references, combine to support the hypothesis that Tullyneeny was a location for routine assembly and fair activity in later medieval Tír Maine (C. M. O'Sullivan 2004, 80; MacNeill 2008, 67; O'Flaherty 2014, 13; Kelly 2016b, 403). Finally, and returning briefly to the account of Patrick's visit to Lough Croan in the *Acallam*, the writer is careful to describe the events, from the tribute provided to Patrick at this place, through to the significance of including acknowledgement of an antique funerary landmark in the region. There was also careful description of the events of a game of 'hurling'. All three aspects of this account preserve evidence of medieval Irish assembly practices, with the performance of games and horse-racing another key element of assembly practices (Gleeson 2015, 35). Combined, they may be pointing towards a key location within the Lough Croan landscape, identifiable at Tullyneeny, which was set aside for one of the key public duties of a medieval Gaelic king or lord.

5.2.4 – Summary of Lough Croan Case Study

The combination of all of this evidence strongly argues for the Lough Croan landscape having served as a long-standing place of residence amongst the senior line of Ó Cellaig dynasts. This landscape, with the lake serving as the focal point, possessed a number of attributes connected to later medieval lordship. These include a venue for seasonal assembly and livestock trade, evidence for an organised pastoral farming economy, the presence of a prominent service kindred connected to the Uí Chellaig, associations with prominent church sites in the area, as well as archaeological and historical information which points towards Lough Croan being a routine place of settlement for the kings and lords of Uí Maine throughout the medieval period. Investigation of one prominent earthen monument near the southern shore of Lough Croan demonstrates a complexity that points towards a substantial cashel constructed upon a small natural island during the later medieval period. This island is likely to have been one of the focal points of the lake, functioning as an Ó Cellaig lordly centre and a key location in medieval Lough Croan and Tír Maine more generally. However, it has been demonstrated that other locations on the lake and on its shore also have strong elite associations. Turrock Castle was a major Ó Cellaig residential site in the sixteenth century, and it may have been linked at that time with the nearby *crannóg* of Edward's Island. It is even possible that Turrock Castle took over the functions of Edward's Island as an elite settlement form in the late medieval period. When taking into account the artefactual assemblages of both Illaunamona and Edward's Island, it is quite conceivable that both islands were in use contemporaneously (O'Conor 1998, 82; Brady and O'Conor 2005, 134; see also 5.4.2), by the Ó Cellaig, or indeed some of the other lords who were seeking to control this area during the later medieval period (see 5.2.1.2; 5.2.3.3).

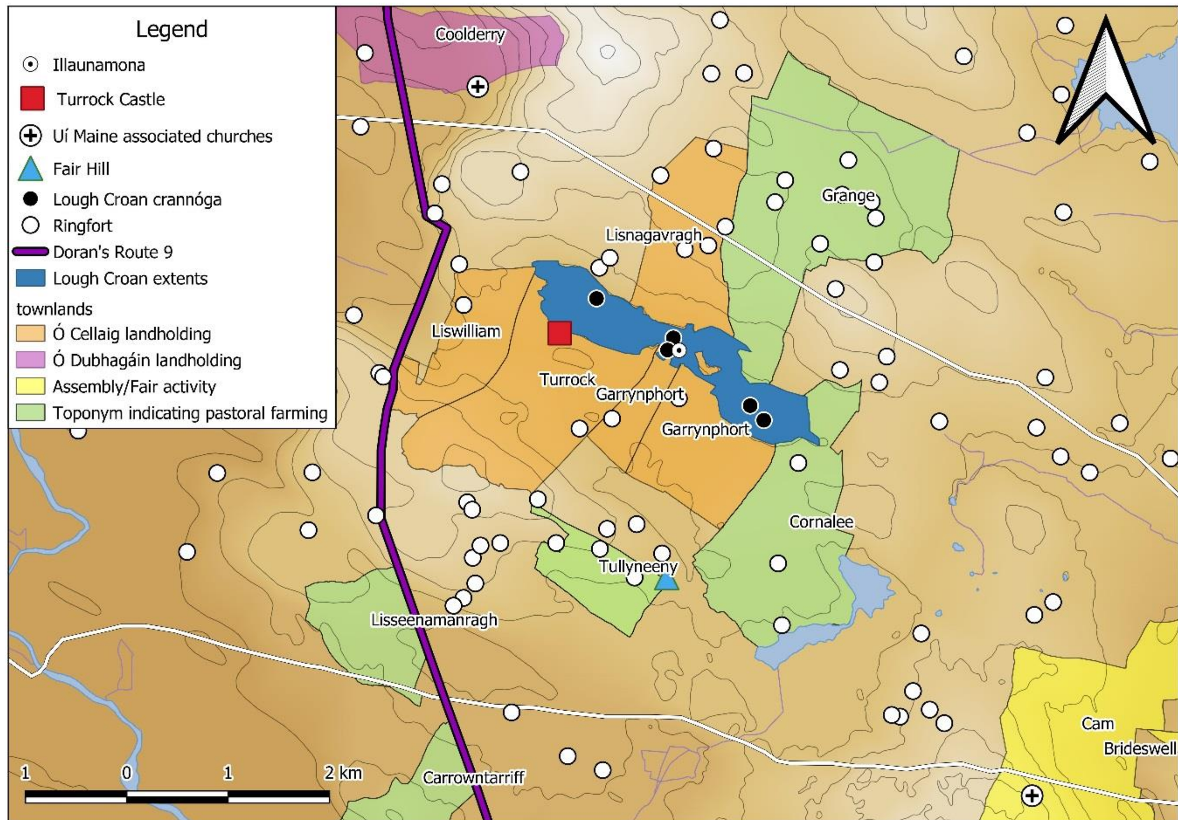


Figure 5.15 – Summary of the Lough Croan case study, with principal location outlined. Turrock Castle is likely to have been of tower house form, perhaps linked to Edward's Island, immediately to its northeast. Note also that Tullyneeny townland is shaded to represent both its assembly and pastoral farming associations.

5.3 – Case Study: Callow Lough (Lough Acalla) and Environs, Co. Galway

The area surrounding the lake of Callow Lough, Co. Galway, presents itself as an important location within the Ó Cellaig lordship, and an area which retains evidence of the historical migration, contraction, and subsequent expansion of the Uí Chellaig, with the zenith of their power beginning in the second half of the fourteenth-century during the career of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, and followed by his son and successor Maolsechlainn (see 2.5).

Callow Lough, and the settlement of Kilconnell, are located within the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine, a territorial unit originally under the authority of the Soghain, and known as *Tír Sogháin* (MacCotter 2014, 207). From the twelfth-century onwards, however, this territory came to be under the authority of the Uí Chellaig (see 3.2). By the mid-fourteenth century, Callow Lough was the focal point of the *oireacht* (territory) of Túath Caladh (*Nósa*, 546-7; see 2.5; Fig. 5.16).

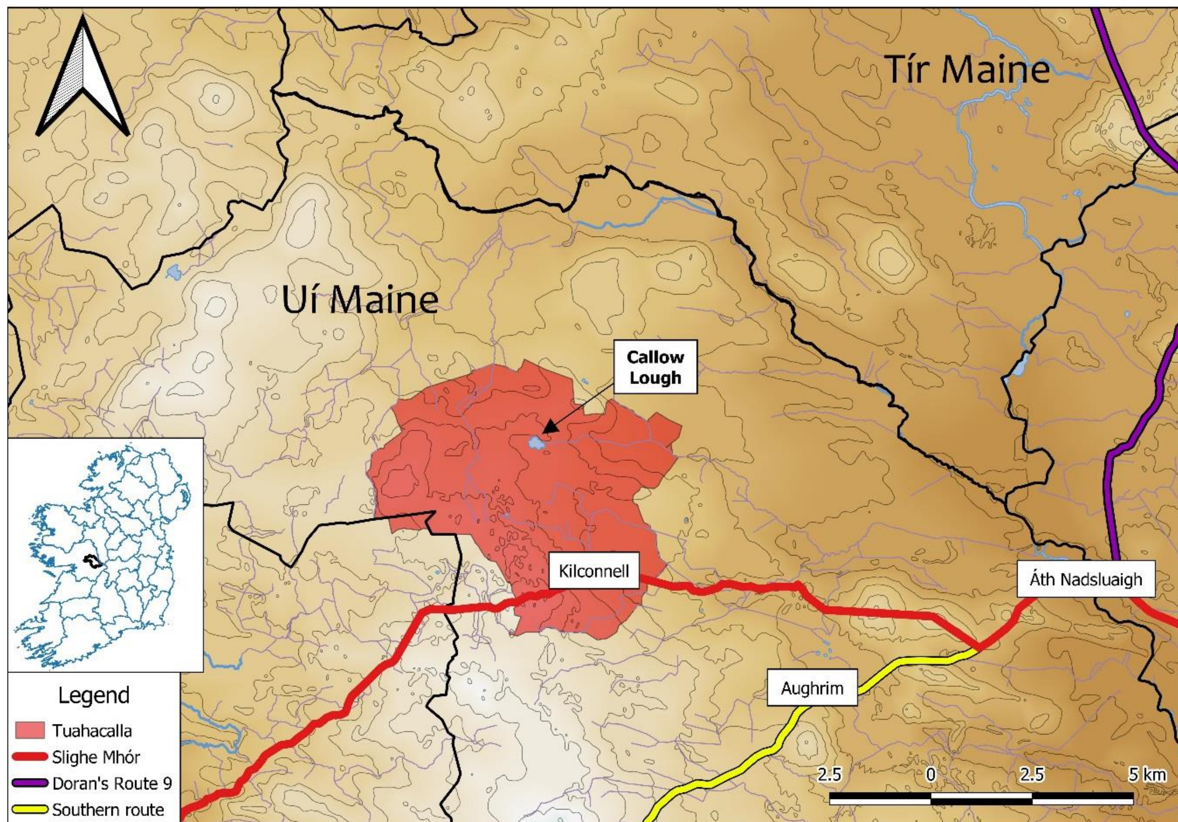


Figure 5.16 – Location of Callow Lough within the oireacht *of Tuahacalla –* Túath Caladh, *in the medieval* trícha cét *of Uí Maine in modern east Galway. Boundaries of these territories in c.1400, defined after Nicholls (1969) and MacCotter (2014).*

5.3.1 – The Toponymy of the Callow Lough **cenn áit**

The area of particular interest to this case study comprises a cluster of townlands surrounding Kilconnell and Callow Lough, and the names of these townlands fall thematically into three broad groups which help to reconstruct this *cenn áit*. The groupings are as follows: geographical/topographical descriptors, settlement descriptors, and those with religious associations.

The townland names relating to the physical landscape reveal an environment that was partly wooded and composed of areas of marshy, boggy, and in this case, lakeland environs. It seems that the settlement activity in the study area is located between the areas of more restrictive wetland and woodland (see 3.2.1; 3.2.2).

The most significant townland names with settlement connotations in the area include Callow – *An Caladh* (the landing place or ferry) and Pallas – *An Phailís* (see 4.7). There are other indicators of settlement activity recorded in townland names such as Lissard – *Lios Ard* (the high fort/enclosure) and Ellagh – *Oileach* (the stony place/the stone house?). This interpretation was arrived at due to the etymological likeness between it and the names given to the large and

significant cashel in north Donegal, the Grianán of Aileach – *Grianán Ailigh* (Lacey 1984, 7). There is also Ballyglass – *An Baile Glas* (the green settlement/townland), and Doon Upper and Lower – *An Dún* (the fort). Doon Upper contains a number of archaeological monuments, and the collection of monuments which gives the townland its name relates to a monument categorised as an enclosure known as Doon Fort, within which is the remains of a castle of unclassified form marked as Doon Castle in the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map (GA073-073001-; GA073-073003-) and Doon House. This precinct is located on the western edge of the townland. Doon Castle may be the site referred to as *Done*, in the possession of 'Tege McMelaghlin Okelly' in 1574 (Nolan 1900-1, 120).

A subcategory of townland names denoting settlement activity surrounds those place-names which incorporate a personal or familial name. Examples include Dundoogan – *Dún gCuagáin* (Coogan's fort), Lecarrowmactully – *Leithcheathrú Mhic Mhaoltuile* (the half-quarter of Mac Maoltuile), Clooncallis – *Cluain Mhic Áilíosa* (the meadow of the sons of Áilíosa), Attiregan – *Áit Tí Riagáin* (the place of the house of Uí Riagáin), Ballynabanaba – *Baile na Banaba* (Banaba's settlement/townland) and Lisdonnellroe – *Lios Dónaill Rua* (Red Dónal's enclosure or fort).

It is also important to note the names of two adjacent townlands in the northern part of the study area, Ballydoogan – *Baile Uí Dhúgáin* (Ó Dubhagáin's settlement) and Cartrondoogan – *Cartrún Uí Dhúgáin* (Ó Dubhagáin's quarter). The Ó Dubhagáin landholdings in question have been identified with the hereditary Ó Dubhagáin poet historians to the Ó Cellaig lord of Uí Maine (FitzPatrick 2016, 204). This family have been encountered previously (see 5.2.3.2), and will be discussed more fully below (see 5.3.4.2).

The townland names with religious associations focus on Kilconnell village and its environs, indicative of the lands owned and used by the church during the medieval period. The name of Kilconnell – *Cill Chonaill* (Conall's church) is adjudged to refer to a Patrician-associated or sixth-century founder of the early medieval ecclesiastical site which names the settlement. St. Conall of Drumcliff, Co. Clare, is regarded as the founder of this early church at Kilconnell (Ó Riain 2016, 222). There is also an argument that the connection of St. Conall with Kilconnell is incorrect, rather the original religious establishment was perhaps founded by a female saint, one St. Conainne (Mannion 2008, 12-3).

Other townland names with religious associations in the vicinity of Kilconnell include Glebe (referencing the church lands which were used to support a parish priest), Abbeyfield,

Monambraher – *Móin na mBráthar* (friars' bog), Hillswood, which was originally called *Loch an Chléirigh Mór*, and Loughaclerybeg – *Loch an Chléirigh Beag* (clergyman's lake[s]), and Gortadeegan – *Gort an Deagánaigh* (deacon's field or deanery). Two further townlands could be added to this grouping, another Cartrondoogan – *Ceathrú an Ghabhann* (the smith's quarter) and Loughaunbrean – *An Lochán Bréan* (the foul/stinking pool – possibly linked to tanning). These adjacent townlands record something of the associated industrial activities which may have taken place near the religious house.

The final townland name that the present writer wishes to consider for this case study area is the name of Corraneena – *Corr an Aonaigh* (the round hill of the assembly). The location of Corraneena within the Kilconnell area is interesting, due to its proximity to the centre of the settlement itself. A catalogue of evidence strengthens the case for the fair of Kilconnell being of considerable antiquity (see 5.3.4.1).

The landscape character of the study area is mixed, with areas of bogland dominating to the east approaching the River Suck, and the townland names, and their size, provide evidence for the former presence of tracts of land unsuitable for agriculture due to the dominance of woodland and wetland (see 3.2.1; 3.2.2). However, the area was well served by the *Slighe Mhór* (see 3.3). Geissel plots the most likely course of the *Slighe Mhór*, and his section on Kilconnell follows a broadly similar route as that of the modern R348 (Geissel 2006, 93-5), historically the old main Galway road through the village of Kilconnell.

5.3.2 – Callow Lough and Kilconnell in the Historical Sources

While Kilconnell is centrally placed in relation to communication routes, it would be somewhat expected that this would result in it being prominently mentioned in the historical sources. However, this does not seem to be the case. The first reliable later medieval reference to Kilconnell comes in 1244, where we encounter 'Macthulaner O'Kellie de Ochonyl', which we take to mean Conchobar Ó Cellaig, son of Domnall Mór, king of Uí Maine, and this reference suggests that he resided at a lordly centre somewhere in the immediate area around Kilconnell (see 2.4.4).

The next reference to Kilconnell does not occur until the fourteenth-century, and may serve as the indication that the Uí Chellaig were re-establishing control over the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine, at the expense of the declining Anglo-Norman interests in the region. This resurgence corresponds with the career of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine. The year 1353 records that Uilliam Ó Cellaig founded Kilconnell Franciscan Friary (*AFM*), while it is

adjudged to be around this year that Uilliam also built the ‘bawn of Callow’ (*Tribes and Customs*, 74). Interestingly, other sources seem to corroborate this re-establishment by the Uí Chellaig of an administrative and power-base at and near Callow Lough and Kilconnell. The rights tract of *Nósa Ua Maine* indicates that *Túath Caladh* was where local rents and taxes due to Ó Cellaig were collected (*Nósa*, 546-7), suggesting that Callow functioned as a key administrative base within the Ó Cellaig lordship during the fourteenth century, at least.

Later entries in the historical sources which were not included in the overall historical background to the thesis also indicate that Callow Lough and Kilconnell retained an importance to the Ó Cellaig wider dynastic family into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The year 1475 records:

> ‘The castle of Caladh was taken by Mac William of Clanrickard, and delivered up to the son of Melaghlin O’Kelly, who was the son of his *Mac William’s* own daughter’ (*AFM*).

This record refers to one Tadhg Ruadh Ó Cellaig ‘of Callow’, grandson of Uilliam Ó Cellaig (died 1420). Tadhg Ruadh’s father, Maolsechlainn (d. 1464), was another prominent patron of Kilconnell Friary during the second half of the fifteenth century, and while neither Maolsechlainn nor Uilliam never became lords of Uí Maine, it indicates that this more junior sept of Uí Maine had the wealth and resources to undertake refurbishments to Kilconnell Friary.

Moving into the sixteenth century, the annals associates Callow with prominent members of the Ó Cellaig in 1519 and 1593 (*AC*; *AFM*), while a series of fiants further record the presence of the Uí Chellaig at Callow in the 1570s and 1580s (*Fiants* II, 209 [1593], 451 [3301], 675 [4672]). More than this, the 1574 list of Galway castles and their owners, compiled for the Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney for the later 1585 *Compossicion of Conought*, confirms ‘Callowgh’ as then being in the possession of ‘W[ilia]m O Kelly of Callowgh’ (Nolan 1900-1, 120).

The final historical attestation to Callow Lough being a place of residence for the Uí Chellaig in the medieval period occurs in 1595, with Callow, presumably at this point referring to the castle being removed from the possession of Feardorcha Ó Cellaig by a prominent member of a rival branch of the family (*AFM*).

5.3.2.1 – Callow Lough in the Cartographic Sources

Callow Lough is known by another name in the local area, that of ‘Lough Acalla’. While this version of the place-name may simply correspond with the aforementioned Callow, it is also possible that this is a corruption of another name given to the lake. Consulting the cartographic

sources of the late-sixteenth century and early-seventeenth century may provide a rationale for the alternative name. The 1591 *Map of the Province of Connaught* illustrates the lake as well as the island at its centre, referring to the site as 'Callowgh C.' (Fig. 5.17). Boazio's 1606 map *Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio* refers to the lake as 'Loughkelli'. Speed's very early seventeenth-century map *The theatre of the empire of Great Britaine: presenting an exact geography of the Kingdom of England, Scotland, Ireland*…records a stronghold at the site, and refers to it as 'Lough Kelly' (Fig. 5.18). It is very possible that the Lough itself was referred to in Irish as *Loch Ó Cellaig*, a name which over time became anglicised, shortened, and resulted in the modern Lough Acalla. If this be the case, it merely strengthens the case of Callow Lough serving as a *cenn áit* or lordly centre of the Uí Chellaig.

Figure 5.17 - Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) showing the Barony of Kilconnell, Callow Lough, Kilconnell Abbey (Friary) and 'Annagh C. Mc Award'. (TCD, MS 1209/68. Copyright 2011 Courtesy of the Board of Trinity College Dublin.)

Figure 5.18 - Boazio's Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio *(1606) [left] refers to the lake as 'Loughkelli'. Speed's* The theatre of the empire of Great Britaine: presenting an exact geography of the Kingdom of England, Scotland, Ireland… *[right] records a stronghold at the site, and refers to it as 'Lough Kelly'. (Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA; Atlas.2.61.1, Cambridge University Library.)*

5.3.3 – The Archaeology of the Callow Lough **cenn áit**

The historical, cartographical and place-name evidence, therefore, suggests that Callow Lough was an important Ó Cellaig lordly centre. What are the archaeological remains associated with the lough and its vicinity? (Fig. 5.19).

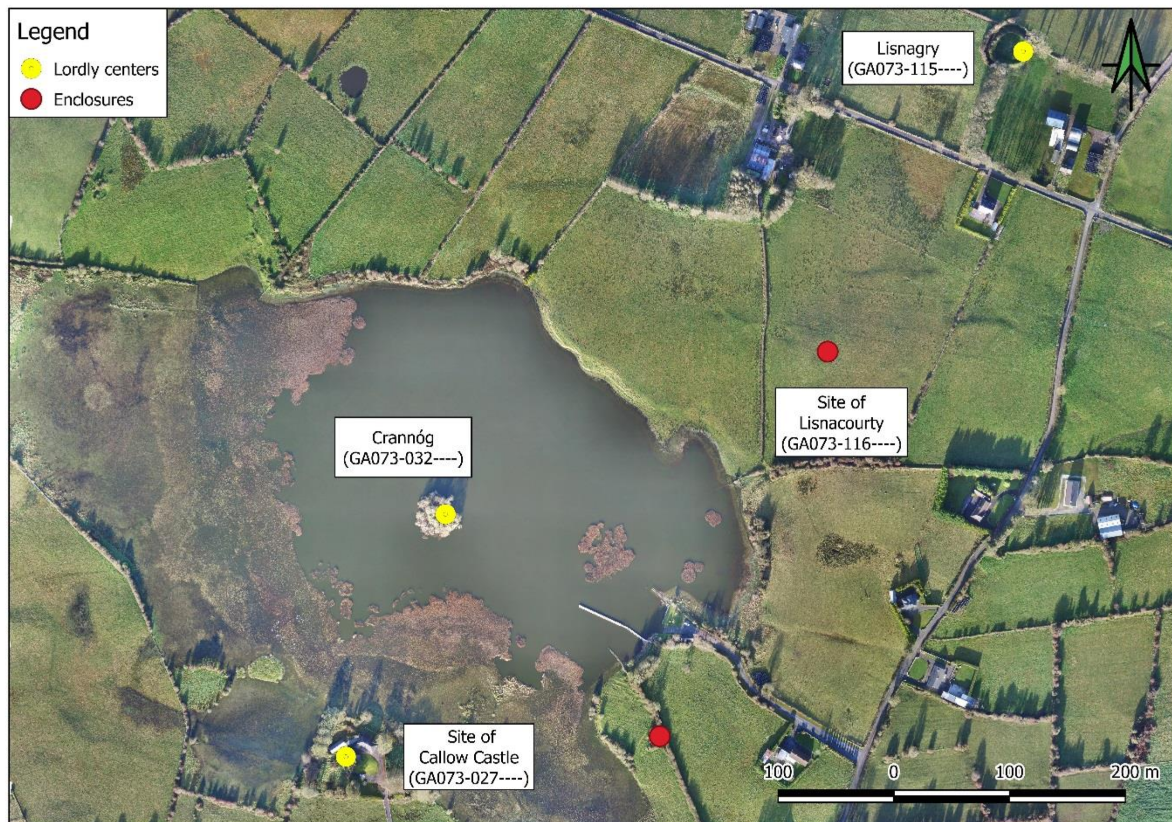


Figure 5.19 – Orthographic image of Callow Lough and environs, Co. Galway, with the principal monuments mentioned in the text labelled. (Image courtesy of Western Aerial Survey)

The archaeological remains in the townland of Callow itself are nearly exclusively of general medieval date. They come in the form of an unclassified castle, Callow Castle (GA073-027-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 398), in the northeast of the townland, adjacent to the lake shore of Callow Lough, and a substantial *crannóg* (GA073-032-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 30) in the centre of the lake itself. Aside from these remains, there are three ringforts and an enclosure in Callow townland (GA073-028-; GA073-029-; GA073-030-; GA073-026002-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 64), which may portray a long continuity of use through time. The adjacent townland to the north, Lisdonnellroe, is also interesting, in that it contains one bivallate ringfort named Lisnagry – *Lios na g-croidh* 'the fort of the cattle/wealth' on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map for the area (GA073-115-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 131), and one recorded enclosure, Lisnacourty – *Lios na Cúirte* ' the fort of the court' (GA073-116-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 205; Fig. 5.19). Aerial photography of the area suggests the presence of an additional, heavily degraded, earthwork monument located 100m directly to the west of Lisnacourty enclosure (E 572271; N 734593). It appears as a curved or nearly circular cropmark on certain of the aerial databases, measuring roughly 45m in diameter. It does not appear on the Digital Elevation Model (DEM) or orthophotograph, however, suggesting a deterioration of the site through time. Should this be a ringfort, which it probably was, it would have been a substantial example.

This discrete complex of monuments, coupled with the names ascribed to some of these sites, indicate a landscape associated with lordship and wealth. It is possible that the townland name of Lisdonnellroe – *Lios Dónaill Rua* (Red Dónal's fort) may also refer to the thirteenth-century king of Uí Maine, Domnall Mór Ó Cellaig, who was operating in the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine during that time, and died peacefully at Aughrim in 1224 (Nicholls 1969, 41). If either Lisnagry or Lisnacourty served as a residence of Domnall Mór, the bivallate site of Lisnagry would be the more likely choice because of its size and complexity (Fig. 5.20).

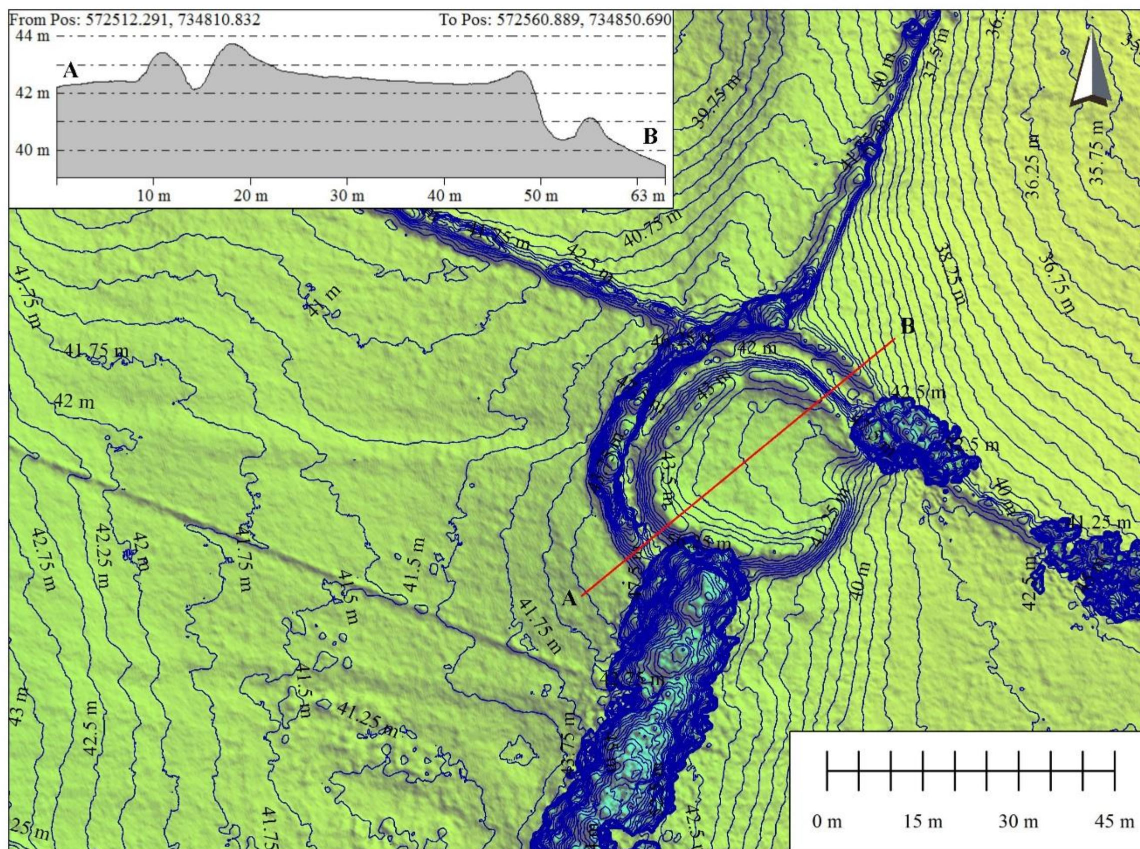


Figure 5.20 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Lisnagry Fort (GA073-115-). This may be the site indicated by the townland name of Lisdonnellroe, a possible thirteenth-century Ó Cellaig elite residence. Note also the sub-rectangular annex which appends Lisnagry Fort to the southwest. This may have been used to corral livestock (Data source: Western Aerial Survey)

The DEM, commissioned for the purpose of the present research, highlights the presence of a number of low-relief features in the vicinity of Lisnacourty, which the present writer would interpret as pre-modern earthen field boundaries, which radiate out to the west and east away from Lisnacourty. The orthophotograph of the district immediately surrounding Callow Lough reveals further linear features that do not conform to the modern field boundaries, suggesting a relative complexity of land division around the *cenn áit*, all hinting at an organised, productive agricultural landscape during later medieval times (Fig. 5.19).

5.3.3.1 – The Callow Lough **Crannóg**

Inspecting the archaeological remains further, two monuments stand out as being identifiable parts of a later medieval Gaelic lordly landscape. Firstly there is the *crannóg* (Pl. 5.6; Fig. 5.21). This artificial island, roughly circular in shape and measuring 30m in diameter, is the most prominent feature on the lake, and is of exclusively stone construction. The evidence suggests that a dry-stone revetment comprised of large square stones served to define the perimeter of the site (Pl. 5.7a). A substantial dump of stone and earth forms the island, with the

crannóg surviving to over 2m in height above the present waterline. The site's morphology would categorise it as a high-cairn *crannóg*, suggesting that the final phases of occupation were later medieval in date (see 4.4). Considering the range of historical references surviving for the area, and the clear evidence from across Ireland for *crannóga* being occupied up to *c*.1600, discussed above (O'Sullivan 1998, 150-6; 2001, 401-13; O'Conor 1998, 79-84; 2014, 333-4; 2018; Brady and O'Conor 2005; Foley and Williams 2006; Bermingham, Moore, O'Keeffe, Gormley 2013; Bermingham 2014; O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 91), it is highly likely that this *crannóg* was part of an Ó Cellaig *cenn áit*.

The remains of a small sub-rectangular building, constructed of unmortared stone, can be seen located centrally on the *crannóg* platform. This structure has internal dimensions of *c*.4m north-south and *c*.5m east-west. Its walls are 0.88m in width and survive to an average height of 1.3m. Access into the structure is provided by a 0.5m gap in the western end of the south wall. This was likely to have been a simple roofed structure, perhaps a house. However, given the relatively large size of the *crannóg*, the island must have supported a more complex structure or structures when occupied that do not survive above ground today to inspect, because they were probably constructed of wood.

A stone-built jetty survives on the eastern side of the *crannóg* as a pair of linear features (each *c*.0.7m wide, 7m-8m long, with a distance of *c*.2.5m between) (Pl. 5.7b), visible beneath the waterline, which presumably provided watercraft access on to the island. Comparison can be made between these linear features and the apparently later medieval dry-stone-built jetty features, slipway and dock surviving at Safe Harbour, adjacent to Rindoon Castle, Co. Roscommon (O'Conor and Naessens 2016a; O'Conor and Shanahan 2018, 26). Based on this comparison, the jetty at Callow *crannóg* may have served to tie up cot or logboat-type vessels, even wherries, and be of similar later medieval date to the examples found at Rindoon.

Plate 5.6 – The high-cairn crannóg located in the centre of Callow Lough, viewed from the southeast. The tree covered island hides the dry-stonewalled structure at its centre (Author's photograph).

Plate 5.7 – [a] Large stones marking the perimeter around the crannóg in Callow Lough, on the southern side of the island. [b] Noost or jetty features on the eastern side of the crannóg. (Author's photographs)

Despite the lack of historical attestation for this island, it must have been a central part of this Ó Cellaig *cenn áit*, particularly prior to the construction of the castle on the southern shore of the lake. As such, evidence from historical accounts (*Topographia*, 37) and from the examination of similar sites elsewhere, indicate that the *crannóg* would have acted as an

administrative centre, defended residence, guest accommodation, and a location for feasting for the occupiers of the lordly centre, as well as a legitimiser of their antique origins in the area (e.g. O'Conor 2018, 164-6). There is also the possibility that this *crannóg* continued to serve a prominent role in the Callow landscape up until the end of the later medieval period, judging by the care taken to include the lake, and the island itself, in the cartographic sources outlined above (see 5.3.2.1).

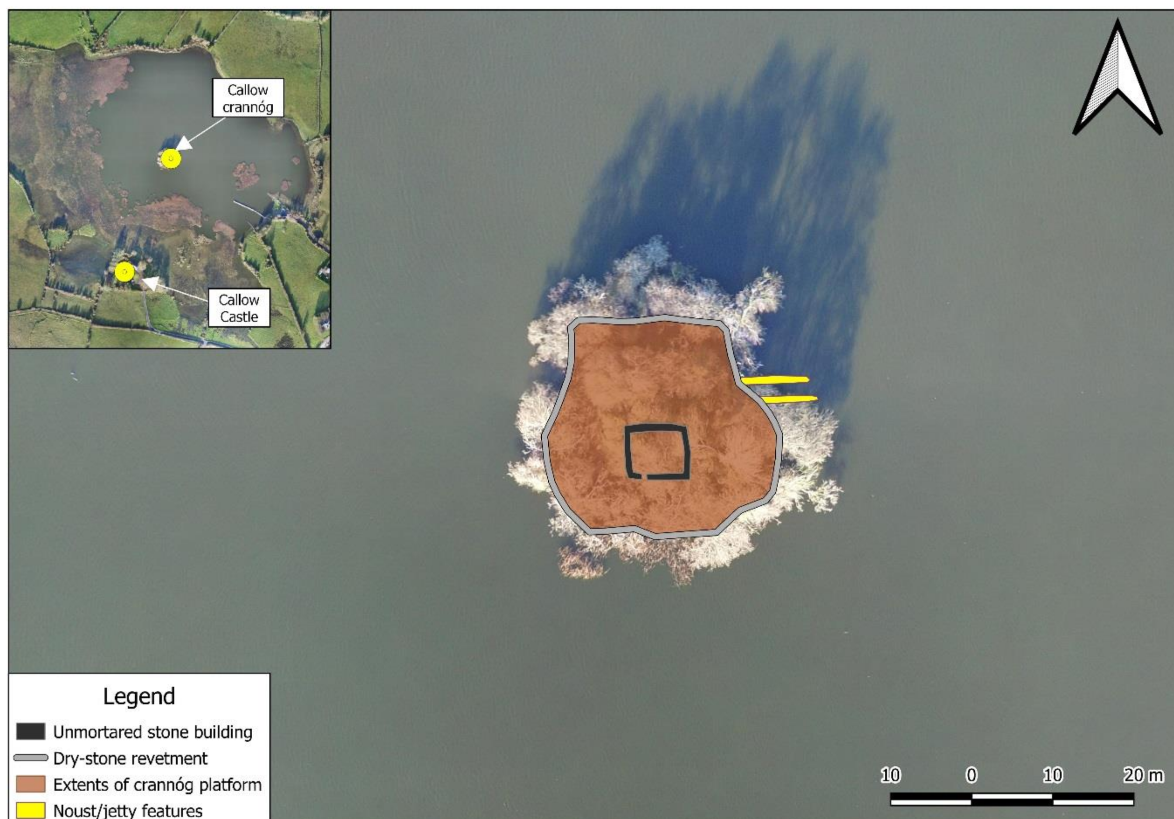


Figure 5.21 – Plan of Callow Lough crannóg*, highlighting the presence of the unmortared stone building south of the centre of the* crannóg *platform, a late feature, and likely preceded by one or more substantial structures which were once located on this high-cairn* crannóg *at the centre of the Callow Lough* cenn áit (Data source: Western Aerial Survey).

A site possibly linked to the *crannóg* by function is the group of monuments located 200m to the south, on the shore of the lake. We have already seen that the pairing of *crannóg* and dry-land site (with the latter site functioning as an agricultural and administrative centre) is a routine arrangement in these contexts (see 5.2.1). For instance, the pairing of *crannóg* and a cashel is seen at Lough Melvin at the MacClancy *cenn áit* of Rosclogher in modern county Leitrim. The *crannóg* lies about 240m offshore from the cashel, which occurred beside a church of later medieval date (McDermott and O'Conor 2015; O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 95). The moated site (which was modified out of an occupied ringfort at some at some stage in the fourteenth century) in Rockingham Demesne is similarly linked (571m apart) to the Rock of

Lough Cé in Co. Roscommon, the island site being a lordly centre of the Mac Diarmada lords of Magh Luirg (Finan 2018, 38-42). However, as noted, some dry-land sites associated with *crannóga* consisted of completely undefended sites (O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 95).

5.3.3.2 – The **bódhún** *of Callow*

If the *crannóg* at Callow was paired to a dry-land site, where was it located, and what form did this site take? In order to understand this, the fourteenth-century mention of the construction or reconstruction of the 'bawn' of Callow could prove helpful (see 4.5). In terms of candidates for this *bódhún*, place-name evidence could point in the direction of Lisnagry – *Lios na g-croidh* (the fort of the cattle/wealth). However, Lisnagry is not in Callow townland itself, thus lessening the likelihood of it being the location in question. The alternative, and more likely location, is at or near the site of the later Callow Castle.

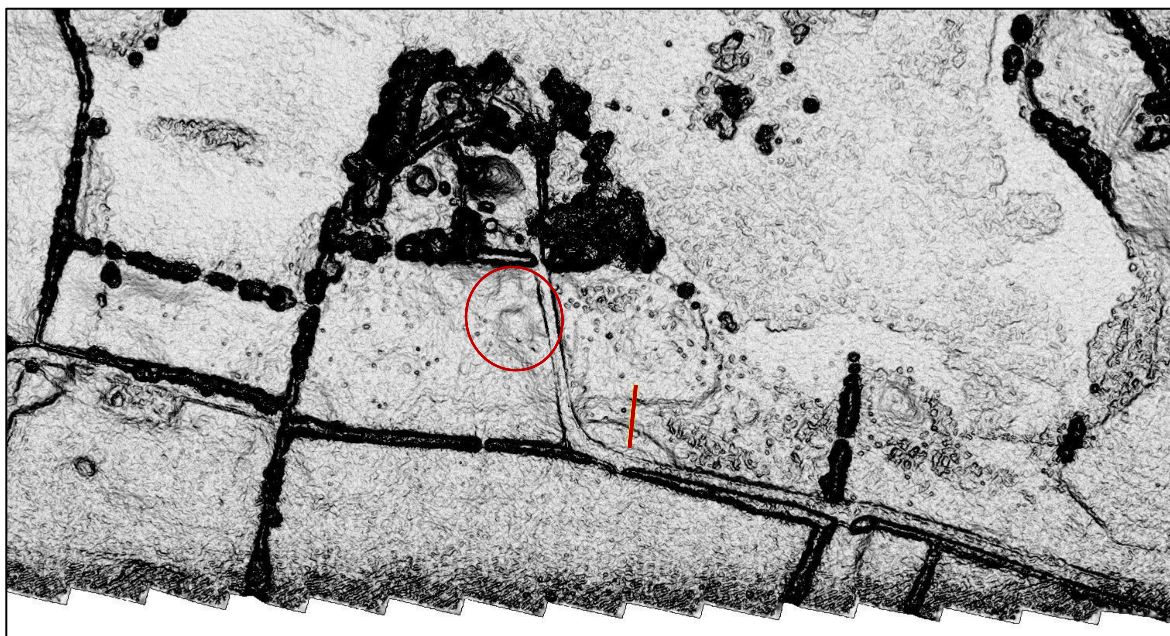
The lake itself, and the modern water levels on the lake, are dependent on the ever growing banks of vegetative growth that dominate on the shoreline and the lake itself. The invasive vegetation encroaching on the lake, the result of eutrophication, is an issue that has affected angling on the lake in the recent past, and is now carefully managed by Inland Fisheries Ireland. This seasonal growth and decay of vegetation over a number of years has led to the shallowing of the lake in places close to the shore, and the transformation of some of its areas into turlough waters. Because of this, it is difficult to deduce the full extent of the lake as it once was in the later medieval past. However, inspection of the southern shore of the lake strongly indicates that Callow Castle was once located on what was a small peninsula or inland promontory jutting out into the lake. This is best visualised through the flood mapping surveys conducted by the Office of Public Works (OPW), which indicates that large areas of what are now turlough zones approaching the lake shore are susceptible to flooding (Fig. 5.22). Corroborating evidence for the larger extents of the lake's area can be inferred from aerial photography taken at a given dry period in the year. In these circumstances, the algae formations in the lake, once dry, take on a scorched appearance, as the dry algal mats lay out over the turlough beds, thus indicating a former high water mark.

Figure 5.22 – Flood Mapping of Callow Lough, Co. Galway, based on survey work undertaken by the Office of Public Works (OPW). The promontory upon which the site of Callow Castle is located is marked by the red circle. North is indicated by the white arrow. (Image Source: GeoHive, Ordnance Survey Ireland 2017). This indicates that the lake was once much larger.

Armed with this evidence, medieval settlement at Callow Lough can be better understood. The southern shore of the lake retains the promontory upon which Callow Castle is located, as well as a small spit of land immediately to its west that seems to have been of artificial or partially artificial construction. The presence of these two tracts of land combine to create a sheltered harbour to the west of the castle, showing this shoreline to be more complex than previously thought. It is quite likely that it is this area that gives the townland its name of *An Caladh* (Callow – the landing place/ferry), which, of course, hints that there was something of importance out on this small lake – which appears to have been the *crannóg*.

Consultation of the photographic and topographical data acquired for the lake and its surrounding environs has led to the identification of a strong candidate for the *bódhún* of Callow. Firstly, the detail captured in the orthophotograph is particularly beneficial in inspecting the southern shore of the lake. This shore seems to have been artificially modified (Fig. 5.22) in order to shape the promontory that juts out on to the lake as a defensible site. The topographical data has uncovered a substantial earthen feature, 97m to the south of the castle remains. This earthwork is better preserved to the east of the laneway providing access to the modern dwelling on the promontory, and would have demarcated the zone from the rest of the

surrounding area. It survives as a silted-up ditch, measuring 8-9m in width, with low earthen banks surviving on both its interior and exterior (see Fig. 5.23 for its location and size). The DEM can trace the ditch to the west of the laneway, and connecting the two sides of the ditch together provides a full length for the feature of 200m from west to east, enclosing the entire space north of the ditch to an area measuring *c.*14,820m² in size. A cross-section of the ditch, utilising the data collected from the DEM, gives an indication of the scale of the feature on the eastern side of the laneway, where it is best preserved. The ditch survives as a wide (*c.*12.5m total distance between banks) but shallow (*c.*60cm deep) feature, with its slight appearance presumably the result of infilling and the silting up of the ditch over time.



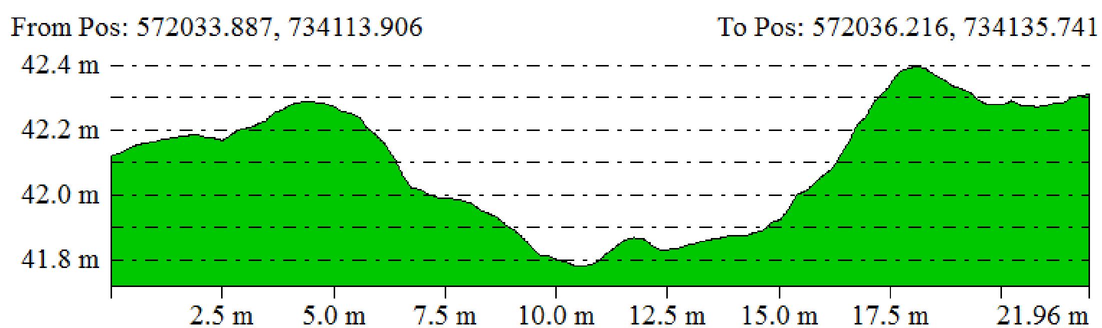


Figure 5.23 – Cross-section of the wet ditch across the promontory at Callow Lough, and the location of the cross section. The left-hand side of the cross section corresponds with the southern end of the line (Data courtesy of Western Aerial Survey). It shows the ditch and its two banks in the best preserved section of the earthwork.

The wide width of this ditch rules out the possibility that it was constructed for some form of drainage action. This earthwork plainly represents the remains of a defensive wet ditch which was fed by the waters of Callow Lough. Therefore, the present writer believes that the ditch is part of the physical remains of the *bódhún* at Callow, constructed or, just possibly rebuilt, in

1353, functioning in part as the dry-land service site of the *crannóg* (Fig. 5.24). As we have seen, these dry-land service sites are seen at some later medieval *crannóga*, and may have acted as the day-to-day administrative and agricultural centres for the territories under the control of the *crannóg* occupiers (5.2.1). Given the considerable size of the area enclosed by this *bódhún*, it is possible that a small number of houses were once located within the interior alongside the elite residence, providing accommodation for those who served the Ó Cellaig lord here on a daily basis. Its size would also have provided the space to safely house the lord's cattle herds in the area in times of trouble.

A modern private lane provides access between the existing farmstead and the site of Callow Castle and the L17423. Both roads are extant on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map. Despite the absence of any earlier detailed cartographic sources surviving for the area, it would appear that this modern lane may broadly follow the old formal route of approach to the castle, as well as what preceded it. Faint traces survive on the orthophotograph, DEM and on the ground for a slightly raised earthen feature immediately to the west of the modern lane (Fig. 5.23), which may represent the remains of an entrance causeway across the *bódhún*'s ditch and onto the promontory.

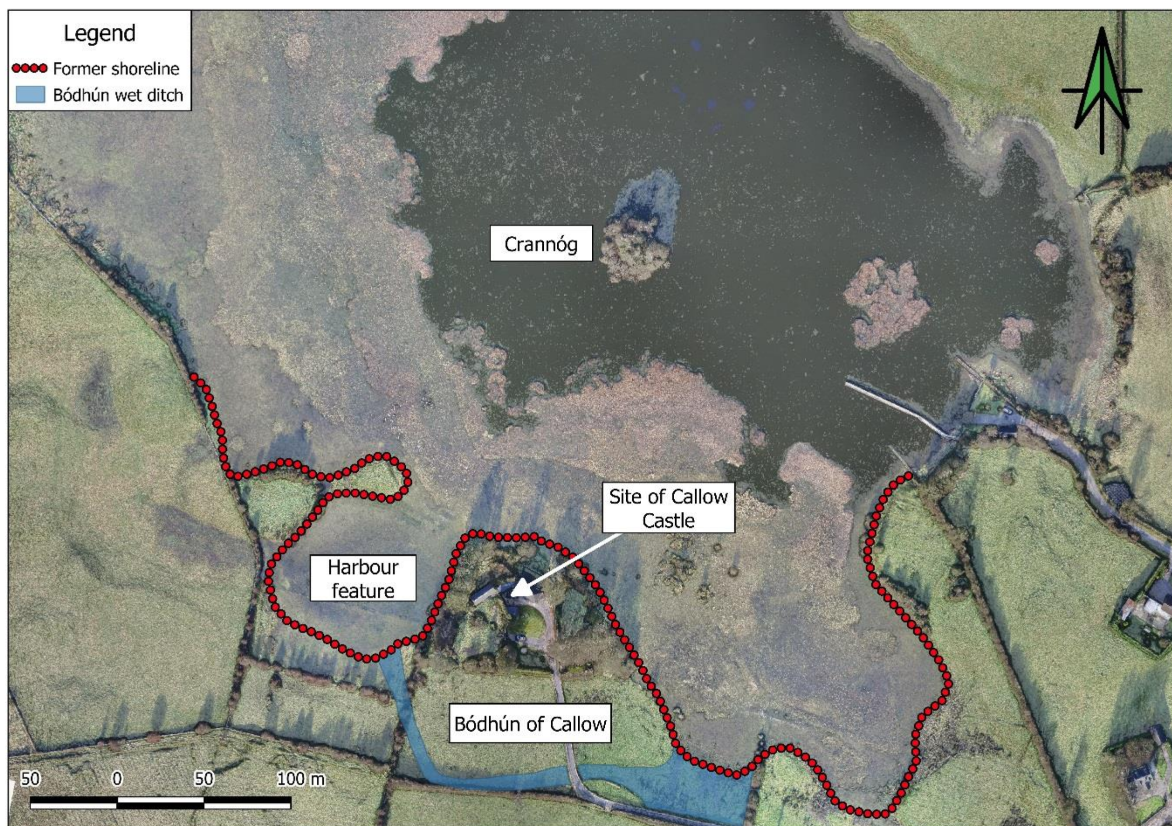


Figure 5.24 – Composite orthophotograph and DEM image of the southern shore of Callow Lough, outlining the principal features of the Ó Cellaig lordly centre: crannóg, bódhún, *harbour and site of the later castle. (Data source: Western Aerial Survey)*

5.3.3.3 – Callow Castle

Callow Castle is marked in the First Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map as being located in a modern farmyard, labelled Callow Lodge, located on the southern shore of the lake, at the northern tip of the *bódhún*. As noted earlier, there are historical references to a castle at Callow Lough in the possession of members of sept branches of the Ó Cellaig dynasty in the late-fifteenth and late-sixteenth centuries. The first reference to a castle at Callow comes in 1475 (see 5.3.2). The castle remains are very fragmentary today, with only one section of castle wall surviving to a maximum height of *c.*6m, and measuring 16m in length (Pl. 5.8). This section possesses a base batter, confirming it to be an external wall, while what was part of the interior retains evidence of a small lancet window, and a recess for joist holes and ceiling timbers on the first floor. The southern section of this wall, which is devoid of recesses, may have been part of what was the curtain wall of a bawn which was built up against the castle proper. The castle remains do not contain any diagnostic features beyond this, however, a series of modern farm buildings incorporate worked stone with punch-dressing, including a series of finely-tooled quoin stones, which seem to have been robbed out from the castle (Pl. 5.9). The owner of the property describes the former presence of a masonry vaulted chamber within the footprint of what was the castle, which was dismantled in the twentieth century (Fig. 5.25).

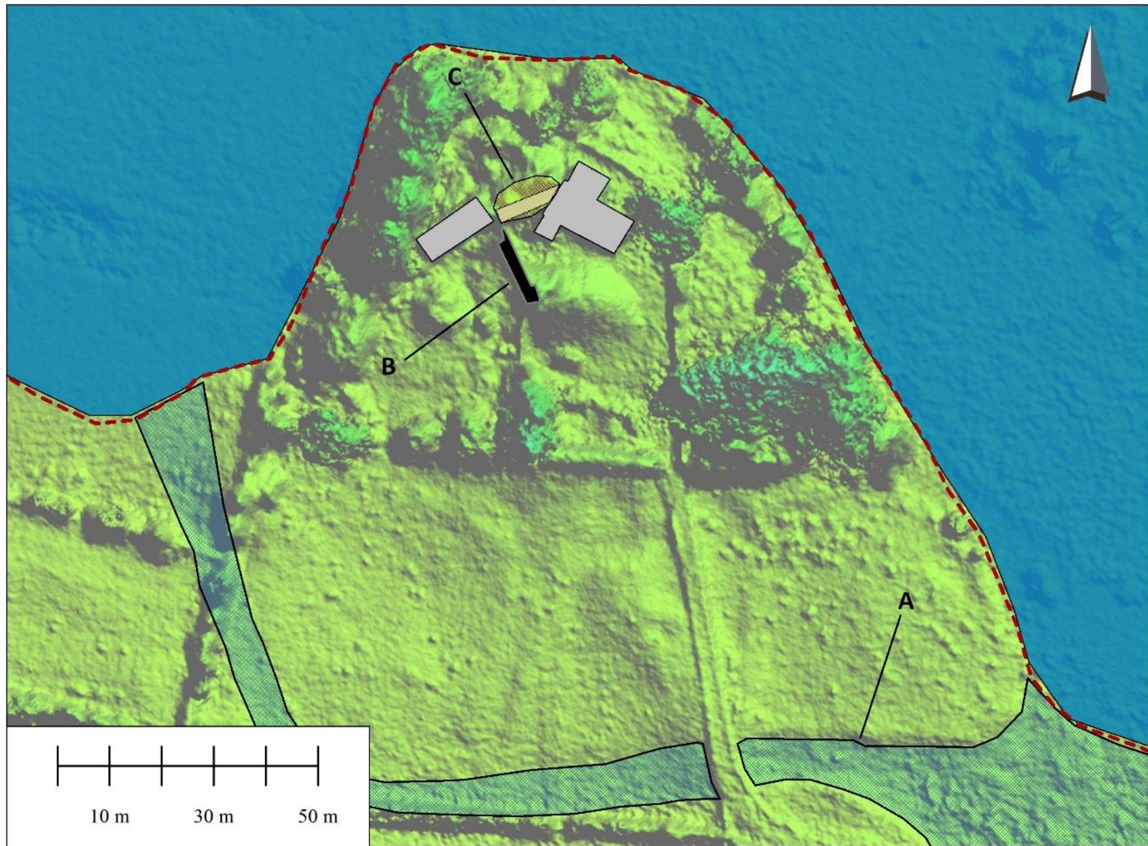


Figure 5.25 – Plan of the extents of Callow Castle as they survive today. The fragmentary castle remains correspond with the masonry section [B]. The modern dwelling and farm buildings are marked in grey, and the proposed bódhún *of Callow (5.3.3.2) is also visible [A]. C = oval area where the property owner indicated the masonry vaulting was once located, now domestic sheds (Data source: Western Aerial Survey).*

Plate 5.8 - Interior view of much modified castle wall at Callow Castle. The lancet window [centre of image] has been blocked up and turned into a grotto, and the first floor joist holes and ceiling recess is evident above it. (Author's photograph)

As we have seen already, punch-dressed cut stones often indicate that a late medieval castle was likely once located at the site (see 5.2.1). The existence of punch-dressed stones in the modern farmyard buildings at Callow and the evidence for the great majority of the castle sites in the Irish countryside being the remains of tower houses suggests the Callow Castle was in fact originally a tower house also.

Plate 5.9 - One example of the finely tooled punch dressing to be found incorporated into the fabric of the modern farm buildings on the site of Callow Castle (Author's photograph).

Furthermore, the existence of a local description of what appears to have been a vault over the ground floor of the castle at Callow also seems to suggest that the remains here are those of a tower house, as this is a feature of tower houses in particular, especially those built before the late sixteenth century (McNeill 1997, 201-2, 205). In this respect, it is noteworthy that the first historical reference to Callow Castle comes in 1475, strongly suggesting that the tower house

here was in existence by that date. A recent radio-carbon dating project, which dated surviving wicker twigs used in the construction of vaults and arches in Irish tower houses, produced some interesting results. While many tower houses sampled in the project seem to have been erected in the second half of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, many others were constructed in the first half of the fifteenth century, in both Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland. Interestingly, from the point of view of the negative evidence from this project, there was little indication from this research for the fourteenth-century construction of tower houses (Sherlock 2013; 2015, 88; 2017). This suggests the possibility that the tower house at Callow, on the shore opposite the earlier *crannóg*, was built sometime in the first half of the fifteenth century, or perhaps a decade or two after 1450, like elsewhere in Gaelic Ireland at this time. Indeed, it is possible that this castle was initially constructed at a similar point in time to the programme of building works undertaken by Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig on Kilconnell Friary, perhaps as early as the mid-fifteenth century, when Callow was under the authority of a more junior sept of the Uí Maine lordship (see 5.3.2).

The wet ditch of the *bódhún* across the promontory in Callow townland is likely to have continued its defensive purpose after the construction of the tower house castle on the site. To repurpose the ditch in this manner is not surprising, and parallels for the reuse of existing earthworks to create a bawn for one's tower house or castle is seen in a number of instances throughout late medieval Ireland (O'Keeffe 2015, 291).

5.3.4 – The Cultural Landscape of the Callow Lough **cenn áit**

The toponymical, historical, cartographical and, now, archaeological evidence has established Callow Lough as a focal point of Ó Cellaig authority from at least the mid-fourteenth century. The cultural landscape which surrounds Callow Lough adds to our understanding of how this *cenn áit* operated in the later medieval period.

5.3.4.1 – Corraneena – **Corr an Aonaigh***, a place of assembly attached to the Callow Lough cenn áit*

Presumably the location where taxation was levied, and tribute was provided to the Uí Maine lord corresponded with settlement of Kilconnell, and the seasonal gathering place from the communities of the rural hinterland towards the social focal point of the lordly centre in *Túath Caladh*. In the townland name of Corraneena (*Corr an Aonaigh* – the rounded hill of the assembly) we likely have the medieval venue of assembly attached to the Callow Lough *cenn áit*, and this location may have corresponded with the statement that:

'The (*túath*) district of Caladh (Callow) holds the stewardship of both petty rent and great exaction' (*Nósa*, 546-7)

Evidence for an early origin for *óenach* activity at Kilconnell can be traced to the medieval period. Hagiographical and folkloric sources concerning local saints Kerrill and Connell refer to a rivalry between these two supposed sixth-century missionaries. The rivalry is regarded as resulting in a pair of curses cast between the two religious figures, with the more important curse for our purposes stating:

'May there be blood shed on every fair day in Kilconnell.' (Mannion 2004, 59-60)

Mannion has convincingly argued that this story is likely to date to much later than the era suggested by the characters. His assertion is that the story actually relates to a developing rivalry between the two religious houses of Kilconnell and Clonkeenkerrill during the fifteenth century (Mannion 2004, 61). Indirectly, this reference enables us to posit that Kilconnell was a recognised location of fair activity at least as far back as the later medieval period. However, the survival of the townland name, and its associations with a natural prominence (*Corr* – round hill) often found as the focal point of early medieval assembly landscapes, could indicate that the fair at Kilconnell had its origins in the early medieval period as an *óenach*.

A seventeenth-century reference survives to the granting of a fair at Kilconnell. There is a 1616 record of a grant for a fair on the feast of St. James. This grant is evidence of a possible reaffirmation at Kilconnell of this longstanding association with a seasonal fair in late July (Cunningham 2018, 130), and must correlate with the earlier hagiographical reference. Given the date of the feast day, in close proximity to the date of the festival of *Lughnasa*, means that the saint's day of the 25th July may have been adopted in order to Christianise the gathering, which hints at the antiquity of the fair.

For further evidence for the presence of an assembly or fair we must consult the modern cartographic sources. Corraneena is located immediately to the south of, as well as incorporating, the western end of the village of Kilconnell. The northeast corner of Corraneena townland, where it borders on the village itself, is shown in the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map to retain an open space marked as 'Fair Green', now largely built over. The presence of the 'Fair Green' perhaps indicates that the fair was still celebrated here into the early-nineteenth century. An annual horse fair has taken place into the twenty-first century. Circumstantial evidence for this location being suitable for assembly activity is also seen by its closeness to the *Slighe Mhór*, which passed directly through Kilconnell (see 3.3).

In summary, this collection of evidence suggests that Corraneena was the location of a later medieval fair, which may have had origins consistent with the concept of the early medieval *óenach*. The present writer suggests that as there is a great wealth of material extant for both Kilconnell Friary and Callow Lough, it serves to confirm this entire landscape to be a key centre of activity for the later medieval Uí Chellaig, with the convening of a seasonal assembly a presumed important part of that.

5.3.4.2 – Service Kindred Landholdings at Callow Lough (see Fig. 5.27)

The rights tract *Nósa Ua Maine* is valuable in identifying the service kindreds, who are those families who held hereditary roles attached to the Ó Cellaig lordship (Fig. 5.27). Some studies have been undertaken into the identification of the landholdings of service kindreds of later medieval Gaelic lordships particularly through toponymical analyses (e.g. Hughes 1994-5). Research into the archaeologies of these landholdings has more recently been pioneered by FitzPatrick (e.g. FitzPatrick 2016; 2018). *Nósa Ua Maine* records a series of offices accorded to minor families in Uí Maine and Tír Maine. However, a degree of caution must be exercised when evaluating whether or not these offices were realistically functioning at all times. It has been suggested that only important dynasties like the Uí Chonchobair kings of Connacht were able to realistically provide even rudimentary administrative offices for their territory in the thirteenth century (Ní Mhaonaigh 2000, 380-1; Nicholls 2003, 44). It is only from the fourteenth century that there is definite evidence for service kindreds in the Ó Cellaig lordship.

At least three hereditary office-holding families can be identified in the landscape from *Nósa Ua Maine* around Callow Lough (*Nósa*, 548-9). The first service family that can be identified are the Uí Dubhagáin, who, as stated, were hereditary poet historians to the Uí Chellaig. It was noted above that they also held land in the vicinity of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordly centre at Lough Croan (see 5.2.3.2). The famous Sean Mór Ó Dubhagáin, who died in 1372, the author of several important literary and poetic works, was a member of this family (Carney 2008, 690; Simms 2018, 424-5). Other members of the Ó Dubhagáin sept served as poet historians to the Uí Chellaig, included one 'Richard O'Dugan', and Cam Cluana Ó Dubhagáin, who died in 1379 and 1394 respectively (*AFM*; *MacC*).

As mentioned previously, the townlands of Ballydoogan and Cartondoogan, some 3km distant to the north from Callow, seems to represent some the later medieval landholdings of these hereditary poet historians, and their close proximity to the lordly centre at Callow is telling, and not without parallel. FitzPatrick notes the proximity of service kindreds' landholdings to

their lords' residence throughout Gaelic Ireland (FitzPatrick 2018, 173-87). This seems to be replicated here at Callow. The Uí Dubhagáin are recorded as present in the Callow landscape into the seventeenth century. 'Donell O Dugan' is described as being 'of Lisfenelle' in 1617 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 356). The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map labels a ringfort (GA073-014-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling, 45) in Ballydoogan townland as 'Lisfineel Fort' – (*Lios Fionaolaigh?* – Fineely's Fort?). This very large ringfort, which is 39m in internal diameter and is defined by as much as four earthen banks separated by three ditches, can still be seen at this site today (Fig. 5.26). The historical evidence hints that this site may have served as a principal residence of the Uí Dubhagáin during the later medieval period prior to the seventeenth century.

Figure 5.26 – Lisfineel Fort [left] on the First Edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map. Lisfineel Fort [right] from the Digital Globe aerial source. (Images courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland).

The second service kindred mentioned in the *Nósa Ua Maine* as being linked to the Uí Chellaig lords are the Uí Longorgáin harpers of *Baile na Banabadh* (ang. Ballynabanaba) (*Nósa*, 548-9). Ballynabanaba townland is located 2km to the east of Callow Lough. The Uí Shideacháin horn-players of *Lis na Cornairead* are also mentioned in the latter source as being another service family linked to the Ó Cellaig lords (*Ibid.*). *Lis na Cornairead* (the ringfort/enclosure of the horn-blowers[41]/cupbearers)[42] may have been located in the townland of Ballynabanaba (Fletcher 2001, 195). The site of at least one univallate ringfort, *c.*29m in internal diameter (GA073-018-), and a tower house of at least three storeys, which has evidence within it for ogee-headed windows of late fourteenth-century to mid sixteenth-century date, occurs within this townland (GA073-017-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 47, 396). An enclosure is also

[41] One stokagh - *stocaire* 'horn-blower' is recorded in association with the Uí Chellaig in a fiant for the year 1583, one 'Teig McDonogh of Colenegir' (*Fiant* II, 584 [4170]). This role is regarded as having been synonymous with hunting, war and feasting (FitzPatrick 2018, 184).
[42] Translation provided by Liam Ó hAisibéil, pers comm. See email 20th October 2020.

mentioned as being located in Ballynabanaba. This seems to be the eroded remains of a ringfort, *c.*28m in internal diameter (GA073-019-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 226). In all, this evidence seems to suggest that that three of the key offices relating to public recitation and performance, feasting, music, entertainment and related activities were all centred close to Callow, the Ó Cellaig lords' administrative and power-base for the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine.

It may also be possible to add two more landholdings of hereditary service kindreds to the Callow landscape. Just under 3km northwest of Callow Lough lies the townland of Annagh, which is recorded as being one of the locations of residence for the *Meic an Bhaird* or Mac Ward family of poets. A poem, included in the fourteenth-century *Leabhar Ua Maine*, beginning *Cruas connacht clanna sogain*, locates a branch of the Meic an Bhaird family in Annagh townland (MacAlister 1941, 77-8/22-3). Furthermore, one Hugh McWarde is recorded as in possession of a castle at Annagh in 1574 (Nolan 1900-1, 120). Browne's 1591 map further corroborates the Meic an Bhaird presence adjacent to Callow Lough, with Annagh marked 'Annagh C. Mc Award', again referencing a castle of some sort (Fig. 5.17). Another early reference to the Meic an Bhaird serving the Uí Chellaig comes in 1356 (*AC*; *ACl.*). It is therefore unsurprising that some of the landholdings of this learned kindred can be found in such close vicinity to an identified later medieval *cenn áit* of the Uí Chellaig at Callow Lough.

Annagh townland itself contains the remains of a univallate ringfort, *c.*31m in internal diameter. The grass-covered remains of a rectangular 'house site' survives in its interior, which measures 8m east/west by 7.3m north/south (GA073-005-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 34). An oval enclosure, probably the remains of a ringfort, whose internal measurements were 50m north-west/south-east by 40m north-east/south-west, once existed *c.*100m to the north of Annagh House (GA073-006-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 166). Either of these sites may be the archaeological remnants of one of the Mac an Bhaird residences and also be the site of the historically-attested castle.

Finally, the townland name of Lecarrowmactully – *Leithcheathrú Mhic Mhaoltuile* (the half-quarter of Mac Maoltuile) also provides a hint of a learned kindred living within the wider Callow landscape. The Mac Mhaoltuile/Ó Maoltuile or Mac Tullys were a prominent Connacht family of hereditary physicians (Sheehan 2019, 22). Physicians often resided close to the chief's residence, with their landholdings often named after them (FitzPatrick 2018, 170-1). Lecarrowmactully is located directly adjacent to the east of Callow and Lisdonnellroe townlands. The Mac Maoltuile physicians were most notably known as *leeches* – from Old

English *laece*, meaning ‘physician’, to the Uí Chonchobair lords of Machaire Connacht, and there is literary evidence for a Mac Tully being present at the inauguration of Cathal Crobhdearg Ó Conchobair *c.*1201 at Carnfree mound, south of Tulsk, Co. Roscommon (O'Daly and O'Donovan 1853, 346-7). Artefactual evidence for the continued practice of the medical arts by the Mac Maoltuile family can be found in the form of a carved wooden mether, a communal drinking cup likely used in this instance for the purpose of the dispensing medicinal remedies. Inscribed ‘Dermot Tully 1590’, it is replete with known astrological-medical symbols of the time, attesting the importance of such symbols at this point (Gray 2016, 157-65; FitzPatrick 2019, 44; Pl. 5.10). The Mac Mhaoltuile are also recorded as serving as ‘kern’ *ceatharnaigh* (foot-soldiers) to the Uí Chellaig in fiants from the late sixteenth century (*Fiants* II, 209 [1593], III, 106 [5435]).

Plate 5.10 - The 'Dermot Tully' Mether, dated 1590. On exhibition in the Galway City Museum. (Author's photograph)

Sheehan also highlights the routine presence of landholdings associated with medical families being strategically located close to road and riverine communication networks. These landholdings were carefully chosen to enable the physician to access both patrons and patients

beyond their own locales (Sheehan 2019, 24-5). This means that Lecarrowmactully might have been chosen to accommodate a medical family in the area, due to its close proximity to the *Slighe Mhór*.

The townland itself contains the remains of four ringforts, as well as an enclosure (GA073-102-; GA073-103-; GA073-104-; GA073-105-; GA073-106-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 129, 204). The most prominent ringfort in the townland is delimited by two banks and one intervening ditch, measures *c.*30m in internal diameter, and possesses a probable entrance to its east/northeast, with the internal bank having a dry-stone-facing (GA073-105-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 129). A possibility exists that this was the residence of the Mac Maoltuile physicians within the townland, lying just over 1km from Callow Lough.

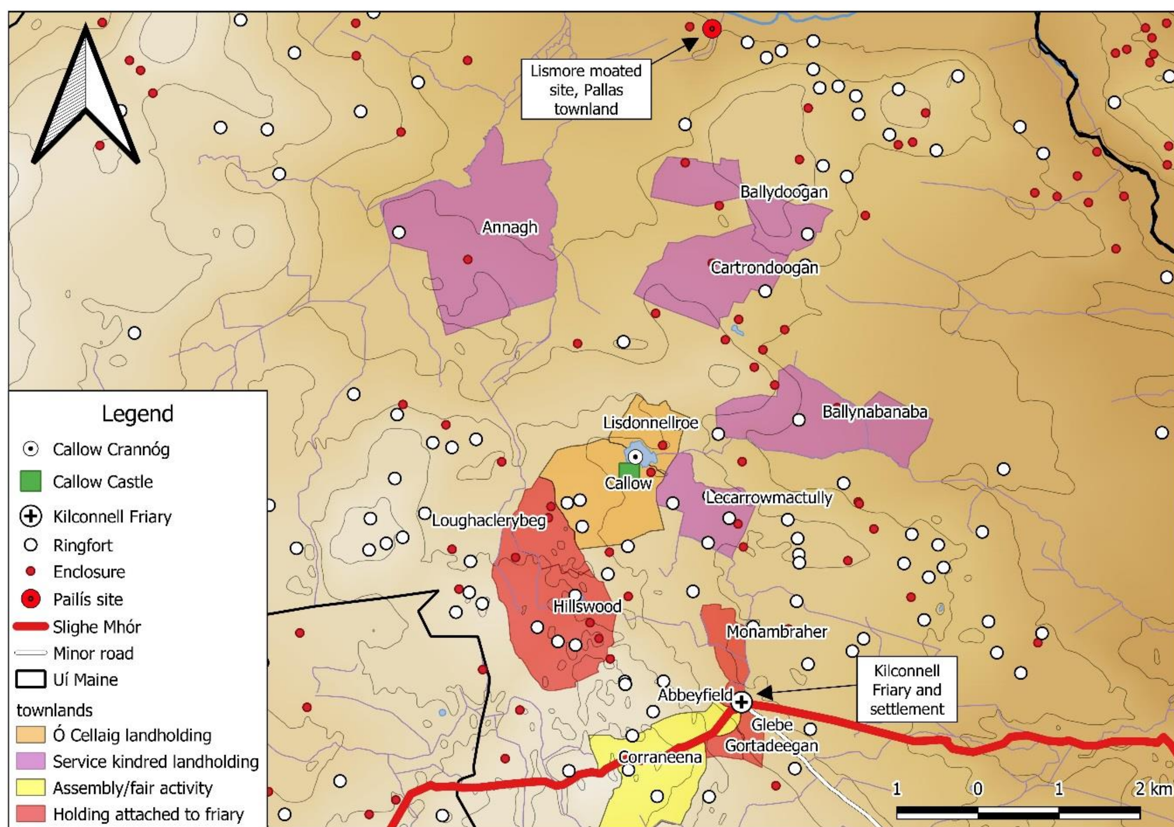


Figure 5.27 – Some of the principal townland names surrounding Kilconnell and Callow Lough, Co. Galway, and an interpretation based upon available source material. The service kindred landholdings, outlined in 5.3.4.2, surround the lordly centre at Callow Lough, indicating the primacy of their role in service of the Ó Cellaig lord at Callow.

5.3.4.3 – Kilconnell Franciscan Friary

Kilconnell Friary, and its place in relation to this Ó Cellaig *cenn áit*, is important to explore, in that it serves as a display of the increase in power and wealth exercised by the Ó Cellaig lords from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. Other scholars have engaged in a more detailed and

expansive study of Kilconnell Franciscan Friary than the present writer (Biggar 1900-1; 1902; 1903-4; Jennings 1944; McDermott 2012; Smith 2014). However, a number of the surviving elements at, and surrounding, the friary need to be discussed in the context of this thesis due to their connection with the Uí Chellaig.

The Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography includes a series of oblique aerial photographs at, and adjacent to, Kilconnell Friary taken in 1963 and 1969, two of which are imaged below. These show the survival of a matrix of field systems surrounding the religious foundation (Pl. 5.11), and this may represent something of the economic activities that supported the friary. In theory, a Franciscan or Dominican friary was not supposed to own land, in the way that, for example, a Cistercian monastery could possess thousands of acres. However, it has been shown that small farms of perhaps thirty to fifty acres may have been worked in the vicinity of these friaries in later medieval Ireland. Such holdings would have been farmed by these friaries to provide their basic food requirements and none of this produce was sold for profit (O'Conor and Shanahan 2013, 13-15). It is possible that the field system depicted in these aerial photographs in the immediate vicinity of Kilconnell friary may be the remnants of such an attached farm. Alternatively, these fields could have been farmed by a lay population living in the immediate vicinity of the friary and who also, as the place-name evidence suggests, delivered industrial processes for the settlement, the Franciscans, and the secular lords at Callow Lough (see 5.3.1).

Plate 5.11 – Oblique aerial photographs of Kilconnell Friary and infields, as collected by CUCAP. [left] Kilconnell Friary at the centre of the image, with the rectangular remains of a series of small fields approaching the background of the image, looking northeast. CUCAP no.: AHM033, Photo date: 1963-06-30. [right] Matrix of pre-modern field systems, located immediately to the west of Kilconnell Friary. CUCAP no.: AYN065, Photo date: 1969-07-10 (Images courtesy of Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography).

Turning to the friary, as you enter through to the nave via its western-facing doorway, located on the north wall is an elaborate canopied mural tomb of late fifteenth-century date (Moss 2018, 480). The canopy consists of 'flamboyant' tracery, flanked by two ornamental pinnacles. Beneath this is a panel of six carved continental religious figures, an unusual addition to a Gaelic-commissioned religious house, and some of these figures may symbolise the act of pilgrimage on the part of the tomb's commissioner and benefactor. As discussed earlier, there is evidence to suggest a long-standing link with St. James at Kilconnell, and the benefactor of this tomb may have gone on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (*Ibid*, 480-1; Nugent 2020, 296; see 5.3.4.1). The benefactor of this tomb is unknown to us today, however, it may be the resting place of a high-ranking member of the Franciscan community at Kilconnell, or alternatively mark the place of repose of a wealthy and prominent member of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship (M. Fitzpatrick 2010, 14). As Franciscans and Dominicans were supposed to live austere lives and to take a vow of poverty, the richly decorated tomb means that it is much more likely that the tomb marks the resting place of a lay lord, presumably an Ó Cellaig.

Retaining a focus on evidence of Ó Cellaig patronage of Kilconnell, the tombs of the chancel of the friary are interesting. The position of a canopied fourteenth or fifteenth-century tomb on the north wall of the chancel (Smith 2014) (Pl. 5.12), closest to the traceried window on the

eastern wall of the friary, occupies a routine location for the founder's tomb in later medieval monastic and friary church architecture, a position replete with significance relating to the placement of the Easter Sepulchre (O'Keeffe 2015, 115-20). The benefactor of this tomb is unidentified, however, it could be speculated that this mural tomb is the final resting place of a prominent member of the Ó Cellaig elite[43], perhaps even Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig (Curley 2019, 18), considering their substantial patronage of the friary. At the foot of the tomb is located a seventeenth-century grave slab, marking a memorial in Latin, which, when translated says:

'Pray for the souls of Thomas son of Hugh Mannin, John son of Malachy Mannin, William son of Hugh Mannin, all from Minlogh, who caused this tomb to be made for them and theirs in the year of the Lord 1648' (Mannion 2015, 21)

Interestingly, John son of Malachy Mannion is recorded as the last Chief of the Name of the Uí Mainnin (Mannion 2015, 23), a family which served as principal rulers over *Tír Sogháin* prior to the overlordship of the Uí Chellaig in the area. The placement of this grave slab, at the foot of a possible founder's tomb, may be of some significance. That a grave slab devoted to the Ó Mainnin is found adjacent to it could suggest close ties between the Uí Chellaig and this sept, perhaps indicating that the former were another service kindred to the latter. The nature of this service is discernible through consulting the literary sources. Mannion has catalogued the Ó Mainnin presence in later medieval Uí Maine (Mannion 2014), drawing attention to the place that the Uí Mainnin of Tír Soghain held in the martial world of the Uí Chellaig. *Nósa Ua Maine* also records the role of the Soghain in battle, indicating that these duties were of longstanding (*Nósa*, 241, 243).

The Uí Mainnin served the Uí Chellaig as military vassals in the battles of *Máenmaige*, in 1135 and Roscommon, in 1377 (*AT*; *AC*). This link between the Uí Chellaig and the Uí Mainnin continued into the sixteenth century. Members of the latter sept appeared regularly in fiants as kern associated with the Uí Chellaig at many of their lordly centres (*Fiants* II, 524 [3793], 584 [4170], 670 [4652] III, 106 [5438]). It can be argued that the combination of the inscribed Ó Mainnin grave slab, along with the literary and historical source evidence, provide an epigraphic representation on the enduring connection between one of the traditional household military kindreds of the Uí Maine, and their overlords. That the Ó Mainnin grave slab is located at the foot of the presumed Ó Cellaig tomb may imply that the Uí Mainnin at some stage after

[43] Cunniffe, C., pers. comm, 17th January 2019

the mid-seventeenth century placed it there to remind people that this sept once not only served their overlords in life but in death too.

Plate 5.12 – Fourteenth or fifteenth-century canopied tomb in the north wall of the chancel at Kilconnell Friary, with the mid-seventeenth century Ó Mainnin grave slab located at its foot. The occupier of the main tomb is unidentified but must have been an Ó Cellaig, given its location on the northern wall close to the High Altar. (Author's photograph)

The continued use of Kilconnell Friary as a place of burial for the Uí Chellaig can be seen in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries The burial of Uilliam Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine is recorded for the year 1420 (*AC*). This is unsurprising considering his prominent patronage of the site, along with it his wife, during their lives (Smith 2014). Another inscribed sixteenth-century Ó Cellaig tomb is located on the south wall of the chancel (Biggar 1900-1, 161). Some of the persons named in the inscription correspond with members of the elite and sept families of sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Uí Maine, notable among them Feardorcha Ó Cellaig, 79th and last lord of Uí Maine, 43rd Chief of the Name, (died after 1611) (Byrne 2011, 227; see 2.6), again serving as a display of wealth by the Uí Chellaig at Kilconnell into the sixteenth century.

As we have seen, Ó Cellaig patronage of Kilconnell also came in the form of more portable items (see 3.5.5). The collection of commissioned religious items for Kilconnell included a silver ciborium 'with a remonstrance in ye topp of wch inscription M'Donagh Minagh Ychalle' (Jennings 1944, 68). The inscription on this drinking goblet or chalice can be rendered 'Mac Donnchad Muimnech Ó Cellaig', referring to the founder of the Franciscan Friary, the aforementioned Uilliam mac Donnchad Muimnech 'Buide' Ó Cellaig, and while no date was provided, it must have been fourteenth century in date. This has been used, along with the presence of the likely fourteenth-century tomb niche in the friary, to cement the argument that Kilconnell Friary was founded by Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig in 1353, being rebuilt in the years after this date (Smith 2014; http://monastic.ie/history/kilconnell-franciscan-friary/). Hitherto, the traditional view is that the friary was built in the early-fifteenth century, albeit still under Ó Cellaig patronage (Leask 1958, II, 167-68; O'Keeffe 2015, 108; Mannion 2015, 21). Other Ó Cellaig commissions in this collection include a silver chalice inscribed 'Willelmi y Kelly' date 1409; a ciborium inscribed 'Malachiae Kelly' dated 1480, a silver chalice in remembrance of Capt. Hugh Kelly of 'Bellaghforen' dated 1685, and a chalice, vestments and mass book provided by William Kelly of Turrock, no date (Jennings 1944, 66, 68).

The mid and late-fifteenth century (*c.*1450-1475) saw a substantial programme of building as well as the introduction of Observant reform at the friary, both commissioned by Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig (Smith 2014). This listing of Ó Cellaig patronage of Kilconnell Friary from the fourteenth century onwards demonstrates how important this religious foundation was to the lords of Uí Maine throughout the late medieval period.

5.3.5 – Summary of the Callow Lough Case Study

To conclude this section of the chapter on the Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* of Callow Lough, the broad base of source material used creates an understanding of what was a highly organised and dynamic Gaelic lordly centre. The physical environment, as parsed through the place-names and the present-day landscape, indicate that this elite centre was located in a fertile agricultural landscape that is interspersed with zones of wetland and woodland. The connectivity of this *cenn áit*, and possibly part of the reason why it was sited where it was, can be partially explained by its close proximity to the main east-west overland routeway in medieval Ireland, the *Slighe Mhór*, which passed through the settlement of Kilconnell (see 3.3). This must have had a role to play in the convening of the annual assembly and fair in Kilconnell, a gathering

that can be considered to be of considerable antiquity, and which survives in the toponymy, historical references and continued practice.

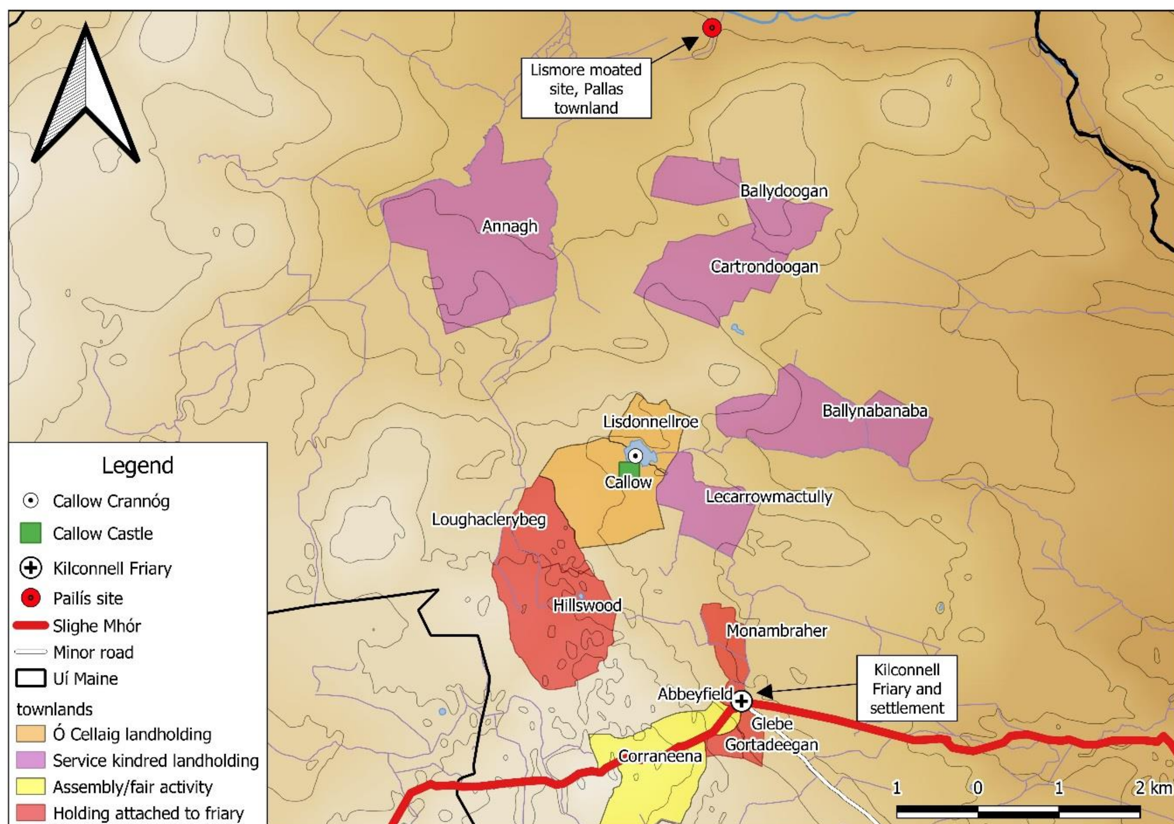


Figure 5.28 – Summary of the Callow Lough and Kilconnell case study, with principal locations outlined, including Lismore moated site, which was discussed above (see 4.6).

The earliest reference to Ó Cellaig settlement at Kilconnell is recorded in 1244, which may have actually been located at Callow Lough. The Callow Lough *cenn áit* seems to have reached its zenith as a place of importance to the Uí Chellaig from the second half of the fourteenth century onwards, during which time the ecclesiastical hub of the district, the Franciscan Friary, was established and was extensively patronised. This is also the period during which the secular focal point of the landscape, Callow Lough, was either established or possibly re-established from a thirteenth century or earlier origin. Prominent service kindreds of the newly ascendant Ó Cellaig lords acquired landholdings, effectively creating a ring of minor families around Callow Lough itself. This small lake and its immediate surrounds retain a medieval archaeology indicative, by comparison with other Gaelic territories, of high-status settlement and organisation. The pairing of the substantial high-cairn *crannóg* with possibly an undefended dry-land service site on the shore to its south, which arguably had a sheltered harbour beside it, continued to be lived in by branches of the Uí Chellaig until the late-sixteenth century (Fig. 5.24). As noted, the evidence at present suggests that a substantial promontory-

fort like enclosure was built enclosing the dry-land service site in 1353 by Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig. This upgrading of the site at Callow Lough was accompanied by the foundation of arguably one of the finest late-medieval friaries in Connacht at nearby Kilconnell (Leask 1960, III, 167-8). At a later stage, probably in the first half of the fifteenth century on analogy with elsewhere, but apparently before 1475, a tower house castle was built on the presumed site of the dry-land service site within the mid-fourteenth-century promontory fort or *bódhún*. Presumably this tower house was surrounded by agricultural and administrative buildings of timber or post-and-wattle (Cairns 1987, 24; O'Conor 1998, 33). If the tower house marked the site of the earlier dry-land service site associated with the *crannóg*, timber buildings associated with farming and local administration existed here before the building of the tower house and the earlier mid-fourteenth century *bódhún.*

It is interesting that cartographers took care in the late sixteenth and very early seventeenth century to depict the *crannóg* and Callow Lough on the various maps of the period (see 5.3.2.1). This suggests that perhaps it continued to be occupied in some way and served a prominent role in the Callow landscape right up to the end of the later medieval period, long after the tower house was built and became the main Ó Cellaig residence in this area. O'Conor (2018) has argued that the continued occupation of *crannóga* beyond the early medieval period right down to just beyond 1600 was not due to an innate conservatism in later medieval Gaelic Ireland. Instead, he suggested that one of the cultural practices of Gaelic society during the latter period was the deliberate use by the elite of anachronisms and references to the past in order to provide political power and social prestige in the present. In the present context, he argued that one of the functions of *crannóga* during the later medieval period was for them to act as living 'theatres' for a display of lordly power that concentrated on referencing the past, particularly the ancestral past (O'Conor 2018, 151-66). Logue (2018, 288-92) has shown that while Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, built a tower house at his *cenn áit* of Dungannon with the most modern internal features then seen in the English Pale, he also maintained an earlier *crannóg*, and used it to entertain and feast his vassal Gaelic lords in the traditional Irish manner as *Ó Néill Mór*, making this a clear example of an immensely powerful Elizabethan lord, albeit of native origin, using the past and its physical trappings to reinforce his position at a local level in Ulster. It is possible that the *crannóg* on Callow Lough continued to function in a politically and socially important way like this, despite the tower house on the lake's shore acting as the main Ó Cellaig residence and administrative centre in the area from the early fifteenth century onwards.

5.4 – Case Study: Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway

The final case study relating to lakeland elite settlement in later medieval Uí Maine concerns a lake located in close vicinity to another Ó Cellaig lordly centre at Athleague, which will be dealt with in Chapter 6. Ballaghdacker – *Baile Locha Deacair* (the settlement of the lake of Deacair), also known as Hollygrove Lake, possesses an approximate area of 20.2ha or 0.202km², and is located close to the traditional northern boundary of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine. By the fifteenth century, the area formed part of the *oireacht* of Túath Átha Liaig (Fig. 5.29). Ballaghdacker Lough is the setting for the kidnap, imprisonment and murder of Áed Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, at the hand of the Uí Chellaig in 1356 (see 2.4), and the archaeological remains coupled with the historical references point to it having been a *cenn áit* of the Uí Chellaig in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at least.

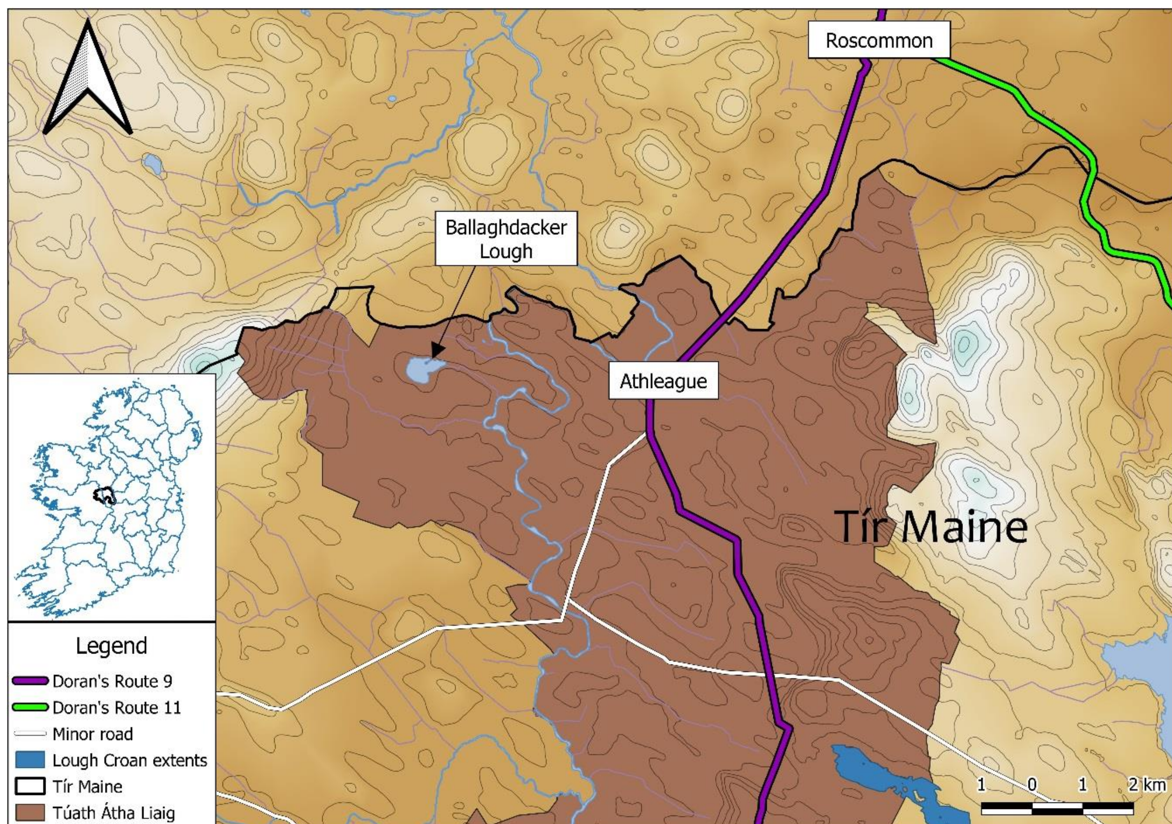


Figure 5.29 – Location of Ballaghdacker Lough in the oireacht *of* Túath Átha Liaig*, close to the northern boundary of the* trícha cét *of Tír Maine. Boundaries of these territories in* c. 1400*, defined after Nicholls (1969) and MacCotter (2014).*

5.4.1 – The Toponymy and History of Ballaghdacker Lough and Environs

Ballaghdacker Lough and its shoreline are spread across the three townlands of Easterfield or Cornacask – *Corr na Cásca* (Easter Hill?) to the north, Hollygrove – *Garrán an Chuilinn* to the south, and Ballaghdacker itself to the east. The townland immediately to the north of

Easterfield is called Farranykelly – *Farann Uí Chellaig* (Ó Cellaig's land), which is plainly a statement of Ó Cellaig landownership in what was a contested border area (see 3.3). The wider environment surrounding the lake is interesting, as land immediately to the west and south is dominated by large tracts of bogland and wooded areas (see 3.2.2), meaning that any settlement that surrounded the lake would have benefitted considerably from the natural defensibility that the landscape provided. Ballaghdacker Lough retains two *crannóga* within its limits, Sally Island (GA020-011-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 31) and Stony Island (GA020-001-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 29).

Aside from the entry in 1356, Ballaghdacker Lough is also recorded in historical sources in the fifteenth century. *Leabhar Ua Maine* provides an entry for the year 1424 which could be interpreted as referring to Ballaghdacker Lough (see 2.6). The reference to *Móinín na hAibhle Léithe* at *Loch an Dúin* has been translated as 'the little bogland of the grey spark or thunderbolt 'at' the lake of the fortress'.[44] This has been interpreted as being at or near Ballaghdacker Lough (Nicholls 1969, 52).

Interestingly, the use of *liath* – grey, in the place-name is also seen at an adjacent townland to Ballaghdacker Lough, Monasternalea or Abbeygrey – *Mainistir na Liath* (Abbeygrey or Abbey of the grey men/monks/friars? – the Grey Friars was an alternative name for the Franciscans in medieval Europe (Ó Clabaigh 2012, 119). This could be a place-name descriptor used to characterise a feature or features in this landscape at large, or it could relate to the fact that the lands of Abbeygrey were attached to an unidentified monastery or friary. Monasternalea or Abbeygrey townland possesses the remains of a large ecclesiastical enclosure, an ecclesiastical site, graveyard (GA033-050001-; GA033-050002-; GA033-050004-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 324) and bullaun stone (GA033-050003-), and this collection of seemingly early medieval archaeological remains are located 2.2km to the southwest of the lake (Pl. 5.13). Gwynn and Hadcock suggested an identification of Abbeygrey with a 1574 record to a list of monasteries still in existence in Galway, under the name of *Kilmore-ne-togher* but could not assign it to a particular religious order (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 363). However, it is possible, as the place-name suggests, that this site was in some way connected to the Franciscans or more likely Cistercians during the later medieval period, albeit having its origins in early medieval times.[45]

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[44] Ó Muraíle, N. pers. comm. January 2018.
[45] Ó Clabaigh, C. pers. comm. November 2020.

Plate 5.13 – Oblique aerial photography of Abbeygrey religious foundation. CUCAP no.: BDV036, Photo date: 1970-07-20. This image shows the large ecclesiastical enclosure at Abbeygrey, indicative of its origins as an early medieval church site (Image courtesy of Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography).

The second element in the place-name is *Loch an Dúin* – 'the lake of the fortress', and the presence of the two *crannóga* on Ballaghdacker Lough means that one or both of these sites are likely to be the physical remains described as fortified in the fifteenth-century *Leabhar Ua Maine*.

Interestingly, analysis of the early fifteenth-century *Leabhar Breac* has yielded a likely identification not just of the scribe of this manuscript, one Murchad Ó Cuindlis (Ó Concheanainn 1973, 67), but information contained in a scribal note or memorandum in the

Leabhar Breac also identifies the landholdings of the Ó Cuindlis learned family. The memorandum indicates that the Ó Cuindlis landholdings were consistent with *Inisfarannan* (now Stony Island *crannóg*), part of Ballaghdacker townland, *Corrbachalla* (Curraghbaghla townland) and *Cluain Canann* (Clooncannon townland) (Ó Concheanainn 1973, 66). *Cluain Canann* translates to the 'the meadow of the *cana* [referring to a relatively junior grade of poet]'. The *cano* was a grade of poet that in the early medieval period had an honour price of seven *sét*s, the equivalent of three and a half milch cows (Kelly 2016b, 87). Given the presence of the Ó Cuindlis learned family in this district, it may not be coincidental that the townland name retains an element associated with learned kindreds.

5.4.2 – The Archaeology of the Ballaghdacker Lough **cenn áit**

The present writer believes that the extent of the historical evidence clarifies that the Ó Cuindlis learned kindred resided at Ballaghdacker Lough in the later medieval period, while contemporaneously, the Ó Cellaig lords utilised Athleague and Ballaghdacker Lough as part of their *cenn áit* in this area. As a result, it is important to observe the presumed route of communication between Athleague and the lake. Today, overland access between Athleague and Ballaghdacker is provided via the R362 road, crossing the River Suck over Rookwood Bridge. This route would have historically followed broadly the same course as survives today. However, a nineteenth-century landed estate, Corra More House, sits between Athleague and the bridge at Rookwood, and as a result, the R362 is directed so as to avoid the lands that immediately surround the estate. The present writer believes that a more direct route likely once existed between Athleague and Ballaghdacker, however no evidence survives to support this.

By contrast, navigation across the River Suck at this point seems to be well-established. Rookwood townland refers to another small landed estate in the area, Rookwood House, which was located on the western side of the river. However, Rookwood is known by an alternative, earlier name, Bellagad. Gaelicised as *Béal Átha Gad* – 'the mouth of the ford of the withies', this informs us that this townland historically contained a fording place, possibly with some form of interwoven willow structure that aided crossing the river, most likely at the present bridge, or in very close proximity.

The archaeology on and around Ballaghdacker Lough seems to be concentrated along the eastern range of the lake. Aside from the two *crannóga* on the lake itself, in Easterfield or Cornacask townland, there is a subcircular univallate ringfort with internal dimensions of

36.8m east/west by 24.2m north/south, located 50m to the northeast of the lake (GA020-006-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 99; Fig. 5.31). To the east, in Coolaspaddaun townland, there are the ruined remains of a church and graveyard of indeterminate date, known in the cartographic sources as Carrigeen Church (GA020-002-; GA020-002001-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 305). The present writer commissioned an aerial survey over Ballaghdacker Lough, and the resulting DEM has uncovered a possible additional archaeological site, located 240m to the east of the recorded ringfort. It appears on the DEM (E 578949; N 757957) as a circular earthen feature, possibly a univallate ringfort, and has a diameter of *c.*45m (Fig. 5.30).

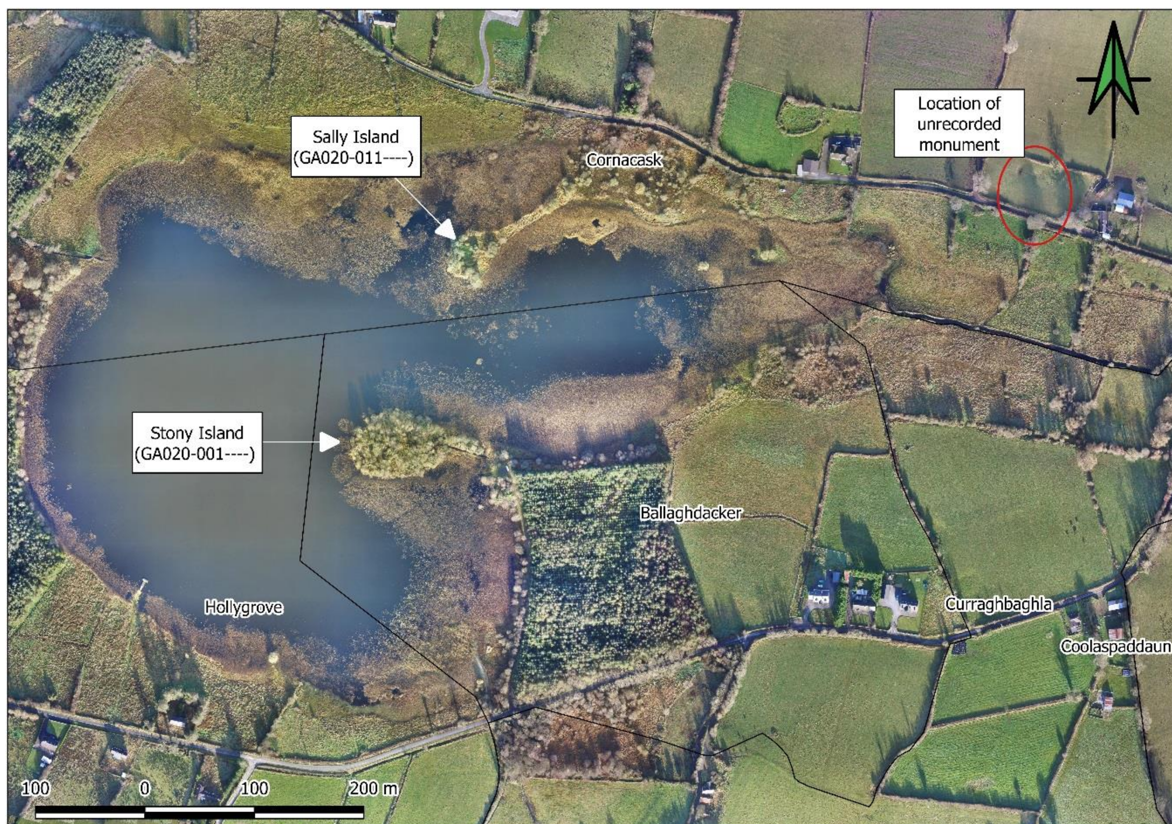

Figure 5.30 – Orthophotograph of Ballaghdacker Lough and its environs, Co. Galway. Sally Island and the Cornacask univallate ringfort are located to the north and northeast of the lake, while Stony Island serves as the larger of the two crannóga*, located close to the eastern shore of the lake (Data courtesy of Western Aerial Survey).*

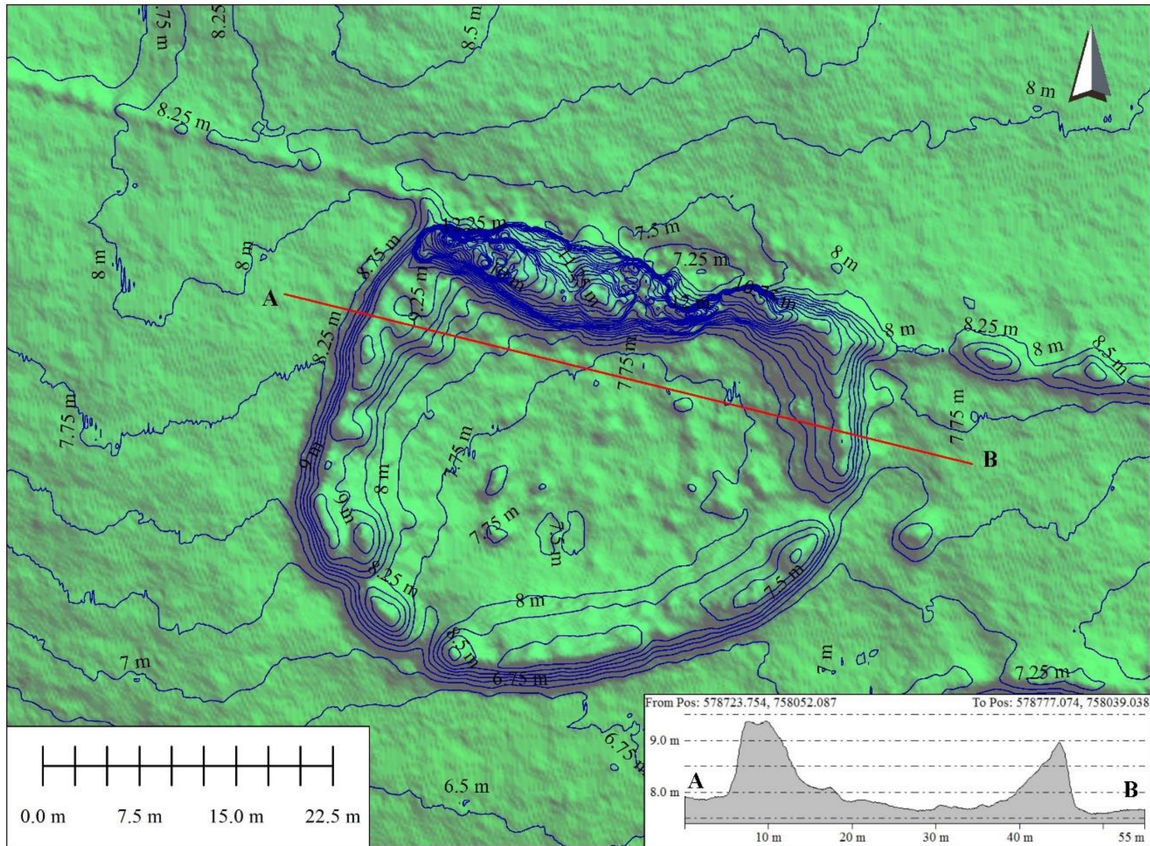

Figure 5.31 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of Cornacask ringfort (GA020-006-), a possible dry-land site linked to the crannóg *of Sally Island, located 320m to its southwest (Data source: Western Aerial Survey).*

The present writer's attention is drawn to Ballaghdacker townland by virtue of the 1356 reference to the location, the reference to *Inisfarannan* in the *Leabhar Breac* memorandum, as well as the settlement activity implied by the place-name itself. *Baile Locha Deacair* indicates that the townland was a focal point for habitation in the medieval past. However, aside from the *crannóg*, no recorded archaeological evidence survives in the townland that can be equated with the place-name. The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map is the only source to confirm settlement in the townland where it does not occur today, with a cluster of houses marked on the edge of what was effectively the turlough lands approaching the lakeshore as it was in the nineteenth century. Much of this area is today composed of planted commercial forestry (see Fig. 5.30), which may hide the remnants of any dry-land site connected with the nearby *crannóg* of Stony Island.

5.4.2.1 –The Levelled Moated Site at Ballaghdacker Lough

However, careful study of the OSi aerial premium data on the GeoHive database reveals a rectangular cropmark that bears a more than passing comparison to the morphology of a moated

site (see 4.6). The sub-rectangular feature measures *c*.57m east/west by *c*.33m north/south, with a possible entrance located on its eastern side. It appears to possess an external ditch and a corresponding internal bank, visible as contrasting darker and lighter colouration evident in the aerial photograph. It is surrounded by a linear feature to its north, likely the remnants of a field boundary, as well as a faint curved element to its west. This may mark the former shoreline of the lake, but it is possible that it is evidence that the moated site was created out of an earlier ringfort (O'Conor and Finan 2018, 116-9, 123-4). Due to what seems to be the repeated ploughing of the field, the site (ITM 578703; 757736) is barely discernible on the DEM (Fig. 5.32). The presence of a potential moated site in such close vicinity, 320m to the east, of a historically-attested *crannóg* at Ballaghdacker Lough indicates a more complex history of settlement in the townland then had previously been known.

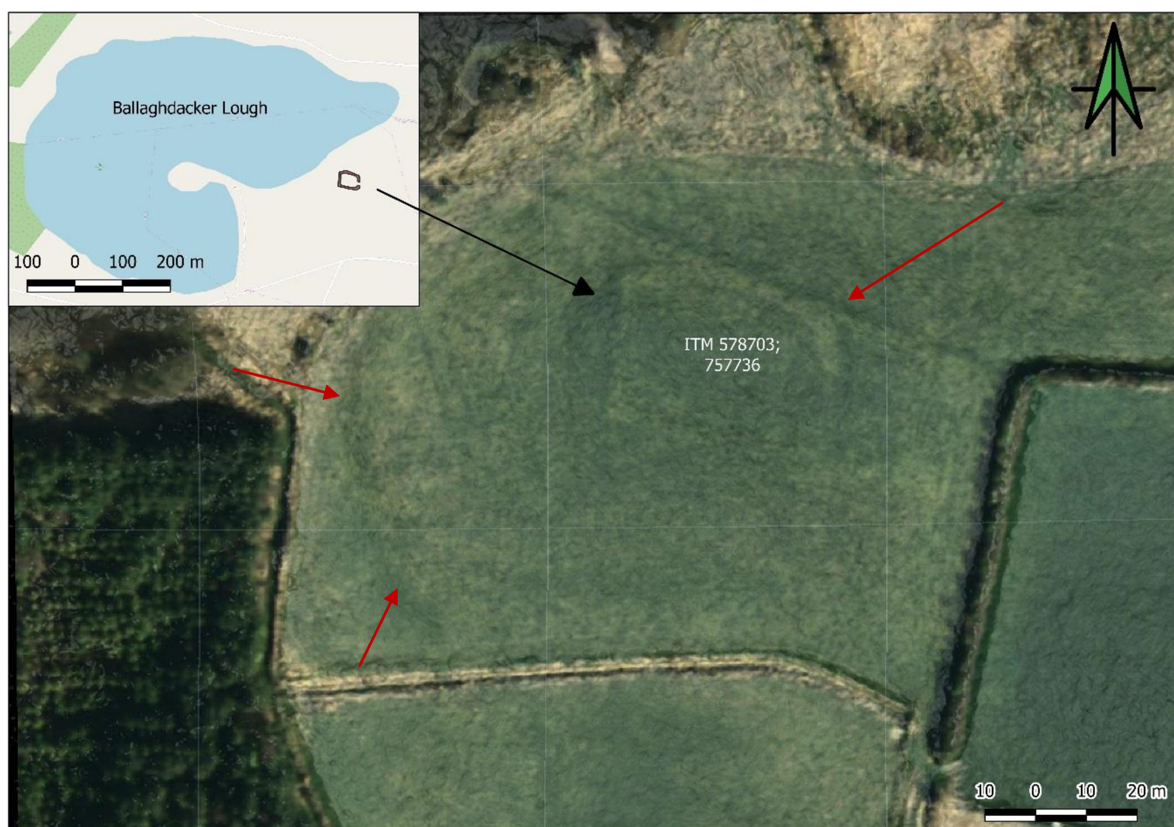

Figure 5.32 – The possible moated site on the eastern shore of Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway. The feature is only discernible from the Geohive Aerial Premium database, which in this image has a DEM topographical model draped over it. The proposed field boundary and the curved feature are marked with red arrows (Topographical data courtesy of Western Aerial Survey).

In some respects, however, it is unsurprising that there is evidence for a moated site at such a close remove from the *crannóg*. As noted, dry-land service sites, either undefended or in the form of ringforts or moated sites, housing agricultural and administrative buildings (and possibly some domestic ones, such as halls), were associated with many *crannóga* (see 5.2.1;

5.3.3.2). Presumably this levelled moated site functioned as the dry-land service site associated with Stony Island *crannóg*.

5.4.2.2 **– Inisfarannan –** ***Stony Island*** **crannóg**

The *crannóg* known as Stony Island is today accessible thanks to a modern timber jetty linking it to the shoreline of the lake, provided for the purpose of angling on the island by Inland Fisheries Ireland. This structure creates an assumption that the *crannóg* may always have been accessible via some form of causeway, however, the nineteenth-century cartographic sources, particularly the Ordnance Survey Twenty Five-Inch and Cassini maps, indicate that Stony Island was once surrounded by water, with no evidence of overland access. The earliest available cartographic source to depict Ballaghdacker Lough was Richard Griffith's early nineteenth-century Bog Commission Maps (Griffths 1809-1814). This depicts a large island, disconnected from the shore, situated in the centre of the lake (Fig. 6.13) as well as a substantial peninsular feature jutting into what appears to be wetland. Stony Island is represented by the peninsular feature, due to its location, and that at the time of Griffith's recording the lake levels had receded significantly enough due to drainage actions to expose the shallower lakebed to the eastern side of the lake. This is certainly not how Ballaghdacker Lough presents itself today (Pl. 5.14).

Plate 5.14 – Stony Island, as viewed from the eastern shore of Ballaghdacker Lough. The modern access to the crannóg *is provided by the jetty on the right of the image. The* crannóg *itself is heavily overgrown, but the southern end of it is visible to the left of this image (Author's photograph).*

The *crannóg* itself is oval-shaped and measures 90m east/west by 60m north/south. It is apparently mainly composed of a huge dump of stones. Given its size, the largest example of a *crannóg* in the entire study area, it is possible that the artificial construction is based upon a natural rocky core, like the *crannóg* on Inchiquin Lough, Co. Clare and the Rock of Lough Cé (O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo Romo 2010, 21-2). The *crannóg* is heavily overgrown but its interior is raised 2m above the present level of the lake (Fig. 5.33).

Figure 5.33 – Plan of Stony Island crannóg *and levelled possible moated site, both located within the limits of Ballaghdacker townland. The proximity of the two monuments would strongly suggest linked use, and this discrete area of moated site and* crannóg *is likely to have served as the focal point of the Ó Cuindlis learned family landholdings at the centre of their lands around Ballaghdacker Lough. (Image courtesy of Western Aerial Survey)*

However, evidence of the construction of the *crannóg* is apparent with the large square boulders that retain the entirety of the perimeter of the island. The internal space is composed primarily of small stones and rubble, covered with a layer of earth. This combination of stone construction and raised interior would allow it to be described as a high-cairn *crannóg*, like the example on Callow Lough, discussed above, suggesting that the final phases of occupation on it were later medieval in date, as indeed the historical and literary evidence also suggests (see 4.4).

5.4.2.3 – Loch an Dúin – *Sally Island* crannóg

As noted, there is a second *crannóg* located on Ballaghdacker Lough, some 170m to the north of Stony Island. Known as Sally Island (Pl. 5.15), the *crannóg* platform is 40m in diameter above the water level, with an inner raised platform located centrally on the site that measures 28m in diameter. The platform survives to a maximum height of *c.*1.75m over the present surface of the lake, which would enable the categorisation of the island as a high-cairn *crannóg* (see 4.4). The DEM of the lake hints at a low earthen perimeter (h: *c.*0.5m; w: *c.*3m)

surrounding this central area, which may be the degraded remains of dwarf walls in support of what would have been a substantial timber building which would have stood in the interior of the *crannóg*. The *crannóg* is connected to the shore by a very definite, apparently artificial causeway. The causeway measures *c.*78m from where it leaves the northern shoreline of the lake, until it reaches Sally Island, while its average width is *c.*6-7m. It is demarcated by a low berm on either side, presumably serving to keep the lake waters at bay. This berm continues around the perimeter of the *crannóg* itself, and survives to *c.*1m in height, and *c.*3m in width (Fig. 5.34). This combination of high-cairn morphology, causeway, as well as the relative complexity of the site would strongly indicate that this monument was constructed or at least modified and reoccupied during the later medieval period, corresponding with the historical entries associating the lake with the Uí Chellaig.

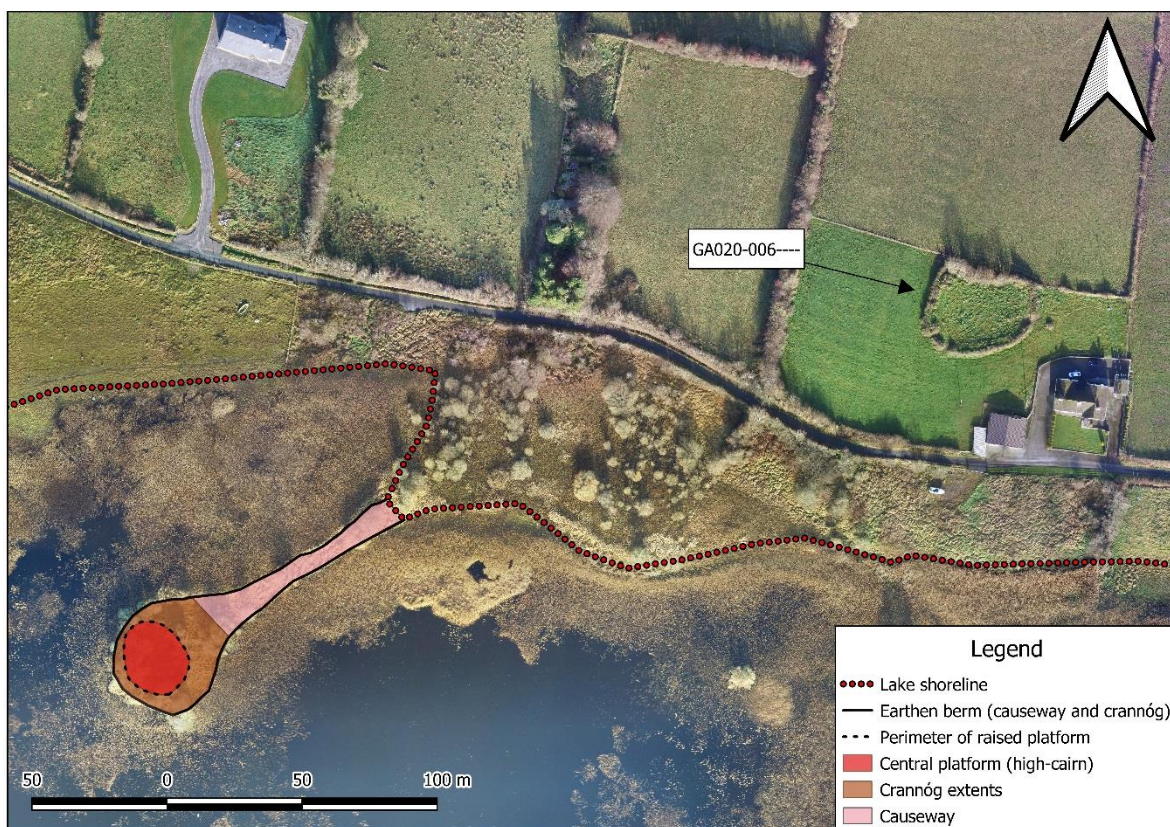

Figure 5.34 – Plan of Sally Island crannóg*, with a potential dry-land service site evident 320m to the northeast. Both located within Cornacask townland on the northern shore of Ballaghdacker Lough (Image courtesy of Western Aerial Survey).*

Sally Island may therefore be the physical remains of the Ó Cellaig residence on the lake known as *Loch an Dúin*. It is possible that the subcircular ringfort (GA020-006-), located 320m to the northeast in the same townland, served as a dry-land service site connected to the *crannóg*, as an administrative and agricultural centre linked to the elite residence (see 5.2.1; 5.3.3.2).

Plate 5.15 – Sally Island, as viewed from the north-western perimeter of Stony Island (Author's photograph)

5.4.3 – The Cultural Landscape of Ballaghdacker Lough

The earlier sections of this case study make it apparent that the Uí Chellaig utilised this lakeland environment as one of their lordly centres in Tír Maine, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. While evidence for the cultural landscape surrounding this lacustrine *cenn áit* is not as strong as the previous case studies discussed in this chapter, the presence of a prominent learned kindred landholding on this lake is noteworthy.

5.4.3.1 – Service Kindred Landholdings at Ballaghdacker Lough

The most likely location for the Ó Cuindlis residence corresponds with the *crannóg* of Stony Island, the physical manifestation of the historically-attested *Inisfarannan*, particularly as neither Curraghbaghla nor Clooncannon possess any recorded archaeology. Resultantly, it seems that Ballaghdacker Lough served as a focal point for a learned kindred landholding, as well as acting as part of an Ó Cellaig *cenn áit.* Potential parallels for the contemporaneous occupancy of more than one *crannóg* in a lakeland setting in later medieval Gaelic Ireland is seen at Ardakillin Lough, Co. Roscommon in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and

Bartlett depicts two *crannóga* occupied simultaneously in Co. Monaghan in *c.*1602 (Bartlett 1602; Brady and O'Conor 2005, 134). There is even a possibility that this also occurred in the study area, at Lough Croan, as outlined above (see 5.2).

The Ó Cuindlis seem to have had strong links with the Mac Aodhagáin legal lineage, a prominent family of *brehons* who provided services to a number of later medieval Irish lords, not least the Uí Chonchobair (O'Daly and O'Donovan 1853, 346-7). The Meic Aodhagáin were originally a family of Soghain origin, and *Nósa Ua Maine* records 'Clann Aedhagain' as being a tributary family of the Uí Chellaig (*Nósa*, 533), that is, until they became *ollamhain* or chief legal family to the lords of Uí Maine (Breatnach 1983, 63-4). There is a speculative location for a landholding associated with the high medieval Mac Aodhagáin in Tír Maine, consistent with the name of a divided townland known as Lissyegan Hodson and Mahon – *Lios Mhic/Uí Aogáin* (Meic Aodhagáin's fort). The argument for Lissyegan being a landholding of the Meic Aodhagáin is strengthened by its closeness, 3.5km distant to the northeast, from the Ó Cellaig settlement of Ahascragh – *Áth Eascrach Cuan*, a location associated with Donnchad Muimnech Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine (see 2.4.4). Lissyegan (Hodson) townland possesses the degraded remains of two ringforts (GA061-106-; GA061-107-).

Murchad Ó Cuindlis scribed the *Leabhar Ruadh Muimhneach*, which does not survive (Walsh 1947, 252), and the *Leabhar Breac*, a manuscript which we know was in the keeping of the Meic Aodhagáin from at least as early as the sixteenth century at their legal school of *Dún Daighre* (Duniry, Leitrim Barony, Co. Galway), while also being scribed for a time in close proximity to another Mac Aodhagáin school at *Cluain Leathan* (possibly Ballymacegan or Kiltyroe townland) near Lorrha, Co. Tipperary (Ó Concheanainn 1973, 65; Fletcher 2001, 53). Secondly, the Mac Aodhagáin maintained another legal school at Park (Park West and Park East townlands), Co. Galway (Costello 1940), 19km to the west of Ballaghdacker Lough, strengthening the possibility that the two learned families could have maintained regular contact.

Later in the century (1449), one Cornelius Ó Cuindlis was transferred by the papal instruction of Nicholas V, from the bishopric of Emly, to become bishop of Clonfert (*Clonfert*, 90-1), and in 1453, Cornelius was instructed by Nicholas V to licence the foundation of three to four new Franciscan friaries in the province of Tuam. Ryan pointed out that the diocese of Clonfert led the early fifteenth-century Observant reform movement in the religious orders (Ryan 2013, 67-8), and this was undertaken, with the support, or active involvement of the Uí Chellaig lords of

the area (Smith 2014). Given that Kilconnell Friary looms so large as a statement of Ó Cellaig wealth and authority in this period (3.5.5; 5.3.4.3), it is likely that the lords of Uí Maine would have had a role in this revival in the orders in the region more generally also.

While the Ó Cuindlis historians do not seem to have any visibly identifiable connections with the Uí Chellaig lords in the early-fifteenth century, they were plainly a prominent player in the secular and ecclesiastical spheres of the area. The lack of direct written evidence does not discount the fact that this prominent learned family resided and operated in such close quarters to the Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* at Ballaghdacker Lough and Athleague, and as a result, were likely pressed in to the service of these lords in the process. This service may be similar to that provided by the Ó Doibhlin service family at their landholding surrounding *Loch na Craoibhe* (Stewartstown Lough, Co. Tyrone). The Ó Doibhlin landholding included a *crannóg* on the lake, and there is evidence to suggest that their Ó Neill lords liked to reside at *crannóg* sites, such as *An Chraobh*, to claim hospitality from their service families, during the winter period (Logue and Ó Doibhlin 2020, 165-9).

The presumed Ó Cuindlis residence at Stony Island indicates that activity on Ballaghdacker Lough was shared between this learned kindred and the Ó Cellaig lords of the area. As a result, it is safe to suggest that the other *crannóg* on the lake, Sally Island, must be identifiable with the 1356 annalistic entry, as well as the site known in *Leabhar Ua Maine* as *Loch an Dúin.*

5.4.4 – Summary of the Ballaghdacker Lough **cenn áit**

The historical evidence, such as it is, suggests that the Ó Cuindlis learned family had their residence on Stony Island *crannóg*. This *crannóg* seems to have had a dry-land service site associated with it in the form of a moated site (see 5.4.2.1). The historical evidence also suggests that the Uí Chellaig lords had a residence here in the form of a *crannóg* during the fourteenth and fifteenth century at least. This was also used by them as a prison for important prisoners, which of course was also one of the functions of defended elite residences throughout later medieval Europe at this time (e.g. King 1988, 5). Apart from the Ó Cuindlis family, other service families, such as the Uí Dubhagáin and possibly the Uí Chobhtaigh, seem to have had their holdings in the wider vicinity surrounding the lough (Fig. 5.35; see 4.7; 5.2.3.2). The Ó Cellaig *crannóg* of *Loch an Dúin* might have been used by the lords of Uí Maine during the period when they were annually entertained by the Ó Cuindlis, as part of an annual tribute, and also as a base from which to farm their lands at nearby Farranykelly.

The presence of two substantial *crannóga*, as well as a possible moated site on the shore of the lake, corroborate the presence of later medieval lordly activity in this environment, while its close proximity to Athleague advocates for a shared use of the two locations for the purpose of elite Uí Chellaig settlement, depending to the circumstances. Ballaghdacker Lough is likely to have served the more private, exclusive, and hospitality-centred needs of Gaelic lordship, considering its relative remoteness from the public sphere and settlement of Athleague. Much of the environment to the west of the lake is composed of large pockets of bogland, which would have been a significant obstacle to approach from the west, as well as providing accessible hunting grounds, and was a suitably safe and separate location for lordly lodging and displays of entertainment.

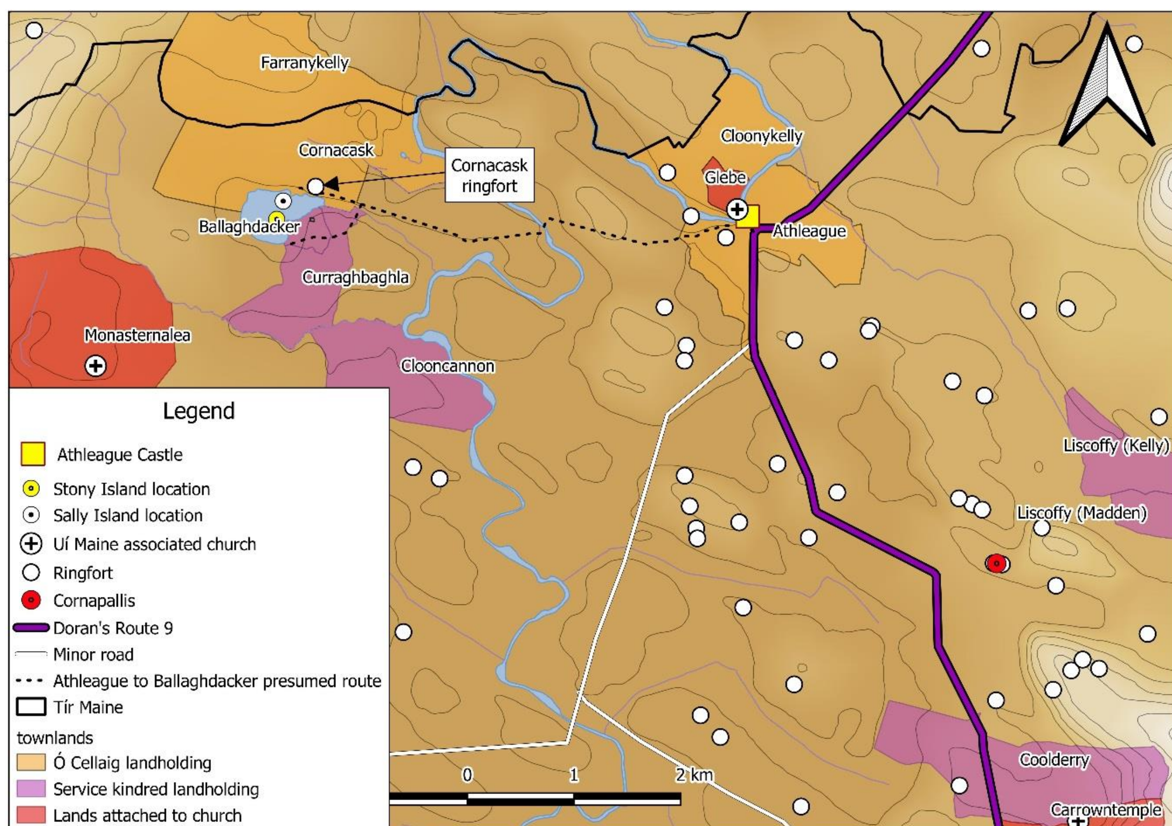

Figure 5.35 – Summary of the Athleague & Ballaghdacker Lough case study, with principal locations outlined, including Cornapallis páilís *site, discussed earlier (see 4.6).*

5.5 – Conclusions

What is clear from these case studies is that, despite the lack of previous research into this aspect of later medieval settlement practice in the study area, the evidence from a multitude of sources strongly indicates that the lords of Uí Maine actively sought to locate themselves in lacustrine settings. This is despite the fact that there are so few lakes to be found in the study

area. The *crannóg*, as a settlement form, served as a routine focal point of these lordly centres, indicating, once more, that these artificial islands are not a monument type exclusive to the early medieval period, but as demonstrated here, continued to be used into the late medieval period, with evidence to support this to be found in all three case studies.

The three *cenn áiteanna* of this chapter share some similarities in their organisation. In every case, service kindreds associated with the Uí Chellaig were to be found in relatively close proximity to the lordly centre, and in the case of Callow Lough particularly, the landholdings of the learned families encircled the *cenn áit.* Despite the perceived remoteness of the three locations, all were served by recognised later medieval routeways, and in two cases, the focal point was close to, but at a slight remove from, a centre of settlement and presumed trade. Religious foundations are also to be found within these landscapes, to serve the spiritual needs of the elite and ordinary people of the area (see 5.2.3.1; 5.3.4.3; 5.4.1; 5.4.2).

In terms of the physical manifestation of these *cenn áiteanna*, it is notable that there is no evidence at any of these sites for pre-tower house castles, corroborating the argument borne out earlier (see 4.2). Instead, elite residence in the pre-tower house period corresponded with the *crannóg* (see 5.2.1; 5.2.2; 5.3.3.1; 5.4.2.2; 5.4.2.3), coupled with a dry-land service site, routinely in the form of a ringfort (see 5.2.1; 5.4.2), moated site (see 5.4.2.1), or, in the case of Callow Lough, a *bódhún* (see 5.3.3.2). More than this, routinely the only monument type to be found in the landholdings of the learned families of the case study areas is the ringfort, albeit in the case of the Ó Cuindlis, their place of residence is actually the substantial *crannóg* known as *Inisfarannan*. This hints that some, if not all, of these ringfort settlement sites, traditionally regarded as a monument of early medieval date, continued to be occupied into the later medieval period, as the excavations at Loughbown and Mackney in the study area also show (see 4.3.1).

The continuity of elite habitation in these three case studies from the high medieval period to the late medieval period is demonstrated by the evidence for the Ó Cellaig building tower houses at Lough Croan (Turrock Castle), Callow Lough (Callow Castle) and Ballaghdacker Lough (nearby Athleague Castle). This shows that these places retained an importance to the Uí Chellaig as lordly centres throughout the period under study.

Finally, this chapter has highlighted the place which Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig inhabits in the fortunes of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine, and his impact is seen, both historically and archaeologically, at all three lordly centres.

Chapter 6 – Riverine Elite Settlement in Later Medieval Uí Maine

6.1 – Introduction

One of the major findings of the present research indicates that the Uí Chellaig elites sought to site their lordly centres at watery locations. This has been outlined in part in Chapter 5, but the pattern continues to be seen in this chapter, with what can be broadly defined as elite Uí Chellaig settlement along rivers as the focus. Certainly, the location of *cenn áiteanna* on the navigable waterways of the lordship has a more immediately practical purpose than what could be seen at the lacustrine sites. In this chapter, research relating to four Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna*, Athlone, Galey Bay, Athleague and Mote, Co. Roscommon, will be outlined, and their character interpreted.

6.2 – Case Study: An Early Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* at Athlone

Plate 6.1 – Athlone Castle (left of bridge), on the western bank of the River Shannon. (Image courtesy of Athlone Castle Visitor Experience)

Chronologically speaking, the first identifiable Ó Cellaig lordly centre discussed in this chapter is to be found at Athlone. While Athlone has served as a principal location within wider medieval politics from at least as early as the establishment by Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair of a wooden bridge and *caistél* fortification there in the early twelfth century (*AFM s.a.* 1120,

1129; Sherlock 2016, 4-5), he was not the first on the historical record to recognise the value of this ford across the River Shannon. Archaeological evidence from Athlone and its near vicinity record settlement at and near the ford from at least as far back as the Neolithic period, as well as a significant artefactual assemblage surviving for the Bronze Age. Five decorated Early Christian grave slabs, dating from the mid-eighth to the tenth centuries, also suggest an undocumented early medieval ecclesiastical site on the eastern bank of the river (Murtagh 2000, 8-11; Sherlock 2016, 3-5).

For the particular purposes of this research, it is interesting to note that there is an early claim for an Ó Cellaig stronghold at Athlone also, one which precedes the Ó Conchobair control over the ford and the surrounding area. The composition of an eleventh-century poem has been attributed to Muirchertach Mac Líacc for one of his patrons, Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig (d. 1014), king of Uí Maine (see 2.2). This praise poem which is entitled *Samhoin so, sodham go Tadg*, records that Tadg Mór had a residence at Athlone (Meyer 1912, 222-3).[46]

The information in this poem also implies that travel to Athlone is undertaken by riverine transport, meaning that in this case, Ó Cellaig's residence there is likely to have been close to the ford (*Ibid.*). The evidence from the poem suggests that Tadg Mór Ó Cellaig, the powerful eleventh-century king of Uí Maine and ally of Brian Boru, controlled the ford of Athlone and possessed a strategically-positioned stronghold at this point of the River Shannon also. It is possible to argue that the site for such a stronghold may have remained fixed through time, meaning that this fortification, whatever form it took, was later modified by Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair in the twelfth century. Despite there being no surviving physical evidence to support this claim, some scholars have argued that these pre-Norman, twelfth-century *caislen*, *caistel* and *caisdeoil* sites were motte and bailey castles (Barry 2007; O'Keeffe 2019; see 4.2.1). However, using evidence from fieldwork, radiocarbon dates and the historical sources, it has been argued that while these *caislen*, *caisdeoil* and *caistel*, like Athlone, while admittedly much more substantial than previous structures, may have obtained their architectural form from a fusion of the native ringfort, *crannóg* and, in particular, the cashel tradition (Naessens and O'Conor 2012; Sherlock 2016, 19; see 4.2.1).

[46] Translation provided by Colmán Ó Raghallaigh, 19th September 2019

Moving into the later medievael period, an early fourteenth-century poem *Uasal an síol Síol Ceallaigh*, written by Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin in praise of another Tadg Ó Cellaig (r. 1315-16), refers to him as the 'lord of Athlone' (Hoyne Forthcoming, 24).

Progressing into the fifteenth century, one example of the continued increase in power of the Uí Chellaig at the geographical limits of their territory (see 2.5) culminated in their capture of Athlone Castle, firstly in 1433 for a short period (*AC*), followed by a presumed capture and then occupation of Athlone Castle in 1455 (*AFM*). It is suggested that the Uí Chellaig were still in possession of Athlone Castle in 1490, when it is finally recovered by the Dillons (*AFM*; Murtagh 2000, 27; Sherlock 2016, 19). Despite this possible thirty-five year occupation by the Uí Chellaig of Athlone Castle, there is no available evidence to suggest that they made any substantial changes or modifications to the stronghold in that time (Sherlock 2016, 37, 44). This is a trend that has been observed at a number of Anglo-Norman castles captured by Gaelic Irish lords from the later fourteenth century and occupied by them down to the later sixteenth and seventeenth century (O'Conor 2007, 199-201; Murphy and O'Conor 2008, 26-8; Logue 2016).

In conclusion, therefore, the available evidence suggests that the possible Ó Cellaig residence that existed at Athlone in the eleventh and early twelfth century was some sort of quite defensive-looking ringfort or cashel (it is unlikely that a *crannóg* would have been built at Athlone as such monuments are rarely built in rivers, due to their fast-flowing nature and their tendency to flood in winter). This fortification at Athlone may have been rebuilt and modified by Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair in 1129. If, as seems possible, the Uí Chellaig lords of Uí Maine occupied Athlone for a period in the early fourteenth century, they would have resided in Athlone Castle when there. The castle at that stage and the accommodation then on offer within it would have consisted of an early-thirteenth century polygonal-shaped great tower set within an inner or upper ward, which was itself defined by a polygonal-shaped masonry-built curtain wall of similar date, which had square or rectangular towers along its length. A lower or outer ward, replete with a twin-towered gatehouse, was added in the late-thirteenth century to the upper ward. It is felt that timber residential and administrative buildings lay within this lower or outer ward (Sherlock 2016, 33-7). Control of the Shannon and its famous ford, must have been one of the reasons why the Uí Chellaig lords tried to control Athlone at times (*Ibid*., 3). Certainly there is archaeological and historical evidence from across medieval Europe to suggest that local princes and lords placed their fortified residences and castles beside rivers and fords to control and take economic advantage of the trade that took place along these

waterways (e.g. Aarts 2016). There are references in the surviving sources and some field evidence for the Anglo-Normans using the Shannon in the vicinity of Athlone for both military and economic reasons (O'Conor and Naessens 2016a; Sherlock 2016, 15-8). It must be presumed that the Uí Chellaig lords saw the economic potential of the Shannon at Athlone from at least the eleventh century and this is one of the main reasons why they placed a residence here and tried again to control the settlement again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

6.3 – Case Study: Galey Bay and Environs, Co. Roscommon

Plate 6.2 – Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon. Oblique aerial image of the tower house and earthworks located on the small peninsula jutting out into Galey Bay, viewed from the south west. Cruit Point is visible in the left background of this plate, as is the corner of Kilmore townland in the right background, framing the bay. A ruined brick boathouse, indicated by the red arrow, may have replaced an earlier iteration on site (Image courtesy of Western Aerial Survey).

The Ó Cellaig settlement activity in the area between Athlone and Roscommon town seems to spell out a different story from the point of view of the lordship, in that the identifiable Ó Cellaig activity in this area does not seem to be as pronounced or as early as what has been identified at places such as Lough Croan (see 5.2), Kilconnell (see 5.3), and as we will see with Aughrim (see 7.2). Galey Bay, sited on the Shannon system on Lough Ree, is nevertheless an important location for the Ó Cellaig lordship from at least as early as the mid-fourteenth

century, and remained as such into the post-medieval period. Galey is considered a *cenn áit* of the Uí Chellaig in part because of its historical associations with the fourteenth-century lord of Uí Maine, Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig (see 2.5). However, this is not the first allusion to this lordly centre in the historical record.

Galey Bay is a small sheltered bay on the north-western shore of Lough Ree, a bay framed by the short peninsula of Cruit Point to its north, and the north-eastern corner of Kilmore townland to its south (Pl. 6.2). Galey is located 3.6km south of the River Hind, as well as being served immediately to its west by the modern N61, the effective descendant of Doran's Route 11 in the area (see 3.3). It was located within the north-eastern corner of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine, one of a number of Ó Cellaig lordly centres which were located within the *oireacht* known as 'O Murry & McEdmonds Eraght called the Heyny' (*Compossicion*, 168; Fig. 6.1). This indicates that in the late medieval period at least, this region south of the River Hind was split between the MacEdmond branch of the Uí Chellaig, and the Uí Mhuiredaig (O'Murry) dynasty.[47] The inquisition of Aodh Ó Cellaig, last lord of Uí Maine, found that he was in possession of lands in the Heyny which by right belonged to the Uí Mhuiredaig, however, in what was probably much like the situation with the Uí Fhallamháin of Clann Uadach (see 5.2.1.2), the Ó Cellaig were the *de facto* lords of the entire *oireacht* at this time, and probably for a considerable period before this also (Nicholls 2003, 41).

[47] Anne Connon, pers comm. See email 18th August 2020.

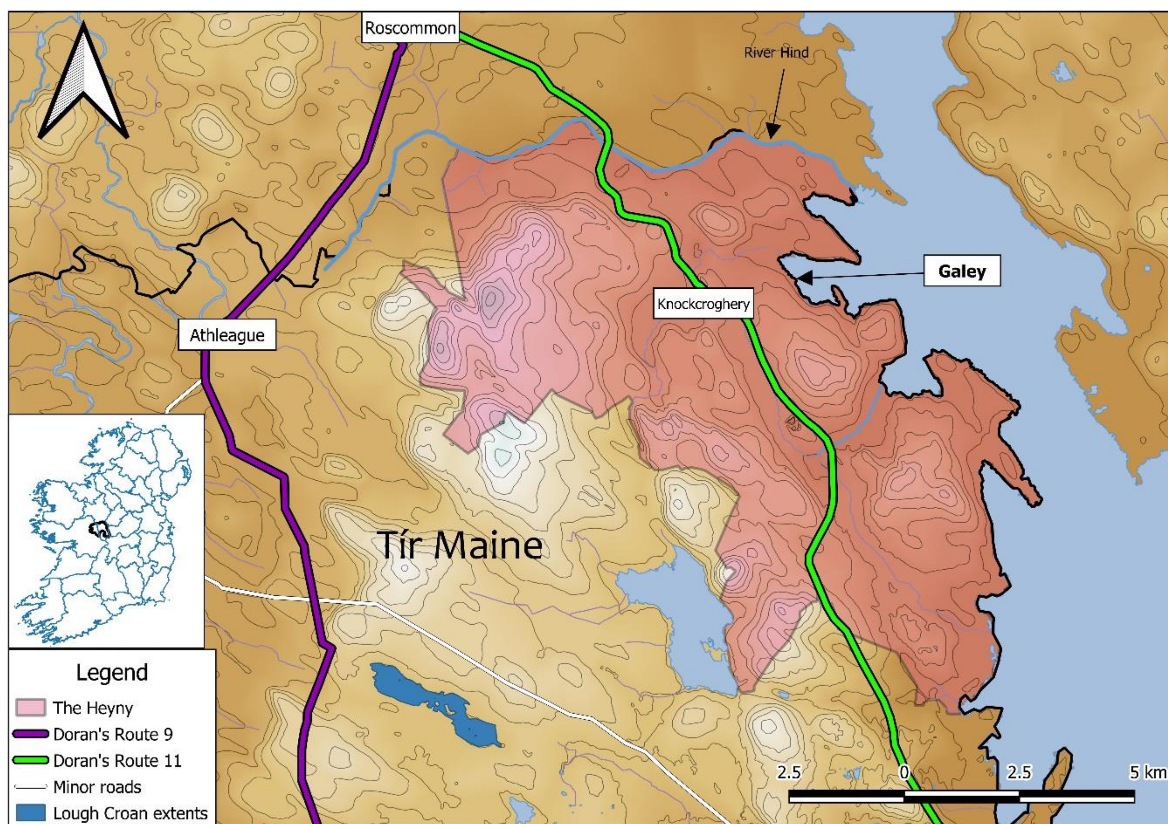

Figure 6.1 – The principal locations to be discussed in the Galey Bay case study, located in oireacht *of 'the Heyny' within the* trícha cét *of Tír Maine. Galey is located on the western shore of Lough Ree, close to the north-eastern border of the Ó Cellaig lordship. Boundaries of these territories in c.1400, defined after Nicholls (1969) and MacCotter (2014).*

As has been outlined above (see 3.2.2), large tracts of the wider region surrounding Galey Bay, particularly to the south, were dominated by the *Feadha* of Athlone, a now mostly lost woodland, except for areas along the shore of Lough Ree itself, which characterised much of this region in the later medieval past.

6.3.1 – Galey in the Historical and Literary Sources

Galey first appears on the historical record for the year 1156, when Ruaidrí Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, used *Blean-Gaille* (Galey) and Rindoon as harbours for his fleet on Lough Ree (*AFM*). The fact that Galey was used by Ruaidrí as a harbour is unsurprising, due to the sheltered nature of the bay, and its close proximity to the overland route linking Athlone to Roscommon being located only 1km distant from Route 11 at its closest point. The importance of Galey Bay, and presumably any stronghold that was located there in the later medieval period, was particularly seen by its closeness to Roscommon town, where in the sixteenth century there is evidence to suggest that goods, and people, were routinely transported into and out of Roscommon via Galey Bay into Lough Ree and thence into the Shannon system (Cronin 1980, 117; Loeber 2015, 137). The 1156 reference is also evidence for the importance of

Rindoon as a harbour. It has been argued that a pre-Norman Ó Conchobhair fortification, possibly a sort of oval-shaped ditched enclosure defended by a timber palisade, overlooked this harbour (O'Conor and Shanahan 2018, 9-11). Clearly, with one of his established royal centres outside of his patrimonial lands of Machaire Connacht located at Athlone and possibly another one at Rindoon in Tír Maine, the ability to travel through the region to the west of Lough Ree and, of course, along the Shannon system unimpeded, was of considerable importance to Ruaidrí Ó Conchobair. It can be conclusively argued that, at this point, Tír Maine was in the control of these Ó Conchobair overlords, as part of their wider kingdom.

The next time Galey is encountered in the historical sources does not occur until the sixteenth century. *Gallee* – Galey is recorded in 1573 as one of the castles in possession of the Ó Cellaig chief, Hugh (Aodh) of the MacEdmond branch (Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019; see 2.6). Galey also later features in the *Compossicion Booke of Conought*, as the place of residence of Teige McOwen Ó Cellaig and one Colloo mcConnor (*Compossicion*, 167). These are the last historical references to Galey in the possession of the Uí Chellaig. Aside from this, *Crích Gáille* by Lough Ree in eastern Connacht is mentioned in the Middle Irish tale *Buile Suibhne*, while a late-sixteenth century praise poem, composed for Gill'Easbaig, earl of Argyll, *Dual ollamh do thriall le toisg*, also seems to refer to Galey as a place of importance in later medieval Gaelic Ireland (O'Keeffe (trans.) 1913, 118-121; McLeod 2007, 178).

Furthermore, the present writer will argue that the location described in a mid-fourteenth century poem, *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, also describes this lordly centre, and it will be inspected in more detail below.

6.3.1.1 – **Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach***: Reconstructing a* **cenn áit** *Through Literary Sources*

The first annalistic record of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig as lord of Uí Maine was in 1351, with his hosting, along with his son Maolsechlainn, of the famous gathering known as 'Invitation Christmas' (*AC*). This is described as a general invitation to all the poetic classes in Ireland, and the event is immortalised by a praise poem written by Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh, entitled *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, in praise of Uilliam Buide (Knott (trans. and ed.) 1911). Some key information from this praise poem will be used to help better understand the mid-fourteenth century *cenn áit* at Galey. The value that this poem can provide in reconstructing the past environment has parallels with multidisciplinary approaches elsewhere (e.g. Simms 2001; Finan and O'Conor 2002).

6.3.1.2 – Location of Fionngh// áille

The location of this great festivity in the poem is recorded as *Fionnghá́ille*. This place-name has caused confusion, with some suggesting it to be Galey, Co. Roscommon (O'Donovan 1843, 104-5; Kerrigan 1996, 103-4), and others suggesting it to be near Gallagh, Co. Galway, or corresponding in archaeological terms to the moated site named Lismore, located in Pallas townland, Kilconnell Barony, Co. Galway (Kelly 1853-57, 54; FitzPatrick 2016, 204; see 4.7). The place-name evidence, however, strongly argues that *Fionnghá́ille* would be more likely represented by Galey than Gallagh or Lismore.[48]

While the place-name evidence is persuasive enough to rule out Lismore or Gallagh as the location of *Fionngáille*, the description of the event in *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach* leaves one in little doubt as to its whereabouts. The approach to the fort is as described as coming over a 'ridge of the bright-furrowed slope' (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 61), which is consistent with the physical environment and place-name survivals directly to the west of Galey, notably Knockcroghery and its antecedent place-name *An Creagán* (the stony hill), which would have served as a line of approach to Galey Bay from the nearest routeway. Directly northeast of Knockcroghery village, in Creggan townland, the elevation climbs to 59m OD, by contrast to the elevation recorded at Galey Bay, less than 1.5km distant to the east, which sees a reduction of elevation of *c.*21m to 38m OD. Conversely, the vicinity around Lismore moated site, and Pallas townland more generally, contains a substantial zone of extremely flat bogland to its south and west, and has no local high points or elevations which match the poem's description.

[48] Eleanor Knott was right to identify the '*dúna[dh] flatha Fionnghá́ille*' (mentioned in line 110 of the poem '*Filidh Éireann go haointeach*') with the castle of *Gáille*, anglicised 'Galey', on Lough Ree (near Knockcroghery), and right to reject D.H. Kelly's identification of it with the castle of *Gallach*, Castle Blakeney, County Galway. This is clear from the different inflexions of *Gáille* and *Gallach*. The former is an 'io'-stem, with genitive singular *gáille* (as in '*dúna[dh] flatha Fionnghá́ille*' in the poem), whereas the latter is an 'o'-stem, with genitive singular *gallaigh:* we have an example of this in the entry in AFM *sub anno* 1511, in the obituary for Maoileachlainn Ó Ceallaigh, who is said there to have been the builder of the castle of *Gallach* (as well as the castles of Monivea and Garbally): '... fear lás a ndearnadh **caislen gallaigh** an garbhdhoire 7 Muine an Meadha.' / 'It was he who erected the castles of Gallach, Garbh-dhoire, and Muine-an-Mheadha.' [Thus in AFM, volume V, p. 1310 (Irish), and p. 1311 (O'Donovan's translation). O'Donovan, footnote m, refers one back to his footnote (footnote g) at p. 1275, which reads: '*Gallach*, now Gallagh, otherwise Castle-Blakeney, a small town in the barony of Killian. A few fragments of this castle still remain on a green hill near Castleblakeny.'
O'Donovan, *Tribes and Customs of Hy-Many*, pp 104-5, has a note on William Buidhe Ó Cellaigh, holder of the great feast of 1351. *Inter alia*, he says there that Uilliam built Galey castle - but I don't know on what authority he stated this. 'He also built the castle of Gaille, now Galey castle, still standing on the margin of Lough Ree, near Knockcroghery, in the county of Roscommon, where, according to the poem just referred to, he entertained the Irish poets and other professor of art in 1351.' (= pp. 104-5). Note provided by Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, 26th February 2019.

Another key indicator of location is provided in a section which repeatedly refers to the presence of a lake in the very near vicinity of the residence, a lake described as *Loch na nÉigeas* in the poem (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 61). The literal translation is the 'lake of the scholars/poets', which considering the event that is being described in the poem, would strongly suggest that the poet is using his licence to create links between the event and the physical environment, perhaps even that the poets attending this feast arrived by water transport. Both Knott and O'Sullivan have suggested that *Loch na nÉigeas* is a cognate for Lough Ree (Knott (trans. and ed.) 1911, 50-1, 68; O'Sullivan 2004, 115). Tellingly, there is no evidence of a lake or turlough in the vicinity of Pallas townland. The detail in the poem indicates that the poet is describing a very particular location, and Galey Bay is most probably the place intended.

6.3.2 – The Archaeology of the Galey **cenn áit**

The elite focal point of this landscape corresponds with the earthen and masonry remains categorised as a ringwork or inland promontory fort (RO042-045002-), and the later tower house (RO042-045001-), both located on the modern boundary between Longnamuck townland – *Long na muc* (bar[c] (i.e. house) of the pigs or alternatively the ship of the pigs)[49] and Galey, seen above (Pl. 6.2). Galey is strategically placed in order to utilise the small natural peninsula that juts into this sheltered bay of Lough Ree. This setting is very defensible as a result, as it serves as a bottleneck to transport coming in and out of the bay. On the landward side, Galey benefits defensibly from the use of the lake as an obstacle to attack over its entire eastern range. Overland access to Galey is thus provided only via a now disappeared route, which approaches from the southwest (see 6.3.3.2 below).

6.3.2.1 – The pre-tower house **Cathair** *at* **Fionngháille**

Turning to the fortification at Galey itself, the present writer believes that the site can be separated into two distinct phases. Firstly, there is pre-fifteenth century archaeology at the site, followed, secondly, by late medieval activity in the form of a tower house castle.

The natural promontory into Galey Bay and Lough Ree retains the traces for what were once substantial earthwork remains, which have been heavily modified through time, but are still evident on the ground. Coastal promontory forts have received some study in Ireland, and their main period of occupation has been traditionally regarded as occurring primarily in the Iron

[49] This place-name is possibly a relic of activity related to the housing and riverine transportation of pigs, facilitated by the natural harbour.

Age, with some early medieval activity also apparent. There has been little by the way of excavation at any of these sites, and when they have been investigated, it is more routinely with an Iron Age research agenda in mind, albeit there is excavated evidence for some Irish examples having been occupied in the early medieval period, and perhaps later (Edwards 1990, 41-2; Breen 2005, 57).

However, Breen, Malcolm and Naessens have now been able to demonstrate that some coastal and estuarine promontories may have been occupied, and possibly even constructed upon, in the later medieval period (Breen 2005, 57-62; Malcolm 2007, 197-201; Naessens 2018, 105). While in these instances, it has proven difficult to conclusively associate these sites with members of the Gaelic Ó Súilleabháin Bhéara, Ó Dubhda, Ó Flaithbheartaigh and Ó Máille elite in their respective coastal study areas, Breen has theorised that the five possible promontory forts in Ballydonegan Bay in Co. Cork may have been inhabited as the later medieval settlements of the O'Donegan sept family within the Ó Súilleabháin Bhéara lordship. Moreover, Malcolm has suggested that a series of Anglo-Norman promontory-sited castles which he identified in the Ó Dubhda lordship of Uí Fhiachrach Muaidhe (broadly north, west and central Co. Mayo), were originally the lordly centres of the latter Gaelic lords of the area, prior to their appropriation (Breen 2005, 61; Malcolm 2007, 196-7). Furthermore, Kingston has indicated that a number of the Antrim Mac Domhnaill lordly centres of the late medieval period are also sited on coastal promontories (Kingston 2004, 196-8). In terms of inland promontory forts, FitzPatrick is one of the few researchers to highlight the probable later medieval use of these monuments in lakeland settings, in her reconstruction and discussion of the Ó Duibhgeannáin learned kindred landholdings who served the Meic Diarmada lords of Maigh Luirg at Lough Meelagh, Co. Roscommon (FitzPatrick 2015b, 173-4).

The layout of the earthwork remains on this promontory consists of two broad ditches (each *c.*5m in width), which surround the central prominence. These ditches are recorded as still extant in the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map. Both ditches have silted up over time, but parts of the inner ditch still survives to a depth of *c.*1.5m in places. The southern end of the outer ditch survives on the ground due south of the castle remains itself, and is visible in the aerial photography. The northern end of the inner ditch has been modified to accommodate a late nineteenth-century brick-constructed boathouse, now ruined. The modern cartographic sources record this boathouse, along with two other slipways in close vicinity to the earthwork. One is consistent with the northern end of the outer ditch, while the second is located to the south of the earthworks. This second landing place is located within a relatively substantial

open space (area *c.*1,100m²) between the inner and outer ditches, which may have been large enough to accommodate a trading post connected with the lordly centre. The recording of these features also allows the present writer to speculate that the two ditches were likely to have been wet ditches during the later medieval period. These would have been fed by the lake waters, and added significantly to the defensibility of the site as a result (Pl. 6.3a; Fig. 6.2).

The central prominence rises to a height of over 3m above the surrounding area, and is *c.*43m in overall measurement east/west and measures *c.*52m north/south (Fig. 6.2). The internal dimensions of the raised prominence measures *c.*28m east/west by *c.*37m north/south, and access to the summit interior is provided by a western-facing cobbled causewayed ramp, measuring 5m in width, which breaks the inner ditch and bank (Pl. 6.3b). The perimeter of this central area is defined by a much degraded bank, measuring 5.8m wide in places, with an internal height of *c.*0.45m and an external height of *c.*2m. This bank contains a substantial concentration of stone, and a large quantity of disturbed stones has found their way into the inner ditch which surrounds the site (Pl. 6.3d). The survival of this perimeter bank is more complete on the southern side of the monument, including the survival of an outer dry-stone wall in places. South of the entrance ramp, the dry-stone wall survives to a height of *c.*1m in places, with an average width of 1.5m to 2m from the west through to the south of the site, with the most substantial section of the surviving stone remains continuing for a length of 5m (Pl. 6.4).

Plate 6.3 – Clockwise from top left [a-d]: Remnants of outer wet ditch, looking north; Cobbled entranceway onto the summit of the earthworks; large boulders, having fallen from the inner bank, located in the inner ditch; ruined nineteenth-century boathouse, which utilised the course of the northern section of the inner wet ditch (Author's photographs).

To summarise the archaeological character of this site then, it possesses a complexity that creates an impression of a well-defended bivallate enclosure, surrounding a central natural promontory. This lakeland promontory fort was placed prominently to provide commanding views over Galey Bay and the upper and middle sections of Lough Ree. A pair of substantial wet ditches, both of which may have had earthen banks although only one survives, guard the approach to the central prominence. The outer bank is likely to have been topped with a timber fence or palisade, while there is evidence that the innermost earthen bank once had a substantial, but now degraded, dry-stone cashel wall surmounting it (Pl. 6.4). Landward access to the site was provided by the now disappeared roadway that still retains some slight presence in aerial photographs (see 6.3.3.2) and water-bound access to the site itself was presumably provided by one of the shallow areas located within the limits of the outer and inner ditches. The later boathouse may have replaced an earlier naust in the northern end of the inner ditch (Pl. 6.2; 6.3c), along with the slipways recorded in the modern cartographic sources for the northern and southern ends of these ditches.

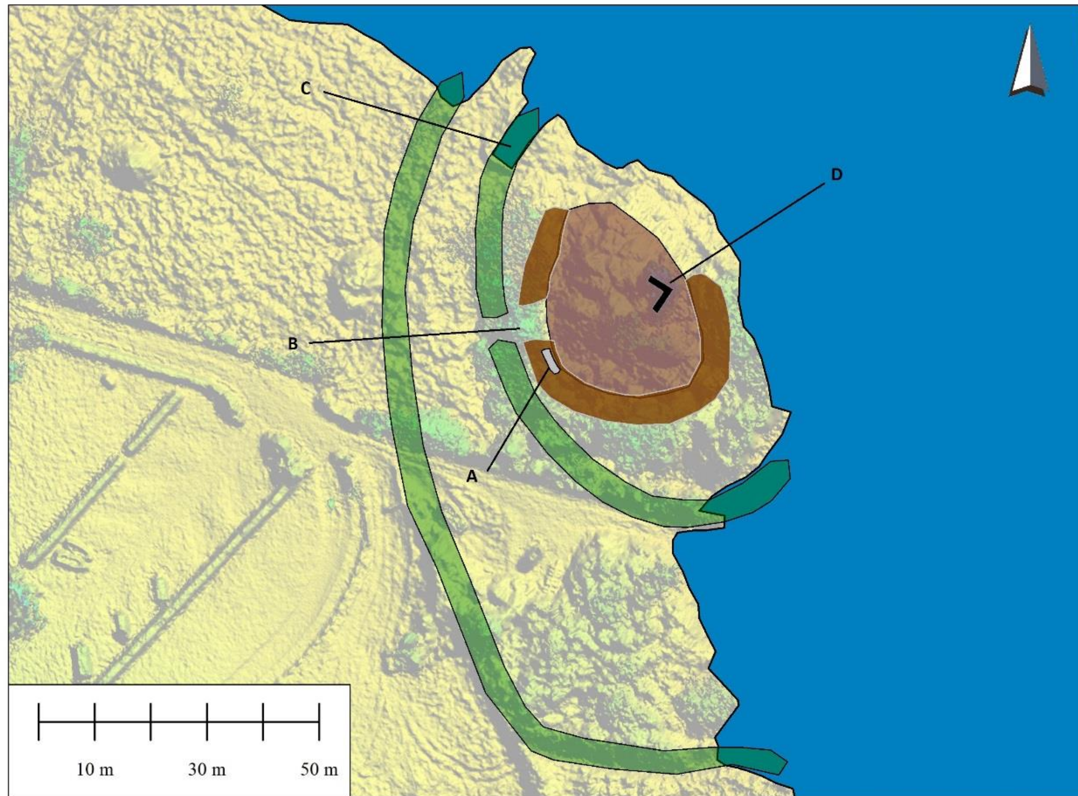

Figure 6.2 – Plan of the promontory fort at Galey Bay. The plan outlines the extents of the pair of silted up ditches which surround the natural promontory at Galey, marked in green, and the inner bank, marked in brown. A = Surviving section of dry-stone cashel wall; B = Cobbled causewayed ramp; C = Ruined nineteenth-century boathouse constructed out of the northern end of the inner ditch; D = tower house remains (Data courtesy of Western Aerial Survey).

As for the appearance of the structure that once stood on the summit of the platform, it is difficult to interpret. However, analysing *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach* may go some of the way in understanding what topped the platform in the mid-fourteenth century. Ó Cellaig's residence at Galey is described in Irish variously as *dúnadh*, *brugh* and *chathrach* (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 61, 63)

The poem describes a fine stone and timber-constructed defended residence, but the poetic nature of the source material gives little away by means of the shape it took. However, the description does suggest that there are two parts to this *dúnadh*. Firstly, there is the stone fortification that is prominent above the lake waters as it is approached from the west. Described as 'a capital letter of beauteous stone', the present writer's opinion is that it may be describing a circular or oval-shaped structure, perhaps reminiscent of the letter 'O' or 'D'. The poet then moves to describe what is located within the stone structure, a 'spacious' and 'domed' court of stone and timber. Such an account, particularly when highlighting the hospitality of the patron, seems to refer to a substantial timber hall, with the stone mentioned perhaps

manifesting archaeologically as dwarf walls that were constructed to serve as the foundations of the hall, in a partly timber, partly masonry constructed building (see O'Conor 1998, 63-6).

Going beyond this, one critical piece of evidence that may assist in clarifying the nature of the construction comes with the use of the word *chathrach*, which is used twice in the poem. *Cathrach* is the genitive singular of the word *cathair*, which has a number of translations, depending on the context. Through analysing its use in the poem, the most pertinent translation for our purposes is 'a circular dry-stone fort'. The second recording of the word in the poem deliberately describes a lime-washed stone edifice. The evidence in support of the continued use, modification, and perhaps even construction of *cathair*/cashel strongholds as places of Gaelic elite residence in the later medieval period is strong (see 4.3).

The poem refers to the joining of stone with timber on this construction, which indicates that the *cathair* wall possessed a timber superstructure which may have added to the defensibility of the site at that time. More than this, it also refers to the *cathair* walls being 'lime-washed'. Lime-washing, which is more routinely understood to be a technique applied to castle walls, also seems to have been undertaken, in some cases, on cashels. Cahermacnaghten cashel, located in the Burren region of Co. Clare, is referred to in a late-sixteenth or early seventeenth-century poem as the *aolta lios* or 'limewhite fort' (FitzPatrick 2009, 297), which shows that the method was likely to have continued in use on *cathair*/cashel strongholds up to a relatively late date. Physical evidence for the *cathair* wall at Galey is likely to be consistent with the degraded remains of the stone-composed bank and dry-stone wall section that tops the earthworks (Pl. 6.4), as well as the large quantity of loose stone found in the inner ditch, dislodged from its original location (Pl. 6.3d). It is possible that much of the dry-stonework of the *cathair* wall was robbed out in the recent past. Corroborating evidence for a more recent mass removal of stone from the site can be seen with the very fragmentary remains of the tower house itself, especially if the *cathair* wall served as a bawn for the later fortification. This conversion of earlier earthworks into a bawn enclosure is not an uncommon occurrence, with *cathair*, ringfort and natural topography used in various instances to act as forms of bawn-type enclosures for later tower houses.

Plate 6.4 – Degraded and overgrown remains of dry-stone-built bank or wall (H: c.*1m, W:* c.*2m) surviving around the perimeter of the central prominence to the west and south of the site (Author's photograph)*

The description of the interior of the site suggests a timber and stone-constructed, elaborately decorated hall, which is described as domed in shape. This would suggest that the structure was possibly a large roundhouse. It is also possible that this was merely an artistic flourish on the part of the poet, and it may have taken the shape of a rectangular cruck-roofed hall, a construction method common in later medieval Gaelic Ireland (O'Conor 1998, 97; Finan and O'Conor 2002). Alternatively, this description of a circular building does have parallels with other later medieval dwellings found more readily in the west of Ireland. There is an argument that the circular design is very stable in high winds, and so their continued existence was to a certain extent determined by the local environment (O'Conor 2002a, 201-4; Gardiner and O'Conor 2017, 150). No material evidence of this hall survives to present day. The construction of the tower house may well have destroyed this earlier structure, and the disturbed nature of the summit of the earthwork makes it difficult to understand the remains on the interior.

In evaluating the archaeological remains in association with the literary evidence, it strongly points towards the former presence of a fine, lime-washed *cathair*-type dry-stone-wall

defensive enclosure, which was placed on, and utilised the natural prominence of the small peninsula jutting into Galey Bay. This was further surrounded by a pair of substantial, water-filled defensive ditches, using the lake waters of Lough Ree on a smaller scale, but in much the same way, as the wet ditch that was constructed across the peninsula at Rindoon, to act as the south-eastern defended edge of the Anglo-Norman town, and as a further defence for the castle, among other uses, only 6.5km to the southeast (O'Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015, 96-8). Access to the interior of the site at Galey was provided by a causewayed, ramped entrance, which cut the inner ditch and bank, and presumably the outer ditch along its southwestern side. An entrance gateway into the *cathair* itself would be expected in this area also. Upon entering the central prominence, the most dominant building, according to the poem, was a hall of stone and timber construction which was likely visible from the lake, as well as presumably some other service buildings (Fig. 6.3; Fig. 6.4). It is difficult to know when the *cathair* was constructed, and it could conceivably have been in existence at the site as far back as 1156, when Ruaidrí Ó Conchobair drew his ships and boats on the ice from Galey Bay to Rindoon. At this point, it may have served as an Ó Conchobair stronghold on Lough Ree.

Figure 6.3 – Summary plan of the identified archaeological remains at the Ó Cellaig cenn áit of Galey Bay (Aerial image courtesy of Western Aerial Survey).

What is clear, however, that it was both in use, and judging by the poetic record, carefully maintained and redeveloped, by the mid-fourteenth century, and the great Christmas feast in 1351 of the newly ascendant lord of Uí Maine (see 2.5). By this time, the *cathair* at Galey would have been old-fashioned, and perhaps incorporating deliberate anachronisms in its appearance. This tactic might have been utilised by the Ó Cellaig lord in order to demonstrate his longstanding legacy and legitimacy at his *cenn áit* of Galey, and in Tír Maine more generally (O'Conor 2018, 164-5).

Figure 6.4 – Reconstruction drawing of the Galey Bay cenn áit *of the Uí Chellaig, conjecturally as it would have appeared in the mid-fourteenth century. The* cathair *serves as the focal point of the promontory, with two wet ditches adding to its defensibility. A newly-constructed feasting hall is located within the enclosure. This reconstruction is based on the surviving archaeological and architectural evidence, the information gleaned from* Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach *and the research findings of the present writer (Reconstruction by Uto Hogerzeil of Galey Cathair. Image commissioned by the present writer).*

6.3.2.2 – The Tower House at Galey

Moving to the masonry remains, the sixteenth century references to a castle at Galey must correspond with the remains of the tower house (RO042-045001-) that is sited on the north-eastern corner of the earthwork (see 6.3.1). These remains consist of the eastern corner of a

tower house, currently surviving to its fourth floor. A number of features survive on the tower house, including a well-preserved garderobe built into the base-batter of the northeast facing wall. On the ground floor level, there is a section of a possibly vaulted ceiling, which, if so, suggests a construction date for the tower house before the later sixteenth century (see McNeill 1997, 213; Sweetman 2004, 269-73), as well as the possible remains of an entrance, facing southeast. Well preserved loops survive at first floor and second floor levels, facing southeast, and there are the possible remains of a window on the north-eastern wall also. An intramural stairwell survives on this floor providing access to the second floor, as well as a probable access point to the third floor built into the northeast wall (Pl. 6.5; Fig. 6.5). Aside from this, there are collections of worked and punch-dressed stone, found loose throughout the site, which indicates that the tower house was probably constructed in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

Plate 6.5 – Ground image of the internal remains in Galey tower house, viewed from the southwest. Note the vaulting in the centre foreground of the image, the window and intramural stairway in the right foreground, linking the first floor to the second floor. Access to the third floor, and joist holes for the third floor platform is visible to the top of the image (Author's photograph).

Figure 6.5 – Reconstruction drawing of the tower house castle at Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon, based on the surviving architectural evidence, the research of the present writer, and on analogy with similar castles elsewhere (Reconstruction by Uto Hogerzeil of Galey Castle with kind permission of Nollaig Feeney of Roscommon County Council. Image commissioned by Heritage Office, Roscommon County Council).

Indeed, as noted, the overall evidence suggests that it was only from the early fifteenth century onwards that Gaelic lords started to build tower houses (Cairns 1987, 9). The overall architectural, social and historical evidence, such as it is, suggests that the tower house at Galey Castle probably dates to before *c*.1550, being built either in the fifteenth or first half of the sixteenth century. As mentioned above, the tower house builders are likely to have continued to use the cashel enclosure as the bawn for the castle (O'Keeffe 2015, 291; Fig. 6.6). This is seen elsewhere, in the case of tower houses located within cashels with the O'Heyne tower house at Cahererillan, south Co. Galway (GA113-058001-), Ballyganner South tower house (CL009-059065-), Ballyshanny tower house (CL009-093002-) and Caherclogggaun tower house (CL004-077002-), all Co. Clare (see FitzPatrick 2009, 302). More than this, the Rock of Lough Cé, Co. Roscommon, saw the Meic Diarmada utilising the natural island/*crannóg*, as well as the earlier mortared cashel wall, as the effective bawn wall for the tower house there (RO006-046001-; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 24-7). The siting of a tower house on a *crannóg* is also seen in the case of the MacClancy tower house on Lough Melvin, Co. Leitrim (LE002-014002-; McDermott and O'Conor 2015). Further evidence for the reuse of older earthworks as effective tower house bawns is seen with the use of the ringfort platform as a protected bawn for the tower house constructed at the Ó Conchobair Ruadh *cenn áit* of Tulsk Fort, Co. Roscommon (RO022-114003-; RO022-114011-; Brady 2009, 22-3). The pattern continues with the evidence from Caherdrinny (CO019-097002-), where the tower house was sited within a prehistoric concentric hilltop enclosure, and the O'Driscoll tower house sited on a promontory on Cape Clear Island (CO153-015002-), both Co. Cork. It is possible that in all these cases, the tower house was located within these earlier earthworks partly with a view to displaying continuity with the past, and maintaining a legitimacy with the territories they controlled into the late medieval period.

In the case of Galey Castle, it presents yet another instance of a tower house being constructed by a member of the Ó Cellaig elite at a long inhabited Uí Maine *cenn áit*. In every case, the tower house either replaced, or was incorporated into, the earlier elite residences, something which is also seen at Turrock Castle on the southern shore of Lough Croan (see 5.2.1), Callow Castle (see 5.3.3.3), and with the connected lordly centres of Ballaghdacker Lough and Athleague Castle (see 5.4.2.3; 6.4.3.1).

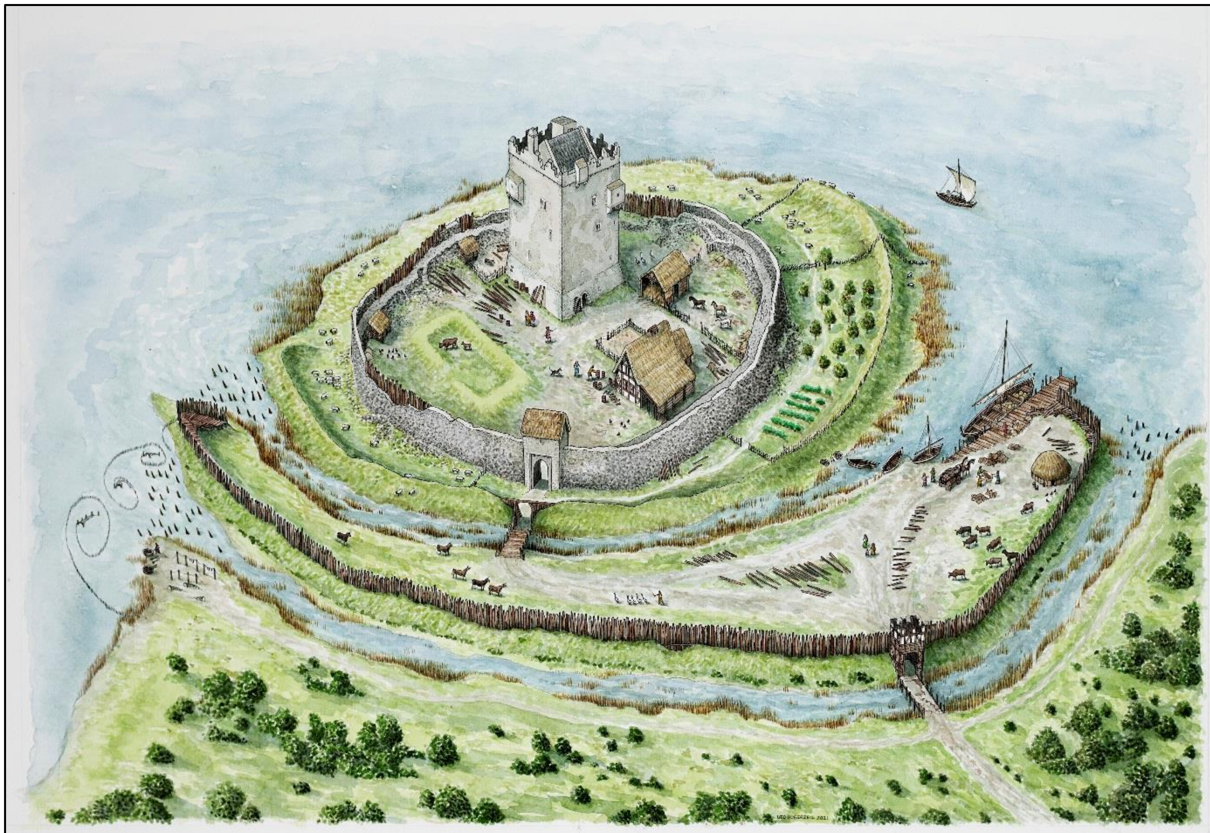

Figure 6.6 – Reconstruction drawing of the Galey Bay cenn áit *of the Uí Chellaig, conjecturally as it would have appeared in the late medieval period. The focal point of the* cenn áit*, the tower house, is surrounded by the earlier* cathair *(cashel), effectively serving as the bawn for the castle at this point in time. The promontory fort is further defended by the palisaded bank, and pair of wet ditches, which demarcate the promontory from the shoreline more generally. This reconstruction is based on the surviving archaeological and architectural evidence and the research findings of the present writer (Reconstruction by Uto Hogerzeil of Galey Castle with kind permission of Nollaig Feeney of Roscommon County Council. Image commissioned by Heritage Office, Roscommon County Council).*

6.3.3 – The Cultural Landscape surrounding Galey Bay

The archaeological evidence, coupled with the historical and literary references relating to this location, have demonstrated that Galey Bay was the focal point of a riverine elite landscape which retained its importance through the later medieval period in Tír Maine. Further consultation of the available sources for this region can develop a fuller picture of the cultural landscape which surrounded this lordly centre. This section will outline the evidence for a settlement associated with the Galey Bay *cenn áit*, a former route of approach to the lordly centre, as well as fleshing out the cultural landscape which existed around this centre, including the location of a prominent service kindred, a patronised religious house, and a place of seasonal assembly in the Heyny *oireacht*.

6.3.3.1 – Physical expression of **Baile Gáile**

One of the complementary sources that can be brought to bear on this case study is the combined topographical data acquired from Ordnance Survey Ireland and Transport

Infrastructure Ireland. Inspecting the wider area around Galey Bay has facilitated the identification of at least nine unrecorded circular or sub-rectangular earthworks ranging west from Galey, with survey data covering an incomplete *c.*5km² area incorporating the modern village of Knockcroghery back to Lough Ree (Fig. 6.7). Merging this with the recorded monuments in the same area raises the total number of earthworks to sixteen. The recorded monuments are nearly exclusively categorised as ringforts.

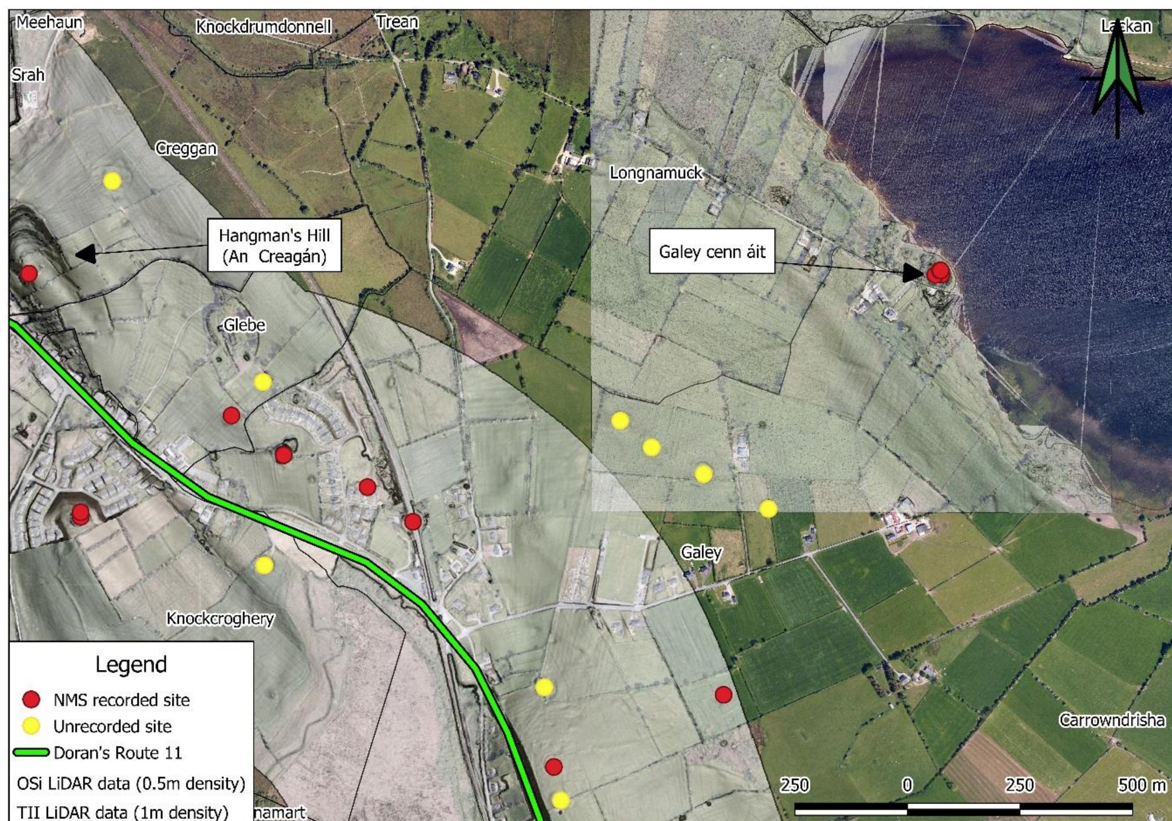

Figure 6.7 – Map of the merged OSi and TII LiDAR topographical datasets, highlighting the distribution of the unrecorded earthwork sites visible on the DTM (Map source: Bing Maps, data courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland and TII)

The location of these additional discovered enclosures is concentrated in the vicinity of the modern village of Knockcroghery, which is the physical representation of the settlement marked in Boazio's 1606 map *Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio* as 'B. Gally' a reference that can be interrogated by comparison with other locations (Boazio's Map of Ireland, 1599 1952) and the legend provided in Boazio's maps (Fig. 6.8). The abbreviation B. stands for 'Bale' – *Vicus* (Lat. settlement), a mutated version of *baile*. This is used to describe a village or other nucleated settlement in early seventeenth-century Ireland. This means that 'Bale Gally' is effectively a mutation of the Irish *Baile Gáile* (the settlement of the creek).

The present writer theorises that due to the growing evidence from this and other research for the continued use of ringfort enclosures by the Gaelic Irish into later medieval period (see for example 4.3; 5.2.1; 5.3.4.2), the clustering of these enclosures may not be coincidental, and could point to a form of Gaelic settlement nucleation, which when coupled with the place-name survival, and the close proximity to Doran's Route 11, points to the presumed continuity of *Baile Gáile* as a hamlet or village into the later medieval period and beyond.

Figure 6.8 - Boazio's Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio *(1606) highlights a settlement near the western shore of Lough Ree as 'B. Gally' –* Baile Gáile*, a settlement linked to the Galey Bay* cenn áit *in the later medieval period. (Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA)*

Literary attestation of this settlement being extant in the mid-fourteenth century can be seen with a reference to a *baile* near the site of the feast (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 59). The present writer's opinion is that Knott's translation of *baile* as 'town' is perhaps oversimplified. The fourteenth-century reality would be more consistent with the translation of it being a place of settlement or habitation, not in the form of a town as we would conceive it in the present sense (Ó hAisibéil 2018, 177). Accepting this, it can be concluded with a high level of confidence that there was a viable settlement located in the vicinity of Galey Bay, apparently

where the modern village of Knockcroghery now stands, while still being at a slight geographical remove from the *cenn áit*. Tower houses of the late medieval period, as well as presumably their antecedents as lordly centres in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were undoubtedly the focal points of their communities (Barry 2006, 30). However, at Galey Bay, Callow Lough, and Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway, the elite centre is seemingly consciously located at a slight geographical remove from the associated nucleus of settlement. Barry has concluded that these settings served, therefore, as a social focus of the community, as opposed to being a physical community hub (*Ibid*., 28), creating a deliberate break between the elite and the general populous as a result. The present writer is aware of the sixteenth century and later cartographic and pictorial sources which depict small clusters of huts surrounding late medieval tower house castles (Nicholls 2008, 404-6), however in the case study examples of this research at least, this more realistically represents the domiciles of those who provided direct, daily service to the lordly residence, than denoting the physical community hub associated with the *cenn áit*.

6.3.3.2 – Accommodating the Host

Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach also indicates that the throngs of learned classes and entertainers that attended Ó Cellaig's feast at Galey were housed on temporary streets, erected specifically for the event (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 57, 59, 61). This is undoubtedly a major undertaking on the part of Ó Cellaig, with such an accommodation designed to display his wealth and generosity, but it is not necessarily without comparison. Simms notes that Aodh Mór Ó Neill may have adopted a similar approach in managing an event at his chief residence in the late-fourteenth century (Simms 1978, 91). While it is nigh on impossible to identify the archaeological expression of such a transient event as this fourteenth-century feast, there are some subtle features visible in the DTM that may bear some relationship to the events described in the poem. These anomalous features follow the route of a now buried road, and it could be speculated that these may be evidence of what is being described in stanza 25-6:

> '25. Such is the arrangement of them, ample roads between them; even as letters in their lines*; in a crowded (?)- -(?) avenue.
>
> 26. Each thread of road, bare, smooth, straight, firm within two threads of smooth, conical roofed houses' (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 59)

The modern road of approach to Galey seems to have been constructed at some point in the later-nineteenth century, judging by its absence from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch

map, but appearance on the later 25-inch and Cassini 6-inch maps. The present road may have been constructed in order to provide access to the boathouse constructed adjacent to Galey in 1881 by the Crofton family of Mote Park (see 6.5), some 6.5km to the northwest (Portrun 2019).

Prior to the construction of the modern road, it seems as if access to Galey was provided via a roadway that connects with Route 11 to the south of the modern village of Knockcroghery. This route survives today in places as a local road as it initially branches off the N61, before transforming to grassland as it approaches Galey. Vertical aerial photography of the area shows that the road can still be traced, visible as a faint dark linear feature, beneath the grass initially, before corresponding with a now established hedgerow. This now disappeared road is still extant on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map. The anomalous features evident in the DTM to the immediate east of this hedgerow (*c.*9m diameter each) may, very speculatively, correspond with the temporary habitations constructed for the feast (Fig. 6.9).

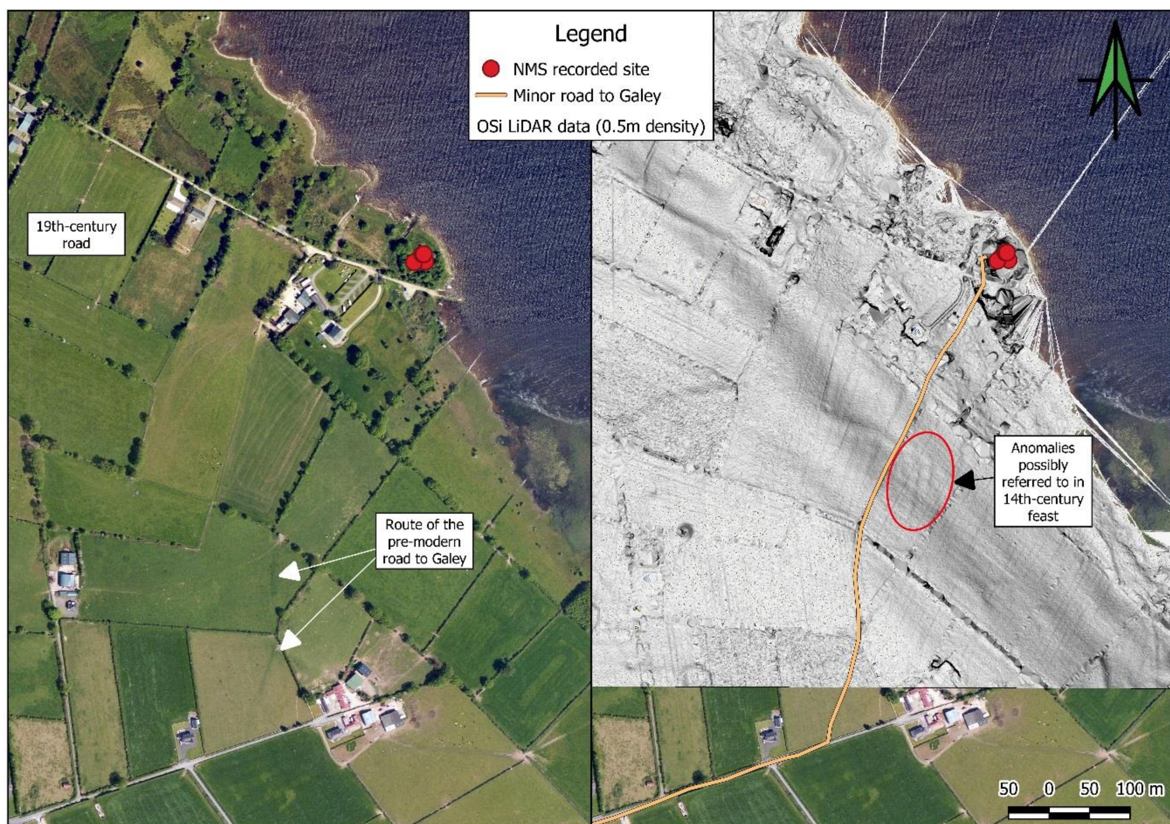

Figure 6.9 – The former approach to Galey, visible as faint cropmarks in the left image. LiDAR DTM on the right shows a 'basket of eggs' arrangement to the east of the former road, which may be evidence for what is described in stanzas 25-26 of the fourteenth-century poem Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach *(Data courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland).*

6.3.3.3 – Ó Cellaig Service Kindreds and Religious Houses in **the Heyny**

The historical sources inform us that Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin resided for the last seven years of his life at the hospital and religious house run by the Crutched Friars of St. John the Baptist at Rindoon, *c.*5.5km from Galey (Breen 2009; O'Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015, 93), before passing away there in 1372 (*AU*; *AFM*). Historians have suggested that Ó Dubhagáin's importance to the Uí Chellaig was such that he either inspired, or actively originated and organised the great feast at Galey in 1351 (Carney 2008, 690; Simms 2018, 424). Considering the hereditary duties of his family as *ollamh seanchaí* to the Uí Chellaig lords, the fact that this prominent learned figure to the lords of Uí Maine resided in his later years in such close proximity to one of their principal lordly centres at Galey is important to note.

In 1403, Conchobhar Anabaidh Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, died in *Loch Cróine* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 67) and is also buried at St. John the Baptist at Rindoon, where he had bestowed many benefits (*AC*; *ALC*). More than this, younger sons of the senior Ó Cellaig line routinely supplied priors to this religious house, particularly in the mid to late-fifteenth century (Genealogies 2011, 161). These references, coupled with other historical sources relating to the Anglo-Norman castle and town of Rindoon, confirm that by *c.*1320, the inhabitants of the town had deserted it, and by the middle of that century, the site had fallen into the hands of the Irish, most likely the Uí Chellaig, who were newly ascendant in Tír Maine (see 2.5). This change in circumstance may be consistent with the identified fifth archaeological phase of activity for the site, the so-called 'destruction phase' (O'Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015, 106; O'Conor and Shanahan 2018, 39). At the same time, the hospital continued to be supported and patronised by the Gaelic elite of the area, particularly the Uí Chellaig lords (see 3.5.5). The Uí Chellaig seem to have retained influence over this religious house until 1569 at least (Cronin 1980, 109).

6.3.3.4 – Portrunny – **Port Airchinnigh/Airchinneach***, an* **oireachtas** *Assembly Site at Galey*

Portrunny (*Port Reanna* or more correctly *Port Airchinnigh* (Connellan 1954, 55) – the port of the *erenagh* [hereditary church steward]), is located on the western shore of Lough Ree, just to the south of the traditional boundary of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine. The present writer believes that the lacustrine/riverine characteristics of this assembly landscape are highly significant, coupled with its close proximity to the *cenn áit* of Galey, only 1.5km to the south as the crow flies. The case for Portrunny being considered as a place of assembly in Tír Maine relates primarily to two historical references, the first being an Ó Conchobair assembly in 1260 (*AC*),

and the second being an Ó Cellaig gathering, documented in the early fifteenth century (*MacC*, s.*a.* 1406).

Freeman, in his translation, mistakenly records the thirteenth century assembly as occurring at Erenagh, regarded as Erenagh townland, Ballintober South Barony, Co. Roscommon. However, it is referred to as being in Tír Maine. The alternative, and correct location, is revealed through consultation of the Irish. *Purt Airenaig* from the annalistic entry equates with *Port Airchinnigh*/*Airchinneach* (Portrunny townland, Kilmeane civil parish), a conclusion drawn by Rev. Connellan (Connellan 1954, 55). The bishop mentioned in the entry is undoubtedly the Bishop of Elphin, Máel Sechlainn or Milo Ó Conchobair, a junior member of the dominant Gaelic sept in Connacht, and five modern townlands in the parish of Kilmeane: Cruit, Lackan, Cooltona, Fearagh and Portrunny, all on the banks of Lough Ree, were designated as land belonging to the bishop of Elphin (Connellan 1954, 55).

The present writer's interpretation of this record is that, in 1260, a seasonal assembly of the Uí Chonchobair took place at Portrunny, indicative of their overlordship at this time which we know included Tír Maine (see 2.3; 2.5). For the second historical reference to the use of Portrunny as a place of assembly, we must wait until 1406, and an assembly of the Uí Chellaig. Consulting the original source, the annalistic record refers to the assembly as an *oirechtus* (*MacC*). The *oireachtas* is regarded as a particular type of assembly activity in medieval Ireland. It is defined as a habitual gathering of chiefs, their nobles, and subjects for the purpose of conducting the business of the lordship. It is deemed to have been usually convened at a fixed location in the lordship, and corresponded primarily with dates in May – *Beltaine*, early August – *Lughnasa*, and November – *Samhain*, the time of the seasonal movement of cattle to and from summer pastures, and in the case of *Lughnasa*, in order to mark the harvest (FitzPatrick 2004, 16; Swift 2017, 15).

Recently, however, Swift has argued that the historical entries relating to *oireachtas* gatherings should not be taken to indicate a specific type of assembly. Rather the terms used to describe these gatherings are outlining different functions undertaken as part of the overall event, thus the reference to an *oireachtas* was likely accompanied in reality by the provision of *cís agus cána/túarastla* (rent and tributes/stipends) and the other routine entertainments and activities which took place at the *óenach*. The *cís*, the rent or livestock/food render came from the constituent communities within the overall lordship, while the transfer of goods

(*cána/túarastla*) between lords was undertaken in order to create political alliances (Swift 2017, 11-7).

These historical entries indicate the use of Portrunny as a place of *oireachtas* and general *óenach* gathering throughout the later medieval period. The initial thirteenth-century evidence links it to the Uí Chonchobair in their then expanded territory. The early fifteenth-century reference to the assembly equates its convention with the Uí Chellaig lordship, who, as has been demonstrated, regained power over this region by the middle of the fourteenth century.

Portrunny Bay is a small, sheltered bay on the western shore of Lough Ree. The widest part of the bay measures *c.*430 – 500m from north to south, and it is the next bay to the north of Galey Bay. The water levels in Portrunny Bay ranges from 60cm to an average depth of 6m (Portrun Development Association 2019). Portrunny is the only townland that presents with archaeological evidence that could be examined in relation to this area as a place of assembly. The townland possesses is a small ecclesiastical complex including the remains of a church (RO042-044001-; Pl. 6.6), a house of indeterminate date (RO042-044003-), a holy well (RO042-168001-) and a holy tree (RO042-168002-). The church site is located 170m from the shore itself, perched on a hill overlooking the bay (Pl. 6.7).

Plate 6.06 – The ivy-covered remains of the medieval church (RO042-044001-) in Portrunny townland, Co. Roscommon (Author's photograph)

The holy well is dedicated to a local saint, one St. Diarmuid of Inchcleraun, whose feast day was celebrated on the 10th January (Ó Riain 2016, 263). Inchcleraun Island is located 3.3km east of Portrunny Bay, a large island with the remains of a substantial church complex on Lough Ree, and logistically this bay could well have served as a suitable natural harbour providing access between the religious community on the island and the mainland, perhaps resulting in the St. Diarmuid link between both sites.

Plate 6.7 – View east from medieval churchyard over Portrunny Bay, obscured by modern trees. This does, however, highlight the elevation and views that the church has over the bay at large (Author's photograph)

The manifestation of this assembly is very difficult to reconstruct. However one conclusion can be drawn based on the available evidence. The physical setting of the gathering, approaching the relatively shallow Portrunny Bay, may have lent itself to ceremonial and commercial activity which incorporated the characteristics of the natural harbour. There is a body of evidence to suggest that large bodies of water are, in some instances, a part of *óenach* celebrations in medieval Ireland (MacNeill 2008, 67; O'Flaherty 2014, 12). More than this, livestock purification rituals are a recurring theme of water-sited assemblies in Ireland, and may indicate a May date of the festivities, in order to mark the summer, and the forthcoming season of bounty. With this in mind, and given the locale, it would not be out of the question to suggest that the shallow waters of Lough Ree at Portrunny Bay could have been the scene of a ritual concerning the swimming of, particularly, cattle and horses, with a view to ensuring their health in the coming year. We have already witnessed the primacy of cattle production in this area, which serves to strengthen the argument (see 3.5.1).

From a commercial perspective, the rent and tribute, in the form of livestock, provided to the lord at these seasonal events may have been quickly traded, or processed into their resources at the postulated butchery and tanning complex, as indicated by the place-names of nearby Cornamart, Corboley, Curraghalaher (see 3.5.1) and Longnamuck, with a view to trade or transportation utilising the trade route provided by the River Shannon. An early fourteenth century legal treatise, written by Giolla na Naomh Mac Aodhagáin, refers to live cattle being traded from a boat, and Kelly has theorised that due to the likely provenance of the treatise being in eastern Connacht, it may be describing trade on the River Shannon, thus highlighting the possible routine trade in both live cattle and their resources at sheltered bays such as Portrunny on Lough Ree (Kelly 2016a, 49; 2020, 169).

In order to provide an appraisal of Portrunny as a site of assembly, its political and geographic characteristics must be considered also. It is of note that this site is located very close to the boundary of the two territories of Tír Maine and Machaire Connacht. Ó Riain highlights the societal value placed on the hosting of communal assemblies at territorial boundaries, and even the logistical value of, upon occasion, neighbouring communities using the gathering in order to trade, strengthen dynastic or familial ties, renew peace or wage war, the assembly offered a ready-made circumstance for these actions to occur (Ó Riain 1972, 24; 1974, 67). FitzPatrick has also discussed the transition of assembly and inauguration practices in some cases away from prehistoric funerary monuments, and to religious establishments (FitzPatrick 2003, 77; 2004, 174, 227, 229) and these characteristics are also readily apparent at Portrunny.

To conclude, the historical evidence available for Portrunny, coupled with its proximity to the *cenn áit* of Galey, as well as the topography and the geopolitical character of the bay, provide a strong case for this site being an important *oireachtas* and *óenach* location for the later medieval Ó Cellaig lords, particularly as they returned to prominence in their ancestral *trícha cét* of Tír Maine. The practice of convening a seasonal fair at Portrunny seems to have fallen out of use by the early seventeenth century, as the first patent issued to hold a fair at nearby Knockcroghery was granted to Colla O'Kelly during the reign of James I of England (Anon. 1853, 106; 2.6).

6.3.4 – Summary of the Galey Bay **cenn áit**

To conclude this case study, it is left to summarise what can be derived from the range of source materials available on the region, and the role played by the Ó Cellaig lords of Uí Maine in shaping it through the period. The natural environment of this eastern Connacht corridor in the

early and later medieval period was composed of substantial areas of woodland, particularly to the south. Early Uí Maine dominance of this part of Tír Maine is forthcoming, particularly from the historical source material, prior to the ascendancy of the Uí Chonchobair in the area. The re-emergence of the Uí Chellaig as overlords in what was their ancestral *trícha cét* of Tír Maine takes shape from the mid fourteenth century onwards, and this coincides with the establishment of an Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* in the area around Galey Bay, on the shores of Lough Ree, perhaps taking over an existing Ó Conchobair fortress.

Galey Bay has been demonstrated to have been the most likely location of the famous mid fourteenth-century feast and gathering of poets patronised by Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig and immortalised in the poem *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*. The hosting of this event was a display of the wealth available to this later medieval lord of Uí Maine, as well as the power and influence which Ó Cellaig possessed both culturally and politically at that time (see 6.3.1.2).

Analysis of the archaeological remains, alongside the breadth of source material, indicates that the mid-fourteenth century elite residence at Galey consisted of a *cathair*-type dry-stone-walled defensive enclosure, which may have possessed a timber superstructure, and which utilised the defensibility provided by the natural promontory which jutted into Galey Bay. This was further defended by a pair of substantial, water-filled ditches and at least one internal bank. There is evidence surrounding this site for landing features for watercraft, which may have been used to provide waterborne access to Galey at this time. It is also likely that a timber hall and additional service buildings were located within this cashel (see 6.3.2.1; Fig. 6.4). The use of this elite settlement form by the high-medieval Uí Chellaig at Galey creates a narrative of Gaelic lordship rooted in continuity and legitimacy in the landscape, in keeping with some of the ways in which lordship was displayed in later medieval Gaelic Ireland more generally. Galey remained an important Ó Cellaig centre into the late medieval period, and continuing a pattern that has emerged at other Uí Maine *cenn áiteanna*, this manifested in the form of a tower house castle. This tower house, probably constructed before the late-sixteenth century, incorporated the earlier cashel as its surrounding bawn wall, and in doing so, retained a strong link with the past (see 6.3.2.2). Along with the presence of an elite residence, an associated settlement has been identified at *Baile Gáile* (see 6.3.3.1; 6.3.3.2), now Knockcroghery, as well as a landscape of annual or periodic assembly activity at nearby Portrunny (see 6.3.3.4). A prominent service kindred of the Uí Chellaig, the Uí Dubhagáin poets, were also present in this area. Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin, *saoi sheancadha ocus ollam* to the Uí Maine during his lifetime, resided and passed away in 1372 at another establishment under Ó Cellaig patronage and

control during this period, that of the hospital run by the Crutched Friars of St. John the Baptist at nearby Rindoon (see 6.3.3.3; Fig. 6.10). It is even possible to suggest that Galey grew in importance in the region more generally from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, due to its natural harbour and the trade and transport opportunity that presented in linking Roscommon with the River Shannon and further afield, possibly supplanting the value previously held by Anglo-Norman Rindoon in the process.

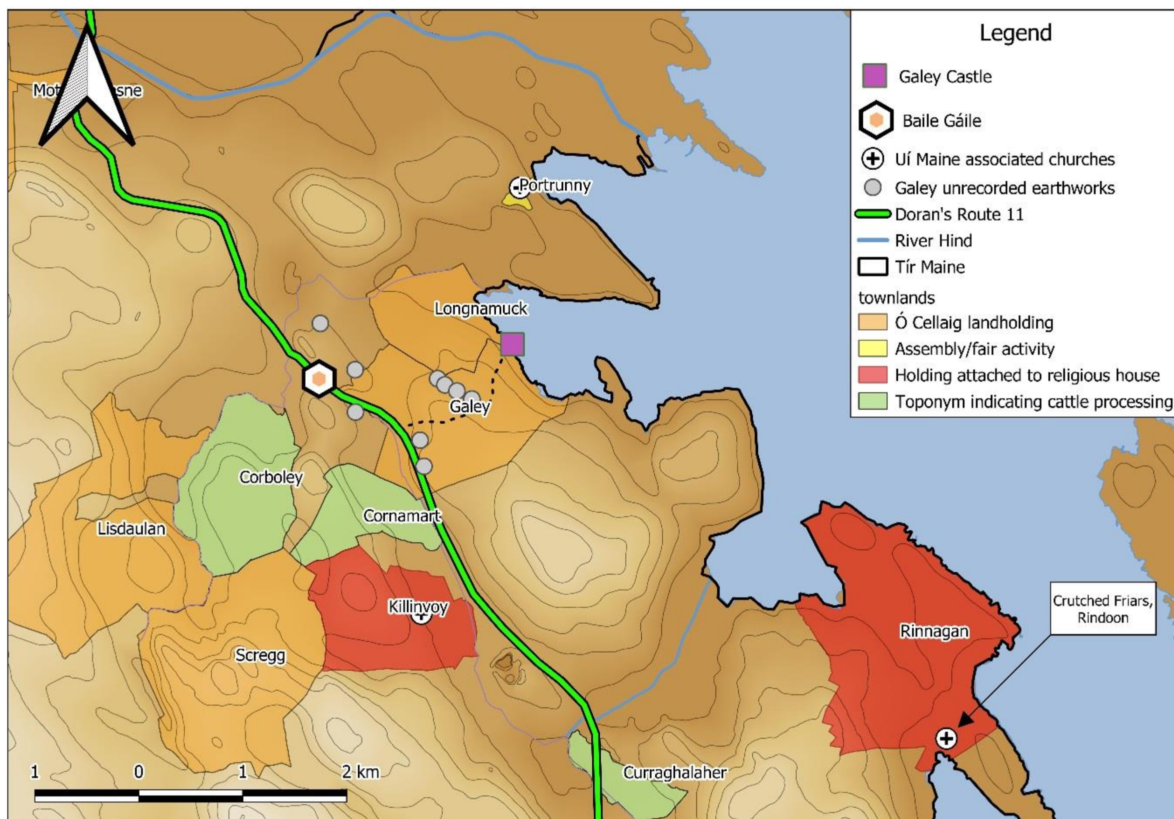

Figure 6.10 – Summary of the Galey Bay case study, with the principal locations outlined.

This combination of lordly centre, nucleated settlement, assembly place, patronised religious house, and its centrality in relation to overland and riverine communication routes presents Galey as a very prominent *cenn áit* for the Ó Cellaig elites, from the mid-fourteenth century through to the end of the medieval period and beyond. It is interesting to catalogue these various elements, which indicate that this *cenn áit* was ordered in what could be described as 'dispersed nucleation', in the sense that while this lordly centre is not tightly arranged geographically, many of the key features of later medieval lordship were to be found in the immediate hinterland around the focal point of Galey Bay. The ordering of the elite landscape in this manner is not limited to Galey, and the present writer believes that this characteristic is also apparent at Lough Croan (see 5.2.4), Callow Lough (see 5.3.5) and Ballaghdacker

Lough/Athleague lordly centres (see 5.4.4; 6.4.4). The possible reasons for this will be considered in the discussion chapter.

6.4 – Case Study: Athleague, Co. Roscommon

The Athleague case study has been identified as a location of interest to the present research, due to the presence of Athleague on the historical record as a principal and highly-prized location of the Uí Chellaig within the Uí Maine lordship throughout the later medieval period (see 2.5; 2.6). By the fifteenth century, Athleague was located within the *oireacht* of *Túath Átha Liaig,* close to the northern boundary of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine (Fig. 6.11). The defining physical feature in this area is the River Suck (see 3.2.3). The village of Athleague (*Áth an liag* – ford of the stones) is located on one of a number of important fords or crossing-points along this river, around which settlement activity developed. Athleague served and continues to serve as one of a number of settlements located on the main Ballinasloe to Roscommon road, the effective descendant of Doran's Route 9 (see 3.3), and as a bridging point between the southern and northern parts of the modern county. Exploring this riverine *cenn áit*, and the environment surrounding it, is key to understanding how this Gaelic lordship operated over the course of the whole period.

6.4.1 – The Natural Environment and Toponymy Around Athleague

A series of river fords punctuate the study area as a whole, chief among them Athleague, Ballyforan, *Áth Nadsluaigh*, and more locally to this case study area, the ford at Mount Talbot, formerly known as *Béal an átha* (the ford mouth), *Bhéal an Átha Uí Cheallaigh* (Ó Cellaig's ford mouth) and later *Cluain na gCloidhe* (the walled or ditched meadow) (Connolly 2014, 6, 9). While Athleague and its near vicinity will provide the focal point of this discussion, it is important to mention the ford at Mount Talbot, located only 5km to the south of Athleague. The aforementioned earlier place-name of Mount Talbot, coupled with the townland names of the area surrounding it, such as Cloonakilleg – *Cluain na coill' leaga* (lawn of the stony wood), Creeharmore – *Criathar mór* (great morass), among others, indicate a landscape characterised by woodland, in the form of the woods of Athleague, as well as bogland and areas where travel was restricted, an dominant aspect of this area (see 3.2). In general, the townlands become much larger immediately to the west of the River Suck in this region, by comparison to the townlands in the civil parishes and what were the later medieval parishes of Taghboy and Tisrara, a clear indication of the more limited nature of these townlands in terms of being able to sustain populations in the district.

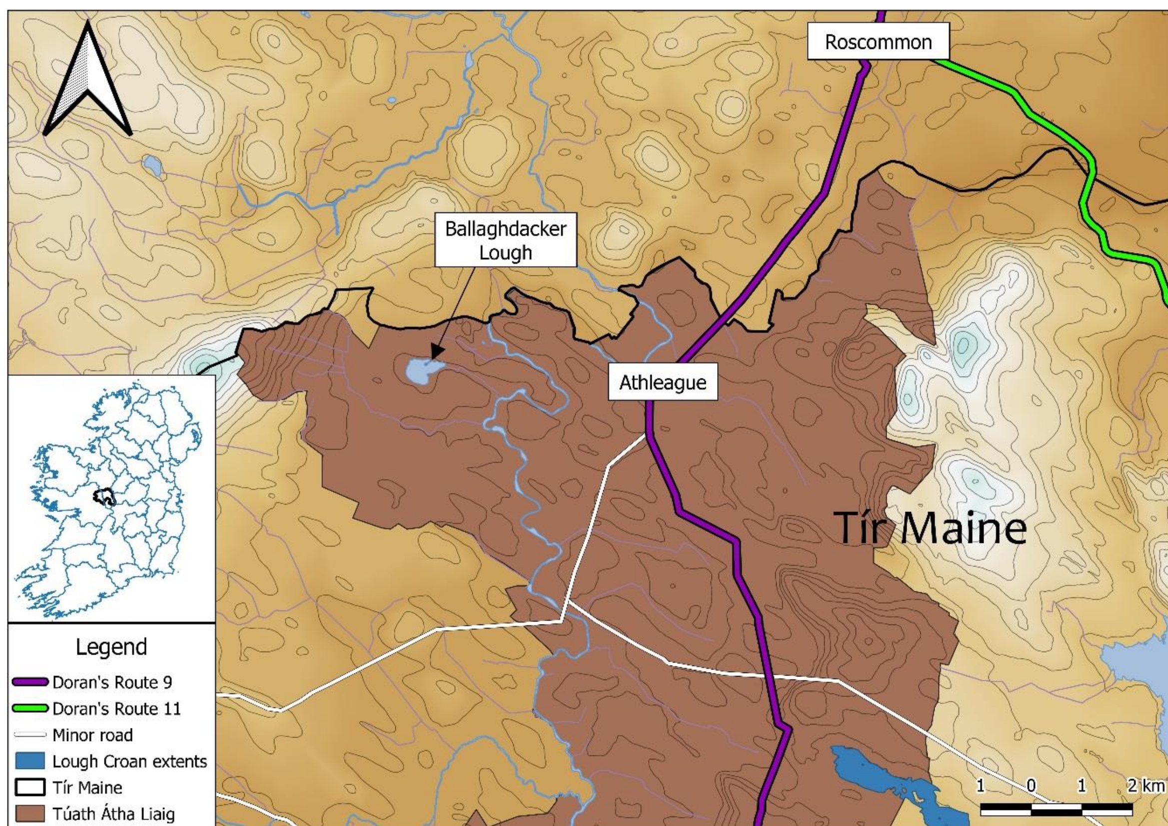

Figure 6.11 – Location of Athleague in the oireacht *of* Túath Átha Liaig*, close to the northern boundary of the* trícha cét *of Tír Maine. Boundaries of these territories in* c. 1400*, defined after Nicholls (1969) and MacCotter (2014).*

The limited nature of this area in terms of access and settlement as it extends further west from the River Suck in the pre-modern period is strongly evident in the archaeological remains. Mapping the ringfort distribution of this area indicates a general paucity of sites (Fig. 3.2), which is due in no small part to the vast expanses of bogland that dominate in the area from Athleague in the north, to Ahascragh and Ballinasloe to the south. It is likely, under these circumstances, that the modern route (N63) connecting Athleague to Mount Talbot, Ballygar, Newbridge, Mountbellew and onwards to central Galway, is actually a continuation of a long established access route. The route has chosen itself, in essence, as the higher value land facilitates easier transfer through an area that is characterised by these large areas of bog and woodland. The annual winter floods of the Suck Callows further limit the use of the area immediately adjacent to the river, and a landscape that is characterised by a series of small tributary rivers and streams, such as the Shiven, Castlegar, Cloonlyon and Bunowen/Ahascragh Rivers, that feed into the larger river.

The centre of Athleague village itself is located where three townlands meet, named Athleague, Glebe (denoting land attached to a religious house), and Cloonykelly – *Cluain Uí Chellaig*, which plainly indicates an Ó Cellaig landholding.

6.4.2 – Historical Background of Later Medieval Athleague

Athleague is the shortened form of the place-name *Áth Liag Maonagáin*, which refers to a local saint Maonagán of Athleague (Ó Riain 2016, 449). It is possible that the remains of the presumed later medieval parish church (RO041-048007-), located in the townland of Glebe, on the western bank of the River Suck, adjacent to the bridge in Athleague, had an early medieval precursor on the same site, which could be the foundation associated with Maonagáin.

One of the earliest attestations to Athleague in the historical record is ecclesiastical in nature, and occurs for the year 1235:

'The church of *an Druimne* at Athleague was burnt, with the charters (?) and all the books of the Canons' (*AC*).

This record may provide the reason why there is no surviving evidence on site of the aforementioned early medieval ecclesiastical foundation, perhaps built over in the aftermath of the fire. Athleague is recorded for a second time in the thirteenth century (1266), due to the death of a prominent prior of Roscommon and Athleague, one Mael Isa Ó hAnainn (*AC*). This reference is used to attach this religious house to the order of Augustinian Canons, and it seems to have ceased to exist by 1466 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 158). A series of eighteenth and nineteenth century O'Kelly grave memorials, as well as the remains of a late medieval graveslab inscribed with the Ó Cellaig name, indicate that the old parish church and graveyard at Athleague was an important traditional Ó Cellaig burial place in the area (M. B. Timoney pers. comm).

Moving later into the thirteenth century, Athleague more generally is one of the districts in the King's Cantred of Tyrmany which is granted to an Anglo-Norman baron, Richard de Exeter, when he is granted a total of fifty librates[50] of land in 1280-81, within which he constructed a castle at Athleague (Walton 1980, 478-9). This castle is regarded as being destroyed by the Irish by 1284, after which de Exeter gave up custody of the royal castles of Roscommon and Rindoon (Walton 1980, 479). The form and location of this castle is not known, however, the most likely position for it in the landscape is adjacent to the ford which gives Athleague its name. This is the first attested fortification at Athleague, and this construction, if located where suggested, is possibly the first of a series of building phases to take place here.

[50] A librate is defined as a unit of land with an annual value of one pound, with an area of 4 oxgangs of 13 acres each.

In 1337, Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, is recorded as building a stronghold or *foslongport* at Athleague for defence against an Edmund de Burgh (*AC*). However, later that year Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair was defeated, wounded and taken prisoner by the Uí Chellaig, as well as having his horses and armour plundered, and many of his men killed (*AC*). Perhaps this was in response to the construction at Athleague, which, as we have already seen, was located in the contested borderlands of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine (see 3.3), and these events may be just further evidence for the grappling for control of Athleague that was taking place throughout the medieval period. From this point on, it can be concluded that Athleague was under the control of the Uí Chellaig.

Further evidence for the establishment of Athleague as a *cenn áit* for the Uí Chellaig survives for the late fourteenth century, and the beginning of the fifteenth century. The late-fourteenth century praise poem *Fa a urraidh labhras leac Theamhrach*, in praise of Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, refers to the Uí Chellaig as 'the fierce warriors of Athleague'[51], while the Ó Cellaig genealogies in *Leabhar Ua Maine* records the death in 1410 of Tadhg Ó Cellaig, who reigned as lord of Uí Maine for six years. He is recorded as dying at *Áth Liag Maonagáin* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 67). Tadhg presumably died in his own residence, located at the ford of the river.

Two late-fifteenth century entries highlight the continued presence of Ó Cellaig elite residence at Athleague. The *badhbhdhúin* of Athleague is described as being destroyed in 1487 (*AFM*), which indicates that by this time there was an enclosing structure, which could have been constructed of stone or organic material, around the stronghold. At this point in time, and through analogy with the presence of the fifteenth-century castle at Callow Lough (see 5.3.3.3), it can be argued that this bawn was part of a larger *cenn áit* complex at Athleague.

The castle of Athleague is attested to in 1499, as part of a leadership struggle between branches of the family (*AFM*; see 2.6). The very end of the fifteenth century saw Athleague captured by Gearóid Mór Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare and Justiciar of Ireland, and taken from the 'sons of William O'Kelly', who were sent west across the River Suck (see 2.6). It was recaptured by Mac William Burke in the same year, and he delivered it up to a different branch of the Ó Cellaig family, one Maolsechlainn son of Tadhg son of Donnchadh Ó Cellaig of *Loch an Dúin* (see 2.5; 5.4), the newly installed lord of Uí Maine. Sir Thomas le Strange was leasing Athleague Castle from Elizabeth I from at least as early as 1573, and it remained as part of the

[51] Translation provided by Colmán Ó Raghallaigh, pers comm. See email 14th July 2020.

le Strange possessions until at least 1596 (Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019; *Compossicion*, 167; Cronin 1980, 110, 117). A fiant from 1578 records a pardon for 'Mellaghlen O Kellye, Wm. O Kellye, and Brien McRowrie, of Alieg' which indicated that the Uí Chellaig did not disappear from Athleague after the arrival of le Strange (*Fiants* II, 438 [3221]). The fortified house extant in the village was possibly constructed on the site by the earl of Clanricarde, who seems to have taken control of Athleague in *c.*1617 (*Clanricard Letters*, 167; Simington (ed.) 1949, 103). However, it is also possible that one of the le Strange owners of the estate could have constructed the fortified house in the very late sixteenth century, or early years of the seventeenth century.

6.4.3 – The Archaeology of the Athleague **cenn áit**

At the core of the Athleague lordly centre, two focal points of elite settlement are discernible from the historical record which can be ascribed to the Ó Cellaig. As we have seen, Athleague itself is historically-attested as a focal point from the thirteenth century onwards, passing from Anglo-Norman hands through to Gaelic Ó Conchobhair, then Ó Cellaig hands, and finally English le Strange and Clanricarde control by the mid-seventeenth century. All of this building and habitation has left the focal point of activity, Athleague Castle, very much changed from its later medieval form (Pl. 6.8).

6.4.3.1 – Athleague Castle

Plate 6.8 – Fortified house at Athleague Castle, Co. Roscommon. The available evidence suggests that this area is the focal point of, initially Anglo-Norman and later Gaelic, elite residence from the thirteenth-century onwards, with the fortified house merely the latest phase of this activity (Author's photograph).

The surviving remains are that of a fortified house of likely very late sixteenth- or early seventeenth century date (RO041-048005-). Fortified houses, a form of castle partly influenced by architectural principles linked to the Renaissance, date from the very late sixteenth-century, with the last ones being built in the late 1640s (Craig 1982, 128-31; Sweetman 2000, 173-93; O'Conor 2007, 191; Lyttleton 2013, 108-60). The earliest example of a fortified house, built on Renaissance principles, in Roscommon dates to *c.*1580 (Murphy and O'Conor 2008, 29-35). The house stands as a rectangular three-storey structure with an attic, with internal dimensions of 15.3m north/south by 6.1m east/west, of which just the northern and southern gables survive complete. Rectangular towers, each of three storeys and an attic, with internal dimensions of 5.4m north/south by 5.1m east/west, are attached to the north-eastern and south-eastern angles with gables on the eastern and western walls, fireplaces on the western walls and windows on the other walls. This fortified house is described by Craig as both a U-plan

building, and a rectangle-plus-flankers building, with the architecture focussed more on a pleasing aesthetic than defensive advantage (Craig 1976, 25; 1982, 128; Pl. 6.9).

Plate 6.9 – Vertical aerial image of the fortified house now known as Athleague Castle. The two projecting towers flank a ruined rectangular building, which was located centrally on the image, between the pair of chimney stacks oriented northeast/southwest. North indicated by the white arrow. (Image courtesy of Carl Bryer)

While the masonry remains at Athleague cover much of its later medieval character, some traces do survive. The fortified house retains some punch-dressed building stones (Pl. 6.10). While punch-dressed stone does occur within a few fortified houses (Murphy and O'Conor 2008, 27), punch-dressed stone is mostly associated with tower houses and friaries, as noted above (see 5.2.1; 5.3.3.3; 6.3.2.2). This perhaps presents evidence for the recycling of stone and suggests that the historically-attested late fifteenth-century castle at Athleague may have been a tower house.

Plate 6.10 – One example of the punch-dressed stone from within the fortified house of Athleague Castle. This cut stone was one of two such pieces incorporated into a first floor fireplace in the north-western flanking tower of the castle (Author's photograph).

6.4.3.2 – The **bódhún** *of Athleague*

More than this however, the area surrounding the castle shows evidence of substantial earthworks, traces of which survive for inspection. Post medieval and modern cartographic sources provide a better impression of what this site once possessed, and record Athleague Castle as being surrounded by the redirected waters of the River Suck. The Strafford Survey map shows Athleague located at a loop on the river, with the castle and a mill sited on an island-type enclosure demarcated by both the Suck and a wet ditch (Fig. 6.12).

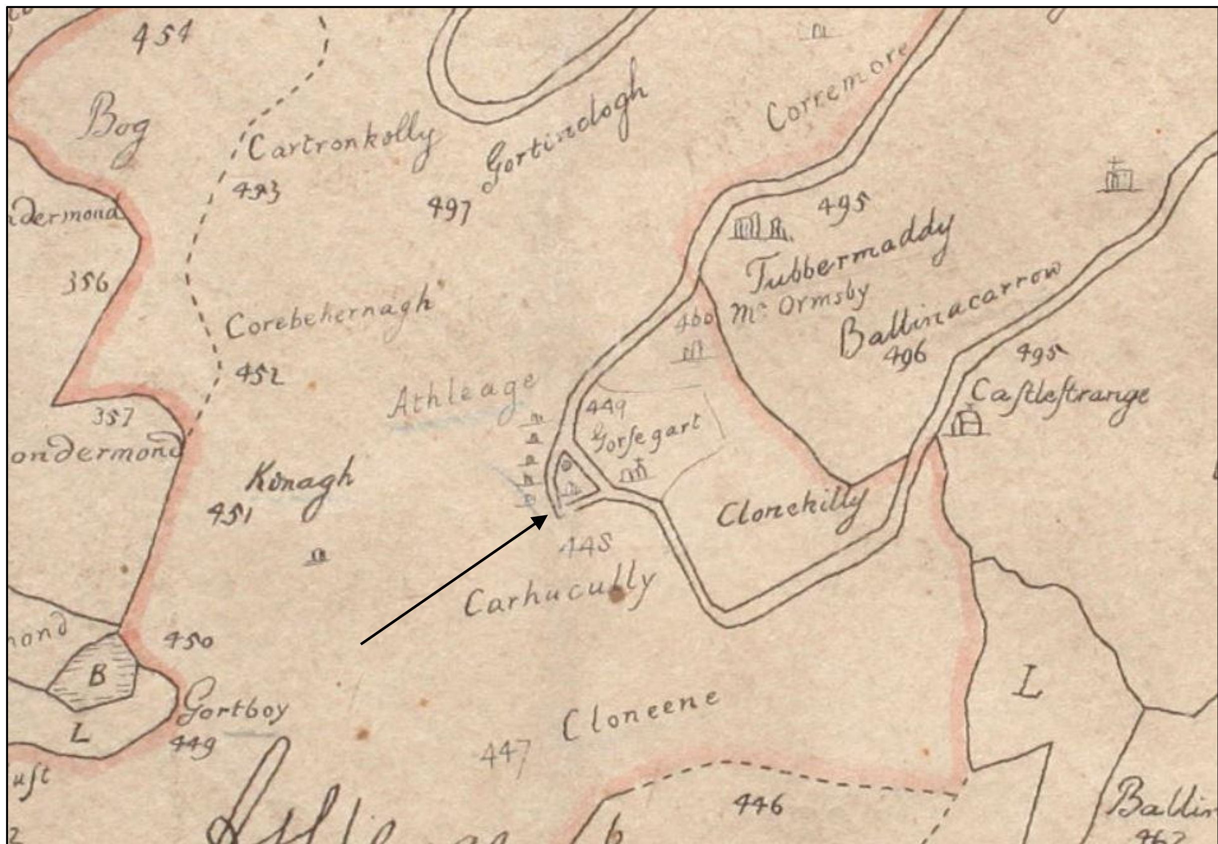

Figure 6.12 – Image of Athleague Castle in its wider landscape setting, taken from the Strafford Survey map c.*1636. The black arrow indicates the presence of an 'island' on the River Suck at Athleague. Two symbols are recorded within the island, a circular symbol, indicating a mill, and a building, which seems to be Athleague Castle (Courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland: [http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#c=Roscommon).](http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#c=Roscommon)*

The wet ditch has now silted up extensively in its surrounds of the castle, but traces of it survive in the form of a narrow drain, which broadly follows the same course of the earlier earthworks. However, initially the Bog Commission map of the district (Griffths 1809-1814; Fig. 6.13), and then the Ordnance Survey Twenty-Five-Inch and Cassini Six-Inch maps (Fig. 6.14 [a-b]), all indicate the survival of this wet ditch into the nineteenth century, and in greater detail. Both of the more modern maps mark out an area of *c.*21,950m² that is demarcated by this wet ditch. The only point of access on to this 'island' was located close to the eastern end of the bridge across the River Suck at this point. The measurements gathered from these maps indicate that the ditch measured *c.*8m-9m in width along most of its course, and the ditch in the north-eastern corner seems to be cut to create a flanking defensive feature (Fig. 6.14; Pl. 6.11), making it a very substantial and complex earthwork, with defensive functions, much more than what would be required just for a race to serve a mill complex.

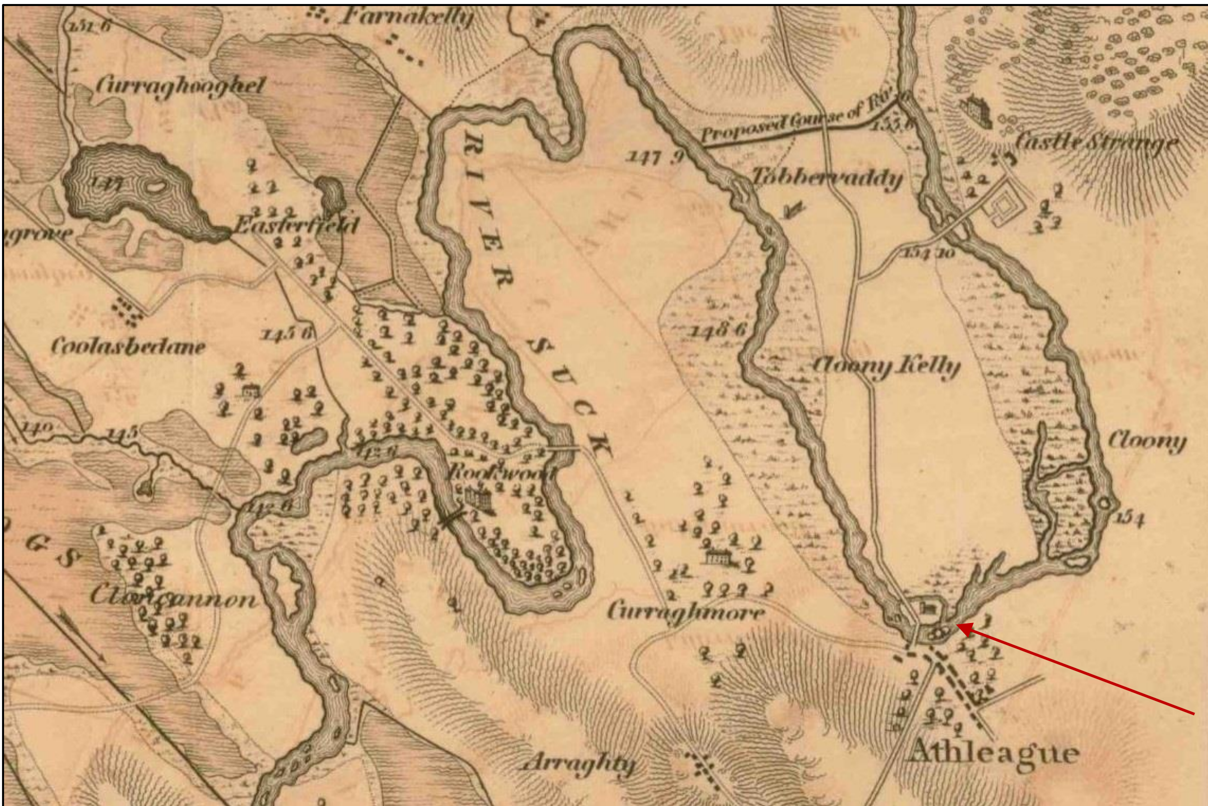

Figure 6.13 – Bog Commission map of the district of Athleague and Ballaghdacker Lough. Note the siting of Athleague Castle within a moated 'island' on the River Suck in the bottom right of the image, as indicated by the red arrow (Griffths 1809-1814).

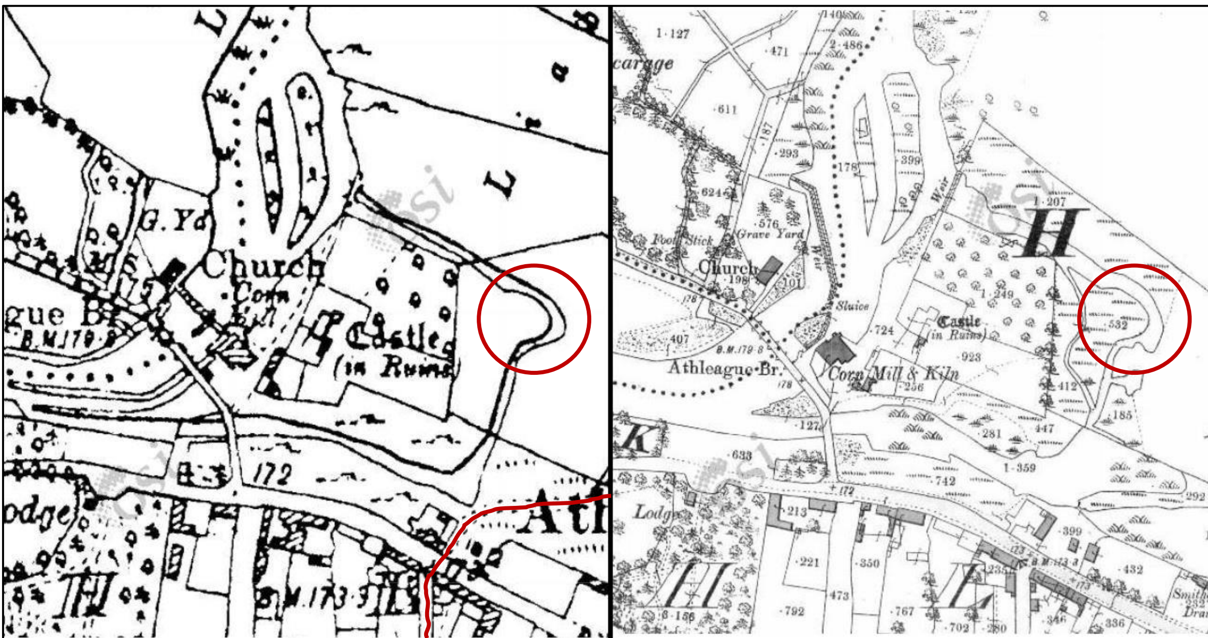

Figure 6.14 – The wet ditch which surrounded the site of Athleague Castle, as per the Cassini Six-inch [a] and Historic Twenty-Five--inch [b] maps. The recorded wet ditch presents with evidence of being cut in order to accommodate flanking defence on the north-eastern side of the earthwork (encircled on both maps). This flanking defence seems to have provided cover over the southeast corner of the defences, which were closest to the course of the pre-modern main road [highlighted by the red line in 6.13a through Athleague.

Plate 6.11 – The silted up and filled in remnants of the section of bódhún *ditch during winter high water levels [outlined by the blue arrows] as it flows into the more recently cut drain [left of image]. This section seems to have been constructed to provide flanking defence to the south-eastern corner of the enclosure (see Fig. 6.14). The red arrow highlights the degraded remains of an internal bank, which would have been more substantial in times past, and must have continued over the course of the* bódhún *ditch (Author's photograph).*

This wet ditch therefore appears to have served either a contemporaneous dual role of defensive ditch and millrace for the occupants and lords of the castle, or possibly the ditch was constructed initially for the purpose of protection, with the secondary role of millrace occurring later in its history (Fig. 6.15). That being the case, it is possible that this earthwork was of some antiquity.

The presence of this wet ditch surrounding what was the focal point of lordly settlement at Athleague throughout the later medieval and post medieval period begs the question of whether this earthwork is part of the physical manifestation of the historically-attested fifteenth-century *badhbhdhúin* (*bódhún*) of Athleague. Comparing it with the evidence of a wet ditch demarcating the promontory at Callow (see 5.3.3.2; Fig. 5.24), also described as a *bódhún*, enables us to theorise on what the archaeological character of these *bódhún* might have been more generally in later medieval Ireland. It is possible that their main use was as a very large enclosure (much larger than a normal castle courtyard or bawn) attached to and associated with

the lordly residence, the primary role of which was to contain and protect the chief's large herds of cattle from raiding. The large areas that are enclosed at both Callow (*c.*14,820m²) and Athleague (*c.*21,950m²) would obviously enable the sheltering of substantial herds, which we know were both a major economic generator and an important status symbol amongst these Gaelic lords (see 3.5.5). It is important to note that the First Edition Ordnance Survey 25-Inch map records the presence of a 'Fair Green' 220m to the east of the *bódhún* earthwork at Athleague, and the earl of Clanricarde was granted a patent to (re)establish two fairs at Athleague in 1635, possibly indicating that the settlement of Athleague was the location for a bi-annual fair of longstanding (Anon 1853, 105, 143).

*Figure 6.15 –*Bódhún *of Athleague, as indicated from the OS Historic 25-inch map. Note again the pre-modern route of Doran's Route 9 through the settlement of Athleague, consistent with the archaeological remains of a road-road/trackway at (RO041-048009-).*

6.4.4 – Summary of the Athleague cenn áit

The Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* at Athleague is characterised by its location at a principal fording place over the River Suck. At Athleague itself, as well as at Ballaghdacker Lough (see 5.4), the River Hind (see Appendix 3) and Cornapallis (see 4.7), all in its near vicinity, we see a longstanding and connected elite landscape emerge, carrying evidence of a broad range of aspects related to later medieval Gaelic society. These include the presence of service kindreds to the lord, a

range of elite settlement forms, evidence of the economic activity conducted in the area (see 3.5.3), and the value inherent in controlling a major regional roadway in later medieval Ireland. Combined, they create a picture of Athleague as a highly-prized settlement and stronghold in later medieval Uí Maine, which plays itself out in the list of those who occupied the *cenn áit* through the course of that period. It is safe to say that the river, and the intersection between road and waterway, were key to its establishment as an important lordly centre in this part of the Ó Cellaig lordship (Fig. 6.16).

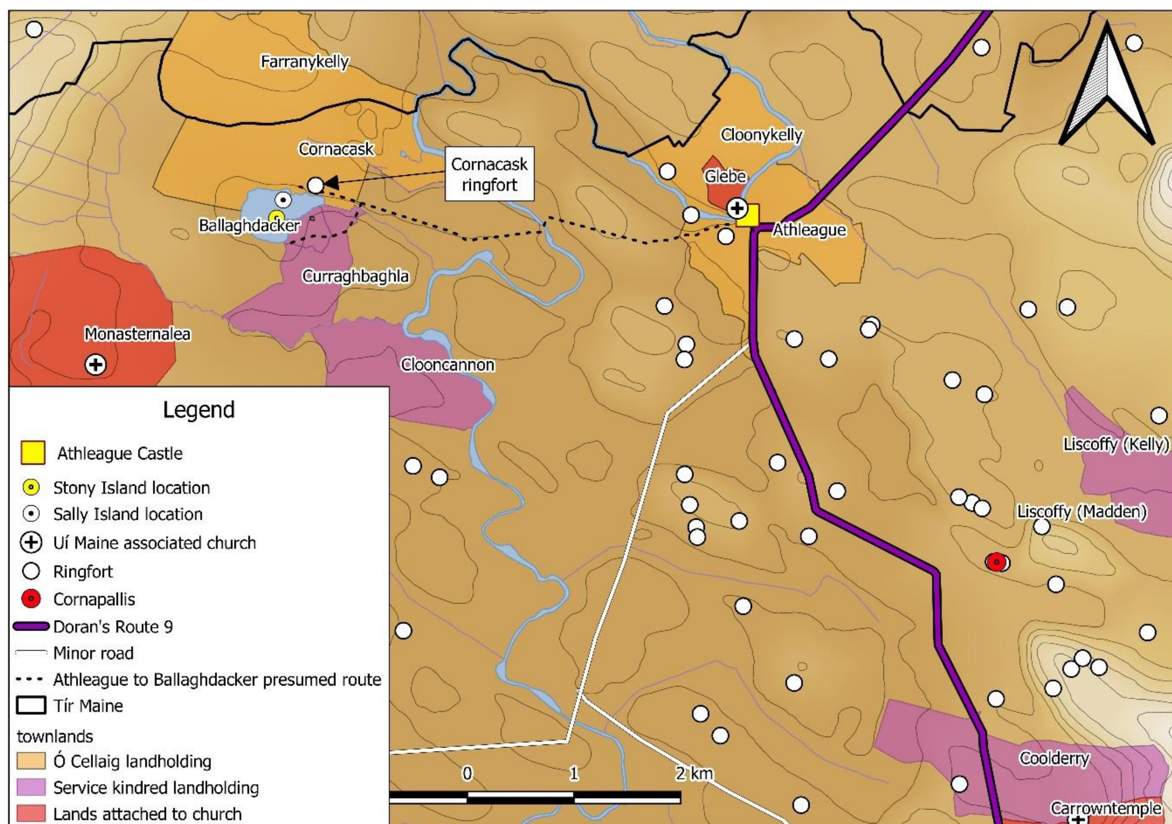

Figure 6.16 – Summary of the Athleague and Ballaghdacker Lough case studies, with principal locations outlined.

6.5 – Case Study: The Late Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordly Centre of Mote Castle

O'Donovan (*Tribes and Customs*, 3) stated that an Ó Cellaig castle existed at 'Moate '(Mote Demesne) near Roscommon during the late medieval period. Mote Castle was in the possession of one Rory Ó Cellaig in 1573, presumably the same Rory mentioned in a fiant for the year 1578 (Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019; *Fiants* II, 457 [3338],). The latter seems to have belonged to a junior branch of the Ó Cellaig sept at that time (*Tribes and Customs*, 114). Browne's 1591 map of Connacht depicts a castle at 'Mote', adjacent to what is clearly the right bank of the River Hind, just to the south of Roscommon town, in the *oireacht* of the Heyny, on what was the northern border of Tír Maine and, so, the northernmost edge of the Ó Cellaig

lordship of Uí Maine in the late medieval period (Fig. 6.17). The Croftons, who were of New English origin, are recorded as having built (or rebuilt) a castle at Mote *c*.1630 (Crofton (ed.) 1911, 78). Mote, which lay in Mote Demesne townland, became the centre of their landed estate in Roscommon and remained so until recent times. It appears that the Croftons moved to Mote in the early seventeenth century, having resided at nearby Ballymurray until then (http://landedestates.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/family-show.jsp?id=1383). The Strafford Survey of the 1630s records a townland (which is now incorporated into the present townland of Mote Demesne called 'Togherfin' (*An Tochar Finn*), which translates as the 'bright/white causeway/wooden trackway', in the vicinity of the castle (http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Athlone&c=Roscommon). This place-name is a hint, no more, that there was a long established routeway running by the castle, perhaps linking this very northerly part of Tír Maine to Roscommon Town. If this road did exist, along with the fact that the castle lay beside the Hind, might suggest that there was a ford or even a bridge at this point.

Figure 6.17 – Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) with 'Mote C.' and 'Kill Mayne Ch.'. (Copyright 2011 The Board of Trinity College Dublin.)

The historical and cartographic sources, therefore, indicate that there was an Ó Cellaig castle beside the River Hind in what was to become Mote Demesne townland during the late medieval period, seemingly until the Croftons took control of the site in the early seventeenth century. Where exactly was this castle located? What form did it take? At first glance, this is a difficult

question to answer as there appears to be no visible surface remains of a castle within Mote Demesne townland today. In this respect, a later copy of an illustration first drawn in 1730, which is entitled 'The Mote of Other Days', is a simple drawing depicting the main buildings of the Crofton estate as they appeared in the early eighteenth century. This complex is said to have been located on the site of the later farmyard buildings of Mote Park (Crofton 1895, 10), about 1.5km north of the site of Kilmeane Church (Fig. 6.17), a later medieval parish church, and so located right beside the right bank of the River Hind. The illustration depicts a tower with a flag on its top pictured behind and much higher than a building of at least six bays, which is referred to as a house (Fig. 6.18). It has been suggested that this may be a representation of the castle constructed by the Croftons *c*.1630 (Crofton 1895, 9-10). However, this originally early eighteenth-century illustration shows that the tower-like structure was at least four storeys in height, if not more. In fact, its size and general dimensions makes it looks very like a tower house castle, which would have been an unlikely choice of castle for the New English Croftons to have built *c*.1630, as such new families in Roscommon tended to build fortified houses and stronghouses at that time (O'Conor 2007, 191-8). Furthermore, an eighteenth-century mill (marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map of the 1830s) within the farmyard at Mote Park has re-used punch-dressed stones (Pl. 6.13) and what appear to the remains of loops (Pl. 6.12), including a gun-loop, within it. As stated above, punch-dressed stones in a secular context are associated with tower houses of mostly fifteenth and sixteenth-century date (see 5.2.1; 5.3.3.3; 6.4.3.1). Therefore, the overall evidence suggests the strong possibility that the historically-attested Ó Cellaig castle at Mote, mentioned in 1573 and marked on the 1591 Browne map, which was located beside a roadway and possible crossing point over the Hind, was a tower house.

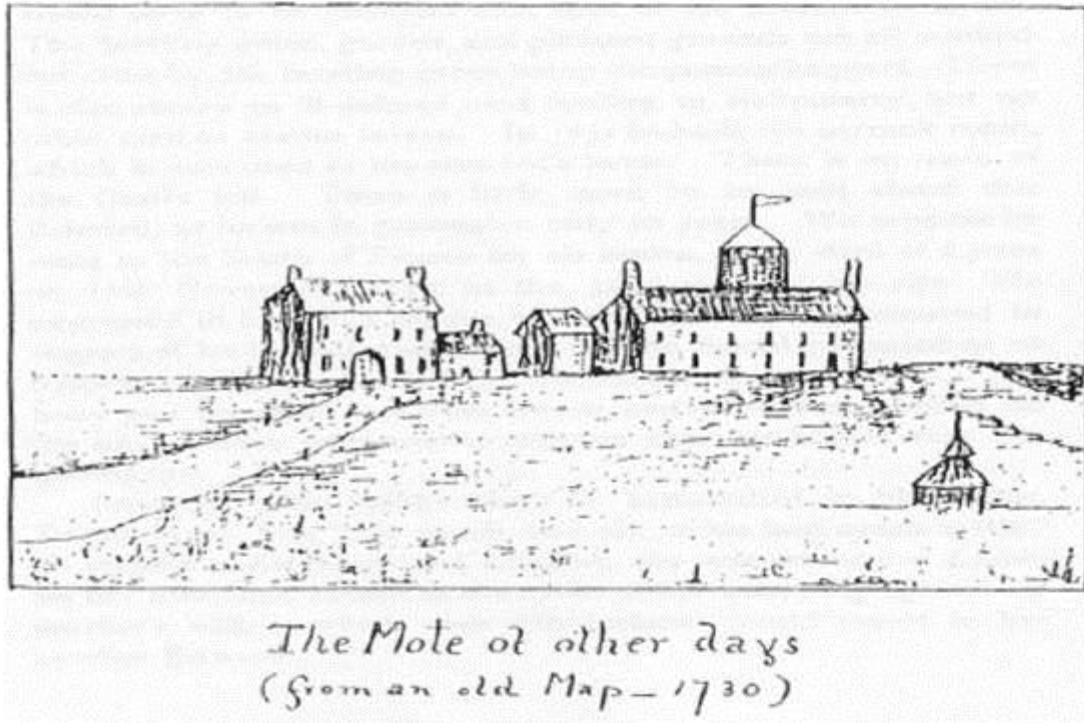

Figure 6.18 – The Mote of other days. Note the possible four-storey tower with the flag on the roof, behind the building on the right-hand side of the image. (Image taken from The Story of Mote *by Francis Crofton 1895, 9-10)*

Plate 6.012 – The best preserved of the loops which are incorporated into the building fabric of a mill building located in Mote Demesne, Co. Roscommon. This is possible evidence for the remodelling of the mill building out of the remains of a tower house castle. (Image courtesy of Martin A. Timoney).

Plate 6.013 – One of the finest examples of punch-dressing found incorporated into the mill building in Mote Demesne, Co. Roscommon, which leads to the conclusion that the historically-attested Ó Cellaig castle at Mote was located here, and is likely to have taken the form of a tower house (Image courtesy of Martin A. Timoney).

Was there an earlier, pre-tower house, Ó Cellaig residence at this site? There is no direct evidence for one. However, there is a reference in 1339 to Ruaidhri *na Maor* Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, being killed by Cathal Ó Conchubhair in *Cill Mhiadhan* (Kilmeane Church?) on his way home to his residence (*AC*; *Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment ii*, 65; see, also, Ó hAisbéil 2018, 176). As stated, the later medieval parish church of Kilmeane (RO042-016001-) lies about 1.5km south of the site of Mote Castle, still within Mote Demesne townland. This church is mentioned in the Ecclesiastical Taxation of Ireland, carried out in the very early fourteenth century (*CDI*, v, 224). Furthermore, the church, which has original doorways in its north and south wall, has the remains of an ecclesiastical enclosure around it (RO042-016007-), which is *c.*80m in diameter. This suggests that this was originally an important church site during the early medieval period, as well as functioning as a later medieval parish church. The 1339 reference and the importance of this church site throughout the whole medieval period hints strongly that there was an earlier, pre-tower house Ó Cellaig residence in the general vicinity of Kilmeane Church. It is possible that this earlier residence lay under the later tower house called Mote Castle.

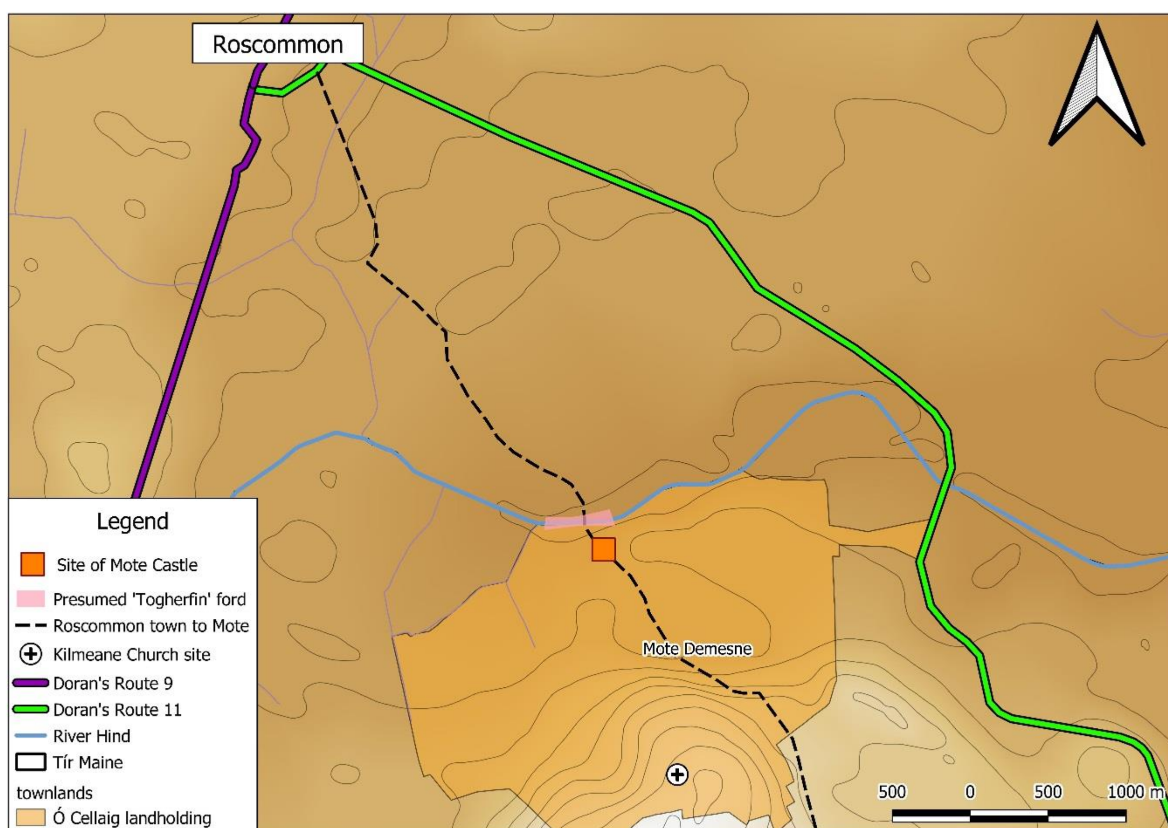

Figure 6.19 – Map of the available evidence indicating that Mote Demesne was once the location for an Ó Cellaig lordly centre, likely located on the site of the later mill and farm complex associated with the Crofton landed estate.

6.6 – Conclusions

While one would expect that the intersection between navigable waterways and overland communication routes would provide the prime location around which later medieval settlement would take place, in the case of the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine, this has never previously been satisfactorily addressed by research. What can be concluded from this chapter and its case studies is that the fording places of the rivers of this study area (see 6.2; 6.4; 6.5), as well as the sheltered bay at Galey and its closeness to a nearby overland routeway (see 6.3), possess a number of attributes that make them particularly suitable as the physical community hubs of Uí Maine. In some instances, they developed as a means to exploit the natural communication and trade routes provided by the river (see McAlister 2019, 90-159). They also seem to have developed close to, or at the intersection between overland and water routeways, often at a fording place along the river, and this brought with it economic potential and presumably the ability to exact tariffs also (*Ibid*., 109-21).

The elite settlement forms found at these riverine *cenn áiteanna* again indicate that Ó Cellaig lordly centres remained relatively fixed through time, possibly through a combination of

environmental determinism and the symbolism inherent in multigenerational presence within the landscape. At Athlone and earlier, at *Dún Leodha*/*Áth Nadsluaigh*, the elusive form and location of the mid-twelfth century *caistél* were discussed, along with what came before and after these two fortifications respectively (see 6.2; 4.2.1; see also Appendix 4). At Galey Bay, a natural promontory into Lough Ree was modified to greatly increase its defensibility, and the focal point of the site in the fourteenth century, at least, was a substantial dry-stone built *cathair*/cashel enclosure (see 6.3.2.1). This cashel was reused as the effective bawn for a fifteenth or early-sixteenth century tower house (see 6.3.2.2), replicating the trend of tower house castles being constructed at identifiable earlier Ó Cellaig lordly centres, something that also occurs at Athleague and possibly Mote (see 6.4.3.1; 6.5; see also 5.2.1; 5.3.4.3). Once more, the present writer has found the archaeological expression for an elite settlement form described as a *bódhún*, and with two morphologically similar examples now extant, at Athleague (see 6.4.3.2), and previously at Callow (see 5.3.3.2), it is possible to suggest that this earthwork should be considered as a monument type of its own, and worthy of exploration in its own right.

There is now also a growing body of evidence to suggest that there may have been a distinction created between the physical settlement focal point of the population at large, and the space occupied by elite residence within the lordship (see 6.3; 6.4; see also 5.3; 5.4). This separation of the public from the private with regard to the *cenn áiteanna* of the Ó Cellaig lords of Uí Maine is an intriguing discovery, and the reasons for this will be theorised at greater length in the discussion chapter.

Chapter 7 – Elite Settlement Sited On Major Roadways in Later Medieval Uí Maine

7.1 – Introduction

The siting of elite Ó Cellaig settlement in close vicinity to major terrestrial routes, at first, seems obvious and that these would have been routine locations to find important lordly centres. Thus far, however, the case studies under inspection have indicated that access to major roadways was only one of a number of factors involved in the siting of a lordly centre, and in many cases, it was of secondary importance. In this chapter, however, focus will turn to the *cenn áiteanna* of Uí Maine which were sited on roadways, through analysing three case studies – Aughrim, Co. Galway, Lisdaulan, Co. Roscommon and the elite settlement sites of the expanded fifteenth and sixteenth-century Ó Cellaig lordship. In doing so, the present writer will treat with the locations which seem to have been primarily chosen as Ó Cellaig lordly centres because of the economic value provided by proximity to a communication route.

7.2 – Case Study: Aughrim, Co. Galway

The village of Aughrim in east Galway is traditionally regarded as an important part of the Uí Maine landscape. An indenture from 1589 refers to the place as *Agherrymymany* (Aughrim Uí Maine) (Curtis 1935, 137) and this is also seen with a 1602 record of the place as *Aughrim-Hy-Many* (*AFM*). The locally-erected village name stone proudly refers to the location as *Eachdruim Uí Cheallaigh*. The place was elevated to a national importance due to its inextricable links to the events of the 22nd July 1691, the Battle of Aughrim, however, the origins of this settlement seem to be closely tied to the fortunes of the later medieval Uí Chellaig kings and, later, lords of Uí Maine.

The lordly centre at Aughrim was the focal point of an *oireacht* known in the *Compossicion* as 'Toehavreny', Tuahavriana – *Túath an Bhrenaidh*, which was located within the traditional *trícha cét* of Uí Maine (*Compossicion*, 169; Nicholls 1969, 42; Fig. 7.1).

7.2.1 – Toponymy and Historical Background of Aughrim and Environs

Aughrim – *Eachroim* (horse ridge) is located 7.4km to the southwest of Ballinasloe. The only other illuminating place-name within the vicinity of Aughrim is Kilcommadan – *Cill Chumadáin* (Comadán's church). The coarb of Comadán of Kilcommadan is regarded as one of the seven principal coarbs of Uí Maine (*Nósa*, 538). St. Comadán has a well named for him in Doocreggaun townland, as well as a fair day on the 14th October (Ó Riain 2016, 215).

The settlement of Aughrim itself is likely to be of some antiquity. One of the earliest references to Aughrim occurs in the early-ninth century, with the record of the murder of bishop Máel Dúin at *Echdruim*, which was a Clonmacnoise-dependent ecclesiastical establishment west of the River Suck (Byrne 2004, 252). With this record, it is clear that Aughrim was the site of a religious foundation from at least as early as the latter century, and it most likely developed in part due to its proximity to the routeway that passed through this landscape. It could be argued also that Aughrim was, in essence, a settlement that grew up around a crossroads. The east-west route discussed above, and referred to as the 'Southern Route' seems to have been crossed by a route running south from Kilconnell, thus connecting it with the *Slighe Mhór* (see 3.3). This is identifiable with the modern L3413, while the local unnamed road heading south from Aughrim, through Kilcommadan townland, on to the crossroads of Callaghan's Loughs, 5.9km distant, is likely to be a route of long standing also, providing eventual access on further east on to the religious foundation of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine (Fig. 7.1).

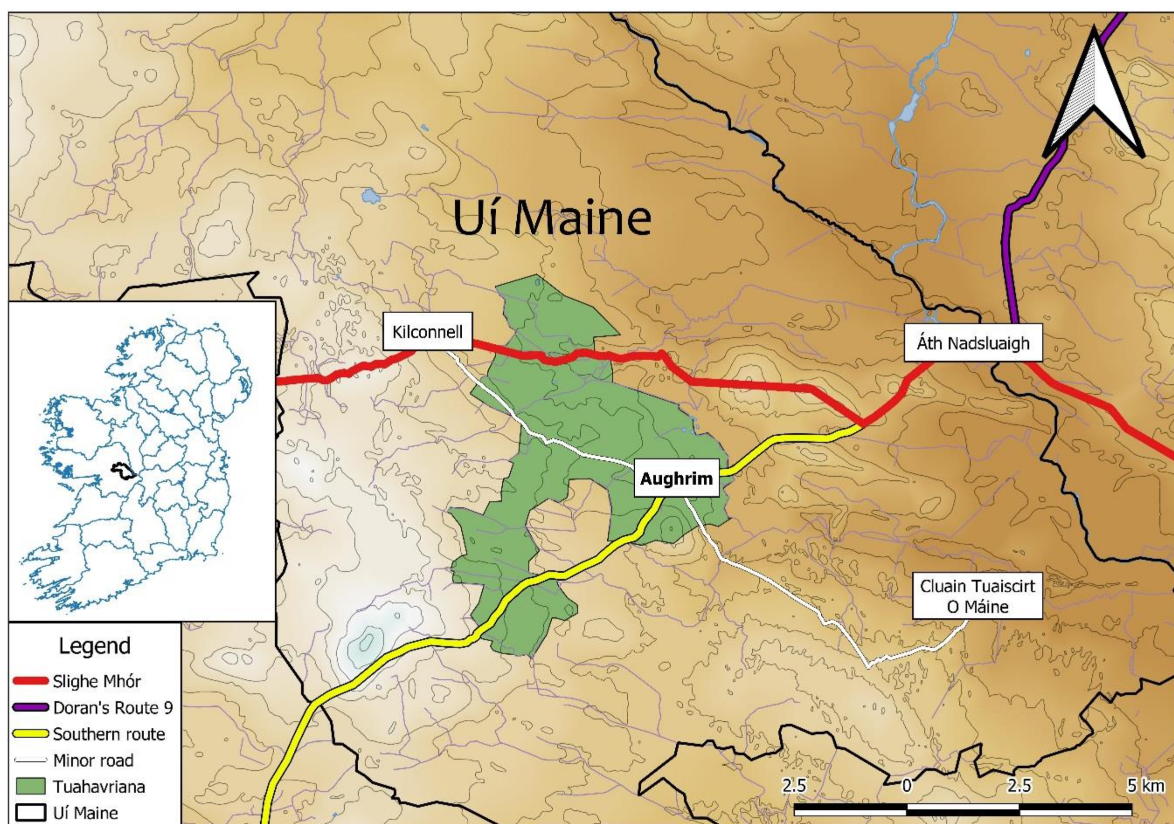

Figure 7.1 – The location of Aughrim within the oireacht *of* Tuahavriana*, within the trícha cét of Uí Maine.*

Uí Chellaig links with Aughrim are firmly established by the early-thirteenth century, with the death of Domnall Mór Ó Cellaig, king of Uí Maine. Domnall is recorded as dying in 1224 'in

his own bed' at *Eachdruim* in *Leabhar Ua Maine* (Nicholls 1969, 41). This is the first reference to Aughrim in the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine as a place of residence for an Ó Cellaig king (see 2.3).

The continued Ó Cellaig presence in the near vicinity of Aughrim is seen beyond the lifetime of Domnall Ó Cellaig. As noted, a list of the kings summoned by Henry III in 1244 on his expedition against Scotland mentions Conchobhair Ó Cellaig, who is then referred to as 'Mac Domnall Mhór Ó Cellaig of Kilconnell'. This indicates that the Ó Cellaig elite remained in power in the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine until the middle of the thirteenth century (*Foedera*, 150; see 2.4.4; 5.3.2). As has been outlined already, authority over this area transferred from Gaelic Irish hands into Anglo-Norman as the thirteenth century progressed, and the Ó Cellaig interactions with Aughrim amounted to their attempts to create obstacles to the de la Rochelle and Butler settlement there and elsewhere in the cantred of Omany in, particularly, the early years of the fourteenth century (see 2.4.4; Appendix 4).

We must wait until the late sixteenth century in order to encounter the next historical references to Aughrim. Ceallach Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, was in possession of 'Achrim' Castle in 1574 (Nolan 1900-1, 120), while his son Feardorcha seems to have resided here also (*Act. Privy Council*, xvii, 233-5). Aughrim Castle is also marked on the 1591 Browne map of Connacht (Fig. 7.2). The *cenn áit* at Aughrim is likely to correspond with the present castle remains located in the village today.

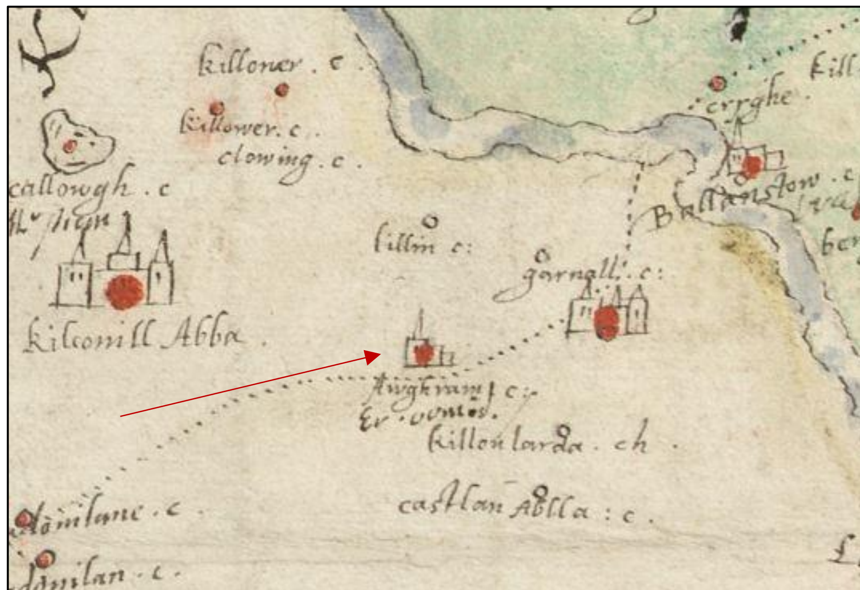

Figure 7.2 - Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) with 'Awghram' in the centre of the image. (Copyright 2011 The Board of Trinity College Dublin.)

7.2.2 – The Ó Cellaig **cenn áit** *at Aughrim*

The remains of the site known as Aughrim Castle (GA087-055-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 405) is located in Coololla townland, immediately north north-east of the modern village of the same name. The castle site is described in the ASI database as an 'Anglo-Norman masonry castle', and is located at 58m OD, sited on ground broadly level with the surrounding area. It seems, therefore, that the site of this castle was not chosen for its commanding position. Possibly more important to the choice of location is what the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map records as an older loop of the now R446 road which once passed directly through the settlement of Aughrim, and in doing so passed directly south of the fortification. The surrounding area, particularly to the south of the castle, is for the most part characterised by well-drained grassland, very suitable for agriculture. One exception to this is a zone of wetland and woodland, located 1km north of the castle site, where the nineteenth-century cartographic sources records a now largely drained lake known as Coololla Lough, which would have been unsuitable for settlement or farming activity, but provided a sufficient physical deterrent to any attacking force from attempting approach from the northeast. It could be suggested from the wider landscape setting around Aughrim that it developed as a place of importance not by its defensibility, rather from its attributes as a hub or central place for trade, traffic and settlement within the Uí Maine landscape, being located at the junction at a number of nationally and locally important roadways (Fig. 7.3).

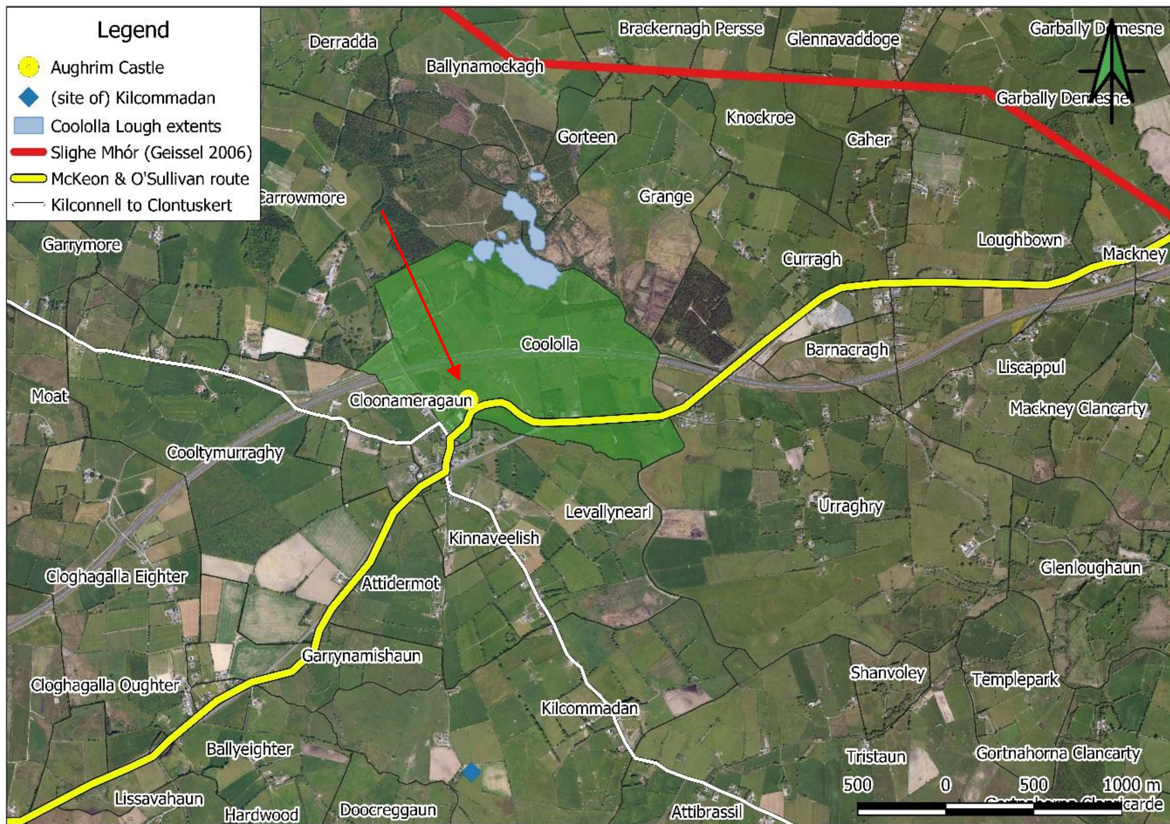

Figure 7.3 – Site of Aughrim Castle in the wider east Galway landscape (indicated by the red arrow). Note access to regional routeway leading west to Galway and extents of former lakes to the north of the castle, as they were recorded in the mid-nineteenth century (Base aerial image: Bing Maps).

The earliest historical attestation for an Ó Cellaig settlement at Aughrim isn't immediately identifiable in the archaeological record. If the residence of Domhnall Mór Ó Cellaig was located on the same site as Aughrim Castle, there are no features of this early construction available for us to inspect today, as no above ground remains are visible in the vicinity of the later fortification. If one was to theorise how his residence might have looked like, however, there are some examples in the immediate area around Aughrim, particularly at Loughbown I and Mackney (see 4.3.1), which provide some clues. On analogy with these sites, Domhnall's residence in the 1220s may have been some form of cashel or ringfort. Analogy with the possible appropriation of a pre-existing Gaelic elite residence in Connacht with the construction of an Anglo-Norman castle can be seen with a series of sites identified by Malcolm in the Ó Dubhda lordship of Uí Fhiachrach Muaidhe (Malcolm 2007, 196-205).

Plate 7.1 – Aughrim Castle, Co. Galway. Historically-attested Ó Cellaig cenn áit *(Author's photograph)*

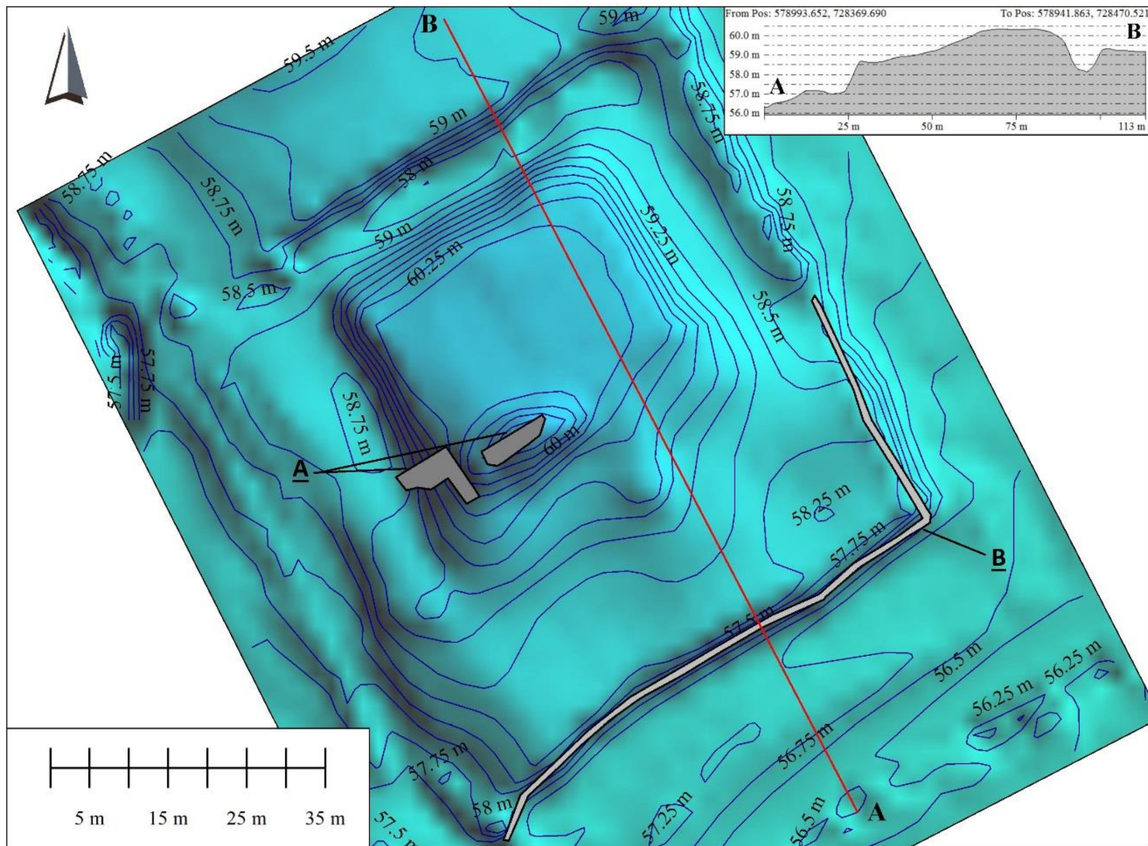

Figure 7.4 - Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of the site of Aughrim Castle. The fragmentary masonry remains marked by A corresponds with that visible in Pl. 7.1. B indicates the outer enclosure where it is best preserved to the east and east of the site. Part of this enclosure ditch contains sections of mortared masonry (LiDAR data courtesy of TII).

The surviving above ground remains at Aughrim Castle are primarily of an earthen character, coupled with some fragmentary masonry sections. These remains are located in the southwest corner of a rectangular elevated platform measuring *c.*35m on its long axis, by *c.*24m on its short axis. This inner ward seems to have been the focal point of the site, and stands about 4m higher than the surrounding area. The masonry remains consist of the corner of an ivy-covered tower-like structure, surviving to first-floor level only, as well as a low section of wall, located immediately to the east of the tower. The two components are separated by a partially cobbled area, measuring 3.5m in width, between the tower-like structure and the wall footings (Pl. 7.1; 7.3; Fig. 7.4 for location). This suggests an entranceway which was guarded by a flanking tower providing access into the elevated rectangular platform.

To the south of this inner ward is a smaller raised area, *c.*27m long by *c.*16m wide, and the aforementioned masonry remains are located at the intersection between these two platforms. These central earthworks are surrounded by a large area of elevated ground, measuring 74-75m in length on all axes. This outer ward is surrounded particularly to the north and south by a

substantial ditch (maximum height 1.7m). Parts of the eastern section of this ditch is reveted with mortared masonry (Fig. 7.4; Pl. 7.2).

Plate 7.2 – Outer enclosure ditch surrounding Aughrim Castle, Co. Galway. The red arrows indicate the sections of mortared masonry in the eastern section of the enclosure ditch (Author's photograph).

Figure 7.5 – Schematic plan of Aughrim Castle, derived from LiDAR data, and an interpretation of the elevation data (LiDAR data courtesy of TII).

Plate 7.3 – Presumed entrance into the inner ward of Aughrim Castle, located between the degraded remains of a rectangular corner tower [left] and curtain wall [right] (Author's photograph)

The surviving masonry remains are, however, much reduced from even the late-seventeenth century. A miniature pictorial record survives of the castle, viewed from the south, as it stood at the time of the Battle of Aughrim in 1691. Sketched by Lieutenant Colonel Jacob Richards (Fig. 7.6), who served in the Williamite Army during the War of the Two Kings, Aughrim Castle is presented as a stronghold placed upon a somewhat raised earthen platform or low natural prominence. Located upon this elevated area was what appears to have been a stone curtain wall with two corner towers. A much higher third tower of at least three, if not four storeys, appears to be located within the enclosure. The surviving masonry remains on site today may correspond with the tower located on the left corner of the curtain wall as illustrated by Richards (Pl. 7.3).

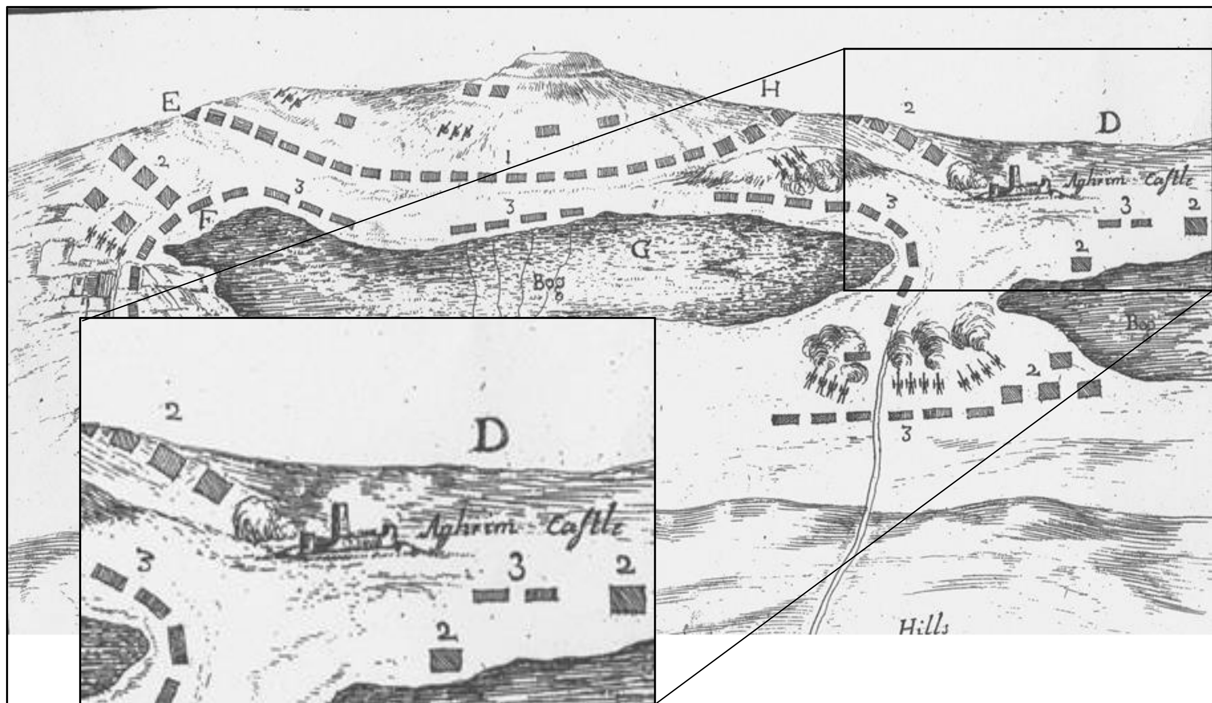

Figure 7.6 – Sketch of the Battle of Aughrim, illustrated by Jacob Richards, c.*1691 (Image courtesy of Dr. Padraig Lenihan, NUI Galway).*

In order to better understand the physical remains at Aughrim Castle alongside the pictorial evidence, it was decided to complement the topographical plan with a magnetic gradiometry survey. This survey was conducted on a series of four 20m x 20m grids across sections of all three areas defined by the topographical plan. One of the major limiting factors in collecting a strong dataset from the Aughrim Castle site is the presence of a modern metal railing which surrounds a large memorial cross located within the inner ward (see Pl. 7.1). This object disturbed the dataset in this section of the survey area, as seen with the large contrasting black and white anomalies in the northern half of the below survey image (Fig. 7.7).

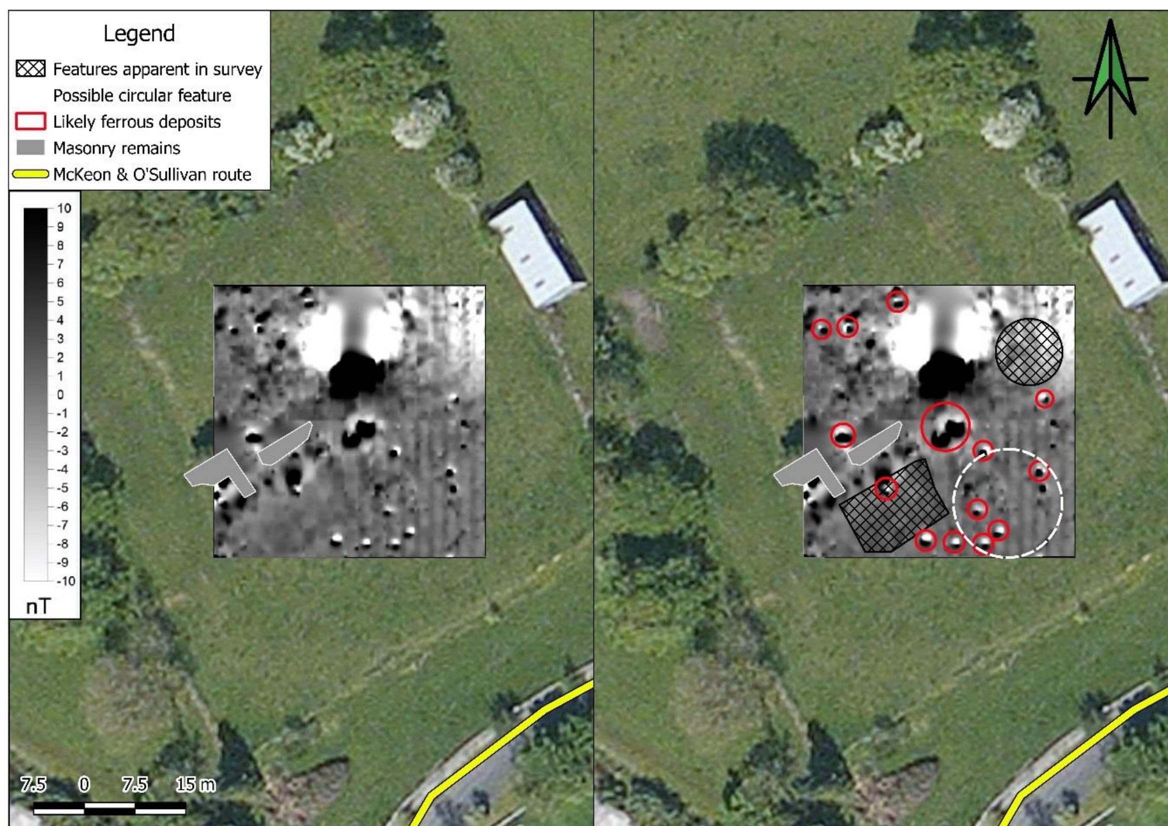

Figure 7.7 – Magnetic gradiometry survey at Aughrim Castle. Survey area 40m x 40m. Left image [a] illustrates the survey and its position in relation to the surviving masonry remains. The image on the right [b] provides an interpretation of the results. (Base aerial image: Bing Maps)

Despite this, there are a number of conclusions which can be made from the application of the magnetic gradiometry survey to the site of Aughrim Castle. Working in a possible reverse chronology, the red circles in Figure 7.7b correspond with what is likely to be dropped metal objects. Given that Aughrim Castle is a known battle site in the wider theatre of war that occurred in 1691, the uncovered features are likely to correspond to these events.

The two hashed anomalies outlined in the same image conform to subtle features located to the south of the inner ward. The circular anomaly in the northeast of the survey measures 10m in external diameter and the linear itself has a thickness of *c.*1.7m. This may be the remains of a cylindrical corner tower located on the south-eastern corner of the inner ward. This anomaly, coupled with the surviving masonry remains on the south-western corner of the inner ward, may be the remains of a pair of non-identical corner towers, as illustrated in miniature by Richards. By contrast to the possible circular corner tower on the south-eastern corner, the masonry remains on the south-western end of the inner ward is likely to be a square, or sub-rectangular, corner tower, located adjacent to the cobbled entranceway into the inner ward.

A rectangular anomaly was also uncovered through the remote sensing survey, located in front the inner ward entrance on the aforementioned smaller raised area. It measures 13m on its long axis and 9m on its short axis. Due to its location in relation to the entranceway, this anomaly could be the remains of a barbican gatehouse, constructed to provide additional protection to the castle entrance.

More than this, a subtle circular anomaly, *c.*15m in diameter, marked by the white broken line in the south-eastern corner of the survey image, appears to underserve the more substantial earthen remains on the site. It is difficult to say what this may represent, but it is worthy of further inspection. Finally, the partial survey of the inner ward is magnetically noisy, and although the anomalies present no discernible pattern, they may represent the sub-surface remains of the tower illustrated in Richards' depiction of the Battle of Aughrim.

Combining the topographical plan with the results of the magnetic gradiometry survey enables a better understanding of the plan of Aughrim Castle more generally. The topographical plan divides the site into three distinct areas, the outer ward, inner ward, and the smaller platform immediately to the south of the inner ward. Access onto the site is difficult to deduce, however the proximity of the roadway to the south of the site implies that access to the castle precincts was facilitated via this road. Access into the inner ward is more concrete in its identification, however. This was likely to have been located where the faced-off break in the masonry occurs between the south-western corner tower and the foundational remains of the curtain wall. The magnetic gradiometry survey provides evidence for what is likely to be a corner tower on the south-eastern corner of the curtain wall, as well as rectangular structure, possibly a barbican gatehouse, located to the south of the inner ward (Fig. 7.7). Consultation of Richards' plan of the Battle of Aughrim would indicate that this curtain wall served to defend a tower which was located on the interior. No evidence survives from either survey which could be used to confirm a preceding phase or phases of construction at this site, which could be considered against the historical attestations for the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman manor of Richard de la Rochelle.

Richards' drawing shows a curtain wall with two flanking towers, possibly at is south-west and south-east angles. While rectangular flanking towers on curtain walls did exist on Anglo-Norman castles, as an Sligo Castle, being built in a phase dated to *c.*1310 (O'Conor 2002c, 189-90), curtain towers are normally round or D-shaped across western Europe, during Anglo-Norman times, from the late twelfth century into the fourteenth century (e.g. King 1988, 77,

92-3, 121). The appearance in Richards's drawing of the curtain wall suggests something later. There are hints of another tower at the back of drawing, possibly the northeast corner tower. This suggests that there was a tower at each corner of the inner ward. If this is a tower house bawn, its plan is similar to that of Barryscourt Castle, Co. Cork (Sweetman 2000, 160; Pollock 2004, 162-3). Indeed, the thirteenth century Cahir Castle in Co. Tipperary had two wards or bawns added to it in the fifteenth and sixteenth century also (Sweetman 2000, 124). More locally, both Aughnanure and Fiddaun castles in Co. Galway have two wards or bawns surrounding the tower house (*Ibid*., 166-9). Therefore the combination of pictorial, LiDAR and field evidence suggests a very complex late medieval castle, probably of tower house form.

After the presumed reclamation by the Uí Chellaig after 1315 of Aughrim from the Butler lords, it is possible that the castle might have been reoccupied, but not modified or added to. Parallels for this approach in Gaelic-occupied fortifications in fourteenth-century Connacht are seen with the lack of evidence for modification to sites such as Ballintober Castle (Ó Conchobair) (Loeber 2019, 18), Roscommon Castle (Ó Conchobair), Rindoon (Ó Conchobair and Ó Cellaig, see 6.3.3.3) and Athlone (Ó Cellaig, see 6.2), among others. Certainly, societal and cultural practices amongst the Gaelic elite in this period did not advocate heavy modification of their newly acquired or reacquired fortifications, a trend that could also be suggested for Aughrim Castle.

However, it is likely that from some point in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, the site of Aughrim Castle as it survives in the pictorial and topographical remains was constructed by a branch of the Uí Chellaig into a stronghold of tower house and bawn form. Given the centrality of this site in the settlement of Aughrim, and the absence of comparable remains in the immediate area, it is quite likely that the site of Aughrim Castle was a fixed location of elite residence throughout the medieval period. This is something that can, however, only be confirmed through excavation. What can be confirmed, however, is that the designation of the castle as an 'Anglo-Norman masonry castle' is misplaced, and should be rectified on the ASI database.

Figure 7.8 – Summary interpretation of the remains at Aughrim Castle, Co. Galway, based on the topographical plan, magnetic gradiometry survey, and late seventeenth-century illustration of the castle (Base aerial image: Bing Maps).

7.2.3 – Summary of the Aughrim **cenn áit**

Throughout this section, the research has had to navigate around the limitations of the available evidence, particularly the lack of surviving archaeological remains. However, careful consideration of the evidence has yielded a more rounded understanding of this lordly centre.

At a number of points throughout the later medieval period, the senior line of Ó Cellaig lords used Aughrim as their *cenn áit*. The historical record informs us that one named thirteenth-century king of Uí Maine used Aughrim as his place of residence. However, the encroachment of Anglo-Norman lords into the area from the middle of that century meant that this Ó Chellaig occupation was then disrupted until at least the early-fourteenth century. Thereafter, Aughrim, and presumably the area around it, was forcibly taken back into Ó Cellaig control, as this dynasty began to re-exert authority over their former lands. There is no historical evidence to support the idea that Aughrim was re-occupied by the senior branch of the dynasty from this point in the fourteenth century. Rather, it is more likely that cadet branches of the Uí Maine occupied the former Butler manor. The references to Aughrim Castle in the mid-sixteenth century, however, seem to indicate that Aughrim was once again chosen as a lordly centre for

the senior Uí Chellaig line, considering the references to Ceallach and Feardorcha Ó Cellaig, lords of Uí Maine, as living in Aughrim, as recorded in the genealogical tables in the second half of the sixteenth century (Byrne 2011, 227; see 7.2.1).

The archaeological evidence for elite settlement among the Uí Chellaig at Aughrim corresponds with this latter period, in the form of a very complex late medieval castle. This consisted of an outer ward and possible barbican gatehouse, as well as a curtain wall, and evidence for at least two, but likely as many as four corner towers, defending the inner ward. Pictorial evidence indicates that a tower once stood within the inner ward, however, no trace of this tower was uncovered during the current research. In keeping with the other available information about Aughrim Castle, this was likely a castle of tower house form, however, this can only be confirmed through excavation (see 7.2.2).

7.3 – Case Study: The Late Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordly Centre of Lisdaulan Castle

Lisdaulan seems to have been an Ó Cellaig centre at least during the sixteenth century, if not earlier (*Tribes and Customs*, 112-3). An Ó Cellaig residence is mentioned as being located at *Lis-dá-lon* (Lisdaulan) in 1557 (*ALC*; *Tribes and Customs*, 187). *Lysdallon* is recorded as one of three castles in the possession of 'Hugh O Kelly' of the MacEdmond branch, lord of Uí Maine, in a 1573 state paper list, with the other two castles being *Skrege* and *Gallee* (see 6.3; Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019). Hugh Ó Cellaig of Lisdaulan, chief of his name, is also mentioned in 1585, which indicates that Lisdaulan must have been his principal residence (*Compossicion*, 167, 172). However, it seems that an English garrison was billeted at Lisdaulan during the 1590s (Croinin 1980, 116). A castle is marked at Lisdaulan on the 1591 Browne map of Connacht and the Strafford map of the 1630s (Figs. 7.12; 7.13).

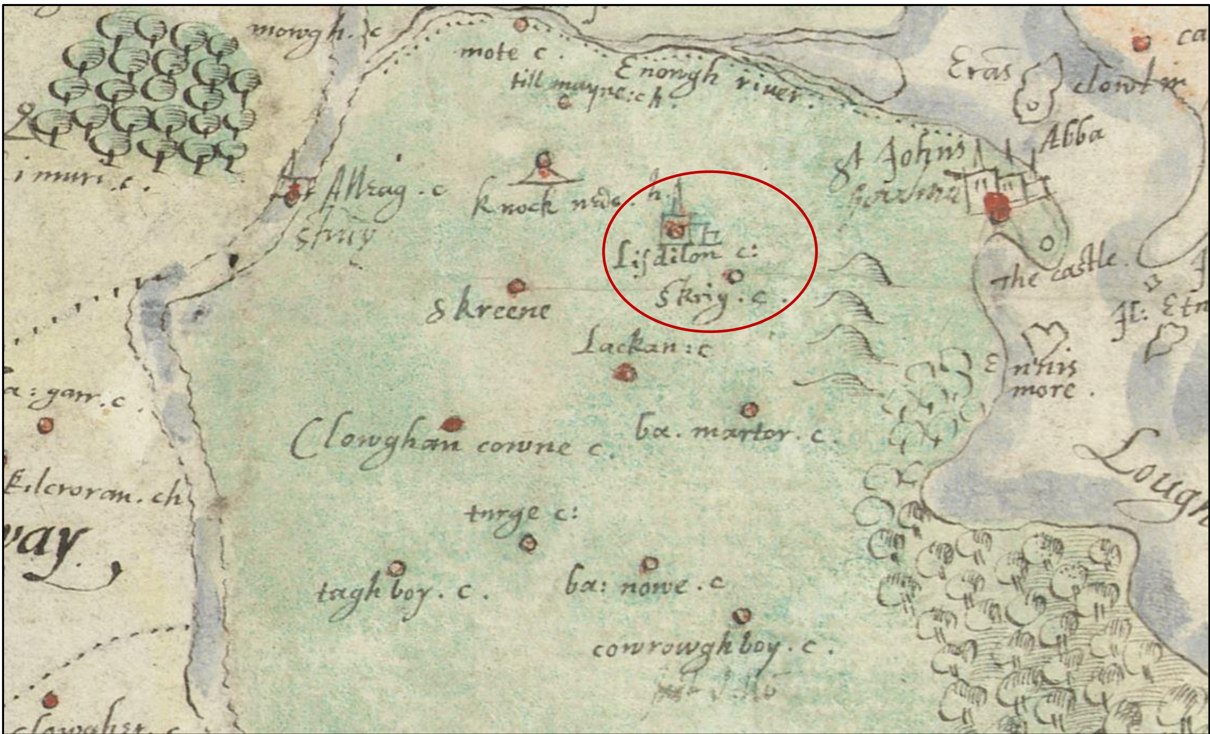

Figure 7.9 - Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) with 'Lisdilon C.' and 'Skriy. C.' encircled. The prominence of Lisdaulan in this map may have been done in order to indicate that this was a chief residence in the region at the time (Copyright 2011 The Board of Trinity College Dublin.)

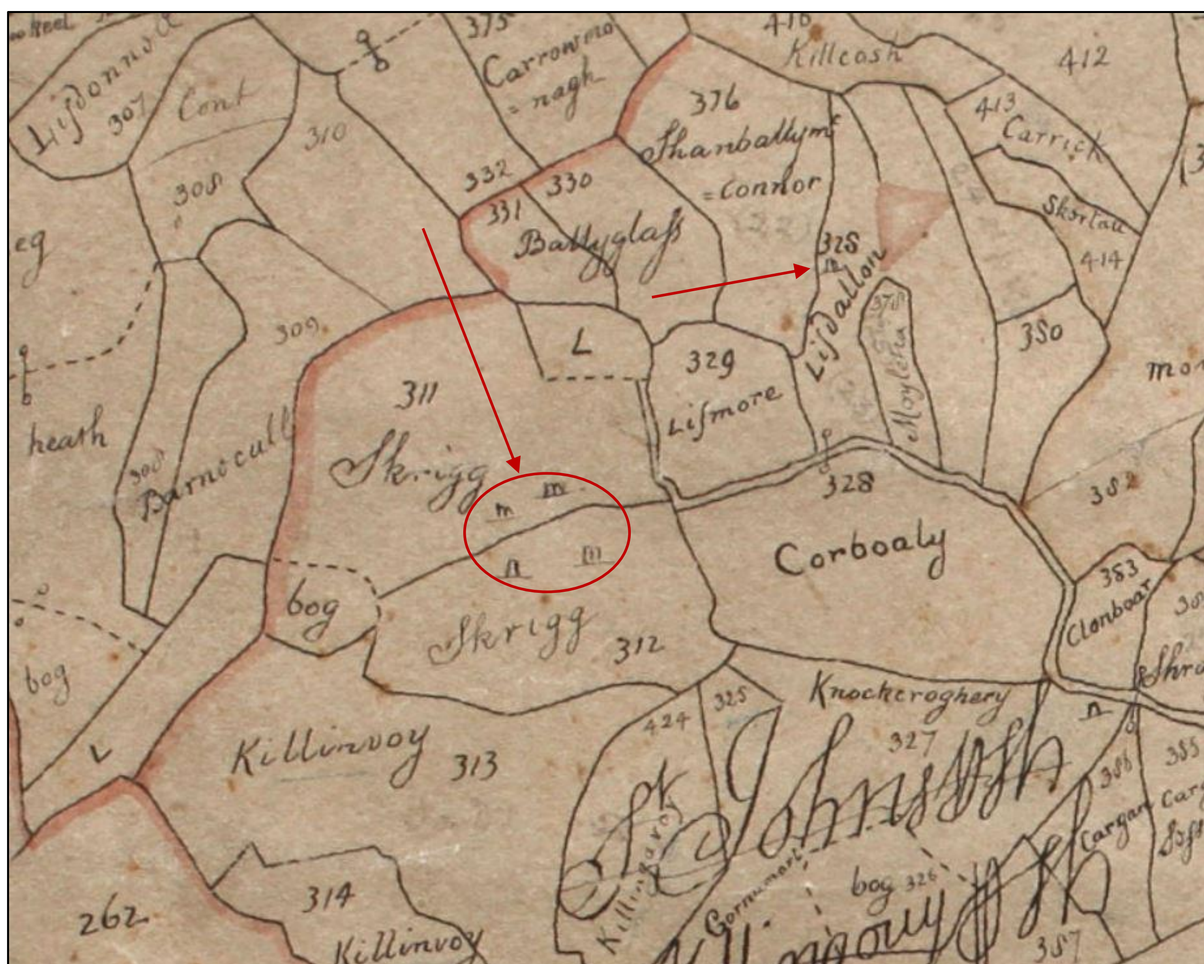

Figure 7.10 – 'Lisdallon' and 'Skrigg' recorded on the Strafford Survey map of c.*1636, with icons indicating buildings of note located in both landholdings (Courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland: http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Athlone&c=Roscommon)*

Where was this late medieval Ó Cellaig residence within Lisdaulan townland? The most likely candidate for this is the site of a castle identified by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland and marked on the ASI database (RO042-136001-). This site is located in undulating, good quality farmland and lies 2.5km to the west of Doran's Route 11, which follows the line of the modern Athlone to Roscommon road (see 3.3). Very little survives of this castle today, however, an aerial image of the grass-covered remains undertaken for the purpose of this research highlights a sub-square raised area, measuring roughly 10m on all axes. This is surrounded by an irregularly shaped platform, which may or may not be the partial remains of a bawn-type feature. This is inconclusive and requires further investigation (Fig. 7.11).

Figure 7.11 - Vertical aerial image over the presumed site of Lisdaulan Castle [a] with a simple suggested interpretation [b]. The cross-hatched area is slightly elevated from the remainder of the site (h = 0.5m), and is sub-square in shape (Image courtesy of Carl Bryer).

215m to the northwest of this site lies Sandfield House, which was built *c.*1710 (RO042-143-). A substantial number of late medieval punch-dressed quoins can be seen re-used in this house, including a series of stones which are finely tooled (Pl. 7.4). Furthermore, the remains of a two light ogee-headed window has been incorporated into an outbuilding adjacent to the latter house (Pl. 7.5). These stones presumably came from the original castle. It was stated above that punch-dressed stones are associated in a secular context with tower houses of mostly fifteenth and sixteenth-century date (see 5.2.1; 5.3.3.3; 6.3.2.2; 6.4.3.1; 6.5). Ogee-headed windows are also a feature of tower houses of mainly fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century date (e.g. Leask 1941, 24, 75-124; McNeill 1997, 201-2; O'Conor and Williams 2015, 62-4). Therefore, this evidence strongly suggests that the late medieval Ó Cellaig residence and castle at Lisdaulan was a tower house, built before *c.*1550, possibly in the fifteenth century.

Plate 7.4 – Some examples of the range of punch-dressed stones, including quoin stones, which have been incorporated into the building fabric of the eighteenth-century estate house of Sandfield House. In a number of instances, the punch-dressing is finely tooled in its pattern, which may be an indication of the skill of the masons employed to construct Lisdaulan Castle, and a sign of the wealth of the occupants (Author's photographs).

Plate 7.5 - The upper [top image] and lower [bottom image] sections of a two-light ogee-headed window, incorporated into an outbuilding adjacent to Sandfield House, and presumably recovered from Lisdaulan Castle (Author's photographs).

The First Edition Six-Inch map records a corn mill 1km to the southeast of the castle site, on the boundary of Lisdaulan townland to the west, and the intersection of Corboley and Scregg townlands to the east. Lisdaulan is separated from the latter two landholdings by a stream which fed the mill, recorded in a late-eighteenth century poem as the 'Calagach' (*Tribes and Customs*,

187). The mill may have been in use in the sixteenth century, and played an economic role connected to the Ó Cellaig lordly centre here.

The same map records a wetland area to the southwest of the castle site, the drained northern section of a lake then and still known as 'Lough Collog'. Lisdaulan Castle was therefore constructed on the north-eastern shore of a now disappeared small lake, which changes how this landscape would have appeared when the castle was occupied. The siting of Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* in watery locations has already been discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 6, and Lisdaulan may have shared this landscape attribute.

Finally, Aodh Ó Cellaig, the lord of Uí Maine most heavily associated with this lordly centre, died in 1590, and was buried at the nearby parish church of Killinvoy (see 2.6), located less than 3km distant to the east. Combining this information allows for a partial reconstruction of this sixteenth-century Ó Cellaig centre (Fig. 7.12).

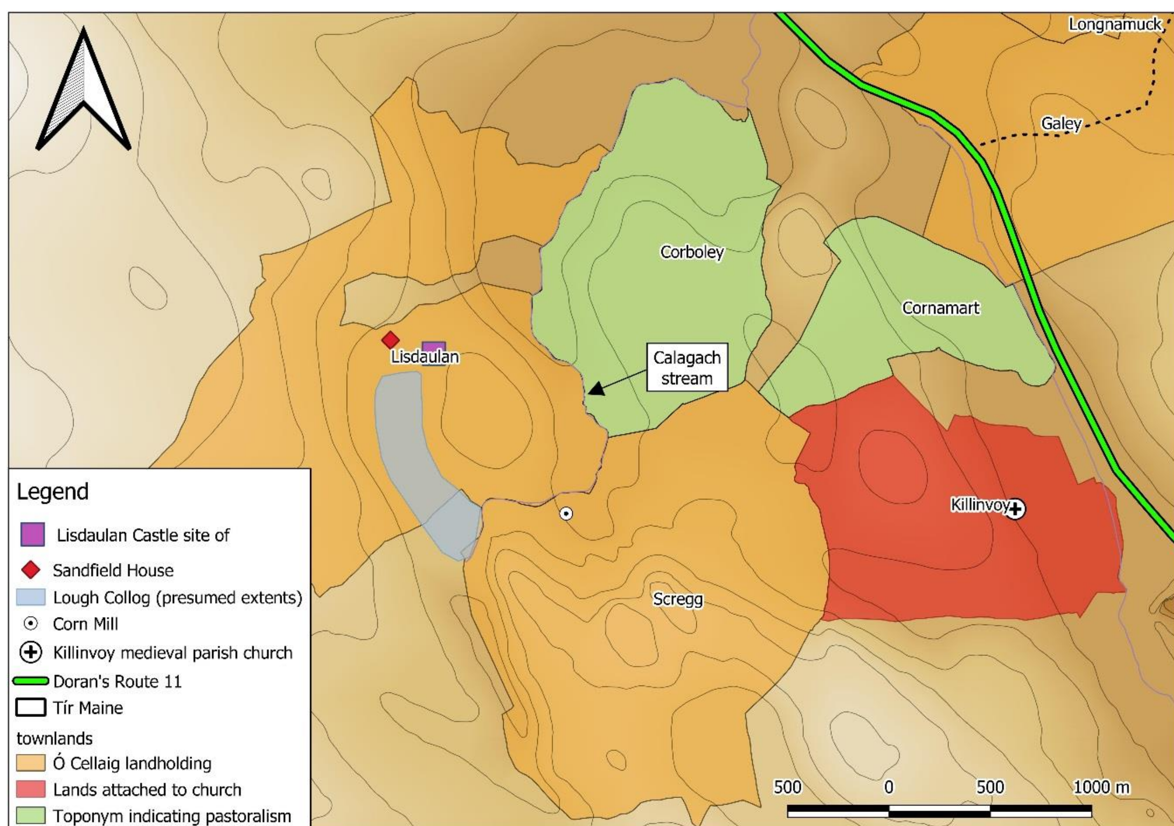

Figure 7.12 - Summary of the Lisdaulan case study, with the principal locations outlined.

7.4 – Case Study: The Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Elite Settlement Sites of the Wider Ó Cellaig Lordship

As has been elicited from the historical background to this research, as well as certain elements discussed in the individual case study sections, the area over which the Uí Chellaig lords presided did not remain fixed through time. By the latter end of the early medieval period, their Uí Maine ancestors primarily operated out of the *trícha cét* of Tír Maine. With the growing supremacy of the Uí Conchobhair dynasts over Tír Maine, and further afield, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Uí Chellaig elite were eventually forced to migrate and subjugate the *trícha cét* of *Tír Soghain*. This territory quickly became synonymous with the Uí Chellaig, resulting in the name changing to Uí Maine. By the mid-thirteenth century, their power over this area was reduced by Anglo-Norman interests in Uí Maine, leading to an eventual return into Tír Maine, presumably beneath, and subject to, the Uí Conchobhair.

However, by the mid-fourteenth century, Ó Cellaig ambitions were on the rise once more, due in no small part to the power vacuum provided by the internal disputes amongst the Uí Conchobhair (Nicholls 2003, 170-5). At this point in time, the authority of the Uí Chellaig began to expand beyond what was their traditional sphere of influence in, firstly, Tír Maine and then, Uí Maine.

Owing to the limitations of the natural boundary of the River Shannon and Lough Ree, territorial ambitions never realistically looked to the east. To the south, the powerful *Clann Ricaird* Burkes were not the most suitable opponents to aim their efforts at either. To the north, the Uí Conchobhair, although wounded and inward-looking, were still too powerful to be a suitable target either. With this in mind, the most fruitful locations into which the Uí Chellaig could attempt to expand their influence was over the area immediately to the west.

7.4.1 – Ó Cellaig Ambitions in **Clantayg**

Immediately to the west of the *trícha cét* boundary of Uí Maine was a region which in the pre-Norman period was known variously as *Clann Taidg* and *Uí Diarmata* (MacCotter 2014, 135). During the period under inspection, the lords of this area were primarily the Anglo-Norman de Bermingham lords of Athenry, with the Gaelic Ó Mainnin lords, referred to earlier (see 5.3.4.3), also operating within this region, particularly in the area around their *oireacht* of 'Eraght O Mannyn' (*Compossicion*, 169), with its principal *cenn áit* of *Mionlach Ó Mainnín* – Menlough, Killoscobe civil parish, Co. Galway.

This landscape is broadly of mixed agricultural value, with the area dominated by large zones of wetland and woodland, interspersed by zones of fertile farmland. These landscape attributes are reflected in the large numbers of *cluain*, *doire*, *enach*, *coill* and similar townland names which are recorded amongst the place-names for the area (Joyce 1910, 233-6; 461-2; 491-3; 501-5).

The principal *capita* of secular and ecclesiastical power in this area during the later medieval period were the de Bermingham town of Athenry and the twelfth century, Gaelic-established, Cistercian foundation of Abbeyknockmoy (*Mainistir Chnoc Muaidhe*) respectively. As we have seen, while Abbeyknockmoy was founded by Cathal Crobhdearg Ó Conchobair in *c.*1190, by 1295, prominent members of the senior Ó Cellaig line were retiring and being laid to rest at the abbey (*AC*; see 3.5.5). Actions such as this, in the late-thirteenth century, may indicate that the Uí Chellaig lords were attempting to compete with, and emulate, their more powerful neighbours through patronising Abbeyknockmoy in this way.

The first historically-attested indication that the lords of Uí Maine sought to expand their control outside their traditionally held boundaries is seen in the 1320s or 30s, when Diarmaid mac Gilbert Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, is recorded as hanging the Ó Mainnin, chief of *Soghain*, after which he seized on Ó Mainnin's 'castle' and estate of Clogher (*Tribes and Customs*, 107). The reference to 'Clogher' is regarded as Killaclogher townland, Monivea civil parish, Co. Galway (Mannion 2004, 38).

Moving into the late-fourteenth century, Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig defeated the de Berminghams or *Clann Mac Feorais* in 1372 (*AFM*). This clash is evidence of further incursions and meddling by the Uí Chellaig in Clantayg, in the area close to Athenry (Nicholls 1969, 47).

The emergence of the Uí Chellaig as the dominant force in Clantayg seems to have been cemented by the early-fifteenth century, judging by the reference to Tiaquin as the place of residence and death for Maolsechlainn mac Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, in 1401 (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment*, 67). Tiaquin is also the site of an early Anglo-Norman castle, historically-attested to in the year 1266 (*AC*).

The Uí Chellaig seem to have successfully established Tiaquin and its environs as a permanent powerbase by the early-fifteenth century, and this is corroborated by the evidence that one of Maolsechlainn's sons, and another lord of Uí Maine, Donnchadh Ó Cellaig, is regarded as having resided at Tiaquin during his reign (r. 1420-1424) (*Tribes and Customs*, 118). This preference for Tiaquin continues into the middle of the century, when the location is again

referred to in relation to Ó Cellaig activities for the year 1461 (*AC*). *Teaqwyn* (Tiaquin) Castle is described as being in the possession of 'Melaghlin Okelly' in 1574 (Nolan 1900-1, 122).

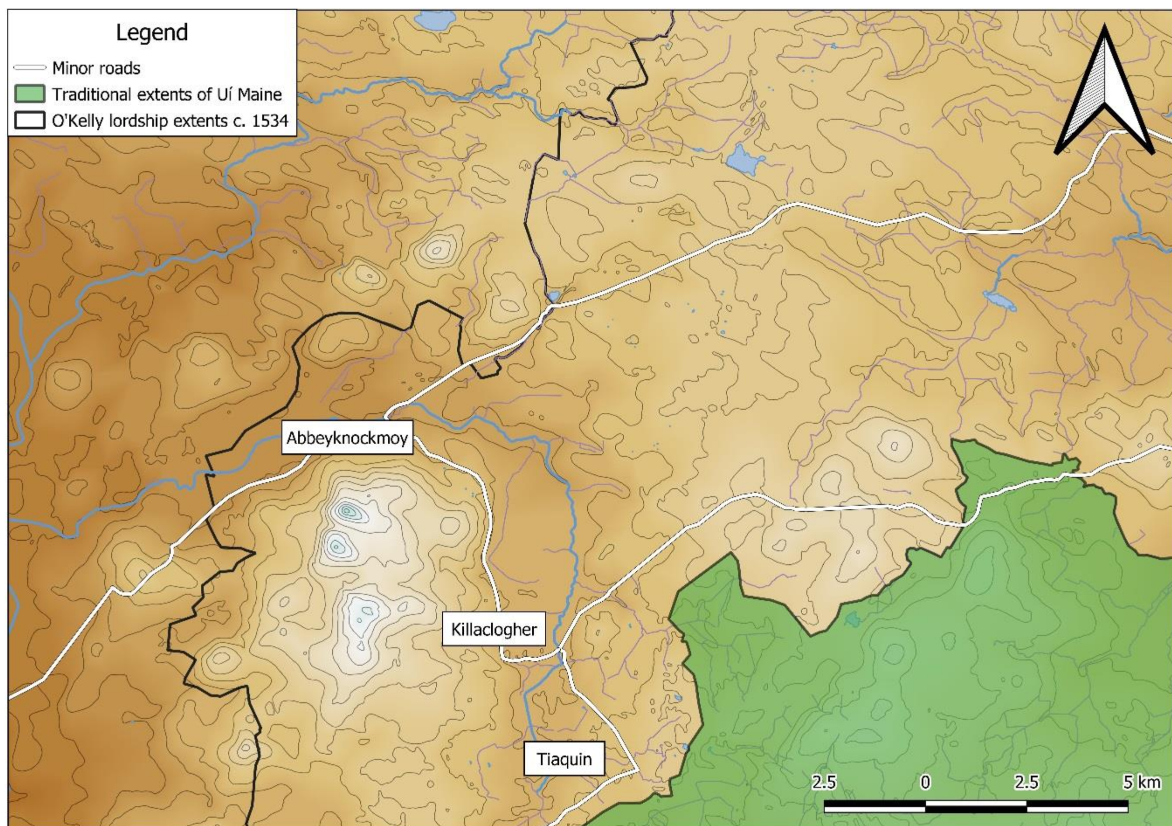

Figure 7.13 - Location of Tiaquin and Abbeyknockmoy within the wider territorial extents of 16th-century 'O'Kelly Country'.

7.4.2 – The Ó Cellaig cenn áit *at Tiaquin*

This collection of historical evidence and archaeological remains indicate that the cantred of Clantayg was a key acquisition of the Uí Chellaig in the fifteenth century. Their principal headquarters in this area was located at Tiaquin, and the townland of Tiaquin Demesne retains evidence of what could have been a continuity of settlement activity through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

A total of four enclosures survive in the townland, and the largest of these (GA072-064-), probably actually a ringfort, measures 44.5m east/west by 31.5m north/south (Fig. 7.14). It survives in only fair condition, with a bank and external ditch, and utilises the height of its placement on the summit of a natural hillock to add significantly to its defensibility to the southwest. It is unclear if this was a settlement site used into the later medieval period, but its dimensions, relative defensibility, and location within Tiaquin Demesne townland all increase the likelihood that this site was in use during the latter period. This ringfort may have been the

residence of Maolsechlainn mac Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig. Maolsechlainn is described in the original Irish as dying in 1401 *ina longphort féin*. O'Conor has referred to the use of the term *longphort* in the annalistic record, a term which seems to be used to describe a dry-land stronghold of cashel, ringfort or moated site morphology (O'Conor 1998, 85), something which, in this case, could also be argued for one of the monuments in Tiaquin Demesne.

Figure 7.14 - Aerial image and cross section of the largest enclosure recorded for Tiaquin Demesne townland, the most likely candidate for the 1401-attested longport *of Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig at Tiaquin. The enclosure was constructed to utilise the natural hillock, and the height difference* (*c.*7m) *between the summit of the earthwork and the ground to its immediate west, possibly played a role in dissuading attack from this direction. Note also the monument recorded as an enclosure to the southeast, which morphologically has more in common with a barrow monument (Image Source: GeoHive, Ordnance Survey Ireland 2017).*

The fifteenth century may also be the period during which the castle (GA072-059-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 417) was constructed. Categorised as a castle of unclassified form, due to the very fragmentary remains which survive of the site, Tiaquin Castle survives today as a rectangular platform standing *c.*1m above the surrounding ground level, and measuring 24m by 10m, with some visible masonry rubble on the site. Despite the lack of diagnostic remains, is it possible, based on analogy with a number of other sites similarly categorised as castles of unclassified form encountered through the present research, that Tiaquin Castle may also have taken the form of a tower house. Alternatively, it is possible that the thirteenth century Anglo-

Norman castle attested for Tiaquin was located at this site, and Holland has demonstrated that quite a number of the thirteenth-century castles built east of Lough Corrib in Co. Galway were hall houses, with notable examples including Athenry, Dunmore and Moylough castles (Holland 1997, 165-9). The hall house was often turned into a tower house in the late medieval period, when taken over by Gaelic lords. Vaults were routinely inserted over the first floor, as well as a ground-floor doorway. Occasionally, a third floor was also inserted. Sweetman noted that a series of Anglo-Norman hall houses in east Galway were modified and given tower house features during the late medieval period (Sweetman 2000, 92-3). Moreover, this also happened at Shrule Castle in Co. Mayo (*Ibid*., 97), and at Temple House Castle, Co. Sligo, in the fifteenth century, when the castle was under the control of the Uí Eadhra of Luighne (O'Conor and Naessens 2016b). It is, therefore, quite possible that the castle remains at Tiaquin once took the form of a tower house or remodelled hall house, during which time it would have conceivably served as one of the residences of Donnchadh Ó Cellaig, as well as the late sixteenth-century Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig.

7.4.3 – Abbeyknockmoy and Ó Cellaig Patronage

Indicative of the Ó Cellaig supremacy in this area can be seen in a number of ways. In 1408, the death is recorded of Maurice Mac an Bhaird of *Cuil-an-úrtain*, described as the *ollamh* of the Uí Chellaig of Uí Maine (*AFM*; *ALC*). Cooloorta townland is located 4.5km to the east-north-east of Abbeyknockmoy and 10km to the north of Tiaquin. Considering as the landholding of the Mac an Bhaird *ollamh* to the Uí Chellaig at this time is located in such close vicinity to the fifteenth-century Tiaquin *cenn áit* of the Uí Maine highlights the intention to establish a permanent foothold in the area, as well as the level of security felt by the expansionist Uí Chellaig in this area at the time. More than this, it is another instance of the trend of placing service kindred landholdings in the immediate surrounds of the *cenn áit* (FitzPatrick 2018, 173-87; see also 5.2.3.2; 5.3.4.2; 5.4.3.1; 6.3.3.3).

The physical evidence for Ó Cellaig patronage of Abbeyknockmoy at this time is most readily seen with the building of the early fifteenth-century tomb to Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, and his wife Fionola, with the tomb even worthy of an entry in the annalistic record (*MacC*, *s.a.* 1402[52]). This tomb was built into the north wall of the presbytery, in the location normally reserved for the founder’s tomb, and an inscription on the tomb informs us of the

[52] Note the *Miscellaneous Irish Annals* are out by one year in this entry. All other sources record Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig’s death for the year 1401.

crafter of the shrine, one Matthaeus Ó Coghinle (Pl. 7.6). Moss has indicated that while the tomb displays a devotion to John the Baptist which became current in fourteenth-century Ireland, it also exhibits deliberate anachronisms, which has been interpreted as the Uí Chellaig elite using material culture to confirm their rights to authority over this contested part of their now expanded territory (Moss 2015, 204). This adoption of deliberate anachronisms is not limited to the tomb, in that the contemporaneous production of *Leabhar Ua Maine* is similarly antiquated in its style (Moss 2015, 204). Of course, these archaisms have been shown to also be apparent in the settlement forms chosen by the Uí Chellaig (for instance 5.3.5; 6.3.2.1), perhaps utilised in order to demonstrate longstanding legitimacy in being able to claim authority over Uí Maine and Tír Maine (O'Conor 2018, 164-5).

Plate 7.6 – The early fifteenth century tomb in the presbytery of the Cistercian monastery of Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway. This prominently placed tomb was commissioned by Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, and both he and his wife Fionola were interred here at the very beginning of the fifteenth century (Image courtesy of Monastic Ireland).

Further evidence of elite patronage, possibly also commissioned by Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, comes in the form of the, now fragmentary, wall paintings that once prominently adorned both the tomb surrounds as well as the areas immediately adjacent to the east. Above the tomb is a Crucifixion scene, while elsewhere in the monastery there is also a depiction of a French morality tale, the Three Living and Three Dead Kings (Pl. 7.7; Morton 2004, 342-6; Moss 2015, 204).

Plate 7.7 – Depiction of the Three Living and Three Dead Kings, Abbeyknockmoy, Co. Galway (Image source: History of Art Teaching Collection (Digital Image Collection), Trinity College Dublin).

The prominent place of Abbeyknockmoy within this development of a *cenn áit* in the expanded lordship is not to be underestimated either. From the late-fourteenth century onwards, the secular lords of Uí Maine, as well as the younger Ó Cellaig sons who went into the religious orders, heavily patronised the foundation (Smith 2014, https://medieval.ie/history/abbeyknockmoy_cistercian_abbey/), using their position to exercise authority over what must have been a wealthy resource in their expanded lordship.

Abbeyknockmoy, and the nearby prominence of Knockroe, consistent largely with the townland of Glennaveel, were until recently the location for an annual pilgrimage and fair, which took place on 21st August, the day after St. Bernard's Day. The Bernard in question is St. Bernard of Clairvaux, founder of the Cistercian order, yet it is quite likely that this date was chosen as a convenient new date for the pilgrimage in this area, due to its closeness to the traditional assembly of *Lughnasa*. MacNeill points out that this pilgrimage up Knockroe hill was part of a wider festivity centred on the settlement and religious lands of Abbeyknockmoy. These came in the form of a well-known and attended livestock fair day, and an early seventeenth-century royal charter which granted, or more likely, regranted permission to hold the annual fair at Abbeyknockmoy (MacNeill 2008, 128-31).

7.4.4 – The Tower Houses of Sixteenth-Century Ó Cellaig Country

The historical background to this research topic seems to indicate that the late-fifteenth century was generally a period of decline amongst the Uí Chellaig, where weakened and distant familial lines fought over the title of chief of Uí Maine (see 2.6). In spite of this supposed discord, by 1504, Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, had constructed three castles, located at Garbally (*Garbh dhoire*), Monivea (*Muine an mheadha*) and Gallagh (*Gallach*), Co. Galway (*AFM*). These fortifications were recorded as being demolished by Ulick Fionn Burke of *Clann Ricaird* in the same year, but in and of themselves, they indicate the wealth and resources still being utilised by the Uí Chellaig lords in this area at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Two further tower houses are located in the area and are claimed to have been constructed by the Uí Chellaig. These are Barnaderg Castle (Pl. 7.8) and Mullaghmore Castle, and these, among many Galway castles, are recorded in the aforementioned 1574 list compiled for the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney, with *Bearnegarik* (Barnaderg) in the possession of 'Edmund Mc Melaghlin [O'Kelly]', and *Molloghmore* (Mullaghmore) in the possession of 'Tege Mc Wm Okelly' (Nolan 1900-1, 122).

Plate 7.8 – Barnaderg Castle, Co. Galway, sixteenth-century tower house of the Uí Chellaig (Author's photograph).

The most westerly of the Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig castles is Monivea. The site of Monivea Castle (GA071-064001-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 415) is located in the townland of Monivea Demesne, where the tower house structure was incorporated into a later country house (GA071-064002-), meaning that little is discernible from the surviving elements. All that survives today is a much-altered rectangular tower of three to four storeys, with external dimensions of 12.5m long by 9.5m wide, while the interior is now inaccessible (Pl. 7.9). One early, two-light, flat-headed window survives on the east wall, but the remainder of the features appear to be of eighteenth and nineteenth century date.

Plate 7.9 – Monivea Castle, Co. Galway, viewed from the north. These are the much altered remains of what was originally an early-sixteenth century Ó Cellaig tower house castle (Image courtesy of visitgalway.ie).

Garbally is another castle of tower house form (GA059-037-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 409; Pl. 7.10). Located in the townland of the same name, it is the centrally located of these three strongholds built by Maolsechlainn. The tower house does not have any evidence for a surrounding bawn, however, it may be possible that the south-eastern limits of the small

field that the castle is sited in today could conform to an older boundary around the site, perhaps the remnants of a bawn enclosure (Fig. 7.15).

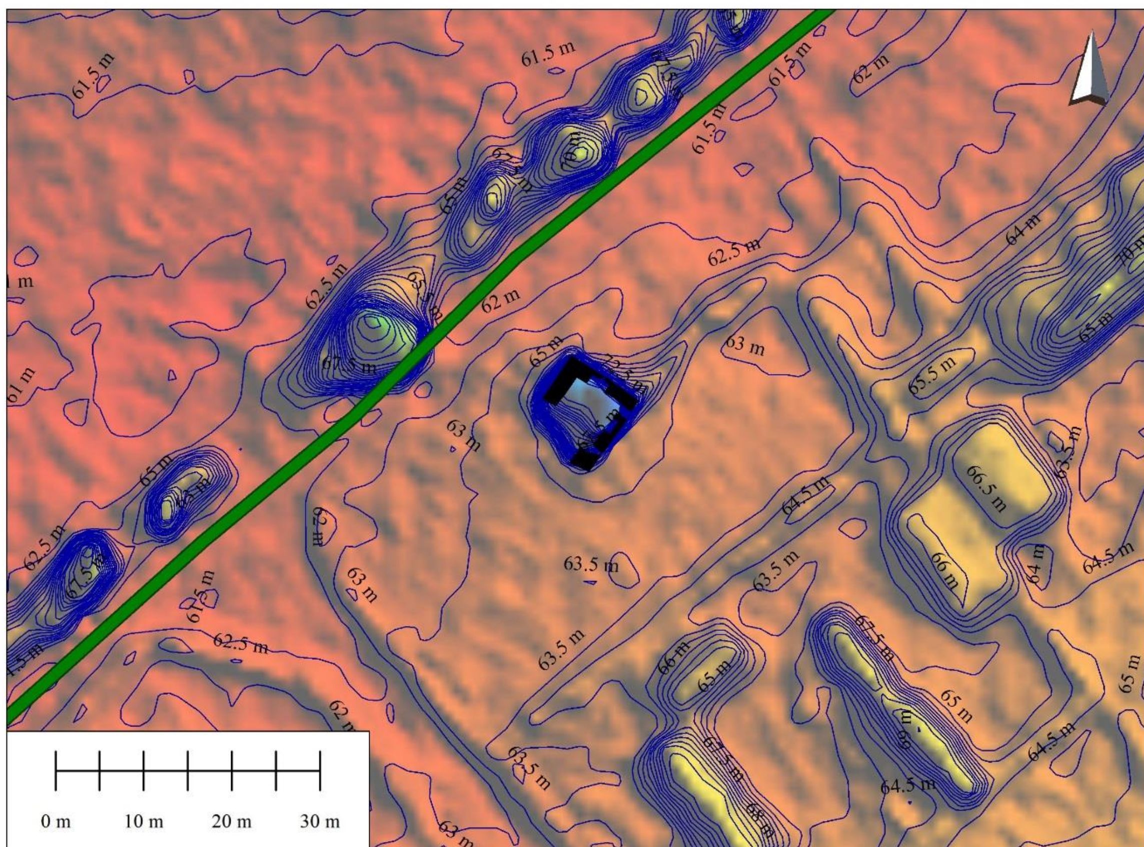

Figure 7.15 – Contoured topographical plan of the area immediately surrounding Garbally Castle, Co. Galway. No definite evidence for a bawn is apparent. The R339 regional road, marked in green, is likely to be the continuation of a long-established roadway through the area (Data source: Bluesky Ltd.).

The north-eastern wall, and the adjoining sections of the north-western and south-eastern walls of this tower house survives to the second floor, with the interior exposed (Pl. 7.10). The original pointed arch doorway survives at the eastern end of the south-eastern wall (Pl. 7.11; Fig. 7.16). This doorway is defended by a murder-hole as well as a possible gunloop, located within a niche on its southern side. A narrow defensive window survives on the north-eastern wall at ground floor level, and an intramural stairwell survives within the south-eastern wall, providing access to the first floor. A window opening is located in the stairwell.

The first floor is more commodious, with evidence for four surviving windows, but again all are narrow slits, and one of these windows is ogee-headed (Fig. 7.16). A wicker-centred vaulted ceiling survives on this floor, and the north-western wall retains evidence for an intramural stairwell which provided access onto the second floor. A two-light ogee-headed window survives on the second floor, lighting a large room, likely the tower house hall, due to its size

and the fact that it was open to the roof, allowing for the use of a characteristic central hearth for feasting purposes (Sherlock 2011, 133; see Pl. 7.12). On the exterior of the surviving ogee-headed window on this floor there are the remains of a possible machicolation (Claffey 1983, 152-3; see Pl. 7.12; Fig. 7.16). Through its architectural remains, O'Keeffe dates Garbally Castle to the second half of the fifteenth century (O'Keeffe 2021, 193). Of the three tower houses, Garbally is the best surviving example.

Plate 7.10 – The remains of Garbally tower house, Co. Galway, viewed from the south west (Author's photograph).

Plate 7.11 - Original pointed doorway of Garbally Castle, Co. Galway (Image courtesy of Mike Salter).

Plate 7.12 – The two light ogee-headed window on the north-eastern wall of the tower house lighting the second floor, flanked by two narrow loops. Note the remains of a possible machicolation over this window, presumably accessed from the battlements on the roof of the castle (Author's photograph).

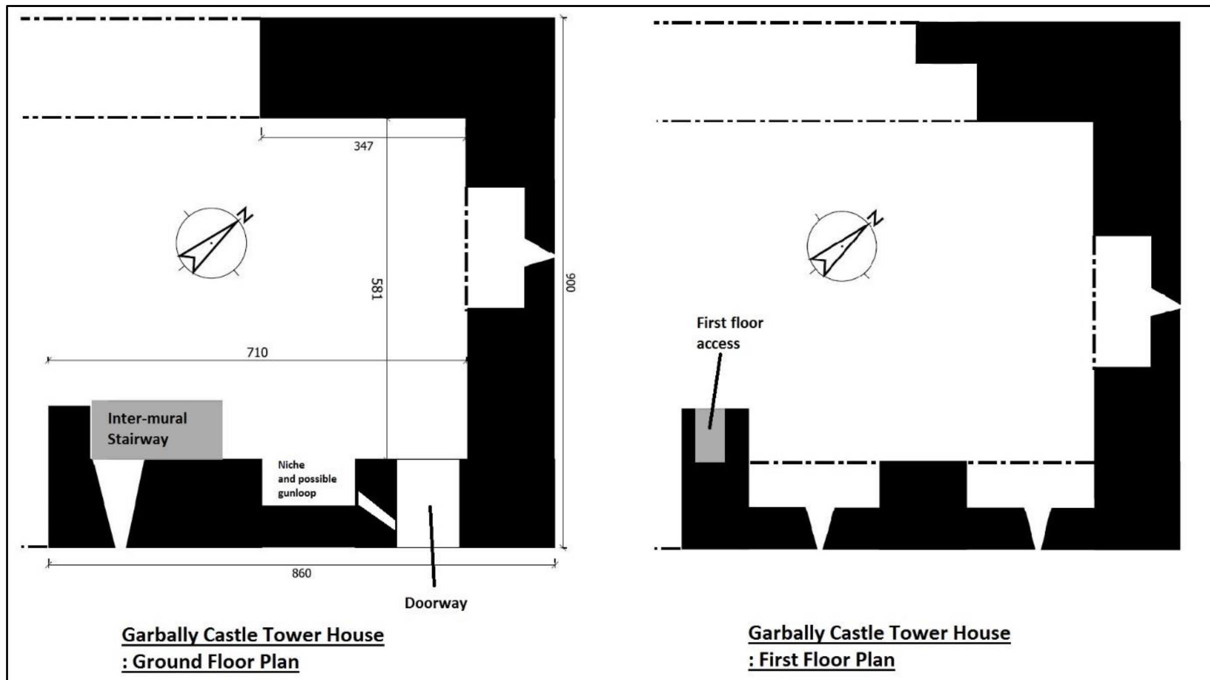

Figure 7.16 - Plan of the surviving elements of the ground and first floors of Garbally Castle tower house.

The site of the third castle (GA060-081001-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 409) is located outside of the village of Castleblakeney (*Gallach Uí Cheallaigh*), in the townland of Gallagh. No masonry remains survive, however, based on analogy with the other 'unclassified castles' studied as part of this research, as well as the fact that the other Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig castles, particularly Garbally Castle, are of tower house form, makes it very likely that Gallagh was also a tower house. What does survive is of earthwork form, with the visible remains comprised of what has been interpreted as a high flat-topped circular mound, measuring 15m in diameter, and rising to a height of 8m. This has been described as motte-like in appearance, and is retained with traces of a circular bank around the perimeter of the summit. More correctly, this castle was located at the summit at the southern end of a small esker, *c.*250m long, which runs broadly north/south (Pl. 7.13). A topographical plan of the castle site indicates that the 'circular' mound is actually more sub-rectangular in plan, *c.*30m on all axes, and this mound is largely composed of rubble masonry. These characteristics are very faint but the shape is reminiscent of a tower house and bawn arrangement, but this can only be confirmed through further investigation (Fig. 7.17). Gallagh and possibly Garbally are marked on the Browne map of 1591 (Fig. 7.18).

Plate 7.13 – Site of Gallagh Castle, viewed from the south (Author's photograph).

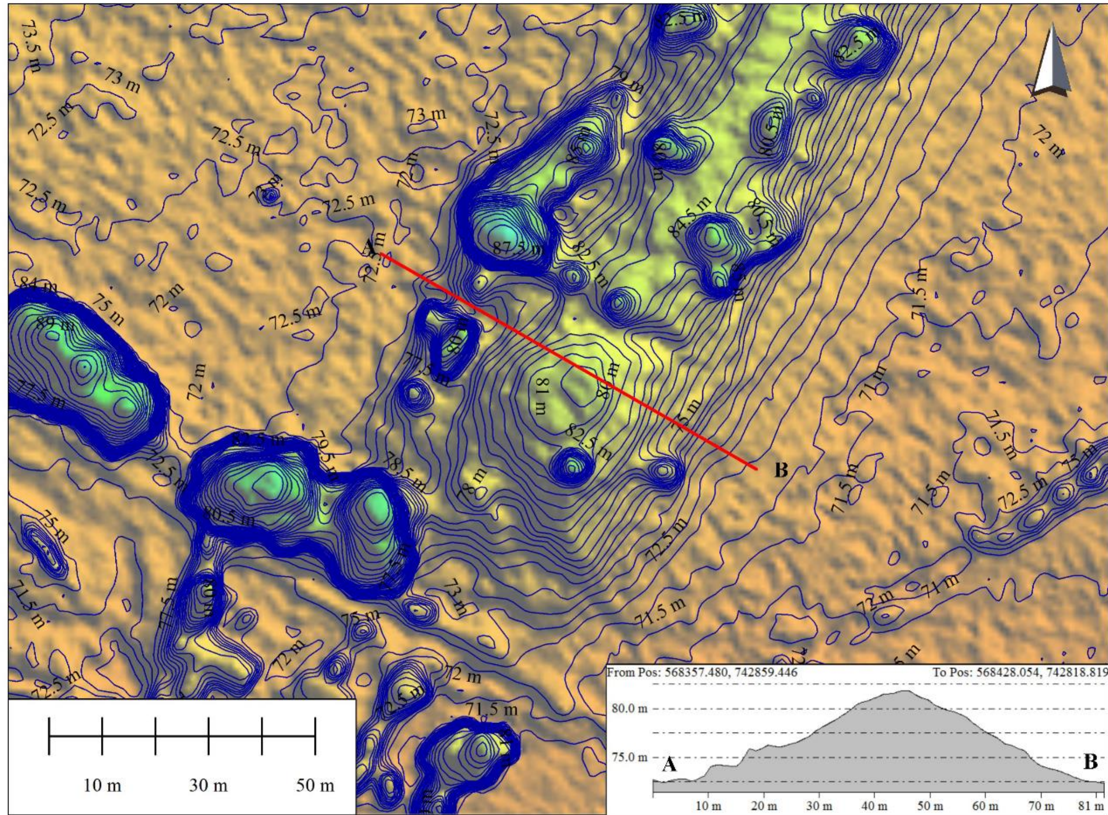

Figure 7.17 – Contoured topographical plan and cross section of the earthwork remains of Gallagh Castle, located as they are on the southern end of a small esker. The upper levels of this mound are sub-rectangular in plan, and based on analogy with other sites, may represent the remains of a tower house castle and bawn arrangement (Data source: Bluesky Ltd.).

Figure 7.18 - Section of Browne's Map of the Province of Connaught (1591) for the Barony of Tiaquin. The site of Gallagh is encircled in red, while the recording that possibly refers to Garbally Castle is encircled in blue (Copyright 2011 The Board of Trinity College Dublin.).

One of the main characteristics that connects these three contemporaneous castles is their siting. All three of these fortifications were constructed adjacent to a modern road running west from Caltra to Galway, the R339. This communication routeway passes in close vicinity to both Abbeyknockmoy to its north, and Athenry to its south, while to the east of Caltra village it connects to another regional road, the R358, which leads through Ahascragh and on to the important ford over the River Suck at *Áth Nadsluaigh* (see Appendix 4). Given the expanses of wetland that survive in this area to present day, both north and south of these roads, it is highly likely that this route follows a roadway of considerable antiquity, through a landscape that is marginal and would have been difficult to traverse. McAlister notes the siting of tower houses at roads and passes more generally in Ireland, and the range of functions that this could supply to the castle builder. These range from the ability to hold off raiding parties and restricting access, through to their use as apt locations to toll travellers through the region (McAlister 2019, 154-7).

Therefore, it is quite possible that Maolsechlainn's siting of these fortifications may have been as important as the constructions themselves, as he sought to keep communication, trade and revenue streams open between the core of his lordship, closer to the River Suck, and the secular and ecclesiastical foundations of Clantayg, and even further on to the city of Galway. Given the relative immediacy with which Ulick Fionn Burke attacked these castles in 1504, it was plainly an attempt to limit the authority of the Uí Chellaig in this area. However, this demolition cannot have been complete, owing to the surviving archaeological remains, as well as the mention of *Moynvea* (Monivea), at least, in the 1574 list mentioned earlier (Nolan 1900-1, 122).

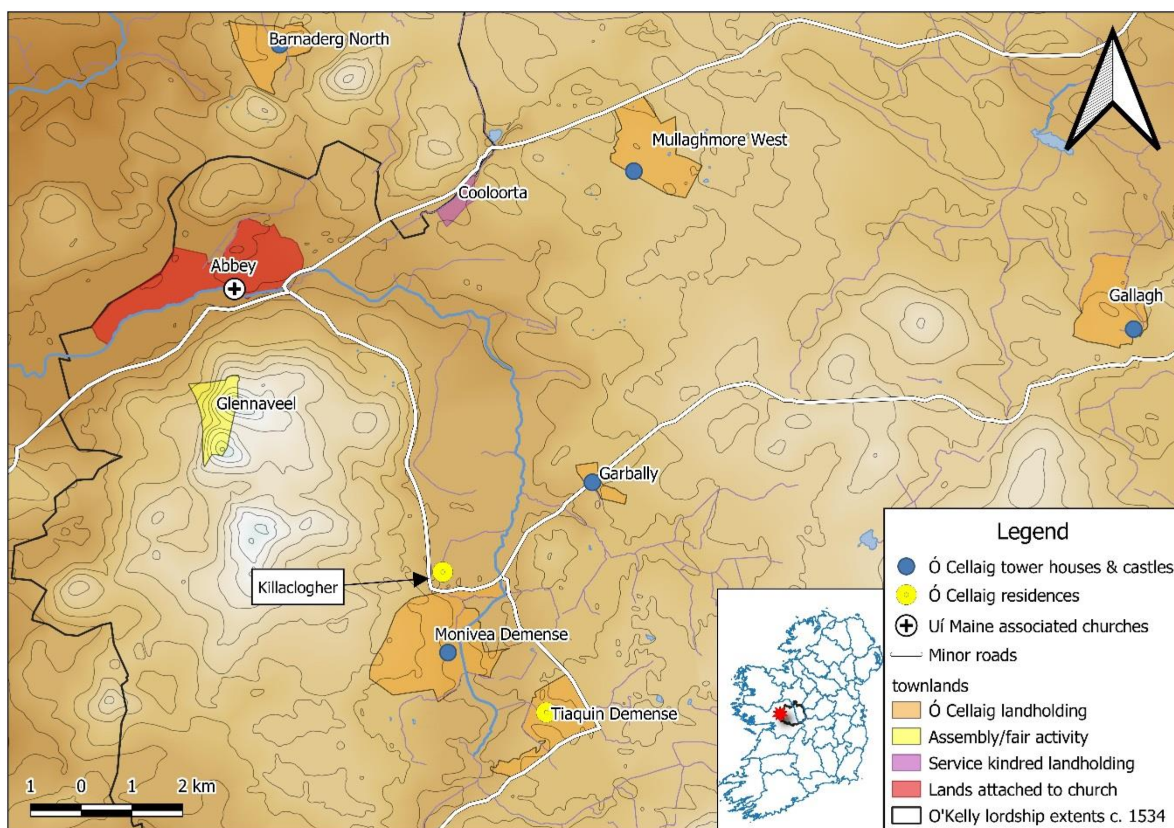

Figure 7.19 - Summary of the Tiaquin and Abbeyknockmoy case study area, with the principal locations outlined.

To conclude this short case study section on the physical manifestation of the late medieval expansion of Ó Cellaig Country, the range of historical evidence and archaeological remains enable us to consider the approach taken by these later medieval Gaelic lords in expanding their territory westward. Patronage and control of the important regional religious house and assembly site of Abbeyknockmoy certainly assisted the Uí Chellaig in retaining a stake in the area, even prior to their expansion into the cantred by force in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The landholdings of a key service kindred of the Uí Chellaig, the Mac an Bhaird

ollamh, within the district, also signals the intent of these lords of Uí Maine in ensuring that one of their principal vassals were located at such a close remove to one of their *cenn áiteanna*. Thereafter, the construction and habitation of sites at Tiaquin, Monivea, Garbally, Gallagh, Barnaderg and Mullaghmore through to the late-sixteenth century highlight the permanence of the Ó Cellaig association with the former de Bermingham and Uí Mainnin lands in the area, a district which produced a level of trade and wealth, evidenced at Athenry and Abbeyknockmoy, which the Uí Maine lords presumably sought to acquire and develop for their own economic benefit.

7.5 – Conclusions

As can be seen across the three case studies of this chapter, in certain instances the Ó Cellaig lord sought to site his lordly centres on or close to some of the principal overland routes of the wider territory. In the first case study, Aughrim, the *cenn áit* was of relative longstanding, despite being passed between a series of Gaelic and Anglo-Norman occupants from at least as early as the late-twelfth century (see 7.2.1). It is likely that in this case, the lordly centre was located in order to benefit from the traffic and revenue that passed to and from Ballinasloe, on to Loughrea, and eventually Galway. The fragmentary surviving remains, coupled with the remote sensing survey and pictorial evidence, indicates that the site of Aughrim Castle was once a complex late medieval fortification, consisting of two wards, and the former presence of a rectangular masonry enclosure with at least two flanking towers. The entrance to this inner ward seems to have been guarded by a barbican gatehouse, and the focal point of this lordly centre is likely to have been a castle of tower house form (see 7.2.2).

In the second case study, Lisdaulan Castle was located within what was the core of Uí Chellaig territory in the sixteenth century. The surviving archaeological remains indicate that the castle at Lisdaulan is likely to have been of tower house form. Lisdaulan was located in order to benefit from the overland route of Doran's Route 11, and there is evidence to suggest that it may have been linked to a watermill, which would have garnered wealth for the resident lord of Uí Maine (see 7.3). The historical and cartographical evidence from two Ó Cellaig lordly centres, Athleague and Lisdaulan appears to suggest that corn and corn milling was part of the economic underpinning of the lordship in the late medieval period (see 3.5.3; 6.4.3; 7.3). However, as castles of all dates were in some way agricultural centres, with land directly farmed from them, this should really come as no surprise. Most castles from the twelfth century through to the mid-seventeenth century would have had mills, usually watermills, nearby

(O’Conor 1998, 26-35; 2004, 235-6; see Rynne 2004, 72-85; McAlister 2019, 78-80). This suggests that most Ó Cellaig castles and fortified sites of all dates would have had mills beside them, as part of the agricultural complexes around these places, and the evidence available from the fifteenth and sixteenth century Ó Cellaig lordship supports the same trend.

In the third case study, the later claim for authority over an extended territory was facilitated by the construction and occupation of fortifications along one of the routes from north-eastern Co. Galway through to the major medieval urban centres of the region, at Athenry and Galway itself, no matter how brief the period of authority. The available evidence from this case study, as well as on analogy with many of the late medieval elite settlement forms discussed throughout this research, suggests that these fortifications are all likely to have been of tower house form, with the best surviving example located at Garbally, Co. Galway (see 7.4.4).

In the Aughrim and Clantayg case studies, however, the lordly centres were located within areas which, at one stage or another, were outside their traditional patrimonial lands. The Uí Chellaig established societal links in the districts surrounding these routeway-sited lordly centres, through the creation, adoption and heavy patronage of wealthy religious foundations (see 7.4.3; Appendix 5), as well as the provision of landholdings to their service kindreds in the area, and the patronage of seasonal assemblies, and inauguration ceremonies (see Appendix 5). This was all undertaken as a means of claiming authority over their new territories. This approach was presumably attempted in order to create a legacy and legitimacy over the areas in question, over which they did not always have a longstanding and traditional claim.

Finally, the surviving evidence from these case studies indicate that tower houses castles were, yet again, the primary elite settlement form found at Ó Cellaig lordly centres in the late medieval period (see 7.2.2; 7.3; 7.4.4). This in and of itself highlights the previously low levels of recording of tower house sites within the study area, by comparison with the information which has been gleaned from this research. Beyond this, however, the archaeological evidence for high levels of tower house building amongst the late medieval Uí Chellaig, as well as the physical evidence for patronage at religious foundations (see 7.4.3), indicate that this lordship remained wealthy and interested in displays of elite culture into the late medieval period, despite the conclusions which have been drawn to date on the Ó Cellaig lordship, based solely on the historical sources. As a result, the surviving archaeology presents a different picture on the state of the Uí Maine lordship in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than has traditionally been accepted, which is a significant conclusion to be able to make.

Chapter 8 – Discussion

8.1 – Introduction

The information outlined over the preceding chapters has added considerably to our knowledge on the archaeology of the lordly centres in the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine. The present writer believes that this research can also provide insights into the character and development of later medieval Gaelic Irish society at an elite level more generally, and this chapter will now address a number of these points.

The central aim of this thesis has been to identify and reconstruct the physical manifestation of the lordly centres in the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship. In order to attempt this, it was necessary to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach, one which resulted in a detailed engagement with all available data in a democratic manner, in order to establish the fullest understanding of the past environment of the study area as possible, an approach advocated by a number of medieval archaeologists, such as Geertz, Breen, Moreland and others (see 1.4). As such, this methodology required the examination of all available published archaeological, historical, cartographic and literary evidence, from both Gaelic Irish and Anglo-Norman/English sources, in order to be able to identify the elite settlements of the Uí Chellaig on the ground. Thereafter, these locations were investigated, in order to ascertain what was physically present at each of these places. What was revealed through this approach could be broadly divided chronologically into high-medieval settlement forms (1100 to *c.*1350), followed by the elite settlement archaeology of the late medieval Ó Cellaig lordship (*c.*1350 to 1600).

The elite settlement forms linked to the Uí Chellaig (and, of course, their vassal lords) for high-medieval Uí Maine and Tír Maine are as follows: *crannóga* and natural island fortresses, defended natural promontories, *bódhúin*, cashels and ringforts, and moated sites. It must be noted, however, that the present study has uncovered a continuity in the use of some of these settlement forms that goes beyond the high medieval period. In the late medieval period, the principal elite settlement form occupied by the Uí Chellaig was the tower house castle, and the majority of these castles were constructed within the Uí Maine lordship from the fifteenth century through to the middle of the sixteenth century. In many cases, however, these tower houses were constructed within Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* landscapes of long standing, and the evidence suggests that the older settlement forms, particularly the *crannóg*, cashel and *bódhún* were incorporated into the physical makeup of some late medieval (i.e. late fourteenth century to *c.*1600) Ó Cellaig lordly centres. The wealth and power of the lordship also seems to increase

during this period, and this is displayed through the aforementioned construction of tower houses, but also in the founding and remodelling of religious houses, and their heavy patronage, among other displays of affluence.

8.1.1 – Discussion of the high medieval elite settlement forms of the **Uí Chellaig**

8.1.1.1 – **Crannóga** *and natural islands*

As was outlined through the case studies of Chapter 5, three lacustrine environments have presented themselves as *cenn áiteanna* of the Ó Cellaig lords, and in all cases, *crannóga* and modified natural islands served as focal points for this settlement activity. Lough Croan, Co. Roscommon, retains evidence for at least five *crannóga* and modified natural islands, and the extant artefactual assemblages from the *crannóg* of Edward's Island and the modified natural island of Illaunamona (see 5.2.1.1), coupled with a remote sensing investigation of the latter site (see 5.2.2), strongly argues for these two monuments having been occupied during the later medieval period. At Callow Lough, Co. Galway, a substantial *crannóg* dominates the lake, and retains the remains of a sub-rectangular drystone-built house, as well as jetty features located on the eastern side of the island (see 5.3.3.1). More than this, the Callow Lough *crannóg* was deemed still relevant to have been worthy of recording on Browne's map of Connacht from 1591 (see 5.3.2.1). Ballaghdacker Lough, Co. Galway, is the location for two further large *crannóga*, Stony Island (*Inisfarannan*), which may have been formed out of a natural core, and Sally Island (*Loch an Dúin*), referenced in the historical sources for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (see 5.4.2.2; 5.4.2.3; Pls. 5.14; 5.15; Figs. 5.33; 5.34). The morphology of Illaunamona, Callow *crannóg*, Stony Island and Sally Island all present with the attributes of high-cairn *crannóga* in the later phases of their construction. This is further evidence that they were modified and inhabited during the later medieval period (Fredengren 2002, 100-2, 272-6).

The historical sources establish that all three of these lakes were frequented by the Ó Cellaig elite as lordly centres throughout the later medieval period, while the evidence from Ballaghdacker Lough suggests that the lake may have been in use contemporaneously as both an Ó Cellaig residence as well as part of the landholding of a service kindred, the Ó Cuindlis, attached to the Ó Cellaig lord. As a result, the present writer can confidently argue that one of the principal physical manifestations of Ó Cellaig lordly settlement in the later medieval period relates to the *crannóg*, as well as a natural island fortress, a conclusion which has not been identified prior to the present study.

How does this information compare with the situation in later medieval Gaelic Ireland more generally? Beginning in the modern county of Roscommon, there are a number of examples of *crannóga* and natural islands that were clearly inhabited during the later medieval period. For example, Ardakillin Lough, historically-attested as a focal point of Ó Conchobhair lordship throughout the later medieval period until at least the fifteenth century, bears the hallmarks of a high-cairn *crannóg*, which seems to have been topped by a cashel-like wall (Brady and O'Conor 2005, 134; Shanahan 2008, 7-10). Further north, in what was once the *trícha cét* of Maigh Luirg, the Mac Diarmada principal *cenn áit* at the Rock of Lough Cé is a fine example of where a natural lakeland feature was modified and added to, so as to develop a substantial occupation platform. A circular mortared stone-walled enclosure, which was cashel-like in form, occupied the western part of this island throughout the later medieval period (Fig. 8.1). Other *crannóga* and island sites with evidence of continued use in north Roscommon into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries include the Ó Conchobair 'island' of Aghacarra on Cornacarta Lough, and the residence of the Mac Maghnusa lords of Tír Tuathail, identifiable with a *crannóg* on Lough Meelagh (O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 21-7; O'Conor 2018, 153-4).

Figure 8.1 – Reconstruction of the combination of natural island fortress, crannóg *and cashel-like enclosure wall on the Rock of Lough Cé*, c. *1250, the principal later medieval residence of the Gaelic Meic Diarmada lords of Maigh Luirg.*

(Reconstruction by Dan Tietzsch-Tyler, reproduced with the kind permission of Nollaig Feeney of Roscommon County Council. Image commissioned by Heritage Office, Roscommon County Council).

On the Roscommon-Sligo border, Fredengren's extensive research on Lough Gara has enabled the identification of features consistent with later medieval *crannóga*, an approach which has informed the present research (Fredengren 2002, 273-4). As outlined already (see 4.4), radio-carbon dates acquired from a series of *crannóga* in what is modern-day Co. Leitrim have just been published; these show clear evidence for later medieval occupation and activity on them. Furthermore, this evidence is supported by historical references in the annals, which also show *crannóg* occupation in the Leitrim area right down to *c.*1600 (O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 91). Further afield, in central and western Co. Galway, Naessens has been able to demonstrate that both the pre- and post-explusion periods in the high-medieval history of the Uí Fhlaithbheartaigh lords of, firstly Mag Seóla, and latterly Iarchonnacht, are consistent with *cenn áiteanna* which manifested as *crannóga* and modified natural island fortresses (Naessens 2018). Naessens has also pointed out that the Uí Fhlaithbheartaigh deliberately selected a lacustrine location for their *cenn áit* in Mag Seóla, despite that landscape being largely devoid of lakes for the purpose (Naessens 2018, 98). This is also the case in Uí Maine and Tír Maine (see 1.2; 3.2.3), perhaps highlighting the importance ascribed by the Gaelic elite more generally to siting their lordly centres on or near water.

The evidence is not limited to Connacht either, as the excavations of Island McHugh in Co. Tyrone, coupled with the research conducted in as geographically separate regions as Cos Fermanagh and Cork can attest to the continued use of *crannóga* in later medieval Gaelic Ireland (Davies 1950; Foley and Williams 2006; Kelleher 2007; Bermingham, Moore, O'Keeffe and Gormley 2013, Bermingham 2014), as well as some of these places being the exclusive and private preserve of the Gaelic aristocracy. Indeed, the dating evidence from the Fermanagh *crannóga*, including Drumclay, clearly indicate the widespread occupation of these artificial and modified natural islands as defended residences during the whole later medieval period (see 4.4).

8.1.1.2 – Promontory forts

Another elite settlement form which has emerged from the present study is the inland promontory fort. Coastal promontory forts have received some study in Ireland, and their main period of occupation has been traditionally regarded as occurring primarily in the Iron Age, with some early medieval activity also apparent (see 6.3.2.1). There has been little by the way

of excavation at any of these sites, and when they have been investigated, it is more routinely with an Iron Age research agenda in mind (Breen 2005, 57).

However, both Breen and Naessens have now been able to demonstrate that some coastal promontories may have been occupied, and possibly even constructed upon, in the later medieval period, while the research undertaken by O'Conor at the early Anglo-Norman fortified promontory at Baginbun, Co. Wexford is equally informative (O'Conor 2003, 17-31; Breen 2005, 57-62; Naessens 2018, 105). In the instances relating to Gaelic lordship, it has unfortunately proven difficult to conclusively associate these sites with members of the Ó Súilleabháin Bhéara, Ó Flaithbheartaigh and Ó Máille elite in their respective coastal study areas. However, Breen has theorised that the five possible promontory forts around Ballydonegan Bay in Co. Cork may have been inhabited as the later medieval settlements of the O'Donegan sept family within the Ó Súilleabháin Bhéara lordship (Breen 2005, 61). In terms of inland promontory forts, FitzPatrick is one of the few researchers to highlight the probable later medieval use of these monuments in lakeland settings; in her reconstruction and discussion of the Ó Duibhgeannáin learned kindred landholdings who served the Meic Diarmada lords of Maigh Luirg at Lough Meelagh, Co. Roscommon (FitzPatrick 2015b, 173-4).

The current research has revealed two examples of what the present writer would describe as inland promontory forts – at Callow Lough, Co. Galway, and at Galey Bay, Co. Roscommon (see 5.3.3.2; 6.3.2.1). Both of these promontory forts are located in lakeland environments, and present with evidence that the occupants sought to manipulate the natural promontory for defensive purposes. At Callow Lough, the peninsula was demarcated from the immediate hinterland by means of a substantial wet ditch (8m-9m wide) and associated banks, and micro-topographical data hints at the possibility of a regulated access point, perhaps in the form of a gatehouse, onto the promontory (Fig. 5.23; 5.24). This site is historically-attested as a *bódhún*, and will be discussed further presently.

The inland promontory fort at Galey Bay is of a similar archaeological expression. The small peninsula into Lough Ree at Galey Bay was modified to create a pair of wet ditches (each *c.*5m wide) to separate the focal point of the peninsula from the surrounding area (Fig. 6.2). In both cases, the evidence suggests that earthen defences, probably in association with timber palisades, were the primary means in which these promontory forts were protected from landward attack. However, the identification of these features is an example of where there is

an issue in typology at these locations, given that the information on the ASI database is not satisfactory in attempting to summarise the archaeological remains on the ground. In the case of Galey, there is a modified natural promontory. But alongside this there is evidence for further earthen defences, as well as the degraded remains in the interior of the site of a cashel, not to mention the later insertion of a tower house castle on the central prominence. The complexity of remains at these sites needs to be recorded more fully than is presently the case, in order that important information relating to these places does not disappear over time.

In summary, both of these promontory forts were located at historically-attested Ó Cellaig lordly centres, and this, coupled with the survival of these ditches, would argue for the later medieval construction and maintenance of these defensive elements which allow the present writer to be able to classify them as promontory forts.

8.1.1.3 – The bódhún

As outlined above, the *bódhún* – 'cattle fort/cow-fortress' is a relatively amorphous monument type, in that the name is coined by its use in the later medieval historical sources alone. A deeper discussion into the origins of the *bódhún* as a specific feature of later medieval Gaelic Ireland was dealt with previously (see 4.5). The present writer has encountered just two examples of this monument and its physical manifestation as part of the present study. Both examples are found within the Ó Cellaig lordship, so any conclusions for other parts of the island of Ireland must be tempered by this slight recording. However, a cursory search of the instances of 'bawn/*bábhún*' townland names on www.logainm.ie returns ten occurrences of the term by itself in the place-names record, not to mention the numerous examples that return with the use of bawn/*bábhún* as either a prefix or suffix to a longer place-name. Looking at the evidence from just two such sites on the ground, the present writer would suggest that the low-relief earthen remains in Bawnmore townland, near Geashill Castle, Co. Offaly, and the remains in Bawn townland, Killeshandra civil parish, Co. Cavan, may be physically similar to the *bódhúin* monuments of the Ó Cellaig lordship. As such, the present writer believes that there must be many more examples of the *bódhún* waiting to be recorded in the Irish landscape.

The *bódhúin* occur at Athleague, Co. Roscommon, and at Callow Lough, Co. Galway, and there is a morphological similarity apparent in both cases. Both are located in watery places, and the 'cattle fort' is created by redirecting the surrounding lake or river waters into a defensive wet ditch, as a means of delimiting a fortified zone (see 5.3.3.2; 6.4.3.2). The wet ditch at Athleague seems to have measured 8m-9m in width, with faint traces of an internal

bank. Here at Athleague and at Callow Lough, the area contained by the ditch was in excess of 14,000m². Both of these *bódhún* had a lordly residence located within their interior, and access to the interior of the *bódhún* seems to have been carefully regulated at one point across the ditch, with additional defences, including flanking defences, presumably once standing all along the perimeter of the site.

Presumably the primary function of these very large earthen enclosures was to serve as the overnight protected enclosure for the lord's cattle and horse herds, when the *cenn áit*, or lordship at large, was suspected to be under threat from a raid. Here, it must be noted, that these fortifications could only have proven effective against small-scale attack, and it is likely that in the case of larger-scale military incursions, the *bódhún* would have been of little use. In these cases, the natural landscape would have proven far more suitable, and the historical sources indicate the frequent use by the Gaelic Irish of woodland and upland areas as places to protect their cattle herds in time of attack (O'Conor 1998, 99-101). Suitable woodlands existed throughout later medieval Uí Maine and Tír Maine which could have been utilised for this purpose, and the intriguing place-name survival at Knockadangan, Co. Roscommon, may speculatively point to this approach being taken in the study area (see 3.2.2). In peacetime, the *bódhún* presumably served as safe places to keep animals for a couple of days, until the available grass was consumed within it, and there was a ready supply of water available in both researched instances. It may have been a routine location for portioning out the lord's cattle for *cána*/*túarastla* (tribute) to other lords, and for temporarily holding cattle as part of *cís* (rent/food stipend) from the constituent communities of the lordship (see 6.3.3.4). It could also have been used to gather animals to be slaughtered and butchered for the table and for the production of resources (see 3.5.1). Beyond these uses, it is possible that these large enclosed fortified zones could have served as mustering points and temporary accommodation for combatants, and the large space would have easily billeted a substantial troop of warriors, their horses, as well as the retinue of camp followers, such as women and horseboys, that would have been routine in the martial world of later medieval Connacht (O'Conor 2003, 26-8). Slight evidence for the possible use of the *bódhún* of Athleague in this manner comes with the 1337 construction by Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair of what was described as a *foslongport*, which can translate to 'fortified encampment' (*AC*; O'Conor 1998, 84).

8.1.1.4 – Cashels and ringforts

The evidence for the continued use of ringforts and cashels (dry-stone wall ringforts) as places of residence beyond the early medieval period has traditionally been a contentious issue in Irish archaeology. However, as has been demonstrated earlier (see 4.3), there is a growing body of evidence in support of the continued use, and possibly even construction, of both of these monument types into the later medieval period. The Ó Cellaig study area has never previously been surveyed in this regard, and by virtue of the sheer numbers of these monument types in the area (ringforts = 767; enclosures (the majority of which were probably ringforts) = 258; cashels = 76), considered in association with the research undertaken on ringfort distributions and densities by Barrett and Graham in their Co. Meath case study area (Barrett and Graham 1975, 37-43), allow for the present writer to suggest that it is highly likely that some of these monuments, located within what was a Gaelic-controlled region, continued to be inhabited throughout the later medieval period. Three developer-led excavations on ringforts in the study area, at Loughbown I and II, and at Mackney (see 4.3.1) all presented with evidence for later medieval occupation.

Two of the most prominent examples of cashels uncovered as part of the present research have been the fragmentary remains of the historically-attested *cathair* at Galey (see 6.3.2.1; Figs. 6.2; 6.3), and the cashel uncovered through remote sensing on Illaunamona at Lough Croan (see 5.2.2). By the mid-fourteenth century, the *cathair* at Galey Bay would have crowned the aforementioned promontory fort, and it is argued that it was the focal point of the great Christmas feast described in *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, while Illaunamona may have been where Conchobar Ó Cellaig, lord of Uí Maine, died in 1403. In both cases, these cashels seem to have served as the elite residence within their respective *cenn áiteanna*.

In the immediate environs around all Ó Cellaig lordly centres throughout this thesis, additional ringforts seem to have played a role in the organisation of the lordly centre. The *crannóga* of the lordship seem to have had dry-land service sites associated with them, some of which were ringforts. The Illaunamona proposed dry-land site comes with the site of a ringfort at Garrynphort, with its intriguing place-name translation 'chief house of the bank/landing place' (see 5.2.1), while there is a univallate ringfort in Cornacask townland, immediately to the north of Ballaghdacker Lough, which may have been linked to the *crannóg* known today as Sally Island (see 5.4.2.3). These dry-land service sites would have served as the public face of the

lord, and acted as the administrative and agricultural centres connected to these more private and exclusive lordly residences out on lakes (see 5.2.1; 5.3.3.2; 5.4.2.1; 5.4.2.3).

A number of other ringforts within the immediate hinterland of the Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* discussed in this thesis may have served as earlier or contemporaneous focal points within the lordly landscape, but in the absence of historical information and excavation, the partial reliance on toponymical evidence in these cases means that the conclusions cannot be as certain. Ringforts from the study area which present with this evidence include the examples in Liswilliam and Lisnagavragh townlands, near the western and northern shores of Lough Croan respectively (see 5.2.1). In the case of Lisnagavragh, the foundational remains of two rectangular stone houses within its interior may be the critical evidence for the continued use of this ringfort as a settlement site into the high or perhaps even late medieval period.

The Callow Lough *cenn áit*, and specifically the townland of Lisdonnellroe, possesses the remains of two named ringforts, Lisnagry and Lisnacourty (see 5.3.3), and owing to their location and morphology, coupled with the intriguing place-name survivals, may indicate that they played a role in the Callow Lough lordly centre during the later medieval period also.

The case for the continued occupation of ringforts and cashels into the later medieval period seems to be on much firmer ground when looking at the residences of the minor elites and the service kindreds attached to the Ó Cellaig lordship. The historical attestation to the landholdings of both groupings, when identifiable and observed on the ground today, presents routinely with the case that the only settlement archaeology, and in some cases, the only archaeological monument of any type to be located in the townland, comes in the form of a ringfort or cashel. This is apparent at the Ó Dubhagáin landholdings of Coolderry, Co. Roscommon, and Cartrondoogan and Ballydoogan, Co. Galway, with the latter townland containing the remains of a tri- or even quadrivallate ringfort, recorded in cartographic sources as 'Lisfineel', and this monument was still inhabited by a member of the Ó Dubhagáin sept into the early seventeenth century (see 5.3.4.2). Ringforts were also the primary medieval monument observed when investigating the landholdings of other service families associated with the Ó Cellaig, such as at Annagh (Mac an Bhaird poets), Ballynabanaba (Uí Longorgáin harpers and Uí Shideacháin horn-players), Lecarrowmactully (Mac Mhaoltuile physicians) (see 5.3.4.2), Lissyegan (Mac Aodhagáin *brehon* kindred) (see 5.4.3.1) and Liscoffy (Uí Chobhtaigh poets) (see 4.7). A cashel serves as the principal settlement archaeology in Cornageeha townland, a landholding recorded in the 1574 State Paper list of 'castles' in Co.

Roscommon as being in the possession of the Mac Dubhghaill. This surname relates to a galloglass kindred in Uí Maine, and the historical sources inform us that they were the hereditary captains of galloglass to the Uí Chellaig throughout the later medieval period (see 2.6). It can be argued that many of the place-names which incorporate a service kindred family name, and thus a name that must have related to the granting of a landholding to a specific family, can be dated with relative confidence to the later medieval period. For instance, most traditional ecclesiastical kindreds, such as the Ó Dubhagáin, only seem to adopt surnames from the eleventh century onwards, while the use of *Mac* in family name formation also only appears from *c.*1000AD (Ó Murchadha 1999, 37-8).

Finally, the minor elite family of the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* Uí Chellaig, the sept group who seem to have controlled the ford of the River Suck at modern-day Ballinasloe for much of the later medieval period, possessed historically-attested strongholds in this area, which, as has been demonstrated, were arguably of a ringfort morphology (see 4.2.1; Appendix 4).

In this study area, it is the first occasion that these monument types have been demonstrated to have been inhabited during the later medieval period. There are parallels for the continued occupation of ringforts and cashels into the latter period to be found elsewhere on the island. One of the first researchers to highlight this later medieval milieu for these monuments has been O'Conor, who theorised that the ringfort was not just a monument type in use during the early medieval period, rather demonstrating the need to consider the range of evidence, which includes cartographic, pictorial and distributional information, which all point toward the continued use of ringforts as a viable settlement form beyond *c.*1000AD (O'Conor 1998, 89-94; 2004, 246-9). FitzPatrick has stated that the available evidence indicates that regional and local variations must be taken into account, which are contrary to the perceived archaeological norm which uniformly places these sites primarily in the early medieval period. FitzPatrick supports her argument through a re-evaluation of published and archived excavation reports of these sites, as well as more recent findings. These suggest that Irish archaeologists should change their views regarding the dating of these monuments and their use through time (FitzPatrick 2009, 277-83).

This argument has been supported in the past decade by the publication of the results of a series of developer-led excavations of ringforts, such as at the aforementioned Mackney and Loughbown sites, while the recent discovery of a diagnostic high-medieval artefact in a stratified context, an Edwardian coin, amongst the assemblage excavated from a previously

unidentified ringfort in Gortnacrannagh townland, Co. Roscommon, in advance of the N5 Bypass project construction,[53] only serves to add weight to the case in favour of the continued occupation of ringforts into the later medieval period. Indirect evidence for the continued use of ringforts into the later medieval period can also be seen in the cases of a number of moated sites in north Co. Roscommon. Finan and O'Conor have indicated that the moated site at Rockingham Demesne was built over a still occupied ringfort at some stage in the thirteenth century, while the moated sites at Carns and Cloonybeirne indicate to a greater or lesser degree that they were built over an existing ringfort. This has led to the suggestion that in these instances, the builders sought to remain in a location that had associations with the past, while wishing to embrace contemporary style fortifications (McNeary and Shanahan 2008, 191; 2012, 222-3; O'Conor and Finan 2018, 123).

There is also a growing body of evidence in support of the continued occupation of the cashel into the later medieval period. This monument type has presented with evidence for later medieval use from both wetland and dryland contexts, with morphological parallels to the two examples recognised over the course of the present study. O'Conor and Naessens have studied the morphology of a series of historically-attested cashels on *crannóga* located on some of the lakes of western Connacht, among them Iniscremha Island and *Caislen na Circe* on Lough Corrib, Co. Galway, *Caislen na Caillighe* on Lough Mask, as well as the undocumented site at Garrison Island on Lough Cullen, both Co. Mayo. In all cases, the island fortification came in the form of a mortared stone enclosure of cashel form. To these sites can be added the cashel-like enclosure on the Rock of Lough Cé, and the presumed cashel which once marked the perimeter of the high-cairn *crannóg* on Ardakillin Lough, both Co. Roscommon (Shanahan 2008, 9; Naessens and O'Conor 2012, 263-6). In the final two cases, these *crannóga*-sited cashels served as the focal points of historically-attested, multi-generational, lordly centres in their respective regions.

Naessens has also identified a number of cashels on *crannóga* and natural islands within the Uí Fhlaithbheartaigh lordship area of Iarchonnacht which seem to present with evidence for high-medieval, possibly high-status, occupation. The most substantial of these examples include two islands with cashel enclosures on Lough Skannive, Co. Galway: *Oileán an Chaca* and *Oileán an Bhalla*, while he also identified an island cashel on Moher Lake, Co. Mayo,

[53] Channing, John, pers. comm. 5th December 2019.

which may have been a high-medieval *cenn áit* of the Ó Máille lordship (Naessens 2018, 101-5).

The dryland-sited cashel, and evidence for their continued use into the later medieval period, presents with a number of investigated examples which are located within the Burren karst limestone landscape of Co. Clare and south Galway. The architectural and archaeological analysis undertaken by FitzPatrick particularly at the *cathair* sites of Cahermacnaughten, Cahermore and Caherahoagh indicate that they were all occupied into the late medieval period, as well as being modified or remodelled during this time (FitzPatrick 2009, 290-8). The excavations at Caherconnell, Co. Clare have demonstrated, through radio-carbon dating and the discovery of diagnostic artefacts, that this cashel was continuously inhabited from possibly as early as the tenth century, right up until the seventeenth century (Comber and Hull 2008, 30-3; 2010, 157-9; Comber 2016; 2018a, 1-12; 2018b, 95-102).

While these results are seen by some as anomalous instances of the continued occupation of ringfort and cashel sites beyond their traditional date (O'Keeffe 2000, 24), FitzPatrick has convincingly argued that cashel occupation was commonplace in the Burren, at least, amongst the minor Gaelic elite into the late medieval and post-medieval periods (FitzPatrick 2009, 288). While it could be assumed that the enduring use of stone for the construction of settlement enclosures into the later medieval period is the result of the natural environment and the stone resources being plentiful in the Burren region, the latter writer has suggested that this medieval and post-medieval built landscape is not unusual in terms of how later medieval Gaelic Irish society was organised. Rather the Burren likely serves as a showcase of what was a reality in the building traditions of the other west of Ireland Gaelic lordships, only that these, particularly stone, enclosures have degenerated in numbers through time elsewhere (*Ibid*., 285). While this degeneration also seems to be the case in the study area, there is also now good evidence for the continued occupation of cashels by the Ó Cellaig elite into the later medieval period.

None of the identifiable high-medieval Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* are of ringfort morphology. *Crannóga*, natural islands and inland promontory forts have thus far been demonstrated to have been the settlement forms chosen by the Ó Cellaig elite. Added to this, however, are the two dry-stone cashels located at Galey Bay and Lough Croan. The present writer believes that these cashels would have been notable by their appearance and their primarily dry-stone construction. The cashel as a monument type is not as numerous in the study area as the ringfort, and this difference may have been a deliberate choice on the part of the builders, likely

designed to distinguish the lordly residence in this area from the settlement environment at large. This may be the physical manifestation in Uí Maine and Tír Maine for the *ríglongport* as seen in the hierarchy of social distinction shown through the choice of enclosed settlement forms recorded in a fourteenth-century battle-roll (*Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, 134; FitzPatrick 2009, 275), and if this is the case, it shows that the high medieval Ó Cellaig elite favoured certain settlement forms over others in the pre-tower house period.

8.1.1.5 – Moated sites

The final high-medieval secular settlement form which is represented in the Ó Cellaig study area is the moated site. When the now-levelled moated site in Ballaghdacker townland is included (see 5.4.2.1), the total number of these monuments identified comes to nine. As outlined above (see 4.6), this monument type is traditionally regarded as a part of the wider Anglo-Norman manorial landscape, particularly in the south-eastern part of the island, and associated with prosperous peasants and minor Anglo-Norman lords. There is a growing body of evidence which indicates that moated sites were also chosen as a place of residence amongst the elites of Gaelic-controlled regions in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries (see, for instance, Graham 1988, 22-3; O'Conor 1998, 87-8; 2001, 338-40; Finan and O'Conor 2002, 74-6; McNeary and Shanahan 2012, 211-2), an argument that could also be made when looking at this site type in Uí Maine and Tír Maine.

The historical background to the study area showed that the cantreds of Omany (Uí Maine) and Tyrmany (Tír Maine) were the subject of speculative Anglo-Norman land grants during the thirteenth century (see 2.4), however, there is little evidence on the ground that the area was ever settled in any meaningful way, outside of the Anglo-Norman towns which were established in eastern Connacht at this time. As a result, there is little to suggest that the moated sites of the Uí Maine lordship were constructed as part of an attempt at developing an Anglo-Norman manor. Conversely, the moated sites of the lordship seem to have been constructed in relatively close vicinity to the lordly centres of the Ó Cellaig lords, possibly as residences for undocumented service kindreds or related junior branches of the Uí Maine. Creeraun, Pallas and Cloonigny moated sites are all located within 9km of the Callow Lough *cenn áit*, while the Moat and Park moated sites are both less than 6km distant from the Aughrim *cenn áit*. Three moated sites are located within the extents of the Uí Fhallamháín territory of Clann Uadach (Cuilleenirwan, Bredagh and Coolnageer), a sept lineage of the Síl Muiredaig who were transplanted into Tír Maine during the twelfth century to control the resident Ó Cellaig lords.

It is noteworthy that these three Clann Uadach sites were situated in close proximity to the Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* of Lough Croan. It is possible that the Uí Fhallamháin chiefs adopted a similar construction trend as was then exhibited in central and north Roscommon, where a total of 53 moated sites are recorded. The majority of the latter number were constructed within the Ó Conchobair *trícha cét* of Machaire Connacht, and the *trícha cét* of their principal vassals, the Mac Diarmada of Maigh Luirg. It may be possible that the building practice amongst the Clann Uadach was undertaken in order to maintain a cultural link with their Ó Conchobair cousins, due to their concentration in that area.

Some of the moated sites within the study area are indirectly connected to the Ó Cellaig elites. Two monuments, at Cloonigny and Coolnageer, were later used as the courtyards or effectively the bawn of historically-attested late medieval castles in the possession of members of the wider Ó Cellaig lordship in the sixteenth century. Lismore moated site in Pallas townland has been interpreted by FitzPatrick as a *pailís* hunting lodge and feasting hall associated with the Uí Chellaig, and due to its location, the present writer believes that it may also have been associated with the Callow Lough *cenn áit* (see 4.7; FitzPatrick 2016, 204). Finally, the levelled moated site in Ballaghdacker townland, which, due to its siting, may have served as the dry-land service site for the *crannóg* known as Stony Island (see 5.4.2.1; 5.4.2.2), which was a residence of a prominent family of historians, the Ó Cuindlis. It is interesting to note that the Ó Cuindlis were important in learned circles in the fifteenth century, with their associations with the manuscripts of *Leabhar Breac* and *Leabhar Ruadh Muimhneach* (Ó Concheanainn 1973, 65-7). That their landholdings, and their settlement archaeology corresponds with a substantial *crannóg* on Ballaghdacker Lough, as well as a settlement form that was more in vogue amongst the Gaelic nobility and minor elites in the fourteenth century (O'Conor and Finan 2018, 122), could point to the status that this learned family enjoyed in this time and place. The use of moated sites as dryland service sites to *crannóga* is also seen with the Rockingham Demesne moated site serving the Rock of Lough Cé, Co. Roscommon, and at Knockalough townland (SL032-199-), on the southern shore of Cloonacleigha Lough, Co. Sligo (O'Conor 1998, 88; Finan 2018, 38-42).

In summary, the present writer can demonstrate enough evidence from the moated sites of the study area to show that the majority were constructed by the Gaelic Irish. This conclusion is contrary to the evaluation of moated sites provided by some medieval archaeologists, who consider them to be the undocumented attempts at colonial settlement in these areas (eg. O'Keeffe 2000, 77; 2001; 2018). These thoughts seem to derive from research of the dense

distribution of moated sites in the east and south-east, and not those west of the Shannon. However, the weight of evidence from across the Gaelic north and west, in territories such as Machaire Connacht, Maigh Luirg, west Breifne and Fir Manach, as well as Lismore moated site in Pallas townland in what was Uí Maine, indicates that quite a number of moated sites in these areas were of Gaelic construction (O'Conor 1998; 2000, 100-1; 2001, 338-40; Finan and O'Conor 2002; McNeary and Shanahan 2008, 191; 2012, 222-3; FitzPatrick 2016, 204; 2018, 179-87; O'Conor and Finan 2018, 117; O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 87-8; Logue, Devine and Barkley 2020). Now, with a high degree of confidence, the moated sites of Uí Maine, Tír Maine and Clann Uadach can be added to that list.

8.1.1.6 - The evidence for castles in high-medieval Uí Maine

The traditional academic belief across Europe advocates that the elites of medieval society constructed different types of castle to live in. Given the previously outlined broad definition that can be applied to the defended residence known by that name (see 4.2), a whole range of monument types could conceivably be inspected with a view to hanging this title upon the surviving remains, including the settlement forms discussed in this chapter thus far. All of the monuments discussed are elite residences, as well as being the centres of estates and administration for the lordship, but they were not called castles by either contemporaries or modern scholars (De Meulemeester and O'Conor 2008, 324-5). Therefore, to refer to these elite residences as 'castles' would do a disservice to the nuances of their construction, as well as the outlook of their builders and occupiers. Indeed, the settlement forms of the high-medieval Ó Cellaig elite can be more correctly referred as private fortified residences as opposed to castles, with the distinction here relating to the physical remains as opposed to function, the key attribute which should define the monument. Therefore, it can be concluded that not all fortified private residences in this place and time can be defined as castles. Earlier in this thesis, the evidence for high-medieval castles in the study area had been discussed, as well as the pitfalls inherent in this topic. Here, the present writer will outline what evidence survives on the ground in the study area for castles of thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century date constructed by both the Gaelic Irish, and the Anglo-Normans, prior to the advent of the tower house as the principal form of encastellation on the island.

Consultation of the ASI database has enabled a catalogue of four definite monument classes which date to the high medieval period for the study area, with one subclass: Anglo-Norman masonry castle [3], hall house [1], motte (motte and bailey) [3 rising to 4] and ringwork [2].

Additionally, some of the monuments which fall into the unclassified castle class may have been high medieval in date; however, one of the conclusions of this thesis is that the majority of these are in fact degraded castles of tower house form which belong to the late medieval period (For example see 5.3.3.1; 7.3; 7.4.3; 8.2.1 below).

The placement of these monuments in the aforementioned classes, Anglo-Norman masonry castle, hall house, motte (motte and bailey), and ringwork, are not immutable. In the case of the Anglo-Norman masonry castle, three monuments comprise the record for the study area, one in Co. Roscommon, at the royal castle at Rindoon, and two in Co. Galway. The Galway examples, Ballinasloe Castle and Aughrim Castle, survive on the ground as the fragmentary remains of late medieval castle and bawn complexes (see 7.2.2; Appendix 4), devoid of any surface evidence for high-medieval/Anglo-Norman period activity. These two sites are likely to have been occupied from the thirteenth century onwards, however, their classification as Anglo-Norman masonry castles is based purely on historical references, as opposed to the surviving archaeological remains.

One hall house is recorded for the study area, located within the moated site at Park, Co. Galway, and there is a possibility that this castle is perhaps the *caput* of a de la Rochelle or Butler manor attached to thirteenth century Anglo-Norman land grants of the cantred of Omany and nearby Aughrim (see 2.4; Holland 1994, 205-6; 1997, 162). It could present as evidence for Anglo-Norman settlement beyond the manorial centres established at Aughrim and Ballinasloe, but it is not possible to confirm this at present.

A total of five earth and timber castles are recorded in the study area, three motte castles, two of which have associated baileys, and two ringwork castles. These earth and timber castles are seen as the physical manifestation of the first phases of Anglo-Norman settlement in the present study area (Graham 1988a, 25-9), and their presence must relate to the speculative land grants in the two King's Cantreds of Omany and Tyrmany, discussed earlier (see 2.4).

The two motte and bailey castles recorded for the Co. Roscommon part of the study area are located at Cloonburren (RO056-010001-) and Ballycreggan (RO048-113001-), both of which were sited close to the medieval routeways of the region, the *Slighe Mhór* and Doran's Route 11 respectively. A third motte is suggested by Dempsey for the townland of Castlesampson (associated with RO051-017001-; RO051-017002-); however, the present writer believes that the remains at Castlesampson can be more correctly interpreted as those of a degraded late medieval bawn and tower house complex attached to the Mac Eochadha of Magh Finn, situated

near the summit of natural gravel hillock, which is characteristic of the wider landscape of this part of south Roscommon. All three are deduced, despite the lack of historical documentation for this undertaking for any of the three sites, to have been constructed by Anglo-Norman lord Geoffrey de Constentin in the early 1210s (Graham 1988a, 25-6; Dempsey 2014, 22-5). The only historical reference for Cloonburren comes in 1226, when it is in use as a garrisoned fortress, presumably to guard the crossing point of the River Shannon at nearby Clonmacnoise, then in the possession of Aedh Ó Conchobair, king of Connacht, and manned by mercenaries from Leinster (*ACl.*). This reference has been used to suggest that this motte and bailey castle was constructed by the Gaelic Irish (Graham 1988a, 25); however, it is just as likely that it was merely occupied by the latter after a decline in Anglo-Norman fortunes in the immediate area in the 1220s.

In the Galway part of the study area, a motte is recorded for the townland of Doon Upper (GA073-020-; Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 387). Again, this is undocumented, and it could very speculatively relate to the 1253 grant of the cantred of Omany to Richard de la Rochelle, as motte castles were constructed throughout the thirteenth century (O'Conor 1998, 18). However, the morphology of this site, coupled with its location, does not discount the possibility that it is actually a raised ringfort (see 4.3).

The final high medieval castle monument type is the ringwork. Two examples are recorded, at Galey Bay and Dundonnell, both Co. Roscommon. It has been demonstrated earlier in this thesis that the remains at Galey Bay more accurately correspond with that of an inland promontory fort, topped by a cashel (see 6.3.2.1), with the later addition of a tower house castle (see 6.3.2.2). The present writer would argue that the designation of the site as a ringwork castle must now be rejected. The ringwork castle at Dundonnell, which seems to have been modified out of an earlier tri-vallate ringfort, has been argued elsewhere by the present writer to be consistent with the historically-attested 'Onagh Castle', a fortress constructed by the Anglo-Normans in 1236 'as a stronghold against the men of Connacht' (*AC*; Curley 2018, 139).

Having reviewed the surviving archaeological remains within the study area, the evidence for the construction and occupation of high-medieval castles in Tír Maine and Uí Maine indicates three things. Firstly, the available information leads to the conclusion that high-medieval castles in this region were constructed exclusively, with the possible exception of Cloonburren, by the Anglo-Normans in their attempts to make good on a series of thirteenth-century speculative land grants within the cantreds of Tyrmany and Omany. Secondly, these attempts

at settlement, particularly outside of the towns, were largely unsuccessful, with the only speculative archaeological evidence for a rural manor attached to the cantred of Omany located at Park, Co. Galway. The lack of archaeological evidence for Anglo-Norman earthwork and masonry castles is contrary to the conclusions drawn by historians, which only consider the Anglo-Norman control of these areas largely on the strength of colonial administrative accounts. A similar issue was identified by O'Conor and Fredengren in terms of Anglo-Norman settlement in what is now Co. Leitrim, as part of a recent review of the archaeological evidence for high-medieval settlement in that county (O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 83).

Finally, there is no evidence either from archaeological remains or the historical record that the Uí Chellaig, or their vassal clans, constructed what contemporaries then and modern scholars now accept as castles within the study area during the high medieval period. Therefore, the choices of settlement forms utilised by the Gaelic elite in the study area during the period from the twelfth to the later fourteenth century were not overly influenced by the Anglo-Normans. Instead, as noted, many of the settlement forms used by the Uí Chellaig and their vassal clans represent a continuity from the early medieval period, with the exception of the moated site. Once more, this is contrary to some of the archaeological narratives being proposed for late pre-Norman and high-medieval contexts in Ireland (see for instance O'Keeffe 1998; 2019; 2021, 30-59; O'Keeffe and MacCotter 2020).

Certainly, many of the aforementioned castles were occupied or reoccupied by the Uí Chellaig and their sept families during the late medieval period, such as the Ó Neachtain of the Feadha at Ballycreggan motte, the Mac Eochadha of Magh Finn at Dundonnell Castle, and the Uí Chellaig themselves at Aughrim, but the overwhelming conclusion from this section of the research is that the Gaelic Irish of this region did not construct or routinely inhabit the various monument types traditionally regarded as a castle during the high medieval period.

To conclude this section, it is worthwhile considering the most up-to-date alternative view on this matter. The most recent publication to deal with the topic of castle building in later medieval Ireland has been Tadhg O'Keeffe's 2021 monograph *Ireland Encastellated AD 950-1550: Insular Castle-Building in its European Context* (O'Keeffe 2021). Early in the book, O'Keeffe sets out his stall with regard to the origins of castles in Ireland, devoting a chapter to teasing out the terminology used to describe the private defended residences of tenth to twelfth century Ireland. O'Keeffe then concluded that the range of elite settlement forms encountered, both in the literary and physical landscape, including the range of monument types outlined

above – *crannóga*, cashels and ringforts (see Chapter 4), and on analogy with what he regards as continental parallels, can be regarded as castles (*Ibid*, 30-59). However, O'Keeffe's analysis of the settlement forms of the Gaelic elite from just prior to the period under investigation in this thesis, as well as the continuity that has been identified through the present research in the study area, seeks to place all of these settlement forms under the banner of castle. Accepting this approach doesn't seem to acknowledge the nuances of later medieval Gaelic society, which will be discussed in greater detail below (see 8.1.1.7), while summarily accepting the concept of feudalism as having been adopted in Gaelic Irish society at about this time. Neither of these arguments have been proved satisfactorily by the latter writer or others, and yet the acceptance of this approach, has potentially impactful on the future of research into later medieval Gaelic Ireland. Some of O'Keeffe's conclusions are based on a on a particular reading of the historical and landscape evidence for the *caistél* of *Dún Leodha* (see 4.2.1), which in and of itself, serves to weaken the overall argument in the mind of the present writer. In order to rebalance this debate, more critical research needs to be undertaken in this area of the discipline, in order to have more questioning and stronger, more evidence-based interpretation levelled on the archaeology of later medieval Gaelic Ireland.

8.1.1.7 – What are the reasons for the continued use of these settlement forms by the Uí Chellaig in the high-medieval period?

Having evaluated the high-medieval settlement forms chosen by the Ó Cellaig, it is clear that there is little evidence for the Uí Maine elite building what contemporaries and modern scholars regard as castles during this period, rather choosing residences which did not possess, in an immediately identifiable way at least, the complexity of defences which were comparable to the fortifications constructed by the Anglo-Normans during the same period. This conclusion is in keeping with the broader picture in high medieval Gaelic Ireland (MacNeill 1997, 157-64; O'Conor 1998, 75-7).

The multidisciplinary methodology devised for the present research sought to identify the later medieval lordly centres of the Uí Chellaig, something had never been systematically undertaken in the past in this study area (see 1.4). Suitable representative case study locations were identified, and upon visiting the historically-attested high-medieval Ó Cellaig lordly centres, the present writer did not find evidence for high-medieval castles. Instead, evidence for *crannóga* and natural island fortresses, ringforts and cashels, *bódhúin*, promontory forts, and moated sites was forthcoming in every case. While the present writer has demonstrated

that the high-medieval elite settlement forms of the Gaelic Irish in Tír Maine and Uí Maine received a physical manifestation as such, the question must still be addressed as to why they chose to live in this manner?

There are practical as well as symbolic reasons which may explain why the Uí Chellaig chose to live in this way. Firstly, high medieval Gaelic society possessed a number of attributes that may have resulted in the routine preference amongst the Uí Chellaig to choose the elite settlement forms outlined above. Firstly, this society was primarily clan or kin-based in its organisation throughout the later medieval period, and land or territory was owned by the sept group, as opposed to any single individual (Nicholls 2003, 8-9). Land was held at this group level, and there is evidence throughout this period for periodic land redistribution and partible inheritance amongst the male members of a sept group, sometimes occurring on a very regular basis (O'Conor 1998, 97; Nicholls 2003, 64-73). As such, this system of partible inheritance has to have gone against building complex fortifications.

Secondly, lordly succession in Gaelic Ireland was not routinely transferred through primogeniture, rather the ascension to lordship was conferred, in theory at least, after an election of the most 'suitable' eligible candidate from within a four-generational kin group known as the *derbfine*. In practice, this presented with countless examples in the annalistic record for lordly succession disputes, bloodshed, and ultimately in many cases, the late medieval division of lordships between irreconcilable warring family factions (Nicholls 2003, 27-30). An example of the non-linear nature of lordly succession from within the Ó Cellaig senior line is seen with the transfer of power in a forty-two year period beginning with the death of Donnchad Muimnech Ó Cellaig (r. 1295-1307). Three of Donnchad's nephews succeeded to the title after him, followed by Donnchad's own son Áed, then three more distant relations, prior to the ascension of Donnchad Muimnech's youngest attested son, Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig, as lord of Uí Maine in *c.*1349 (see 2.4.4; 2.5).

Thirdly, the most powerful and influential member of the sept was elected as the lord, and in the case of the larger or expanding Gaelic territories, one of the ways in which these lords sought to state and restate their authority was by establishing or appropriating *cenn áiteanna* throughout their lordship, and travelling between these lordly centres over the course of the year. This meant that the lord was not in permanent residence at any one place. The lord would have used this circuit as an opportunity to inspect his lordship (perhaps combined with a hunting season, see King 1988, 2) collect his rent, demonstrate his status, and he also expected

to be accommodated by the communities which resided in different parts of the lordship. This has been identified as a characteristic of Gaelic royal and lordly lifestyles from the early medieval period onwards (Simms 2020, 69, 235). This peripatetic lifestyle is readily evident in the case of the later medieval Ó Néill lords of Tír Eoghain (Logue and Ó Doibhlin 2020, 167), while a mid-sixteenth century 'Covenant' or agreement between the Westmeath chieftain Mageoghegan and his subordinate O'Kearney, nicknamed 'the Fox', explains that the Fox is bound to attend Mageoghegan's *oirechtus*, whether this is held his lordly centre of Ardnurcher or Corr-na-Sgean (Simms 2020, 467). This peripatetic lifestyle is similarly apparent from the careers of particularly Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig, and his son Maolsechlainn. Uillaim Buide was first encountered at his lordly centre at Galey Bay in 1351 (see 2.4; 6.3.1), before he established or re-established an Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* at Callow Lough in 1353 (see 5.3.2). Later in that decade, there was activity at his lordly centre at Ballaghdacker Lough in 1356 (see 2.4; 5.4). In the case of Ballaghdacker Lough, the Ó Cuindlis service kindred may have been the family tasked with attending to their Ó Cellaig lord on his travels to this part of the lordship (see 5.4.3.1). Toponymical and literary evidence also points to Uilliam Buide possibly having had a residence at Lough Croan (see 5.2.1; 5.2.2). His son Maolsechlainn presumably maintained the aforementioned lordly centres, but a late-fourteenth century praise poem suggests he also had a residence at Athleague (see 6.4.2), and the Ó Cellaig genealogies indicate that he died at his own residence at Tiaquin in 1401 (see 7.4.1). All of the aforementioned lordly centres continued to be used by members of the Ó Chellaig elite throughout the late medieval period, meaning that this practice also must have persisted, particularly as the Ó Cellaig lord sought to maintain authority over the Uí Maine lordship at its greatest extents in the later medieval period from *c.*1400 onwards (see Fig. 2.8). It is important to note that this constantly-moving elite lifestyle probably did not cease in the Ó Cellaig lordship in the late medieval period, with first Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig constructing three castles, located at Garbally, Monivea and Gallagh, Co. Galway before 1504 (see 7.4.4), and then Aodh Ó Cellaig, last lord of Uí Maine, recorded in possession of three tower houses within his lordship in 1573 (see 7.3).

Finally, and as has been demonstrated already, one of the principal means by which these lords derived and stated their wealth was through the retention of large herds of cattle and horses, and this predominantly pastoral economy meant that this wealth was moveable, not generally requiring protection through the construction of substantial defences, apart from that provided in a temporary capacity by the *bódhún*. In times of trouble, the lord's herds could be moved out of harms way, meaning that one of a Gaelic lord's primary commodities would be less

vulnerable in times of attack, using the landscape as defence, as opposed to a fixed fortified location (O'Conor 1998, 100-1; see 3.3; 3.5.1; 3.5.2; Appendix 3).

With these practical attributes of later medieval Gaelic Ireland taken into account, it helps to explain why the Uí Chellaig elite chose to construct and occupy settlement forms which were less substantial, not as defensible, and not requiring the same amount of resources to construct. The way in which this society was organised meant that there was an absence of security in lordly succession from father to son. Couple this with how the territory was held by the kin group as opposed to the individual, the lifestyle espoused by many Gaelic lords to travel from *cenn áit* to *cenn áit* throughout the year, and the primacy of cattle as a form of currency and an expression of wealth in this society, meant that the construction of complex castle-type fortifications was not favoured, and possibly not a necessary or sensible commitment of resources in many cases.

In terms of the symbolic reasons for choosing to reside in these older settlement forms, it is becoming increasing apparent that one of the major preoccupations of high-medieval Gaelic lords concerned the display of power and authority through referencing the past (see 3.5.5). This was presumably undertaken to maintain or create a legacy and legitimacy of authority over the area under their control, and could take many forms, including the commissioning of praise poems, design of tombs, production of manuscripts, as well as the holding of assemblies and inauguration ceremonies, but even down to their personal presentation (Moss 2015, 204; McGettigan 2016, 72-6; Simms 2018, 424; see for example 5.2.2; 6.3.1.1; 7.4.3; Appendix 5). Of course, for the purpose of the present research, one of the ways in which this was achieved was through the place chosen to establish a lordly centre, as well as the incorporation of deliberate anachronisms into the elite settlement forms constructed and occupied by the lord.

FitzPatrick has prosposed that 'pedigree of place' was an important consideration amongst the Gaelic elite. One manifestation of this relates to the venues chosen for assemblies and gatherings of different types in later medieval Gaelic Ireland, and indeed places of inauguration. FitzPatrick has demonstrated that these locations were often replete with prehistoric or early historic funerary and ritual monuments that retained an importance for those interacting with these landscapes beyond their perceived main period of use, and into their 'afterlife' (FitzPatrick 2015a, 52, 55). The evidence of what appears to be multi-period activity at what becomes the Ó Cellaig inauguration mound at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine is an example of this 'pedigree of place' theory in action in the study area (see Appendix 5).

In terms of the continued use of older settlement forms, the display of continuity within a landscape, and indeed within earlier monuments, seems to have held particular relevance for the Gaelic elite also (FitzPatrick 2006, 70-2). FitzPatrick has also highlighted this importance through the insertion of tower house castles within three earlier *cathair* dry-stone cashels in the Burren landscape of Co. Clare, at Cahercloggaun, Ballyshanny and Ballyganner south (FitzPatrick 2009, 302). Within the current study area, a similar arrangement of late medieval castle being inserted within earlier Ó Cellaig elite centres is seen at Callow Lough, Galey Bay and at Athleague (see 5.3.3; 6.3.2; 6.4.3). More than this, the continuity of Ó Cellaig elite settlement at a particular location of importance throughout the entire later medieval period, and before, is demonstrable at Lough Croan, which may have originally been an elite centre of the *Delbna Nuadat* in the mid-eighth century, before being taken over by the Uí Maine, and eventually their principal offshoot in the area, the Uí Chellaig (see 4.4; 5.2). The Uí Chellaig elite then continued to occupy this lacustrine landscape in some form or another until 1573 at least (see 5.2.1).

The social value for the Gaelic elite continuing to use these older settlement forms is also demonstrable in the high medieval period itself. As has already been stated, when visiting high medieval Ó Cellaig lordly centres on the ground, there is no evidence for the construction of high-medieval castles. As a result, the Ó Cellaig elite must have occupied, built within, and possibly even constructed what are traditionally regarded as site types of an early medieval date as their places of residence. O'Conor has theorised that one of the reasons for this pattern relates to the Gaelic elite striving to construct deliberate anachronisms in their places of residence, as a demonstration of their lordly prowess, a social display designed to highlight their legitimate place within a landscape, and a legacy tied to an ancient, heroic past (O'Conor 2018, 161-5). It is also possible to argue that these lordly residences, which did not present with the defensibility of castles, were chosen because of the importance placed by their owners in how their *cenn áit* was viewed as a statement of immutable authority within a lordship. This theatrical display of power would have come in the form of a lightly defended elite residence, such was the level of security felt by the lord, amongst their people, in their *cenn áit*. Parallels for this have been suggested for places such as Ardtornish and Finlaggan, lordly centres of the Lords of Isles in western Scotland, and in the largely undefended Scandanavian royal centres of the same period, which are all notable by the deliberate choices in their location, construction and what their owners are attempting to display (Caldwell 2017, 142-3; Hansson 2020).

These constructed archaisms can be seen at many of the historically-attested high-medieval Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna*. In three cases, these lordly centres possessed *crannóga* as their focal point, a monument type which possesses a chronology that stretches the entire settlement history of Ireland (see 4.4; 5.2.2; 5.3.3.1; 5.4.2.3), while at Galey Bay, the mid-fourteenth century *cenn áit* of Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig possessed an archaeological expression as a dry-stone walled cashel, again a monument traditionally regarded as being of early medieval date (see 6.3.2.1). In this instance, as well as in the case of the cashel uncovered on the natural island of Illaunamona (see 5.2.2), it can be argued that these older settlement forms continued to be used by the Ó Cellaig elite into the later medieval period as a means of displaying an antique, archaic-face to the world. Their northern neighbours, the Meic Diarmada and the Uí Conchobhair, chose to reside in a similar fashion, while simultaneously having the ability to fund the construction and patronage of up-to-date religious houses within their respective lordships at the same time (O'Conor 2018, 158-9). The parallel to this is seen with the Uí Chellaig constructing Kilconnell Friary in the mid-fourteenth century, while residing at nearby Callow Lough, where the principal high-medieval settlement archaeology is a substantial *crannóg*, and a historically-attested *bódhún* (see 5.3.5). Similarly, when Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig hosted the famous Christmas feast at his old-fashioned looking *cathair* at Galey Bay, his *saoi sheancadha ocus ollam*, Seán Mór Ó Dubhagáin would have been at his side. Seán Mór retired and died at the Ó Cellaig patronised hospital of the Crutched Friars of St. John the Baptist at nearby Rindoon, a religious house which was rebuilt by the Uí Chellaig during the fifteenth century (see 3.5.5; 6.3.2.1; 6.3.3.3).

However, a point made by O'Conor in relation to this way of life must be highlighted here. Despite the attention placed on residing in these more old-fashioned elite settlement forms, Gaelic lords possessed the technical knowledge and resources to construct top-rate residences within these anachronistic settings. For this, O'Conor used the example of the large timber hall constructed within the Ó Conchobair moated site of Cloonfree. While the praise poetry sought to accentuate its deliberately old-fashioned looking feasting hall, its walls being built of post-and-wattle, and the heroic timeless nature of the activity which occurred within it, its description also informs us that it possessed an entirely up-to-date, sophisicated cruck roof system, in order to support its heavy roof (Finan and O'Conor 2002, 81-2; O'Conor 2018, 166).

In the present study area, there are two descriptions available from 'house poems' associated with the Uí Chellaig which are worthy of consideration with this in mind. Neither correspond with upstanding remains, unfortunately, but the descriptions are illuminating. In the earlier of

the two, *Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*, great detail is applied to the building of a new 'court' by Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig at an unidentified island site, presumably a *crannóg* or natural island fortress at possibly Lough Croan or Callow Lough, within the lordship. This post and wattle feasting hall was described as a 'refined dwelling' that required the application of skilled craftsmen to construct it (*Táth aoinfhir ar iath Maineach*, stanza 14-21; see 5.2.2). The poetic description of the construction of this new 'court' on the island site seems to represent a similar coupling of older settlement form with the construction of up-to-date lordly accommodation. Similarly, in *Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, written *c.*1351, the focal point of Uilliam Buide's feast at Galey is a timber and stone-constructed, elaborately decorated hall, which seems to incorporate advanced building techniques and the employment of skilled carpenters and metalworkers. This feasting hall is located within a *cathair* dry-stone-walled cashel, again showing the juxtaposition between the seemingly archaic settlement form of the cashel, and the, possibly old-fashioned looking, but first-rate elite residence within (*Filidh Éreann Go Haointeach*, 61, 63; see 6.3.2.1).

Therefore, it can be safely concluded that despite the narrative that the Gaelic Irish at this time were backward and poorer than their Anglo-Norman counterparts, the evidence presented here show that the Ó Cellaig elite had the resources and technical knowledge to build complex defended settlements, but for practical, social and cultural reasons, a separate and different approach was advocated for in the case of these eastern Connacht lords.

8.1.1.8 – Spatial organisation in the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordly centres

One of the attributes noted by the present writer as regards a number of the Ó Cellaig lordly centres was the way in which the elite environment was laid out spatially. These lordly centres served a number of purposes. They were the location of an elite defended residence, but they were also the administrative, agricultural, and presumably, economic and trade centres for the lord's estate in that area. There were temporal considerations as well as spiritual considerations to be satisfied. The high-status group would have required attendants in close proximity in order to serve the lord and his retinue on a day-to-day basis, while it is clear from across the study area that learned kindreds played an important role at these estates, and were thus, close at hand. More than this, in all of the Ó Cellaig lordly centres investigated as part of this research, access to communication routes, overland and riverine, was a common characteristic, while in the case of three lordly centres of the senior Ó Cellaig line, at Callow Lough, Galey Bay and Ballaghdacker Lough/Athleague, the lordly centre possessed some form of settlement

nucleation of the wider community within the catchment area of the *cenn áit* itself. What is clear is that these lordly centres were the focal points within a wider cultural landscape which developed around the *cenn áit* (see, for example, 5.2.3; 5.3.4; 5.4.3; 6.3.3; Appendix 4). However, all of these traits, while being linked to the focal point of the elite landscape, the defended residence, are also at a slight geographical remove from the rest of what comprised the lordly centre.

This spatial organisation is different from the high-medieval Anglo-Norman lordly centres, where the catalogue of attributes described above would have been fulfilled by the establishment of a nucleated agricultural village or urban settlement directly adjacent to the elite residence. Historical evidence for this from the study area can be seen with the grants provided to Richard de la Rochelle to erect a castle, host markets, fairs and warrens, and establish a gallows at his manor of Aughrim and in the surrounding area in 1253 and 1258 (see 2.4; 4.2.2), while places such as Kilkenny, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford and Rindoon, Co. Roscommon, for instance, show the close spatial organisation between the variety of roles expected at an Anglo-Norman lordly centre, in a range of landscape contexts (see, for example, Bradley 2000; Ó Drisceoil 2020, 161-3; Pollock 2020, 197-208; O'Conor, Naessens and Sherlock 2015; O'Conor and Shanahan 2018; Shanahan and O'Conor 2020). Taking Rindoon as a case study, evidence survives for a hospital, town walls, a parish church, a number of houses aligned along a main street, a substantial harbour with a ship slipway, dock and jetty features, as well as the castle itself, and associated elite landscape features such as a fishpond, warren, windmill and possible deerpark (O'Conor and Shanahan 2018, 21-37).

These same roles also needed to be fulfilled at the lordly centres of the Gaelic elite, however, this did not correspond with the establishment of towns in later medieval Gaelic Ireland, with some notable exceptions in specific instances (Nicholls 2003, 139-40; Simms 2018, 421). The results of the excavations at the moated site in Rockingham Demesne in 2016, which uncovered a range of high medieval artefacts, as well as a large corn-drying kiln, has been attributed by Finan to the historical attestation of a *baile marcaid* (market) being constructed by the Meic Diarmada on the shores of Lough Cé in 1231 (*AC*; *ALC*; Finan 2020, 60-1). Finan is right to point out, however, that this market at Lough Cé is not likely to have constituted a later medieval urban settlement in Maigh Luirg, while also highlighting that these urban settlements seem to be absent from Gaelic Ireland more generally (Finan 2020, 63).

If we accept that the lordly centres of the study area were not accompanied by what modern observers would describe as towns or large villages, how did an Ó Cellaig lordly centre look in *c.*1350? The most suitable exemplars for this discussion are, as mentioned above, Callow Lough, Galey Bay, and Ballaghdacker Lough/Athleague. At Callow Lough, Galey Bay and Ballaghdacker Lough, the *cenn áit* is located at a geographical remove from the presumed physical community hubs of Kilconnell, *Baile Gáile* and Athleague respectively, all located on major roadways through eastern Connacht (see 3.3). The community hubs in these instances are located, on average, *c.*3km away from the *cenn áit*. Undoubtedly, the *cenn áit* would have had a small group of houses surrounding it. It is likely that the majority of these houses accommodated the day-to-day retainers to the lord's household and their families, in the form of householders, craftspeople, livestock herders and so on. Based on pictorial evidence from elsewhere, these houses are likely to have been similar to the 'creat', a circular or ovoid, one-room house, constructed of wattle and daub, and covered with sods (O'Conor 1998, 95-6; 2002, 201-4). Aside from this accommodation, however, the community focus must have been consistent with the latter settlements. Using Barry's theory for where tower house castles were placed in the landscape, the castle served as the social focus of the community, but not the physical one (Barry 2006, 28-30), the earlier elite residence seems to have operated in this fashion also. There are a number of valid suggestions as to why this divide was in place, including the additional security, exclusivity and privacy provided by maintaining this separation between the lord and the population of the settlement. While it is possible that all of these reasons had a role to play, the present writer believes that one of the single most important reasons for this space between the *cenn áit* and these 'dispersed' nucleated settlements in the Ó Cellaig lordship (see 6.3.3.1, for example), relates back to the principal form of wealth accumulated by the later medieval Gaelic Irish, cattle (see 3.5.1). The overwhelming primacy of the pastoral economy to the Ó Cellaig elites may be at the heart of why the *cenn áit* was separated from the community hub, in the sense that the landholdings directly farmed by the lord would have encircled the *cenn áit*, meaning that this space was needed to feed and maintain the lord's substantial herds, something that may be elicited from Viscount Ramón de Perellós's account of Gaelic settlement practices amongst the Ó Neills in Tyrone in 1397 – 'Their dwellings are communal and most of them are set up near the oxen...' (Carpenter (ed.) 1988, 111). The townland names of Farranykelly – *Farann Uí Chellaig* (Ó Cellaig's land) at Ballaghdacker Lough, Cloonykelly – *Cluain Uí Chellaig* (Ó Cellaig's meadow) at Athleague, the ringfort name of Lisnagry – *Lios na g-croidh* (the fort of the cattle/wealth) at Callow Lough, and the *bódhúin* at these latter sites, along with the range of townland names referencing cattle

surrounding the Galey and Lough Croan *cenn áiteanna* (see 3.5.1), all point towards the immediate lands around these elite focal points being reserved for the maintenance of the lord's herds, the source of his wealth and status.

This observation can also be extended to explain why some of the principal service kindreds identifiable as a part of the wider Ó Cellaig lordly centre also possessed landholdings which correspond broadly with modern townlands. These learned families received their lands in return for service to the lord, and often held these roles through several generations. Certain services, such as physicians, poets and historians, played pivotal roles in the life of a Gaelic lord. As such, their holdings were often found in close proximity to the *cenn áit*. One of the more routine means by which these learned families received payment for their services was an immunity from paying *cís* (tribute), while gifts of horses, drinking goblets and herds of cattle were routine (FitzPatrick 2018, 172; Simms 2018, 423; 2020, 360, 366; Sheehan 2019, 23). This means that the space was granted by the lord to his learned families in order that they could accumulate and maintain the wealth acquired through their services. One of the more striking examples of this accommodation of hereditary learned families at a lordly centre within the study area can be seen at Callow Lough, where the landholdings of five service kindreds to the Ó Cellaig lord have been identified across the northern and eastern sides of the lake itself (see 5.3.4.2; Fig. 5.27).

In essence, the main difference between the Anglo-Norman manorial and urban settlements, and that of the Gaelic Irish community, in this study area at least, relates to their spatial organisation. Anglo-Norman settlements were clustered, with all of the key requirements of a lordly centre in close proximity to the elite residence. By contrast, the Ó Cellaig elite settlement landscape was organised in a manner possibly best described as 'dispersed' nucleation, with all of the key requirements of the Gaelic lordly centre in geographical reach, within a couple of kilometres or so, and so more spread out. Perhaps security, particularly in a frontier setting, was high on the agenda when planning an Anglo-Norman lordly centre, while accommodation of the principal resource which drove the economy of later medieval Uí Maine, cattle, may have been the more important preoccupation in the development of an Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* and hinterland at the same time. From a purely practical point of view, herds of cattle need a considerable amount of space within which to graze, as well as a regular and consistent water supply. It seems likely that these requirements played an important role in the spatial organisation of the Gaelic lordly centre and its constituent parts.

In discussing the nuanced spatial organisation of the high-medieval Ó Cellaig lordly centres, it has become apparent that one of the key, yet terribly underutilised, resources available to the archaeological researcher must be the place-name evidence that has survived to the present day. As have been already stated above (see 1.6.1.4), although undated, many of the, particularly, townland divisions, and their accompanying names, can be dated to at least as early as the twelfth century, but it is possible that the townland system could date to the early medieval period or even earlier. It is safe to say that some of the key findings of this research would not have been uncovered, or the insights would have been severely limited, had the toponymical information which survives for the study area not been consulted and interpreted. In the absence of many of the socio-economic records which are a commonplace source for the researcher into Anglo-Norman Ireland (see 1.4; 1.6.1.1; 3.5.5), the place-name database is a means of gaining vital information for the reconstruction of the past environment and cultural landscape organisation of later medieval Gaelic Ireland.

8.2 – The Late Medieval Ó Cellaig Lordship

8.2.1 – Tower house castles

Turning to the late medieval period, the principal elite settlement form to emerge in the Ó Cellaig lordship is the tower house castle. As has been outlined already, the tower house possesses a chronology which seems to really begin in the last decades of the fourteenth century, and continue through to the 1640s, with the vast majority, particularly the ones built by Gaelic lords, constructed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see 4.8). In terms of when the Ó Cellaig elite began building these castles, there is little clear information. The earliest potential tower house that can be dated from the study area is the historically-attested castle built by the *Clannmhaicne Eoghan* branch of the Uí Chellaig at the place called *Áth na Stuaidhe* at Ballinasloe in 1406, but only excavation will be able to conclusively state whether this castle was of tower house form (see Appendix 4). The next date for an Ó Cellaig tower house corresponds with a reference to a castle at Callow in the year 1475, and in this instance, and despite the fragmentary remains on site, there is a strong likelihood that a tower house once stood at this location (see 5.3.2; 5.3.3.3). As such, based on the presently available information, there is no evidence to suggest that tower house castles were constructed by the Uí Chellaig prior to the beginning of the fifteenth century at least, which is in keeping with the information available from other Gaelic lordships. As for the origins of tower house building in the Ó Cellaig lordship, we are on similarly unstable ground. There has been very little research to

date into the reasons why the Gaelic elite began adopting the tower house as their settlement form of choice from around 1400. O'Conor has remarked that there is no available evidence to suggest that major changes occurred in military techniques or in how Gaelic society operated at this time, which may have necessitated the first widespread construction of castles during the later medieval period by the Gaelic Irish (O'Conor 1998, 102). Instead, one of the most reasoned arguments relating to this embracing of the tower house as a settlement form of choice by the Gaelic Irish concerns the gradual cross-cultural exchange which had taken place over the decades and centuries since the Anglo-Normans first began to establish lordships in Ireland in the late twelfth century. By the fourteenth century, large parts of what was the Anglo-Norman colony had become Gaelicised, which saw the spread and adoption of a range of Irish customs, even down to the proclamation of their lords in a fashion in keeping with Gaelic inauguration practices (*Ibid*., 103; FitzPatrick 2001; Simms 2018, 426-9).

As stated above, this exchange was cross-cultural in nature, and aspects of Anglo-Norman culture were no doubt adopted by the Gaelic Irish also. Intermarriage between the two cultures is one of the most identifiable ways in which this contact was established, and ideas exchanged, and it is noteworthy that Gaelic women were married to Anglo-Norman men from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards. One notable early example of this is William *Gorm* de Lacy (1180 – 1233), son of Hugh de Lacy, Lord of Meath, and a daughter of Ruaidrí Ó Conchobair, high king of Ireland (Veach and Verstraten Veach 2013, 63-4). However, it is not until the second half of the fourteenth century that the Gaelic lords of what constitute modern Roscommon, such as the Uí Chonchobair and the Meic Diarmada, began marrying women from the prominent Anglo-Norman families in the wider region.[54] From an Ó Cellaig perspective, Uilliam Buide (r. *c.*1349-1381) and Maolsechlainn Ó Cellaig (r. 1381-1401) are the only attested lords of Uí Maine by *c.*1400 to take a woman from an Anglo-Norman family as a wife. Uilliam Buide married a daughter of Seoinin *Búrc*, while Maolsechlainn married a daughter of one Báitéar a *Búrc*. There are other instances recorded in the genealogies during this time for intermarriage between women from Ó Cellaig elite and minor elite families, and men from Anglo-Norman families such as the *Búrc*, *Seoighe* (Joyce), and *Mac Fheorais* (de Bermingham) (*AC s.a.* 1356; *Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment i*, 35, 48). Aside from intermarriage, opportunities for cross-cultural exchange would have occurred through marketplace and higher level trade and economic contact between the Ó Cellaig elites and the

[54] O'Conor, K., pers. comm, 26th February 2021, citing Charles Owen O'Conor Don, *The O'Conors of Connaught* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co., 1891), 140; Dermot MacDermot, *MacDermot of Moylurg* (Manorhamilton: Drumlin Publications, 1996), 90.

Anglo-Normans, particularly in the Anglo-Norman towns located at the fringes of the lordship, as evidenced earlier through the presence of Anglo-Norman coinage at many of these sites (see 3.5.5). Another possible avenue for this interchange presented itself amongst the elites through the mustering of combatants for Anglo-Norman military expeditions to other regions, and there are surviving records for the Uí Chellaig being summoned to fight for Henry III in Scotland in 1244, against the 'Irish of Meath' in 1289, and into the Leinster Mountains as part of a wider Connacht force under the ultimate command of the then deputy justiciar of Ireland, William *Liath* de Burgh, in late 1308 (see 2.4.4).

One slight indication of what must have been cross-cultural exchange is seen with the use of the Anglo-Norman first name Uilliam amongst the Ó Cellaig elite, and the first lord of Uí Maine to be found with this name is the mid-fourteenth century Uilliam Buide Ó Cellaig. The most enduring physical manifestation of this cross-cultural exchange for late medieval Gaelic Ireland seems to come primarily in the form of the tower house (see, for example, O'Keeffe 2000, 51-3). The fact that it was built by both the Anglo-Normans and the Gaelic Irish indicates that a level of cultural uniformity had developed at around this time. It is interesting to note the directness of cultural change that seems to occur upon the arrival of Anglo-Norman women into the lordly families of Gaelic Connacht, and the fact that the generation that followed seemed to correspond with the adoption of the tower house as the elite settlement form of choice. In terms of the number of tower houses extant in the Ó Cellaig lordship study area, the Archaeological Survey of Ireland records twenty. However, consultation of the ASI database for the area which once constituted the Ó Cellaig lordship records a total of forty-nine castles of unclassified form. Not all of the unclassified castles are dateable to the late medieval period, but a considerable number of them are referred to in the lists compiled of Galway and Roscommon castles and their owners in 1573-1574, in advance of the *Compossicion of Conought* (Nolan 1900-1; Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019). Judging by their presence in these lists, as well as annalistic entries, along with evidence from early modern and modern cartographic sources, would all indicate that most of these are the sites of late medieval Gaelic castles. The present writer believes that this may indicate an underrepresentation of the number of tower house castles that were once constructed and occupied in this area, and there are a number of arguments to support this.

As has been outlined over the chapters of the present research, a number of the *cenn áiteanna* of the Uí Chellaig have castles of unclassified form located at them. In terms of the best way to approach the study of these castle sites, O'Conor and Williams have highlighted that only

through the application of a multidisciplinary approach that a fuller understanding of late medieval castle studies in Ireland can be achieved, one which uses the combined evidence of all disciplines, sources and methods available, in order to give a clearer picture of how a particular castle developed through time. This is broadly the same methodology that the present research is based upon (O'Conor and Williams 2015, 64; see 1.4). Having applied the desk-based research to these sites, one of the principal means by which the present writer could diagnose the likelihood of the former presence of a tower house at a particular Ó Cellaig lordly centre was through inspection of the surviving masonry, particularly the presence of punch-dressed stones and the remains of ogee-headed windows. Punch-dressed cut stones are seen in Ireland on buildings dating to the period from the last years of the fourteenth century through to *c*.1600, maybe a little later in parts of Connacht (McAfee 1997, 28). Punch-dressed cut stones were especially associated with late medieval tower house castles and friaries (Leask 1941, 82; McNeill 1997, 202-3; O'Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 25; O'Conor and Williams 2015, 62-3; O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 84). For their part, ogee-headed windows are also a feature of tower houses of mainly fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century date (e.g., Leask 1941, 24, 75-124; McNeill 1997, 201-2; O'Conor and Williams 2015, 62-4).

When the present writer inspected the remains at Turrock, Callow Lough, Athleague, Mote Demesne and Lisdaulan, as well as what is recorded as an 'Anglo-Norman masonry castle' at both Aughrim and Ballinasloe, the physical evidence indicates that tower house castles are likely to have once stood at all of these places (see 5.2.1; 5.3.3.3; 6.4.3.1; 6.5; 7.2.2; 7.3; Appendix 4). This adds seven additional tower houses to the study area, where the focus has been narrowed to the Ó Cellaig lordly centres specifically, as opposed to any other family groups. Using these seven sites as a representative sample, the present writer can argue that it is possible that all or, at least, most of the castles of unclassified form in the study area could, in fact, be ruined tower houses, which brings the total number of castles of tower house form in the study area to potentially as high as 71, a huge increase on the twenty hitherto accepted.

The application of this methodology does much to highlight how little archaeological research has been undertaken on the tower houses of the late medieval Ó Cellaig lordship, and of Gaelic Ireland more generally, to date (see Barry 1993; 1996, 140; O'Conor 2001, 330-1; O'Conor and Williams 2015, 60-4). This lack of research has created an unfortunate ambiguity which revolves around the present physical state of the late medieval castles in the south Roscommon and east Galway area. For instance, the aforementioned historically-attested Ó Cellaig lordly castles at Lisdaulan, Callow Lough, Athleague, Mote Demesne, Turrock, but also Gallagh,

Tiaquin, and Mullaghmore do not, in and of themselves, survive for inspection, while only partial remains survive for Galey, Aughrim, Barnaderg and Garbally and the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* Uí Chellaig castle at Ballinasloe. However, in all cases, these monuments are likely to have been of tower house form (see, for example, 6.3; 6.5; 7.2; 7.3; 7.4.4; Appendix 4). Arguably the only surviving late medieval lordly castle of the senior Ó Cellaig line still extant is at Monivea, Co. Galway, which was acquired by the Ffrench family in 1609, and is very much altered from its late medieval phase (see 7.4.4; Pl. 7.9). Beyond the Ó Cellaig themselves, it is clear that the lord of Uí Maine was not the only one to be able to afford a tower house in this period. Members of the cadet branches of the Uí Cellaig constructed them, as did members of vassal clans, such as the Meic Eochadha of Magh Finn, and the Uí Mainnin of Soghain, among others. More than this, prosperous members of traditional Uí Maine service kindreds, such as the Mac an Bhaird learned poetic family and the Mac Dubhghaill galloglass kindred, are recorded in possession of castles in these lists, which conceivably came in the form of tower houses (see 2.6; 5.3.4.2). Beyond the study area, in modern Roscommon more generally, research by other scholars indicate that previously unrecognised tower houses were located at, Ballinagare House (Uí Conchobair Donn), Tulsk Fort and possibly Strokestown, recorded in the State Paper List as *Beallnemolle* – Béal na mBuillí, (both Uí Conchobair Ruadh), and on the Rock of Lough Cé (Meic Diarmada), showing that the lack of surviving above ground remains for tower houses goes beyond the study area itself, into the eastern Connacht region more generally (Brady 2009, 22-3; O’Conor, Brady, Connon and Fidalgo-Romo 2010, 24-7; O’Conor and Williams 2015, 63-4; RO023-172001-; Nicholls (transcribed) 1573, 2019). Unfortunately, this lack of surviving remains in most cases has limited our understanding of the specifics of this settlement form amongst the Uí Chellaig during the final centuries of their authority in the region, leaving us, in most cases, with only the locations of these castles to inspect. While it is beyond the scope of the present research, an important question to address with future study is the reason or reasons for this regional phenomenon of tower house removal.

How does this fit into the wider archaeological understanding of late medieval castle studies in Ireland? It is clear now that huge numbers of tower houses were constructed in Ireland, particularly during the fifteenth and sixteenth century, with the first examples being erected in the late fourteenth century and the last examples being built as late as the 1640s (e.g., McNeill 1997, 202-5). Using archaeological, historical and cartographic sources, it has been plausibly argued that anything up to 7,000 tower houses were erected by the end of the sixteenth century (Barry 1996, 140; O’Conor 2008, 329-32; O’Conor and Williams 2015, 63-4). The evidence

from Uí Maine helps corroborate this argument for much larger numbers of tower houses in late medieval Ireland than has hitherto being argued by scholars from Leask to Sweetman. The very large numbers of tower houses constructed during this period, as opposed to the far fewer numbers erected in other eras, arguably made Ireland the most castellated part of Europe around the year 1600 – a fact that is not regularly acknowledged by scholars either inside or outside Ireland (Cairns 1987, 21; O'Conor 1998, 25; Barry 2008, 129). The evidence outlined above merely serves to confirm principally Barry's argument for far more of this castle type being built in late medieval Ireland than once thought when looking at the tower house castles that once stood in the Ó Cellaig lordship.

As a result, the decision by Loeber to provide a distribution map of the definite and possible tower houses within the Gaelic and Gaelicised lordships of late medieval Ireland, using the information provided in the *Atlas of the Irish rural landscape*, was open-minded in its approach (Aalen, Whelan and Stout (eds.) 1997, 59, Fig. 67, Loeber 2001, 283; 2019, 9). This distribution map included the castles of unclassified form, presumably accepting that they must, by and large, represent degraded examples of tower houses on the ground, something which has been shown to be largely correct as regards the present study area, and is in contrast with the very low numbers recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.

As regards the location of these Ó Cellaig tower houses within the lordship, aside from the ones which seem to be sited primarily with their proximity to the overland or riverine routeway as the main concern (see 6.5; 7.3; 7.4.4), all are to be found at Ó Cellaig lordly centres which display a long duration of continuity of elite settlement through the later medieval period and, in some cases, before. As such, the adoption of the tower house as the settlement form of choice within these landscapes indicates that the Ó Cellaig elite sought to embrace the new trend in residence choice in late medieval Ireland, while being careful to retain a deliberate link with their lordly centres of longstanding. As well as this, there is some evidence at these lordly centres for the continued importance, and indeed occupation, of the older settlement forms as a means of maintaining and enhancing this link with the past. For instance, Turrock Castle was constructed on the shore across from the *crannóg* of Edward's Island on the former lake of Lough Croan (see 5.2.1). At Callow Lough, the tower house was constructed within the earlier *bódhún* and facing out onto the *crannóg* at the centre of that lake, which itself was worthy of depiction on Browne's 1591 map, possibly indicative of its continued use into the late sixteenth century (see 5.3.2.1; 5.3.3). At Athleague, the tower house was again constructed within a *bódhún* enclosure (see 6.4.3.1), while Galey Castle was located within a dry-stone walled

cashel (see 6.3.2.2). Finally, Aughrim is a historically-attested thirteenth-century Ó Cellaig lordly centre, where a branch of the dynasty also constructed and occupied a tower house at some point in the late medieval period (see 7.2.2). The location of these tower houses within and adjacent to these older settlement forms is important to note in terms of the elite mindset, in and of itself, but it also increases the likelihood greatly that these *crannóga*, *bódhúin*, cashels, and indeed promontory forts, were still operational and important parts of the late medieval Uí Chellaig lordly centre, a narrative that is in keeping with the evidence available from other parts of Gaelic Ireland. In doing so, the lord may have been seeking to retain a physical link with the past at these places, in order to justify and restate authority in the present (see, for instance, Logue 2018; 8.1.1.8).

8.2.2 – The Archaeological Expression of wealth in the late medieval Ó Cellaig lordship

The history of late medieval Gaelic Ireland is a difficult topic to grapple with for the historian, given that the sources available for inspection are not as accessible, or as easy to interpret, as the traditional source material which has enabled the reconstruction of large parts of Anglo-Norman Ireland during the same period. The lack of socio-economic records is a case in point in relation to this imbalance in surviving documentation (see 1.4). As a result, many of the conclusions arrived at by historians in relation to this time and place in Ireland's history is coloured by these perceived difficulties with what they consider to be the primary information, i.e. historical documentation alone. Some historians for this period still accept the type of conclusions drawn by Goddard Henry Orpen, who compared the Anglo-Norman arrival in Ireland in the late twelfth century with the civilising effect which the Roman Empire had on Europe, highlighting the progress made and benefits provided by the Anglo-Normans to the island of Ireland and its society in the century and a half after 1169 (Orpen 2005, 560-87). The same historian, writing in the early twentieth century, letting his personal biases dominate his writing of history, bemoaned what he perceived to be a cultural regression in the years which followed the Gaelic Resurgence, which was 'distinguished by the recrudescence of Celtic tribalism and its spurious imitation by many of Anglo-Norman descent. The door was now finally closed on a century and a half of remarkable progress, vigour, and comparative order, and two centuries of retrogression, stagnation, and comparative anarchy were about to be ushered in' (*Ibid*., 559; see 2.4.4; 2.5; 8.2.1). As noted above, few researchers have chosen to study the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship, and when it has been studied, it has been primarily through the historical discipline (see 1.7.5.2). For the late medieval period, interpretation of the historical record has concluded that, somewhat in keeping with Orpen's stance, the Ó Cellaig

lordship became consumed with internal dissension, developed a weak central authority, and ultimately, a stagnation and decline in terms of power and influence (Nicholls 2003, 176-7; 2008, 425; Cosgrove 2008, 579). If this is the case, can this historical interpretation be identified in the archaeology?

The archaeological evidence from this period does not seem to corroborate the accepted historical narrative. If political decline can be measured through the physical expressions of lordship amongst these eastern Connacht lords, it seems, in fact that the opposite is the case. As outlined above, tower house castles were one of the principal lordly residences constructed by the late medieval Ó Cellaig lords, which indicates an interest in displaying modernity and affluence within their ancestral *cenn áiteanna* landscapes (Barry 1987, 168-98; Simms 2018, 421; see 8.2.1). However, this is not the only way in which wealth and affluence was displayed by the Uí Chellaig at this time. The late medieval period was a time when the religious foundations of the lordship were heavily patronised by the Ó Cellaig chiefs, with rebuilding works undertaken at Kilconnell Franciscan Friary, the Crutched Friars of St. John the Baptist at Rindoon, and the Augustinian monastery of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine (see 3.5.5; 5.3.4.3; 6.3.3.3; Appendix 5). It is also during this time that the architecturally-rich Ó Cellaig tomb was inserted and the wall paintings commissioned at Abbeyknockmoy, an important religious foundation within what was now an expanded territory under Ó Cellaig control (see 7.4.3).

Furthermore, portable religious items, such as chalices, illustrated books and other religious objects which could be included in a catalogue of late-medieval Ó Cellaig patronage at Kilconnell Friary continues this pattern of wealth display at this time (see 5.3.4.3). When considering books and manuscripts as artefacts, wealth is also demonstrable through the commissioning of the *Leabhar Ua Maine*, the recording of *Nósa Ua Maine*, as well as the heavy patronage of praise poets during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. All are displays of the overt interest which these powerful and wealthy late medieval Gaelic lords took in patronising the arts, while simultaneously cementing their legitimacy and documenting their legacy on the territories under their control (see 3.5.5). It is even possible to suggest that this interest in learning and the arts by the Uí Chellaig might have been a Gaelic Irish manifestation of the Renaissance ideas which were in vogue at the same time in continental Europe. Whether this is the case is immaterial for the present research; however, the information gleaned from the surviving archaeological remains of the late medieval Ó Cellaig lordship indicates that this territory was very wealthy and powerful during the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, something which contradicts the accepted historical narrative, which relies on infrequent

annalistic references to familial infighting and periodic divisions in the lordship in order to arrive at this conclusion. As a result, it can be stated with confidence that a reconstruction of the lordly centres, and the cultural landscapes which surround them, in the late medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine is best achieved through application of the multidisciplinary approach espoused by the present research, in that toponymical and literary source material, coupled with the well-preserved, but sadly understudied and under-interpreted, archaeological remains, can provide a well-rounded picture in this part of later medieval Gaelic Ireland, something which could not have been achieved through depending on the historical sources alone. The archaeological discipline in Ireland, particularly medieval archaeologists, have increasingly valued the greater breadth of information available to the researcher of medieval Ireland. Unfortunately, the same approach does not seem to be recognised with parity in historical academia, which despite the merits of the research being undertaken, suffers from this approach. Two recent publications which serve to illustrate the undervaluing of archaeology to the reconstruction of later medieval Ireland is seen with *The Cambridge History of Ireland, Volume I: 600-1550* (Smith (ed.) 2018, see, for instance, Simms 2018a; 2018b), and *Gaelic Ulster in the Middle Ages* (Simms 2020), where the choice to largely marginalise the discipline of archaeology in both cases as greatly jaundiced our understanding of this time and place.

It is clear now that any future research into the character and organisation of later medieval Gaelic Ireland must incorporate and interpret the vital information that can be gleaned from careful analysis of the archaeological remains of a given case study area, in order to achieve a well-rounded reconstruction of the past environment and society.

8.3 – The Landscape and Economy of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship

The landscape of later medieval eastern Connacht, as reconstructed in Chapter 3 above, would have been very different to how it appears today. Cartographical, toponymical and historical information combined indicate that large areas of woodland once stood within the Ó Cellaig lordship, particularly, from the available evidence, in what is now south Roscommon (see 3.2.2). Bogland was, and in much of the area still is, quite extensive, while the callowlands and floodplains of the River Shannon, Suck and their tributaries contributed to zones within the study area which present with very little evidence of settlement in the later medieval period (see 3.2.1; 3.2.3). Communication routes through this landscape were dictated to by these diverse environmental conditions, with waterways possibly an easier route of communication

in some areas, by comparison to the meandering overland routes which developed in what is now eastern and central Galway in particular, and which presumably required constant maintenance in order to keep open.

Conversely, a lot of the study area is underserved by very fertile soils, which meant that there was a considerable amount of agricultural land available to serve as the primary economic driver in the region. One of the notable aspects of the present research is that, perhaps unsurprisingly, the lordly centres of the Uí Chellaig were all located in the most productive agricultural areas of the territory, and it is possible that there was a correlation between the territories held by vassal clans to the Uí Chellaig as opposed to the lords of Uí Maine themselves, and a decline in terms of agricultural productivity in those areas.

It has been demonstrated that a variety of resources were obtained from these diverse landscapes within the study area, and the accumulation and distribution of these commodities would have served as the economic underpinning to the wealth displayed by the Uí Chellaig in the high and, particularly, the late medieval period. Certainly greater economic influence in the region would have provided the tools to establish greater political control, and this in turn assisted in the western expansion of the territory under the authority of the lords of Uí Maine in the fifteenth century in *Clann Taidg* and *Uí Diarmata*. Indeed, the present research has been able to reconstruct the changing extents of the territory under the authority of the Uí Chellaig, and their Uí Maine ancestors, from *c.*800AD through to *c.*1500, which highlights the amount of change in authority which occurred during that time, as well as providing a series of territorial maps which can be used to better understand the history and archaeology of the study area going forward (Figs. 2.2; 2.3; 2.8).

8.4 – Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the settlement forms chosen by the Ó Cellaig elite, as found at their historically-attested lordly centres, throughout the later medieval period. Broadly divided between high medieval and late medieval settlement forms, there is a distinct cultural trend which emerges in the Ó Cellaig lordship post *c.*1400, or perhaps a decade or two earlier, in the adoption of the tower house castle, a pattern which is matched in other Gaelic-controlled regions. Prior to this, however, the present research highlights the long continuity of occupation in the study area of archaeological monuments that are traditionally accepted to belong to the early medieval period, in particular the *crannóg*, cashel and ringfort. Beyond these, evidence for Gaelic-constructed moated sites within the study area indicates what is likely to be the first

real archaeological manifestation of cross-cultural exchange in a secular context between the Gaelic Irish and their Anglo-Norman counterparts in this region, perhaps influenced by building trends immediately north of Uí Maine and Tír Maine, in the Ó Conchobair *trícha cét* of Machaire Connacht. The final two high-medieval elite settlement forms to be considered are largely unexplored in the archaeological discipline for later medieval Gaelic Ireland to date, and one of the major conclusions from this research is that the promontory fort and *bódhún* must be added to the list of site morphologies which need to be considered when studying the archaeology of Gaelic lordly centres into the future.

High medieval Anglo-Norman castles were found to be few on the ground, while Gaelic-constructed castles, or what contemporaries then or modern scholars now accept as castles, were found to be absent entirely in the Ó Cellaig lordship. The conclusion drawn from this evidence is that Gaelic society was ordered and organised in a manner which was not conducive to the building of castles at this time, with the elite expressions of wealth and power occurring in different ways to that of Anglo-Norman parts of Ireland in the high medieval period. How these Ó Cellaig lordly centres were organised geographically bolsters the earlier point, with the considerations and motives required from a Gaelic lord expressed on the landscape in a different way than their Anglo-Norman counterparts. The evidence seems to suggest that 'dispersed' nucleation developed around Gaelic lordly centres due to a feeling of security in the landscape as well as the need to retain grazing lands around the *cenn áit* itself in order to maintain the lord's substantial livestock herds. By contrast, an Anglo-Norman lordly centre was clustered in a manorial or urban settlement expression, with the need for security higher as a requirement in the planning of these complexes.

Moving from the high medieval to the late medieval period, a degree of homogeneousness begins to occur with the places that the Ó Cellaig elite chose to reside, as they adopted a trend seen throughout large parts of Gaelic Ireland in the form of the tower house castle. The origins of this emerging cultural uniformity between Gaelic Irish elite culture and Anglo-Norman culture is difficult to trace, but one of the clearest ways in which this may have occurred is intermarriage. The slight recording of these monuments on the ground, as distinct from other similar areas, has been addressed with regard to the need to inspect the large numbers of castles of unclassified form with a multidisciplinary methodology, and this approach may enable the cataloguing of a number of sites which are perhaps listed too readily as being of unclassified form in the south Roscommon and east Galway region at present.

Finally, the vital, but underutilised role which archaeology can play in reconstructing the past environment of, in this case, later medieval Gaelic Ireland, is exemplified by the contrasting archaeological evidence which survives on the wealth and authority which the Ó Cellaig lords retained in their late medieval lordship, as distinct from what the traditional historical narratives have arrived at for the same time and place. Interpreting the broad range of available information using a multidisciplinary methodology, including the underutilised but very valuable place-name evidence, has enabled a much richer and integrated understanding of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lordship to be presented, which in turn has a number of direct and indirect benefits for further research in this study area, and in the study of later medieval Gaelic Ireland more generally.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

The central aim of this research has been to identify and reconstruct the physical appearance of Ó Cellaig lordly centres in their lordship from the sept's emergence as one of the principal

offshoots of the Uí Maine in *c.*1100, to the demise of the lordship around the year 1600. This was to be achieved through the application of a multidisciplinary methodology which was framed to consider all sources of information as part of a wider jigsaw to be interpreted. This approach, a concept known as 'contextual archaeology', is espoused by Geertz, Moreland, Anderson, Scholkmann and Kristiansen, amongst others, and was chosen as it demanded the consultation of all available data sources on the topic at hand. This information was then considered in an 'equal and complementary' manner, aimed at developing the most rounded narrative possible of the research topic.

The present writer has demonstrated that this is the most suitable way in which to reconstruct different facets of the later medieval lordship of Uí Maine, and this approach must be applied more generally to the study of the historic past. Indeed, the present writer is somewhat concerned at the present state of affairs in historical studies in Ireland, which routinely sees many Irish historians shy away from the very valuable results and interpretations which have been arrived at by their colleagues working in the discipline of archaeology. It is plain to see that the only way to successfully reach an understanding of, in particular, later medieval Gaelic Ireland, is through a collaborative effort between disciplines, and until this is accepted and adopted more fully, vital information and interpretations are being lost in our attempts to understand an entire period of our past.

In Chapter 2, a systematic investigation of the available historical sources enabled the successful identification of the principal Ó Cellaig lordly centres of the later medieval period, most of which had never been identified before now or previously studied. This chapter also presented the changing territorial extents of the kingdom and later lordship of Uí Maine from *c.*800AD through to *c.*1500, and both of these endeavours have provided a considerable advance in our knowledge of the history of these eastern Connacht lords, the territory under their authority, and their activities throughout the period under investigation.

Having fixed the geographical extent of the study area, Chapter 3 reconstructed the physical landscape of later medieval Uí Maine, and used this as the basis to explore the primary resources and then the economic conditions which underpinned this inland Gaelic lordship during the period. In the absence of detailed socio-economic documentation, this was achieved through thorough inspection of the range of source material available, which strongly indicated that one of the principal sources of wealth for the Uí Chellaig was a strong pastoral economy which was sustained by the large areas of excellent grazing lands, developed on a limestone

geology. As well as this, the chapter highlighted the importance of the River Shannon and River Suck to the fortunes of the Uí Chellaig, and more historical and archaeological research is required to better understand how these waterways were used for trade and other economic purposes in the medieval past. Gathering together and analysing this information in turn allowed for conclusions to be drawn on the substantial wealth accrued and displayed by the Uí Chellaig lords, a trend which became more evident during the latter end of the high medieval period, and into the late medieval period.

With the physical appearance of later medieval Uí Maine described and better understood, Chapter 4 outlined the forms of later medieval settlement archaeology which appeared in the study area in a general way, with a view to establishing what settlement forms could be expected upon physically visiting and investigating the individual Ó Cellaig lordly centres and their immediate hinterlands in the later case study chapters. The chapter considered the range of settlement forms which research elsewhere indicates were occupied in other Gaelic territories at the same time, and outlined the probabilities of the same elite archaeologies occurring within the study area. This exercise was undertaken in order to identify Gaelic settlement forms in the landscape, and was successful in its outcome. It has traditionally proven difficult to identify, particularly, high-medieval Gaelic lordly sites in the field, prior to the adoption of the tower house castle. Being able to achieve this has been a crucial advance in terms of identifying targets for remote sensing surveys and research excavation within the study area. This having been completed, the present writer investigated the identified Ó Cellaig lordly centres while grouping them according to their geographical setting. The three settlement environments which have been revealed through this approach are as follows: lakeland elite settlement, riverine elite settlement, and elite settlement sited on major roadways.

Chapter 5 inspected three lacustrine landscapes associated with the Ó Cellaig lords, and in all cases, one of the physical manifestations of this elite settlement corresponded with the occupation of high-cairn *crannóga* and natural island fortresses. This has never previously been identified with regard to the history or archaeology of the Uí Chellaig, and comes as a major step forward in terms of where, particularly, the high-medieval lords of Uí Maine sought to reside within their lordship. More than this, evidence began to emerge on the spatial organisation of these lordly centres and their hinterlands, a question which does not seem to have been posed in regard to the study of Gaelic lordly centres more generally prior to the present research. This spatial organisation, coined as ‘dispersed nucleation’ by the writer, is a later medieval settlement pattern which may have been unique to Gaelic Ireland. This

organisation suited a largely pastoral economy with the requirements of a grazing strategy, and may explain why large villages and towns did not develop at later medieval Gaelic lordly centres. This 'dispersed nucleation' speaks of the ways in which this society ordered itself in relation to its elites, its temporal and spiritual needs, and its economy. Evidence for the later medieval occupation of cashels, ringforts, moated sites, a promontory fort and a *bódhún* (a site type recognised by the writer, and the term applied from the historical sources) from within these case study areas was also forthcoming, again something which had not been discussed previously. It was also apparent that these *cenn áiteanna* retained an importance for the Ó Cellaig into the late medieval period, with evidence for the construction of tower house castles found at or near all three of these lakeland lordly centres. This chapter also introduced the need to inspect the landholdings of service kindred families associated with the Ó Cellaig lords. The evidence for them on the landscape serves as a key indicator of the continuity of these landscapes as places of high importance to the Uí Maine elite throughout the later medieval period.

The lordly centres of Uí Maine sited beside rivers were explored in Chapter 6. It has become very clear that a number of the Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* developed near rivers or at important fording places due to the value that the River Shannon and Suck provided to these elites. This value, which has been largely unrecognised until now, corresponds with these rivers being used extensively for transport, trade, defence, milling activities, as well as what could be extracted from the water itself, primarily freshwater fish. Chapter 6, in examining the settlement forms used by the Uí Chellaig in these places, bolstered the findings of Chapter 5, which showed construction of a *cenn áit* on an inland promontory fort, which itself was topped by a cashel. More than this, the *bódhún* appeared once again as part of the makeup of a lordly centre, and there was evidence for the later medieval occupation of a ringfort also. Once again, each case study area, to a greater or lesser degree, presented with evidence for the construction of a tower house castle as part of the continued occupation of these lordly centres by the Uí Chellaig into the late medieval period.

Chapter 7 considered the Ó Cellaig lordly centres which were sited on major regional roadways, as a final physical attribute which seemed to define the location for these lordly centres. While the lordly centres mentioned in the earlier two chapters may have interacted with water in a symbolic as well as a practical way, the siting of Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* along major roadways seems to have been motivated primarily by the communication and economic value of their placement on the vital overland networks through eastern and central Connacht

in the later medieval period. In each of the case study areas, the most routine elite settlement form evident was the tower house castle, which may speak of the first establishment of these places as Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* at a later date than in the prior examples, as well as practical concerns amongst the lords of Uí Maine starting to become more important in their thinking than symbolism, and a legacy and legitimacy in the land being attached to an ancient heroic past. By contrast, exploration of the inauguration venue of the Uí Chellaig at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine revealed evidence for a long continuity of likely ceremonial activity at the mound, which through parallels drawn with other locations, suggests a late prehistoric origin (see Appendix 5). This may have had a role to play in the establishment of the early medieval monastic site, and the later Augustinian priory of St Mary at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine during the later medieval period. The remembrance of this ritual monument may also be at the heart of why Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine became established as an Ó Cellaig venue of inauguration during the later medieval period as a result.

A number of major conclusions can be drawn from the information gathered in the data collection chapters, namely Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Firstly, it has been clearly demonstrated that settlement forms that have their origins certainly in the early medieval period continued to be occupied in the Ó Cellaig lordship by elites, vassal clans and service families into the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Moated sites and then tower house castles intruded into this repertoire of settlement forms through cross-cultural contact in the high and late medieval period respectively. It is clear that the settlement forms mentioned above served as the elite residences of the Gaelic Irish in this area throughout the later medieval period, and while these private fortified residences, excepting tower houses, possessed some of the functions of a castle, they looked physically different, and were chosen due to the requirements of the society who used them.

Secondly, these requirements were both practical and symbolic in nature, and later medieval society in what was Uí Maine did not consider castle construction to be a necessary or sensible commitment of resources as they sought to protect themselves and their wealth at this time. More than this, it is clear that the Gaelic elite used aspects of the past as a means of creating and maintaining a legitimacy and prestige in the present. One of the principal ways in which this was achieved was through residing in settlement forms which were old-fashioned in their outward appearance, and this was possibly part of a 'landscape theatre' designed to accentuate the immutable authority which the lord and his lineage possessed over the territory to the audiences who witnessed these *cenn áiteanna*. This writer feels that this preoccupation with,

and use of, the past by the Gaelic elite, frees us from being 'embarrassed' about what initially appears to be conservative choices of settlement form and the consequent charges of backwardness. The Gaelic use of the past was, in fact, really practical and sensible given the society that they operated in.

Finally, one of the major conclusions of this research is that the application of the range of available information, particularly archaeology, presents a different picture about the degree of wealth and power the Ó Cellaig lords achieved in their late medieval lordship. Historians, such as Orpen more generally, but Nicholls and Cosgrove more specifically, have led us to believe that the late medieval period was a time of stagnation and decline for the Uí Chellaig, as warring factions fought for control of the territory, in whole or in part. However, the multidisciplinary approach applied here speaks of prosperity in what was an expanded lordship, and of displays of affluence through patronage of the arts and production of manuscripts, coupled with the patronage of important religious foundations through rebuilding works and commissioning of tombs, religious objects and wall paintings. This contradicts the accepted historical narrative, and again emphasises the need to conduct future research using a multidisciplinary approach. It also speaks to the importance of the discipline of archaeology in understanding later medieval Gaelic Ireland.

To conclude, the multidisciplinary research conducted on the lordly centres of the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine has added a considerable amount to our knowledge of the characteristics of elite settlement in Gaelic Ireland, and has greatly broadened our understanding on how these eastern Connacht lords operated within their territory during the later medieval period.

What questions need to be addressed by future research?

The completed research has resulted in the emergence of a number of research questions which require further investigation in order to further our understanding of the Ó Cellaig lordship specificially, and later medieval Gaelic Ireland more generally. In terms of the geographical characteristics of this lordship, one of the first questions which deserves further research relates to the underexplored role which the important regional waterways of the River Shannon and Suck played in the lives of the later medieval communities who lived within their catchments. This work would build on the important findings of Stark at Cloondadauv, Co. Galway, and of Hall on the castle sites of Lough Derg. Their study would be an important development in our understanding of the place which these rivers held in terms of communications, economically,

recreationally, as well as symbolically, in this time and place, as well as considering the different types of watercraft employed for these purposes.

Another major question which needs to be answered by future research relates to the application of remote sensing investigations and a subsequent research excavation of a ringfort which is a historically-attested residence of a member of the Ó Cellaig elite, vassal clan or service kindred family associated with the lords of Uí Maine. A number of potentially suitable targets could be considered for inspection, not least the ringforts at Lisnagavragh, Liswilliam, Garrynphort and Coolderry within the limits of the Lough Croan lordly centre, Lisnagry Fort in Lisdonnellroe townland and Lisfineel Fort in Ballydoogan townland in association with the Callow Lough lordly centre, or indeed the ringfort in Cornacask townland related to the Ballaghdacker Lough lordly centre. Furthermore, the site of the enclosure in Ashford townland may also be worth consideration with regard to the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* minor Ó Cellaig lordly centre. An excavation of one or more of these sites would greatly enhance our understanding of ringfort occupation beyond the traditional dates ascribed to them, as well as informing us about the material culture and habitation practices of those strata of later medieval Gaelic society within the study area.

Based on the findings of the present research, it is clear that the promontory fort, as well as the newly-coined monument type known as the *bódhún*, had a significant role to play in the archaeologies of the *cenn áiteanna* of the later medieval Ó Cellaig lords. Adding the promontory forts of the study area to those already identified as being occupied by the Gaelic elite during the later medieval period indicates that the promontory fort, both inland and coastal, was a monument type and a geographical feature which was utilised beyond their perceived settlement dates. This also highlights the need to consider these locations when conducting research into the lordly centres of the later medieval Gaelic Irish elsewhere. The *bódhún* is another monument classification which researchers need to consider when exploring the physical appearance of these *cenn áiteanna*, as there are undoubtedly more examples to be uncovered through future research.

Another question which is worthy of further enquiry relates to the origins of, and reasons behind, the explosion in tower house building which occurred during the late medieval period. This would benefit from the skills of historical enquiry, in order to further clarify the theory proposed by Barry, and to better understand the cross-cultural contacts which resulted in this

increased uniformity in elite residence construction which began at the very end of the fourteenth century by both the Anglo-Norman and Gaelic Irish communities.

Further landscape and micro-landscape research is required into the lordly centres of the later medieval Gaelic elite, as well as their hinterlands, in order to identify if settlement patterns amongst the Gaelic Irish communities correspond with the 'dispersed nucleation' model proposed by the present writer. For instance, does this pattern of spatial organisation which sees the *cenn áit* separated by a distance of *c.*3km from the communal hub bear any resemblance to the spatial organisation identified at the series of Ó Cellaig lordly centres studied as part of the present research? Are there any other reasons apparent to explain why this geographical separation was established, beyond what has been argued herein?

In keeping with the earlier point, the successful identification of Gaelic lordly centres in the field also opens up the opportunity to explore the lives and lifeways for those of lower status in the lordship. One way to do this would be through the identification of the *cenn áit* and then exploring their surroundings for lower status dwelling sites similar to the 'creat'-type houses discussed above. Remote sensing investigations and targeted excavation based on these findings would be the most suitable methodology through which to investigate these areas, with the overall intention of bringing the stories of the day-to-day retainers to the lord, and their families, to light.

Finally, due to the nature of the Irish Research Council Employment-Based Postgraduate Scholarship awarded to the present writer, one of the objectives of this archaeological research has been to link the more fully understood heritage of the study area with sustainable heritage and heritage tourism benefits. This objective was arrived at due to the present writer's employment as the manager of a community-established and maintained social enterprise, whose purpose is to be the interpretive resource for an internationally significant archaeological landscape. It is hoped that the experience garnered from seven years developing employment and economic activity through promoting cultural heritage in a rural environment can be used as a case study in best practice for other areas with similar attributes. As such, the writer has developed plans to use the research carried out in this thesis as a key initiator in the development of rural tourism initiatives in the south Roscommon and east Galway region. This will be achieved through the identification of gains that can assist in a greater recognition of the heritage potential of the study area, based on themes including but not exclusive to

archaeological, historical and heritage tourism, genealogy, and outdoor and walking tourism (see Appendix 6 below).

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Appendix 1 – Recorded monuments Discussed Over the Course of the Research

RMP No.	Name	Townland	Monument Class	County
GA086-001-; 001-; 002-; 003-; 004-	Kilconnell Franciscan Friary	Abbeyfield	Religious house – Franciscan friars	Galway
GA033-050001-	*Monasternalea* (Kilmore-ne-togher?)	Abbeygrey	Ecclesiastical site	Galway
GA088-001-; 001-; 002-; 003-; 004-; 005-; 006-; 007-; 008-	*Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine*	Abbeypark	Religious house – Augustinian canons; and associated features	Galway
GA073-005-		Annagh	Ringfort – unclassified	Galway
GA073-006-		Annagh	Enclosure	Galway
GA074A001-	*Tuaim Sruthra*	Ashford	Enclosure	Galway
GA020-001-	Stony Island	Ballaghdacker	Crannóg	Galway
GA073-014-	Lisfineel fort	Ballydoogan	Ringfort – unclassified	Galway
GA073-017-		Ballynabanaba	Castle – tower house	Galway
GA073-018-		Ballynabanaba	Ringfort – unclassified	Galway
GA073-019-		Ballynabanaba	Enclosure	Galway
GA073-026002-		Callow	Enclosure	Galway
GA073-027-	Callow Castle	Callow	Castle – unclassified	Galway
GA073-032-		Callow	Crannóg	Galway
GA074-027001-		Cloonigny	Moated site	Galway

GA087-055-	Aughrim Castle	Coololla	Castle – Anglo-Norman masonry castle	Galway
GA073-073001; GA073-073003-	Doon fort; Doon Castle	Doon	Enclosure; Castle – unclassified	Galway
GA020-006-		Easterfield or Cornacask	Ringfort – rath	Galway
GA020-011-	Sally Island	Easterfield or Cornacask	Crannóg	Galway
GA060-081001-	Gallagh Castle	Gallagh	Castle – unclassified	Galway
GA059-037-	Garbally Castle	Garbally	Castle – tower house	Galway
GA087-126002-	*Cill Comadan*	Kilcommadan	Church	Galway
GA071-041-; GA071-002-		Killaclogher	Enclosure	Galway
GA071-042-	Clogher Castle?	Killaclogher	Castle – tower house	Galway
GA073-105-		Lecarrowmactully	Ringfort – unclassified	Galway
GA073-115-	Lisnagry	Lisdonnellroe	Ringfort – unclassified	Galway
GA073-116-	Lisnacourty	Lisdonnellroe	Enclosure	Galway
GA061-106-		Lissyegan (Hodson)	Ringfort – unclassified	Galway
GA061-107-		Lissyegan (Hodson)	Ringfort – unclassified	Galway
GA087-178-		Loughbown	Ringfort – rath	Galway
GA071-064001-	Monivea Castle	Monivea Demesne	Castle – tower house	Galway
GA060-179-	Lismore	Pallas	Moated site	Galway

GA072-059-	Tiaquin Castle	Tiaquin Demesne	Castle – unclassified	Galway
GA072-064-		Tiaquin Demesne	Enclosure	Galway
GA088-040-	*Caislen Suicin/ Áth na Stuaidhe*	Townparks	Castle – Anglo-Norman masonry castle (not scheduled for inclusion in next revision)	Galway
RO041-048001-; RO041-048002-; RO041-048005-	Athleague Castle	Athleague	Castle – unclassified; Bawn; House–Fortified house	Roscommon
RO041-048006-		Athleague	Ford	Roscommon
RO041-102-		Derrineel	Castle – unclassified	Roscommon
RO041-021-; RO041-132-		Ballygalda or Trust; Correal	Canal	Roscommon
RO047-059-		Bredagh	Moated site	Roscommon
RO048-099001-	*Camach Brighdi*	Cam	Church	Roscommon
RO044-043001-	Tisrara	Carrowntemple	Church	Roscommon
RO044-107-	Edward's Island	Carrowntielve, Turrock	Crannóg	Roscommon
RO051-017001-; RO051-017002	Castlesampson Castle	Castlesampson	Castle – tower house; Bawn	Roscommon
RO050-019001-; RO050-019002-	Cloonbigny Castle	Cloonbigny	Castle – tower house; House – $16^{th}/17^{th}$ century	Roscommon
RO044-037-		Coolderry	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO045-171002-		Coolnageer	Moated site	Roscommon
RO048-105-		Cornageeha	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO048-106-		Cornageeha	Ringfort – cashel	Roscommon

RO044-017-; RO044-018-		Cornapallis	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO047-028-		Cuilleenirwan	Moated site	Roscommon
RO038-010001-	Dunamon Castle	Dunamon	Castle – unclassified	Roscommon
RO051-047001-; RO051-047002-	Dundonnell Castle	Dundonnell	House – 16th/17th century; Castle – ringwork	Roscommon
RO044-088-	Inchnaveague Island	Garrynphort	Crannóg	Roscommon
RO044-091-	Illaunnamona	Garrynphort	Redundant Record (formerly crannóg)	Roscommon
RO044-092-		Garrynphort	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO044-094-	Inchnagower	Garrynphort	Crannóg	Roscommon
RO047-031-	Inchnagreeve	Garrynphort	Crannóg	Roscommon
RO044-089-		Garryphort	Crannóg (incorrect location)	Roscommon
RO041-048007-	*Áth Liag Maonagáin*	Glebe	Church	Roscommon
RO047-026-	Fair Hill	Gortaphuill	Wayside-cross	Roscommon
RO045-121001-		Grange	Barrow – bowl barrow	Roscommon
RO045-123-		Grange	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO044-023-		Liscoffy (Madden)	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO044-026002-		Liscoffy (Madden)	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO042-136001-	Lisdaulan Castle	Lisdaulan	Castle – unclassified	Roscommon
RO044-072001-	Lisnagavragh fort	Lisnagavragh	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO047-035002-; -036-; -037-; -038-		Lisseenamanragh	Field system	Roscommon

RO044-065001-	Liswilliam fort	Liswilliam	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO042-045001-; -045002-	Galey Castle	Longnamuck	Castle – tower house; Castle – ringwork	Roscommon
RO047-058001-		Milltown	Castle – unclassified	Roscommon
RO047-058022-		Milltown	Bawn	Roscommon
RO042-014001-		Mote Demesne	Ringfort – rath	Roscommon
RO042-016001-	*Cill Mhiadhan*	Mote Demesne	Church	Roscommon
RO042-044001-	*Port Airenaigh*	Portrunny	Church	Roscommon
RO044-114-	Turrock House	Turrock	House – $16^{th}/17^{th}$ century	Roscommon

Appendix 2 – Additional/Reinterpreted Monuments Uncovered Over the Course of the Research

E (ITM)	N (ITM)	Name	Townland	Proposed Class	County
585835	725848		Abbeypark	Ceremonial enclosure/ inauguration site	Galway
578703	757736		Ballaghdacker	Moated site	Galway
572035	734116	*Bódhún* of Callow	Callow	*Bódhún*	Galway
571992	734224	Callow Castle	Callow	(Site of) castle – tower house	Galway
572065	734426		Callow	Pier/jetty	Galway
571897	734229		Callow	Naust/landing place	Galway
572043	734429		Callow	House - indeterminate date	Galway
578945	728412	Aughrim Castle	Coololla	Bawn	Galway
578948	728439	Aughrim Castle	Coololla	(Site of) castle – tower house	Galway
585341	730948	*Dún Leodha/ Áth Nadsluaigh*	Dunlo/ Townparks	(Site of) ringfort – cashel	Galway
578940	757973		Easterfield or Cornacask	Ringfort – rath	Galway
582930	757789	*Bódhún* of Athleague	Athleague	*Bódhún*	Roscommon
582796	757762	Athleague Castle	Athleague	(Site of) castle – tower house	Roscommon
593806	758896		Creggan	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
594768	757771		Galey	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
594803	757520		Galey	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
594936	758363		Galey	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
595004	758304		Galey	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
595121	758246		Galey	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon

595264	758165		Galey	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
595451	758178		Galey	Road – road/ Trackway	Roscommon
587885	749494	Illaunamona	Garrynport	(High-cairn) crannóg/natural island fortress	Roscommon
594143	758448		Glebe	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
587769	747213	Fair Hill	Gortaphuill	Inauguration site	Roscommon
594145	758043		Knockcroghery	Enclosure *or* ringfort	Roscommon
591904	756874	Lisdaulan Castle	Lisdaulan	(Site of) castle – tower house	Roscommon
595625	758685	*Cathair* of Galey	Longnamuck	Ringfort – cashel	Roscommon
589285	761241		Mote Demesne	(Site of) castle – tower house	Roscommon
586764	747418		Tullyneeny	(Bivallate) ringfort – rath	Roscommon
586682	749673	Turrock Castle	Turrock	(Site of) castle – tower house	Roscommon

Appendix 3 – The Diversion of the River Hind, Co. Roscommon

The role which the natural landscape, and its various nuances, played in communications, trade and military movements through medieval Uí Maine and Tír Maine cannot be underestimated. Movement through the study area was by no means straightforward, and natural forces, as well as human impacts on these forces, could and did manipulate these actions. The intersection of the River Hind, a now disappeared stand of woodland known as the Woods of Athleague, a treacherous zone of bogland, and the routeway termed Doran's Route 9 by the current research, presents itself as a bottleneck to travel north-south between the settlement of Roscommon and *Áth Nadsluaigh* (Ballinasloe) in the later medieval period. Engineering works were undertaken in this area at the behest of Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair in the twelfth century. Its location, physical manifestation, and purpose will be theorised in this appendix and have developed primarily from an annalistic entry of the year 1139. The entry is as follows:

> '1139.4 – The Suca river was dug by Toirdhealbhach Ó Conchobair so that it came into the marsh of the south of the plain and the marsh of Aedh, making large lakes of them, and it went into the river of Ednech [River Hind] and into Loch Rí, and there was a muster of Connachtmen doing that work.' (*AT*)

A second translation of the entry has been provided more recently by Ó Muraíle as follows:

> 'The River Suck was excavated by Toirdhealbhach Ó Conchubhair as far as *Turlach Deiscirt an Mhaighe* and *Turlach Aodha*, transforming them [i.e. the two 'winter lakes'] into two large lakes, and it continued from there into *Abhainn na hEidhnighe* [River Hind] and into Lough Ree, and a gathering of Connachtmen was engaged on that task.'[55]

The River Hind – *An Eidhneach* (the ivied river) in its current form runs for 12km from west to east, before emptying into Lough Ree at the boundary of the two townlands of Fearagh in the parish of Kilmeane, to the south, and Clooncah, parish of Kilteevan, to the north.

The premodern course of the River Hind must have been rather different from how it appears today. The Hind was the focus of extensive drainage works in the nineteenth century which have greatly straightened and canalised the course of the river (Connon and Shanahan 2012, 155-6). The Hind provided an effective physical boundary between these two political territories, meaning that control over the river, or more particularly the points of transfer north-

[55] Ó Muraíle, N. pers. comm., 28th January 2019.

south over the Hind or near it, possessed with it a high level of authority over the area as a result.

The chief indicators of traffic through these contested zones only ever comes from the historical record of exceptional occurrences, such as military expeditions and mass herd movements, a point made elsewhere by Moore as part of research relating to the Red Earl's Road and *Bóthar an Corann* (Moore 2015, 51). It is, therefore, not surprising that we have to turn to the likes of the career of Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair in order to quantify the importance of communications at this point in history.

It is likely that at least three of the historically attested twenty-seven cattle raids conducted by Toirrdelbach between 1111 and 1154 would have used the fords at Athleague and *Áth Nadsluaigh* as crossing places over the River Suck [1115 – Thomond, 1116 – Béal Ború and Kincora, 1131 – Connello, Co. Limerick] (Lucas 1989, 144, 197-9).

Moreover, Toirrdelbach also constructed *caistél* fortifications throughout this region, at *Dún Leodha* [Ballinasloe, Co. Galway] (see 4.2.1), and at *Gaillim* [Galway city] (Barry 2007, 37), and direct transit to these strongholds from the Ó Conchobair heartland of Machaire Connacht would most likely have come via the use of Route 9 and the *Slighe Mhór* also (see 3.3).

Attack and defence is a two-way process, and the route which Toirrdelbach used on these raids could also be used to attack, harass and raid the patrimonial lands which the Uí Chonchobair held north of the River Hind. Consideration of two chronicles for the period 1130 to 1139 indicate that the power successfully wielded by Toirrdelbach in the early part of his career led to an adverse reaction amongst his opponents, culminating in a series of raids on Toirrdelbach and his territory from further afield. In the years 1130, 1131, 1133, 1134, 1135, 1136, 1137 [twice], a series of incursions are recorded into Connacht against Toirrdelbach (*AT*; *MacC*).

It is against this backdrop of repeated debilitating military incursions into Connacht, and particularly the patrimonial lands of the Uí Chonchobair, that we must consider Toirrdelbach's engineering action on the River Suck north of Athleague. A number of scholars in both the historical and archaeological disciplines have highlighted the significance of this annalistic entry, however, there has to date been no consensus on the form of these works, their archaeological remains, or the purpose these works served (Ó Corráin 1972, 151; Barry 2007, 38; Valante 2015, 51, 60-1). The only attempt to identify the course of this modification, and its proposed use, was a 2012 study, entitled 'Creating borders in twelfth-century Ireland? Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair's diversion of the River Suck' (Connon and Shanahan 2012).

While some have suggested that this operation was ordered as a means of providing an access route for Ó Conchobair's fleets from the River Suck to Lough Ree (Barry 2007, 38; Valante 2015, 61), the work was most likely undertaken primarily as a defensive measure in order to restrict military movements through Tír Maine to the settlement at Roscommon via Route 9 north of Athleague, and further into the core of Toirrdelbach's patrimonial lands (Connon and Shanahan 2012, 164-8).

Given the frequent raiding that was now being meted out on the once predatory Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair, perhaps it is unsurprising that he sought to harness the physical landscape, and access routes into his territory, in order to stem this tide. The spartan description of the diversion of the River Suck into the River Hind does however specifically state that the diverted waters succeeded in turning two turloughs into large bodies of water, which would have undoubtedly restricted military movements through this constricted area of land as a result.

The marshes mentioned in the annalistic record, more correctly described as turloughs, are still evident in a range of guises in the area. The rise in water levels that occurs during the winter and spring seasons results in the seasonal flooding of considerable areas of land to the north of Athleague, particularly in the townlands of Ballinturly, Correal and Ballygalda (or Trust). The precise route of the diversion of the River Suck into the Hind, or vice versa, has proven difficult to some authors to plot. Connon and Shanahan theorised a line for this diversion advocating that it went through Ballinturly townland, and then took a route southeast via the southern lobe of Ballygalda townland into the River Hind (*Ibid*., 154). However, the present writer believes that such a conclusion is misplaced on a number of points.

Firstly, Ballinturly – *Baile an turlaíghe* (town of the turlach or dried lough) and Ballygalda – *Béal átha gallda* (mouth of the foreigners ford) corroborate the former presence of a substantial body of water in the area, with the name of Ballygalda indicating that it was the location of a ford through this water course. Considering as there is only one location in Ballygalda today that presents evidence of a water course, it being the River Hind, which delineates the eastern boundary of the townland, it is possible to argue that the ford of the townland name does not survive in the physical landscape, but is retained only in the toponymy.

Correal townland also retains significant turlough waters through the winter and spring. An example of these two turloughs in full 'winter' flood is evident with the Landsat aerial photography of the area, which was captured in February 2016 (Fig. 1). Ballinturly turlough extended to an area of *c*.1.23km², while Correal turlough measured *c*.0.22km² during this

period of 2016, which were substantial bodies of water to have to navigate around, and may serve as a suitable proxy for how these turloughs might have appeared in past times.

By contrast, investigating Connon and Shanahan's route requires for the flood waters to pass through Clooneen bog and another small area north of that townland that is prone to flooding, prior to reaching the headwaters of the Hind (*Ibid*., 146, 151-2). However, the Landsat image shows that even after a period of heavy winter flooding in the area in spring 2016, there was no re-emergence of a turlough in the location immediately south of the source of the Hind, meaning that there is not a second turlough to justify the Connon and Shanahan theory.

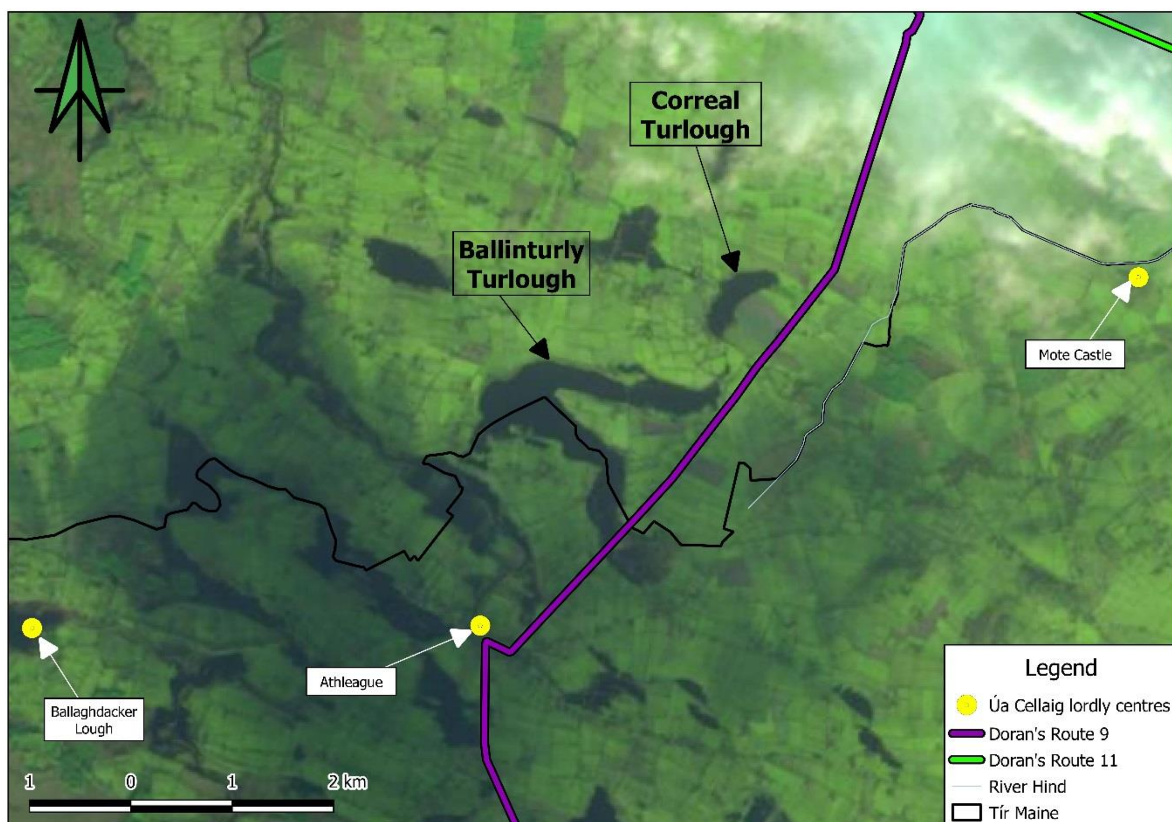

Figure 1 - Lansat image, captured February 2016, indicating the extents of two substantial turloughs in high flood immediately to the northeast of the ford of Athleague, and just to the west of the medieval communication route of Route 9 (Aerial data courtesy of USGS/NASA Landsat)

As for an alternative route of the engineering works, there is some corroborating evidence which may help to clarify the issue. There are two recorded monuments on the RMP that are categorised as 'canal' in this area (RO041-132-; RO041-021-). Recorded by James Moran, they were sections of what was a substantial linear earthen feature that was evident on the local landscape in two locations prior to *c.*1980. Plotting these on the Landsat aerial image provides a strong argument for the course of the Suck-Hind diversion taking a different route than the one charted by Connon and Shanahan, from Ballinturly turlough northeast to Correal turlough.

From here, the diversion passed through an excavated ditch, known locally as the 'Clogher Dyke', before meeting the River Hind in Ballygalda townland.

The early seventeenth-century cartographic sources corroborate the more northerly route being proposed for the River Hind diversion. Browne's *Map of the Province of Connaught* illustrates, albeit broadly, a north-eastern course. Boazio's *Irlandiæ accvrata descriptio* also charts the course of a river east from the River Suck, most likely the Hind, and again charts a north-eastern route. The Petty Down Survey, dated 1685, (http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Athlone&c=Roscommon) plots the route of the Hind directly northeast of the River Suck (Fig. 2), contrary to the more convoluted route advocated by Connon and Shanahan. More than this, there is no evidence to indicate that the headwaters of the modern River Hind are any different to the headwaters of its pre-canalised ancestor, therefore the small stream source of the Hind would not be the best point to connect the waters of the two rivers if one wished to achieve a flooding of the surrounding area. The alternative route, recognisable in the landscape further north, after it flowed through Ballinturly and Correal turloughs, is therefore much more suitable.

Figure 2 - Course of the River Hind, as recorded in the Down Survey (1685), accessible at http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#c=Roscommon

As for the archaeological character of Toirrdelbach's feat of hydraulic engineering between the rivers Suck and Hind, some slight traces survive for inspection. As mentioned above, two features, described on the RMP as 'canals', were recorded. One is located between Ballinturly turlough and Correal turlough (RO041-132-), while the second (RO041-021-) is located between the eastern end of Correal turlough and the N63 road. The description of the scope note for RO041-132- is as follows:

‘Described as a depression (L *c.* 300m N-S; Wth *c.* 7m; D *c.* 4m) with earthen banks at E and W (Moran 1993, 10-11) which was reclaimed *c.* 1980. It is now visible as a depression (Wth *c.* 5-6m; max. D *c.* 1m at E) with an earthen bank (Wth 4.5m; H at W 0.3m; H at E 1.5m) on the W forming the townland boundary with Correal. The bank is planted with hazel and conifers, and has the base of a stone wall on top of it. A second section (RO041-021-) is *c.* 800m to the NE.’ (M. Moore 2010 and 2015)

The second part (RO041-021-) does not survive to inspect. Known locally as the ‘Clogher Dyke’, this section was photographed (Pl. 1). Further to the east, Timoney recorded a cross-section of its extents as they survived in 1977. The cross-section was recorded at ITM 585500; 761140, and is illustrated below (Fig. 3).

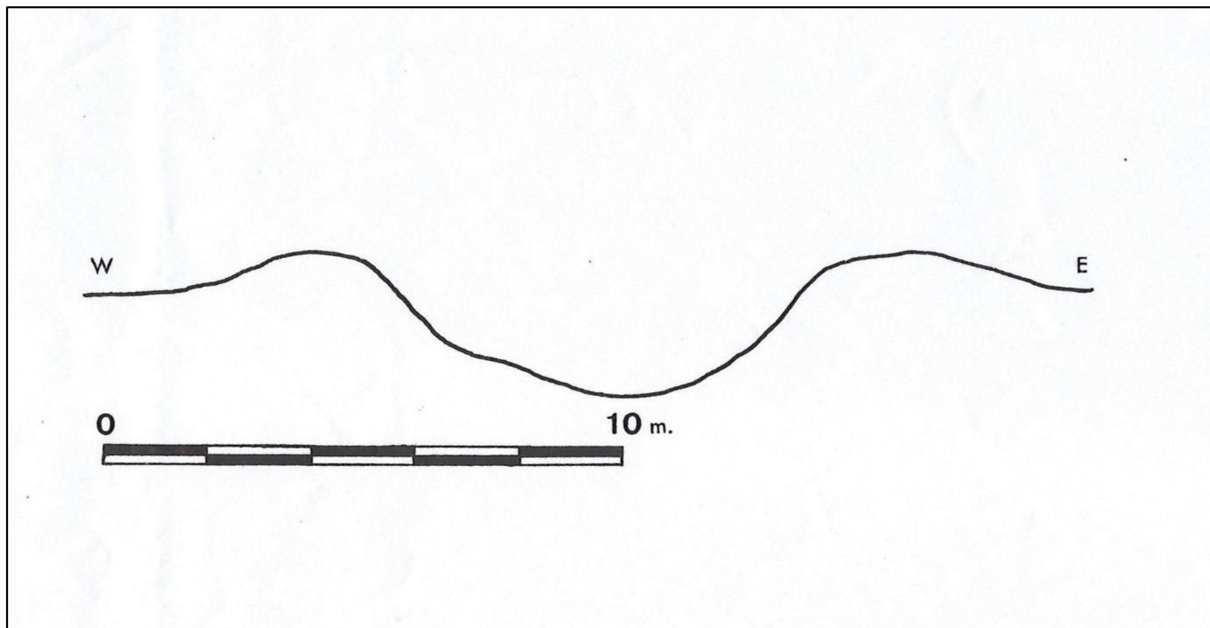

Figure 3 - Cross-section of the 'Clogher Dyke' section, recorded in 1977 at ITM 585500; 761140 (Diagram courtesy of Martin A. Timoney)

This cross-section compares readily with the measurements recorded by James Moran at the more southerly of the two recorded ‘canals’ (RO041-132-), and it is clear that while these sections were very substantial earthworks, both have become much reduced in the past forty years, as land improvement and reclamation has diminished the profile of both features.

Plate 1 - Ground image of a section west of the 'Clogher Dyke' in the vicinity of the Timoney cross-section, looking west. Image taken in 1977, prior to the infilling of Toirrdelbach's bealach uisce (Image courtesy of Martin A. Timoney).

Indicative of this decline can be seen in the cross-sections derived from the GSI-commissioned LiDAR topographical data, captured on 28/06/2018 (Fig. 4). Despite the infilling, however, the two cross-sections suggest a similar ditch profile to that of the cross-section recorded by Timoney in 1977, albeit with a reduced depth. Considering the cross-sections, the banks occur at *c.*20m and *c.*30m measurements in both cases. The main impact of the reclamation works has seen the depth of this earthwork being degraded from a maximum depth of *c.*4m on the 1977-recorded cross-section, by comparion to the much shallower remains derived from the 2018 topographical data.

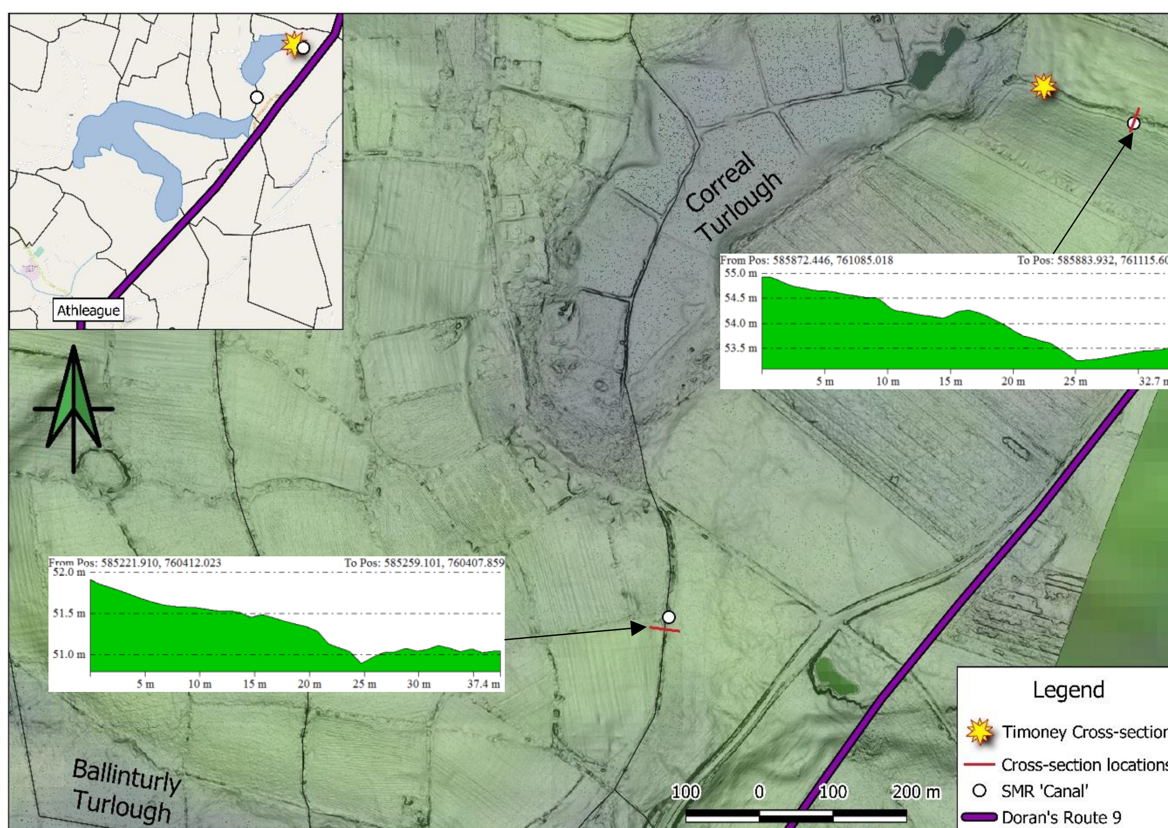

Figure 0 - Location of the three cross-sections on the presumed course of the River Suck - River Hind diversion. Cross-section of 'canal' feature at (RO041-132-), from west to east [left]. The base of the much-changed ditch is apparent at 25m. Cross-section of 'canal' feature at (RO041-021-), from south to north [right]. The base of the ditch in this case is also apparent at 25m (Topographical data courtesy of GSI)

Collating the available information enables the present writer to theorise the most likely course of Toirrdelbach's waterway. Water entered Ballinturly turlough from the west via the River Suck. The 'gathering of Connachtmen' excavated a waterway which enabled the waters of Correal turlough to flow south to meet Ballinturly turlough, the remnants of which are consistent with RO041-132-. The course of this waterway also survives as the eastern boundary of Correal townland. The second section of this waterway is likely to be consistent with the Clogher Dyke, recorded by Timoney in 1977. This profile, coupled with the record at RO041-021-, charts the likely course of Toirrdelbach's waterway as it continued east across Route 9, thereafter connecting up with the River Hind. This waterway is likely to be the reason why Ballygalda – *Béal átha gallda* (mouth of the foreigners' ford) is named as such, due to the former presence of a crucial ford located where Route 9 intersected with the Toirrdelbach's waterway (Fig. 5).

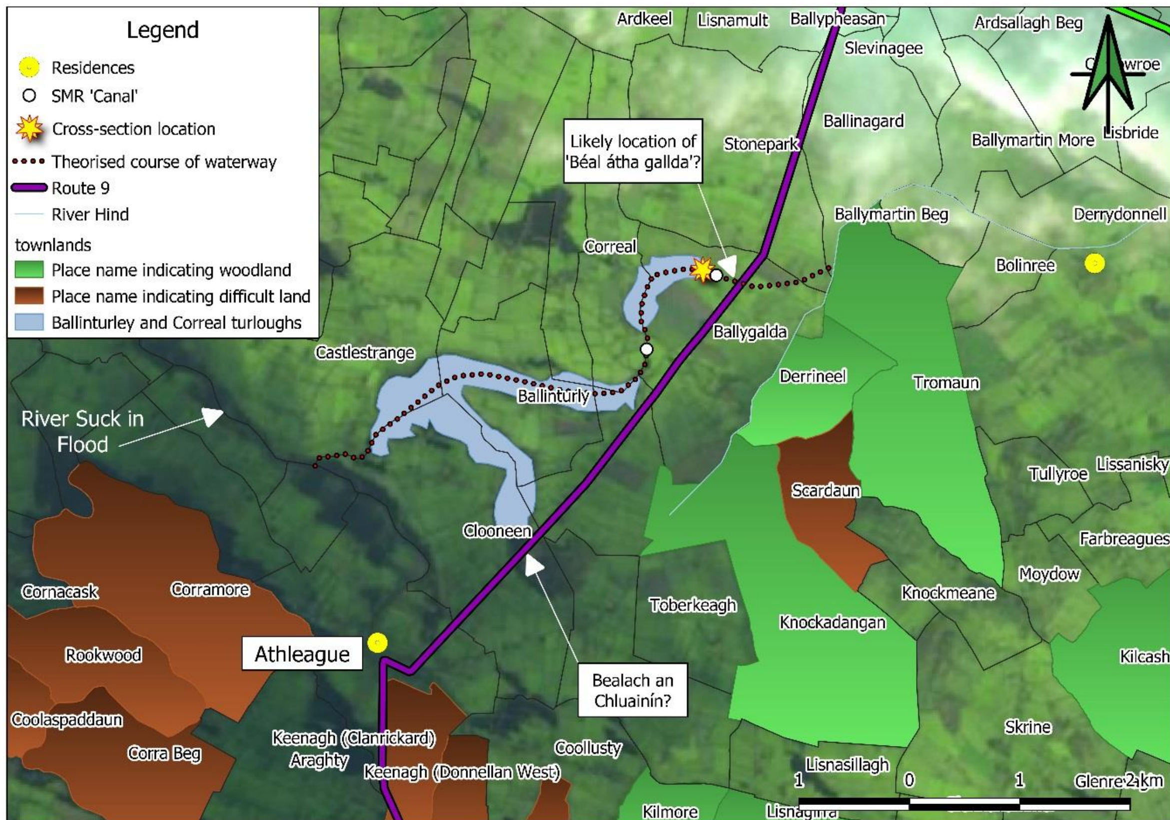

Figure 5 - Theorised course of Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair's waterway, based on the evidence outlined above. The extents of Ballinturly and Correal turloughs are consistent with their size as recorded by the Lansat image taken in February 2016 (Aerial data courtesy of USGS/NASA Landsat)

If the place-name survivals indicating woodland to the east of Route 9 are to be trusted as representing an arboreal environment in the medieval period, something that is corroborated by the seventeenth-century cartographic sources (see 3.2.2), then the communication route through this area was located in a very tight corridor of accessible terrain (Fig. 5). As a result, the enlarging of the turloughs to the west of the road would have constricted the available space for transit even further.

A possible motive for Toirrdelbach's creation of this diversion of the River Suck waters into the River Hind seems to have been a direct response to the incursions that were led into his territory at this time. Therefore this flooding of the turloughs between the two rivers was undertaken in order to protect his territory, and to regulate or slow the movement of large groups that, as evidenced in the historical record, seemed intent on gaining access to his territory at this time. These twelfth-century engineering works would continue to affect communication and travel through this region well into the later medieval period, thus highlighting some of the vulnerabilities that moving through Uí Maine carried at this time.

Appendix 4 – Case Study: *Áth Nadsluaigh*, Co. Galway

The vassal clan *cenn áit* of *Áth Nadsluaigh* (the ford of the crowds *or* hosts), now Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, sees a shift in focus away from the lordly centres of the Ó Cellaig senior line. This has been undertaken in order to explore the character of one of the most prominent riverine elite settlements in the later medieval lordship more generally, that of the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* Ó Cellaig *cenn áit* on the ford of the River Suck, and how it manifested through time. The information we have for this location is sparser than what has been encountered with *cenn áiteanna* relating to the senior Ó Cellaig lords, but insights can nonetheless be derived from the available evidence.

The area of *Áth Nadsluaigh* has been encountered already in this thesis, in the guise of *Dún Leodha*, one of the twelfth-century *caistél* fortifications constructed by Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair (see 4.2.1), and after that in the form of the Anglo-Norman castle of *Caislen Suicin* (see 4.2.2), indicating that it was of central importance to a number of players in later medieval Uí Maine.

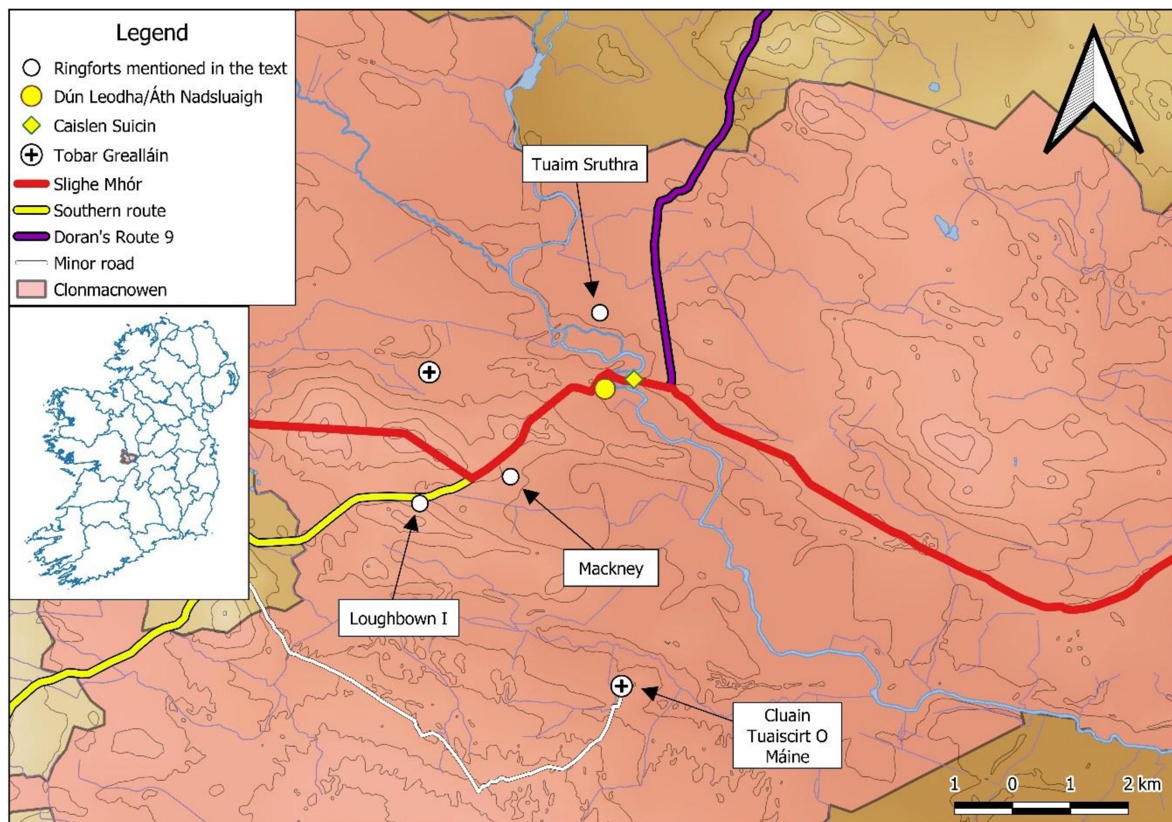

Figure 1 - The oireacht *of Clonmacnowen, indicating the intersection of riverine and overland routeways which converge on the ford of* Áth Nadsluaigh, *modern-day Ballinasloe. The map also indicates the location of some of the other locations mentioned for this area, Loughbown and Mackney (4.3.1) and Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine (Appendix 5) over the course of the present research.*

***The Toponymy of* Áth Nadsluaigh**

A small group of townlands relate to navigation across the River Suck in this area, directly corresponding with the ford and its name. The townland names of Cleaghmore – *An Chliathach Mhór* (the great hurdle/wicker bridge), Cleaghbeg – *An Chliathach Bheag* (the small hurdle) and Cleaghgarve – *An Chliathach Gharbh* (the rough hurdle) (Fig. 3), all relate to navigation across the river at this point using wooden or wicker-type materials. The river was undoubtedly crossable all along this shallow, safer point in its course, with the three townlands located immediately to the north of the bridge which now regulates the crossing. Judging by these place-names (O'Sullivan and Downey 2015, 37), it was aided, prior to the construction of a stone bridge over the Suck, by a series of timber or hurdle bridges in the medieval past (Geaney 2016, 91). These aids to fording the river probably took on a similar form to the hurdle ford which survives in the name given to the settlement of Dublin, *Átha Cliath*, as illustrated by Johnny Ryan (Fig. 2).

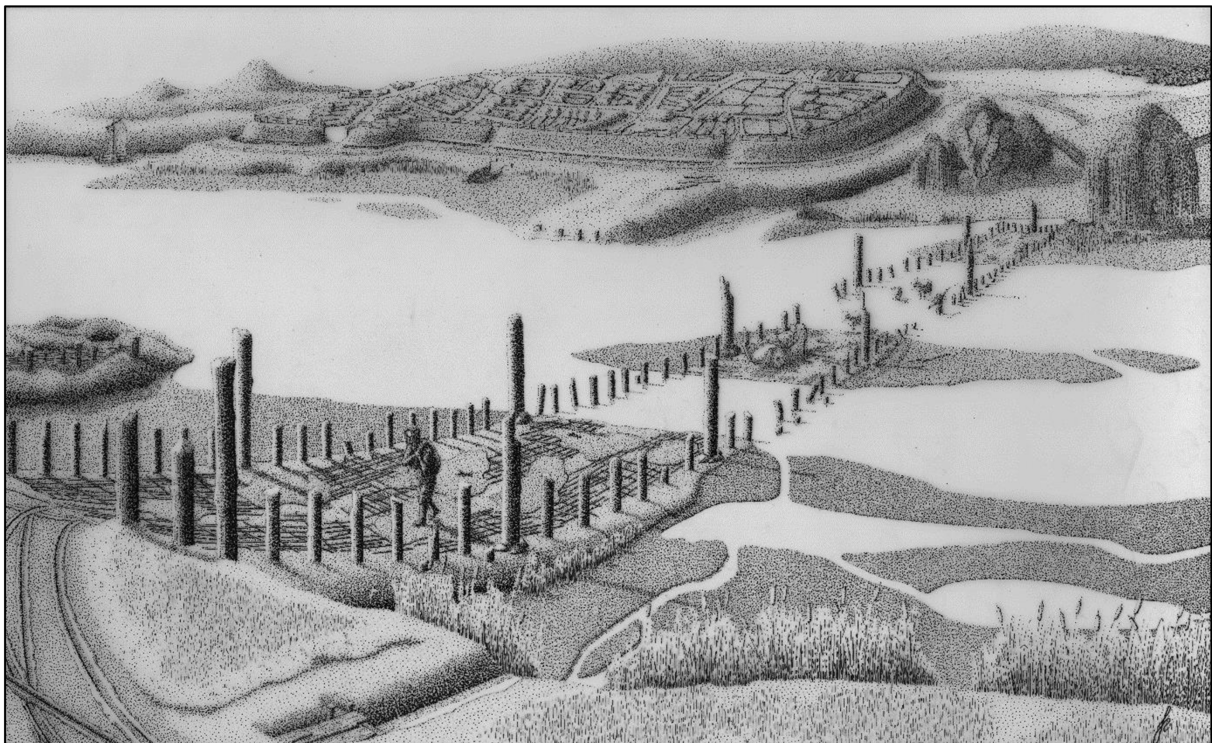

Figure 2 – The Hurdle Ford, the Viking Dún *of* Dubh Linn*, circa 1014. This illustration serves as a good comparison for the type of wicker/hurdle structures that enabled travellers to cross river fords prior to the construction of bridges proper. (Image courtesy of Johnny Ryan, archaeological illustrator)*

Interestingly, immediately upstream from Cleaghmore is the townland of Ashford, *Tuaim Sruthra* in Irish (see 2.4.1), within which lies the remains of the early medieval religious house of *Teampall Raoileann*. This church site, located 2km to the northwest of the stone bridge, is regarded as also being located a fording place, now destroyed, across the river, creating a route

which ultimately linked up with the Ballinasloe to Ahascragh road (Connellan 1943, 145-6, 150). Combining this information leads us to conclude that the River Suck was passable at a number of points along its course in this area, something which is no longer possible, owing to the works undertaken in the nineteenth century by the Suck Drainage Board, which removed the fording places along the course of the river (Connellan 1943, 146).

A stone bridge was erected over the Suck at *Áth Nadsluaigh* by Sir Nicholas Malby in the 1570s (Mannion 2012, 72; O'Sullivan and Downey 2015, 39), but it is difficult to conclude if this was the first stone bridge constructed over the river, or if it replaced an earlier iteration. The south-facing side of the modern bridge retains much of the late medieval construction in its fabric (GA088-047001-; https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/30333029/ballinasloe-bridge-bridge-street-back-ballinasloe-county-galway; O'Sullivan and Downey 2015, 40; Pl. 1).

Of the townland names which denote settlement activity, Dunlo is the most prominent on the historical record. In 1120, Toirrdelbach Mór Ó Conchobair constructed a bridge at *Dún Leodha* (*AFM*), which through comparison with contemporary constructions, such as at Clonmacnoise, was most likely of timber (Geaney 2016, 91).

Plate 1 – The surviving later medieval fabric of the stone bridge of Ballinasloe, viewed from the south (Author's photograph)

***Historical Information Relating to the* Clannmhaicne Eoghain cenn áit**

Aside from the twelfth-century references to *Dún Leodha*, the next entry for this area describes the construction of *Caislen Suicin* in 1245 (*AC*). As discussed earlier (see 4.2.2), *Caislen Suicin* served as an indication of the power now being exerted by Anglo-Norman lords in this area, highlighting the importance which the ford possessed for those who controlled it.

Leabhar Ua Maine provides important information on the location of residence for the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* Uí Chellaig in the mid-to-late thirteenth century, with Eoghan Ó Cellaig's sons recorded as possessing *longphoirt* at *Áth Nadsluaigh* and *Tuaim Sruthra* (*Ó Ceallaigh Genealogical Fragment i*, 41). On the eastern boundary of Ashford townland with Rooaun townland, there is the heavily degraded site of an oval-shaped enclosure (GA074A001-), which measures 46m north/south by 40m east/west. This once substantial, but now effectively levelled, enclosure, which seems to have been a large ringfort, is the only evidence of medieval settlement activity in the townland, and is possibly the physical manifestation of this historically-attested thirteenth-century stronghold of the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* (see Fig. 1). The presence of these recorded residences of the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* Uí Chellaig in the

vicinity of Ballinasloe indicates that at some point in the thirteenth or early-fourteenth century, either during a period of Ó Cellaig supremacy or Anglo-Norman landownership, the Uí Chellaig of *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* were located close to the ford.

***Archaeological Expression of* Áth Nadsluaigh *and* Caislen Suicin**

Based upon the evidence outlined with regard to *Dún Leodha* earlier (see 4.2.1), the present writer would argue that the most likely location for the historically-attested stronghold described as *Áth Nadsluaigh* in *Leabhar Ua Maine* is merely another name used to describe *Dún Leodha.* There are a number of reasons why this is a possibility. Firstly, *Dún Leodha* was constructed by Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair in the early-twelfth century, meaning that by the time a cadet branch of the Uí Chellaig began to gain prominence in the area, likely in the late-thirteenth century, it is quite conceivable that they simply referred to it by a different name.

The survival of Molyneux's 'Danesmount' into at least the early-eighteenth century indicates that this earthwork still served as a prominent feature of the settlement of Ballinasloe, thus increasing the likelihood that it continued to serve an important practical purpose in the area beyond its use and control by the Uí Chonchobair dynasts, being taken over and used as a fortified residence by a junior branch of the Uí Chellaig.

Finally, the establishment of *Caislen Suicin*, which will be discussed more fully presently, must be considered in association with the Ó Chellaig presence at *Áth Nadsluaigh*. *Caislen Suicin* was an Anglo-Norman fortification, likely constructed in direct opposition and to take control of the ford, the overland route of the *Slighe Mhór*, and the area as a whole, at the expense of the local lords. In this regard, Finan's suggestion that the land grants of Aughrim and Ballinasloe were attempted as a means of providing intermediary outposts between Galway and Athlone carries greater weight (Finan 2016, 161). It is quite likely that native and colonist lived in close proximity in this case study area. In times of peace, this closeness was presumably mutually advantageous for both the Uí Chellaig and the Anglo-Normans, while in times of conflict, control over the ford was likely of paramount importance. It is therefore unsurprising that such a contest inevitably led to the type of conflict that developed in 1307 and 1315 in the wider cantred of Omany (see 2.4.4).

It is argued, therefore, that there were two fortifications at Ballinasloe in the thirteenth century – the *Dún Leodha* one, perhaps occupied by an Ó Cellaig as the *longport* of *Áth Nadsluaigh*, and an Anglo-Norman castle called *Caislen Suicin*. Where was the latter castle located? It appears that the Archaeological Survey branch of the National Monuments Service believe that

it was located at the site of what is clearly the remains of a very late castle marked 'Ivy Castle' on what was then a tear-shaped island (whose maximum dimensions were *c.*197m north-south by 55m east/west at its widest point) in the Suck on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map (Alcock, de hÓra and Gosling 1999, 418). This castle (GA088-040002-) is located beside Ballinasloe Bridge, presumably marking a fording place over the Suck, and its southern side once fronted onto the main Dublin/Galway Road. Certainly the location of this late castle on what was the easternmost island in the Suck at Ballinasloe fits the location of the Anglo-Norman castle implied in its name *Caislen Suicin* – 'The castle of the Suck' or 'Suck Castle'. The present remains of this castle consist of a bawn that is rectangular in shape and this has internal dimensions of 54m north/south by 50.6m east/west. The walls of the bawn, which are heavily overgrown with ivy, are on average 4.5m in height. Low crenellations can be seen surmounting the southern and western walls of this bawn, while the remains of a wall walk occur in places on its eastern and southern walls. A 5m-wide silted up ditch, which was once wet, can be seen at the base of the western curtain wall of the bawn. A circular turret or flanker, three storeys in height, can be seen at the bawn's south-western angle (Pl. 2). This flanker has an internal diameter of 2.45m and was entered by a door at ground level. The interior of the tower is lit by two, small flat-headed windows and number of gun-loops can be seen in it. A fireplace can be seen at first-floor level in this tower, hinting that it had a domestic function as well as a defensive one. The remains of a T-shaped, apparently nineteenth-century house, can be seen on the eastern side of the bawn, with its façade inserted into the southern wall of the bawn. However, the remains of an arched gateway, in the centre of the bawn's east wall, appears to mark the location of the original entrance. A keystone once existed in this arch, which was dated '1597' and was inscribed with the name 'Anthony Braklon'. This stone now lies on the eastern side of the nineteenth-century house (GA088-04003-).

What date is this castle? At a general level, the rectangular bawn with its flanker could either have functioned as courtyard of a late medieval/post-medieval tower house or fortified house/stronghouse (see, for example, Cairns 1987, 16-7; Sweetman 2000, 137-98). Indeed, some late sixteenth and seventeenth-century bawns had undefended houses within them (Cairns 1987, 18). However, the occurrence of gun-loops in the flanker suggests that, architecturally, the bawn post-dates *c.*1550 and, therefore, could be later sixteenth or early to mid-seventeenth century in date (McNeill 1997, 217; Sweetman 1997, 146, 153, 163). Indeed, the plan of Ivy Castle bears considerable similarity, with its lack of visible evidence for a tower house or fortified house within it, to the bawns built by various English and Scots settlers, along with

some native Irishmen, across Connacht and Ulster in the first four decades of the seventeenth century (Sherlock, Kerrigan and O'Conor, Forthcoming). In this respect, the keystone that existed over the original gateway to the bawn, which was inscribed with the date 1597 and the name 'Anthony Braklon', is important. A New English soldier and administrator named Captain Anthony Brabazon occupied the castle during the last two decades of the sixteenth century at least (Burke 2019). The name 'Braklon' is surely a spelling of the surname Brabazon. The available historical and architectural evidence all suggests that the standing remains at Ivy Castle today were effectively built by Brabazon in the very late 1590s. The building of this fortress, during the Nine Years War, may have been carried out so as to provide defended accommodation for an English garrison guarding this important part of the Dublin/Galway road (Loeber 2019, 86).

However, it is also clear that a castle was in existence at this location by *c.*1570 at the very least, being held by the earl of Clanricarde. In 1572 Sir Nicholas Malby took over the castle for the Crown, presumably because of its important position controlling this ford over the Suck (Killanin and Duignan 1967, 118). Furthermore, in 1406 it is stated that the *Clannmhaicne Eoghan* Uí Chellaig built a castle at a place called *Áth na Stuaidhe* (*MacC*). It has been suggested that the latter place-name is in fact *Áth na Sluaidhe* or Ballinasloe (Loeber 2019, 33). Alternatively, the present writer believes *Áth na Stuaidhe* can be translated as 'The Ford of the Arches' (Toner, Ní Mhaonaigh, Arbuthnot, Theuerkauf and Wodtko (eds.) 2019 eDIL *s.v.* stúag, http://www.dil.ie/search?q=stuadh). This translation indicates that this 1406 castle was built at a ford that perhaps had an arched stone bridge over it. The principal ford in the territory of the *Clannmhaicne Eoghan* branch of the Uí Chellaig is over the Suck at Ballinasloe, as noted (see 4.2.1). Either way, given the available evidence, the castle erected in 1406 by this branch of the Uí Chellaig would appear to have been at Ballinasloe and seemingly on the site of the later Ivy Castle.

Given that the remains of this castle seem to date to the last years of the sixteenth century, what form did this 1406 Ó Cellaig castle take? As discussed already, the very first years of the fifteenth century saw an explosion of tower house building by members of the Gaelic elite like the Uí Chellaig (e.g. Cairns 1987, 9; Sherlock 2013). This is a strong hint that this castle at Ballinasloe was of this form, perhaps built over the remains of the timber castle, *Caislen Suicin*, built by the Anglo-Normans in 1245, discussed above (see also 4.2.2).

What happened to this tower house? One possibility is that the erection of the dwelling house in the south-eastern quadrant of the bawn in the early nineteenth century (this house is marked on the Ordnance Survey Six-Inch map) demolished this tower. Yet there is absolutely no antiquarian record of a tower house at this location. One possibility is that this tower house was demolished during Brabazon's rebuilding of this castle in the late 1590s. It is certainly clear that several Gaelic strongholds were taken over and completely remodelled by incoming New English settlers and officials during the very late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, perhaps in a desire to show new ownership and modernity. For example, the O'Rourke tower house at Newtown on the shores of Lough Gill, Co. Leitrim, was destroyed in the early 1620s and a bawn was established on the site. Shortly afterwards, a fortified house was built within the bawn by Captain Robert Parke and the site is now known as Parke's Castle (Foley and Donnelly 2012, 11-13). In a similar case from the same area, the principal seat of the O'Rourkes at Dromahaire is known to have been a very important late medieval site and to have had a tower house and a large hall at its heart. After the site was taken by the New English, the tower house was subsequently levelled and was replaced by a fortified house constructed by one of the Villiers family in 1628, probably William Villiers (Moore 2003, 213; Salter 2004b, 64; O'Conor and Fredengren 2019, 82-84). Again, the castle of Castlederg in west County Tyrone provides further evidence for the takeover and complete remodelling of Gaelic strongholds by settlers in the early-seventeenth century. A bawn, measuring 34m by 30m, which originally had four square flankers attached and a house within, was built by Sir John Davies *c.*1615 (Salter 2004a, 66). During excavations undertaken by Conor Newman in 1991, the foundations of a tower house were found in the centre of the bawn and, indeed, the plantation bawn appears to have incorporated parts of the earlier bawn associated with the tower (Newman 1992). Arguably, on analogy with these sites, the possible Ó Cellaig tower house at Ballinasloe was demolished by Captain Brabazon in the late 1590s. No indication of earlier work can be seen in the standing remains of the bawn today but, saying that, much of this enclosure is covered with ivy, making it difficult to analyse. Certainly, any future architectural study of the bawn should take special care to see if earlier work can be detected in it. Furthermore, as the potential site of the Anglo-Norman *Caislen Suicin* and an early fifteenth-century Ó Cellaig tower house, any future excavation of this late sixteenth-century bawn should take this into account.

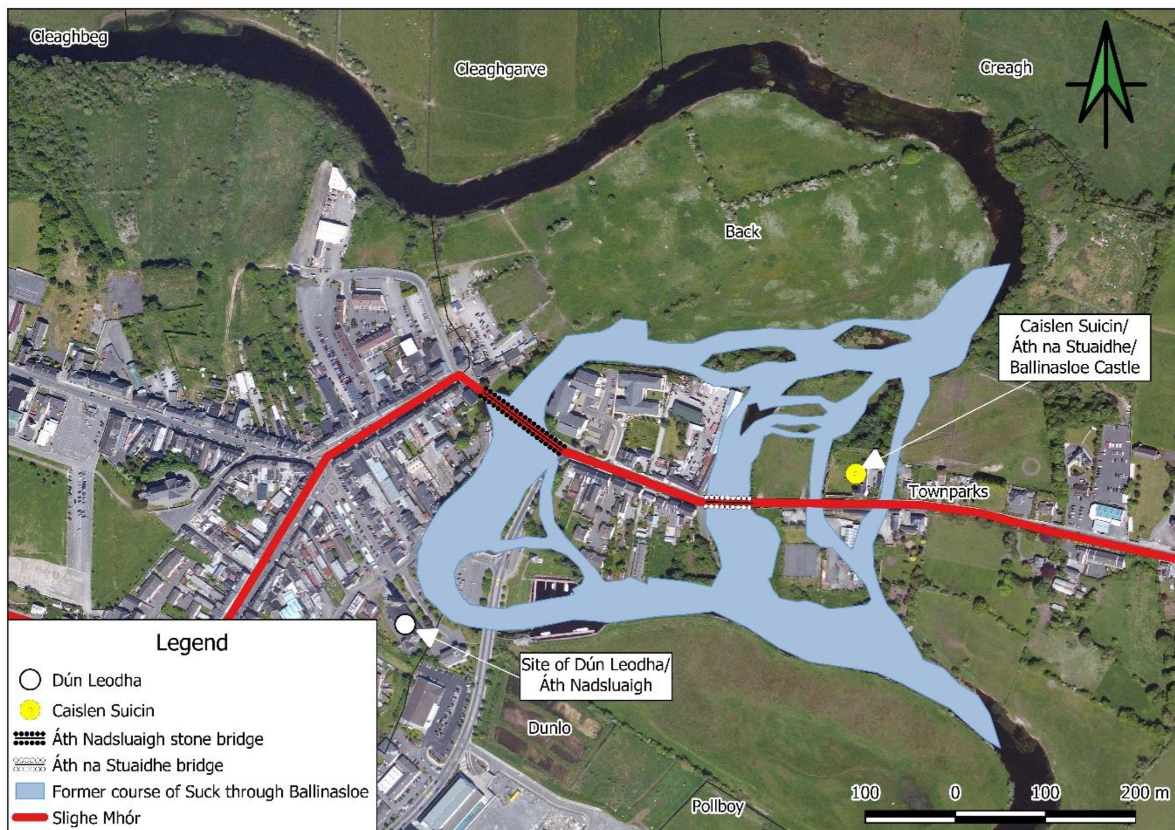

Figure 3 – Reconstruction of former, much more extensive, course of the River Suck at Ballinasloe in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the proposed locations of caistél Dún Leodha and Caislen Suicin. Note also the hurdle-related place-names located to the north of the modern town (Base aerial image: Bing Maps).

Plate 2 – Bawn wall of the castle (Caislen Suicin) *on the eastern bank of the River Suck at Ballinasloe, viewed from the west. Note the repaired wall on the extreme right of the image, and the partially filled remains of a wet ditch on its western side. (Author's photograph)*

As can be seen from the above accounts of both *Dún Leodha/Áth Nadsluaigh* and *Caislen Suicin/Áth na Stuaidhe/*Ballinasloe or Ivy Castle, for at least nine hundred years, this ford across the River Suck has served as a location of vital importance for the transit from the east of the island of Ireland, through to the lands west of the river. It has been demonstrated that this ford has served as a key strategic point from at least as early as the early medieval period, and continued to possess this prominent role after Anglo-Norman ambitions looked west across the Shannon. The historical sources, toponymy and archaeological remains all indicate that control of this ford was of paramount importance to all who sought authority in this area. It is also interesting to note that there is no evidence of any member of the senior Ó Cellaig line using *Áth Nadsluaigh* itself as a *cenn áit*. Instead, the cadet branch of the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* Uí Chellaig resided in this region, and most likely performed an important role for their kin and overlords in controlling this well-travelled and militarily important ford across the Suck at Ballinasloe.

The Cultural Landscape of the **Áth Nadsluaigh cenn áit**

This bottleneck for overland, and undoubtedly riverine, traffic in modern east Galway allowed for the settlement of *Áth Nadsluaigh* to develop through the later medieval period. This presumably busy settlement would have been of considerable economic value to the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain*, and through tribute and tax, their overlords, the Uí Chellaig. One of the physical manifestations of this economic activity may be consistent the settlement being a location of seasonal gathering and fair activity, the evidence for which will be inspected further presently.

The Fair of **Áth Nadsluaigh***, Co. Galway*

In terms of the possible credentials of *Áth Nadsluaigh* as a setting for regular assembly and fair activity in Uí Maine, one obvious but problematic piece of evidence is the place which the modern Ballinasloe Horse Fair may hold in matters. The annual Ballinasloe Horse Fair, which takes place at the very end of September or early October, is generally accepted as being in existence as a significant regional livestock fair since at least 1757 (Miscellanea 1893, 88), or even 1716 (Smith 1846, 166, note 16). The significance of this fair to eighteenth and nineteenth century Connacht is highlighted by both Gabriel Beranger (published in 1870 by William Wilde) and Samuel Lewis, who describe the huge distances travelled by farmers to bring their livestock and produce to be traded at the fair of Ballinasloe (Wilde (ed.) 1870, 258; Lewis 1837, 480).

It may be possible that this Ballinasloe Fair may have had much earlier origins than what has been traditionally accepted for it. The role of the patron saint of the Uí Maine, St. Grellan, is important in this regard. St. Grellan is regarded as assisted the migrating Uí Maine when they came to establish themselves in eastern Connacht in the fifth century (Ó Riain 2016, 369-71), and he is immortalised in the local townland name of Tobergrellan – *Tobar Grealláin* (Grellan's Well). Grellan continued to retain an importance for the Uí Maine and the Uí Chellaig into the later medieval period, with the *screaball* or traditional tribute that is provided to his ecclesiastical descendent (*Nósa*, 538-9), as well as the use of his crozier, surviving to the nineteenth century but now lost, as a battle standard for the Uí Maine in times of war (*Nósa*, 538-9; Ó Riain 2016, 370)

St. Grellan's accepted feast day is the 10th November. However, O'Donovan records in his Ordnance Survey Letters for Galway that a 'pattern' or patron day was also celebrated for Grellan at Tobergrellan on the 29th September annually (*OS Letters, Galway*, 124). This

conforms to the well-established starting dates for the Ballinasloe Fair. If the two events are linked, then it can be argued that this annual fair must be of considerable antiquity, possibly at least religiously connected with St. Grellan in the early medieval period. MacNeill highlights other instances in Ireland where *aénaige* or seasonal festivities/assemblies have taken place both in the vicinity of lakes, rivers and at holy wells (MacNeill 2008, 67, 243-59, 260-86), increasing the likelihood that such an assembly or gathering could be accorded for *Áth Nadsluaigh* also.

The presence of a substantial open area in the townland of Townparks, within the limits of the modern town, the Fair Green of Ballinasloe, may also be a fixed and long-standing public space in close vicinity to the secular centre of *Áth Nadsluaigh*, and the *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* lordly centres located on either side of the river crossing.

In concluding the discussion on the credentials of *Áth Nadsluaigh* as a candidate assembly site of some antiquity in the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine, we have evidence derived from continued practice, an extant physical space devoted to fair and market activity, and a rationale for theorising that the current dates of the convention of the gathering are consistent with the feast day of an important local early medieval patron saint to the region. More than this, the place-name *Áth Nadsluaigh*, first recorded in the late-thirteenth century, explicitly indicates that the location was synonymous with routine gatherings of people, as a result of the natural landscape, and the organic transportation routes these produced for the past societies that resided in this environment. All in all, there is a very strong likelihood that *Áth Nadsluaigh* held an important place within the Ó Cellaig lordship as an annual regional fair during the later medieval period, a gathering that in its significance, has continued to operate in some form up to present day.

Summary of the **Áth Nadsluaigh cenn áit** *of the* **Clannmhaicne Eoghain Uí Chellaig**

This case study, in interrogating the material which survives, has been able to provide insights on one of the most important focal points in the eastern Connacht landscape, *Áth Nadsluaigh*. This important ford on the River Suck is carefully named, and control of this ford seems to have been a preoccupation for all who sought to control the region at large. Elite settlement within this environment has understandably gravitated to the ford itself, and successive generations of political players have been demonstrated to have established and occupied fortifications in the shadow of the intersection between waterway and overland routeway. The settlement archaeology of this case study area has highlighted the continued use of a ringfort as a historically-attested Gaelic elite residence of the thirteenth century at Ashford. The other

attested Gaelic *longport* at *Áth Nadsluaigh* is likely to correspond with the occupation of the *caistél* fortification originally constructed at *Dún Leodha* in the mid-twelfth century (see 4.2.1). Finally, the location of the thirteenth century Anglo-Norman baronial castle of *Caislen Suicin* has been identified with the teardrop-shaped island located on the eastern bank of the River Suck, and may have been an earth and timber castle (see 4.2.2). However, the surviving archaeological evidence is much later in date, and manifests as a late sixteenth century bawn with a presumed undefended house within, which was constructed by the New English settler Anthony Brabazon. In doing so, Brabazon may have dismantled and remodelled the fortification out of an early fifteenth century *Clannmhaicne Eoghain* Ó Cellaig constructed tower house and bawn complex known as *Áth na Stuaidhe*.

Áth Nadsluaigh seems also to have occupied a central role as a place of gathering in the medieval past, possibly connected with both the prominent local early medieval patron saint, and evident as the modern survival of a significant regional fair at this site. As a result, being able to understand something of the medieval character of *Áth Nadsluaigh*, it being the most substantial modern settlement in the entire study area, is a crucial advance in our knowledge of the lordship as a whole.

Appendix 5 – *The Inauguration of the Uí Chellaig*

Research into the archaeology of assembly practices of early medieval and medieval Ireland has, up until relatively recently, been primarily focussed on the study of Gaelic inauguration (Gleeson 2018, 100). Earlier chapters of this research have identified and interpreted the assembly landscapes of later medieval Tír Maine and Uí Maine, however, we must now consider this candidate inauguration landscape of the Uí Chellaig, an understudied, and little understood aspect of this later medieval Gaelic lordship.

***The Case of the Two* Cluain Tuaiscirt**

Two places are routinely posited for the inauguration place of the Uí Chellaig, *Cluain Tuaiscirt na Sinna* (regarded as Cloontuskert Priory of Augustinian Arroasian Canons Regular, Ballintober South Barony, Co. Roscommon) and *Cluain Tuaiscirt Omany* (Priory of St Mary Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Abbeypark townland, Clonmacnowen Barony, Co. Galway). Various authors have based their conclusions on the inauguration practices of the Uí Chellaig dependent upon their identification of the venue being either one or the other *Cluain Tuaiscirt* (Ó Riain 1972, 24; 1974, 67; FitzPatrick 2003, 77; 2004, 174, 227, 229), meaning that one or other of the two sites is incorrectly identified as an inauguration site.

Therefore, in order to be able to investigate the nature of inauguration practice in this later medieval lordship, we must first clarify the site that needs to be inspected. To begin with, the original source indicating *Cluain Tuaiscirt* to be an Ó Cellaig venue of inauguration must be considered in detail. *Nósa Ua Maine* records the following:

> 'The generous Clann Dhíarmada and the Uí Chormaic of Máenmag and Muinter Mithigean, that is, the coarb of Clúan Túaiscert on the Shannon, are in charge of their enthroning and deposing for the Uí Mhaine.' (*Nósa*, 545)

This singular reference is the only contemporary medieval mention of a place of inauguration for the Uí Maine, however, as we are beginning to see, it is fraught with a difficulty of identification. There has been a traditional acceptance by many scholars, following O'Donovan, that *Clúana Tuaiscert na Sinna* was the Priory of Augustinian Arroasian Canons Regular at Cloontuskert, Co. Roscommon, located as it is in very close proximity to the shore of Lough Ree, and the River Shannon (*OS Letters, Roscommon*, 31).

This identification has been accepted by both Ó Riain (1972, 24; 1974, 67) and FitzPatrick (2003, 77; 2004, 174, 227, 229), and from a place-name perspective, it would seem to be the

correct conclusion. However, there is evidence to support the other *Clúain Tuaiscirt* actually being the Ó Cellaig inauguration site. Examining the evidence to support the alternative location, one must return to O'Donovan. His letter to the Ordnance Survey of Ireland during his work in County Galway on the 25th October 1838 shows him correcting an error he noted from his previous letter. When writing 'Of the Parish of Cluain Tuaiscirt', he provides two arguments for the Galway site being the inauguration place of the Uí Chellaig. Firstly, the fact that Cloontuskert Priory, Co. Roscommon was not within the territory of the Uí Chellaig led O'Donovan to cast doubt over its use as their inauguration venue. Secondly, he tackled the issue of the descriptor applied to the end of the place-name '*na Sinna* – of the Shannon'. O'Donovan cited another instance in the tract on Uí Maine preserved in the Book of Lecan where a place-name contained the descriptor '*na Sinna*', in this case *Calad Sinna* [Callow of the Shannon] (*OS Letters*, *Galway*, 151-5). *Calad* – Callow, is identifiable with Callow Lough, Co. Galway (see 5.3). Despite the sobriquet attached to both sites being at a geographical remove from the River Shannon itself, it is clear that they were actually located within the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine, as opposed to being outside the lordship, and thus outside of the Ó Cellaig sphere of influence, as in the case of the Roscommon candidate. It is this identification of Clontuskert, Co. Galway, which O'Donovan settled on as the inauguration site when it came to his 1843 study of Uí Maine and Ó Cellaig (*Tribes and Customs*, 79, 91).

The Inaugurator of the Uí Chellaig

Moving beyond O'Donovan's argument in favour of the Galway site, further evidence in favour of the inauguration venue being St. Mary's Priory of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine can be gathered from the identity of the inaugurators themselves. The three listed lineages are the Clann Dhíarmada, the Uí Chormaic of Máenmag, and the Muinter Mithigean.

The Clann Dhíarmada are identifiable with the Uí Diarmada, one of the dynastic groups of the Soghain, whose territory in the thirteenth century was consistent with the parishes of Moylough, Killarerin and Aghiart (now part of Ballynakill civil parish), Co. Galway (Nicholls 1972, 121). From this kin-group are derived the Meic Aodhagáin, traditional chiefs of Uí Diarmada (*Tribes and Customs*, 75) until they became *ollamhain*, or chief legal family, to the Uí Chellaig (P.A. Breatnach 1983, 63-4) at some point in the later medieval period (see 5.4.3.1). Another learned family of the Soghain, the Meic an Bhaird (Mannion 2006, 168), were, by association, also one of the Uí Diarmada, and the 1408 reference confirms that members of the

former sept served in the role of *ollamh* to the Uí Chellaig and Uí Maine at that time (*AFM*; *ALC*; Mac Cana 1974, 129).

From evidence of Gaelic inauguration practices in medieval Ireland more generally, it is clear that the inaugurator is routinely either the hereditary *ollamh* to the lord, a *comharba*, or in some cases the lord’s chief vassal (FitzPatrick 2004, 11). As has been demonstrated, the role of *ollamh* to the Uí Chellaig was held by members of the Uí Diarmada families of the Meic an Bhaird and the Meic Aodhagáin at different points in the later medieval period. That these families originated in what is now Co. Galway, and were located in much closer proximity to Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine than to Cloontuskert Priory of Augustinian Arroasian Canons Regular, helps to argue for the former being a more realistic venue of inauguration of the Uí Chellaig as a result.

The next familial group mentioned in association with the inauguration of the Uí Chellaig are the Uí Chormaic of Máenmag. The Uí Chormaic were a dynastic family originally related to the Uí Maine, judging from their pedigree (*Tribes and Customs*, 37, 76-7). *Máenmaige*, as we have seen, is identifiable with the later barony of Loughrea (see 2.2), a territory that in the later medieval period was not under the authority of the Uí Chellaig, indicating that the crafter of *Nósa Ua Maine* was attempting to promote a pre-1169 version of Ó Cellaig or Uí Maine history. This was achieved by ignoring the more recent Anglo-Norman presence and dominance in this and other districts.

The final group which the *Nósa Ua Maine* associates with inaugurating the Uí Chellaig is the Muinter Mithigean. The ‘Muinter Mithigean’, referred to as the *comharba* of Cluain Tuaiscirt, are identifiable with the Ó Miadhacháin ecclesiastical kindreds. Anglicised as O’Meehin or Meehin, not Meehan, the west Bréifne surname that it is sometimes confused with, the Ó Miadhacháin are difficult to pinpoint in the historical record. However, a series of Papal Registers relating to the diocese of Clonfert indicate that the family held clerical roles at parishes in the diocese of Clonfert and adjacent dioceses, from the late-fourteenth to the early-sixteenth century. Examples of members of the Ó Miadhacháin in these roles can be seen with positions in churches at Kilconickny [before 1398], Killaloe [1401], Tuam [1447], Tiranascragh [1466-7] Clonkeen [before 1487] and Kilmore [1506] (*Clonfert*, 19, 26, 85, 141, 177, 270). In other words, this sept were also located in the vicinity of Clontuskert, Co. Galway.

Interrogation of this stanza of the *Nósa Ua Maine* enables us to consider the identities of what the literary work indicates were the likely principal or routine inaugurators of the Ó Cellaig

lords. All three family groups were located in or near the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine during the later medieval period, as opposed to Tír Maine or Machaire Connacht. Collating the outlined evidence then, this writer believes that there is enough now to argue for the historically-attested *Clúain Tuaiscirt* being identifiable with *Cluain Tuaiscirt Omany*, or the Priory of St Mary Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Clonmacnowen Barony, Co. Galway.

There is also evidence to suggest that Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine served as a location around which other learned kindreds attached to the Uí Maine could be found. As seen already, the Uí Chobhtaigh have been speculatively placed near the Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* of Athleague and Lough Croan (see 4.7), but there is also evidence that a branch of these poets may have been positioned near Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine. Immediately to the north of Abbeypark townland is the landholding known as Kellysgrove. However, in the later medieval period, this townland was known as *Tuaim Cátraige*, and in the seventeenth century, members of the Ó Cobhtaigh were in residence here (*Tribes and Customs*, 39-40; R.A. Breatnach 1967, 82). The presence of this kindred in the vicinity of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine may have been significant. *Nósa Ua Maine* also refers to this district:

> 'Every task and act of bestowing which he will need, they are to be undertaken by the Catraige Suca provided they are not deprived of their responsibility' (*Nósa*, 547).

Also, to the south of Abbeypark, the two townlands of Atticoffey West and East, *Áit Tí Cofaigh* – 'the place of the house of Ó Cobhtaigh' carry on the possibility that a significant landholding of the Ó Cobhtaigh poets once existed around the religious foundation.

Plate 1 – Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Co. Galway, and the traditional inauguration place of the Uí Chellaig, the natural hillock immediately to its east (Author's photograph)

The Ó Cellaig Venue of Inauguration

Now that this has been established, the possible setting for an inauguration at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine must be considered. The religious foundation at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine itself is a house of the Augustinian Canons Regular, deemed to have been founded in the late-twelfth century, possibly replacing an early medieval monastic site associated with St. Baetan (Fanning 1976, 97, 100). Upon the acquisition of this collection of monuments by the Office of Public Works in 1970, they were subjected to a four-month programme of excavation and restoration in 1971, published in 1976 (Fanning 1976). This work, as well as the research of other scholars (Egan 1946; Smith 2014; Molloy 2009, 49-80) goes into much greater detail on this site than what will be undertaken in this section, as the focus here concerns Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine as a place of Ó Cellaig inauguration.

However, in order to properly understand the viability of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine as a place of inauguration, we must first establish the explicit links between the Uí Chellaig and this religious house. One of the first records of the sobriquet of Cluain Tuaiscirt 'O Máine' is found in a Papal Petition of 1379 (*Clonfert*, 283; Molloy 2009, 52), a reference that would be broadly contemporaneous with the scribing of the *Nósa Ua Maine* (Ní Mhaonaigh 2000, 367-8).

The year 1404 saw Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine 'burned by lightning' (*MacC*), an unfortunate incident which likely resulted in a major rebuilding of the priory through the fifteenth century (Fanning 1976, 102). Moving then into the fifteenth century and beyond, the wealth of the priory can be seen increasing thanks to the evidence surviving from the Papal Letters, a growth that was matched by the development, and eventual supremacy, of Ó Cellaig patronage and monopoly over the priory (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, 165; Fanning 1976, 102-3; see, also, 3.5.5). Judging from these historical entries from the fourteenth century onwards, it can be confidently deduced that Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine served as religious foundation of some importance to the Uí Chellaig from at least as early that century.

But what of the possible venue chosen for the inauguration ceremony itself? The association of the church with the performance of medieval Gaelic inauguration rites is a topic explored at length by FitzPatrick in her monograph on the matter (FitzPatrick 2004, 173-93). FitzPatrick concluded that it is likely that in the majority of cases, the church became associated with the secular king-making site, as opposed to the ceremonial site developing because of a proximity to the church (FitzPatrick 2004, 193).

The inauguration venues cited which resulted in this conclusion share some similarities to, as well as some differences from, Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, in terms of direct proximity to the religious house and/or the lordly centre. In the case of the Ó Domhnaill inauguration venues of Kilmacrenan and *Carraig an Dúin*, there is a distance of *c.*3.2km between the religious house and the inauguration site (FitzPatrick 2004, 190). This may imply that *Carraig an Dúin* was an inauguration venue for the Uí Domhnaill of longstanding, with the addition of the Kilmacrenan associations potentially occurring at some point in the later medieval period, as a means of Christianising the event.

One of the other cited occasions of inauguration at an ecclesiastical foundation was the enkinging of Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair at *Áth an Tearmainn* in 1106. It has been suggested to have taken place close to the church of Assylin – *Eas Uí Fhloinn* in the Mac Diarmada territory of Maigh Luirg. This ceremony does not portray any deliberate action relating to a physical or prehistoric feature in the surrounding landscape, apart from a holy well, and seems to have been a singular event (FitzPatrick 2004, 180). More than this, the inauguration did not take place within the patrimonial lands of the Uí Chonchobair, Machaire Connacht, never mind a lordly centre attached to Toirrdelbach or his kin. As a result, this instance of a church-sited inauguration could be argued to have been an anomaly based upon a pressing need to get Toirrdelbach inaugurated, as opposed to any strong links with the church.

All of this raises questions regarding both the longevity of use of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine as a traditional venue of inauguration for the Uí Chellaig, and also, what form and where this rite took place. As stated above, this religious house was likely established in the late-twelfth century. Its foundation is broadly contemporaneous with the migration of the Uí Chellaig from their ancestral lands of Tír Maine into the *trícha cét* of Uí Maine. Perhaps it is at this moment in time that Cluain Tuascirt O Máine became a place of inauguration for the Uí Chellaig? Prior to the establishment of the religious house, or its monastic precursor, the most notable feature of this landscape was the natural hillock, which provided commanding views over Uí Maine and the southern parts of Tír Maine. As well as this, Cluain Tuascirt O Máine is close, 3.4km to the northwest, of the territorial boundary with the *trícha cét* of the Síl Anmchadha, with borderlands such as this offering a routine location for a venue of assembly and inauguration in medieval Ireland (as seen previously at Portrunny, see 6.3.3.4).

As a result, the grounds of the church at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine are not seen as the accepted location for this activity. Rather, it is the substantial natural hillock located 200m east of the priory that has been seen by some scholars as the Ó Cellaig inauguration place (e.g. Anon. 1892, 4; Fanning 1976, 100; Molloy 2009, 50; Pl. 2).

Plate 2 – The natural hillock, 200m east of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine. Measuring c.*95m N-S by* c.*60m E-W, with an elevation of* c.*4m above the surrounding countryside, Note the very superficial feature located on the summit of the natural hillock (Author's photograph)*

This natural plateau hillock, which measures *c.*95m north/south by *c.*60m east/west at its base and *c.*60m north/south by *c.*37m east/west across its summit, being 50m OD, has an elevation of *c.*8m above the surrounding fields (Fig. 1). The mound strikes an imposing figure over the eastern approach to Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, and serves as a very persuasive candidate for being an inauguration venue. Standing on the summit of the hillock, extensive views over the wider landscape can be had in all directions, despite it being so low lying.

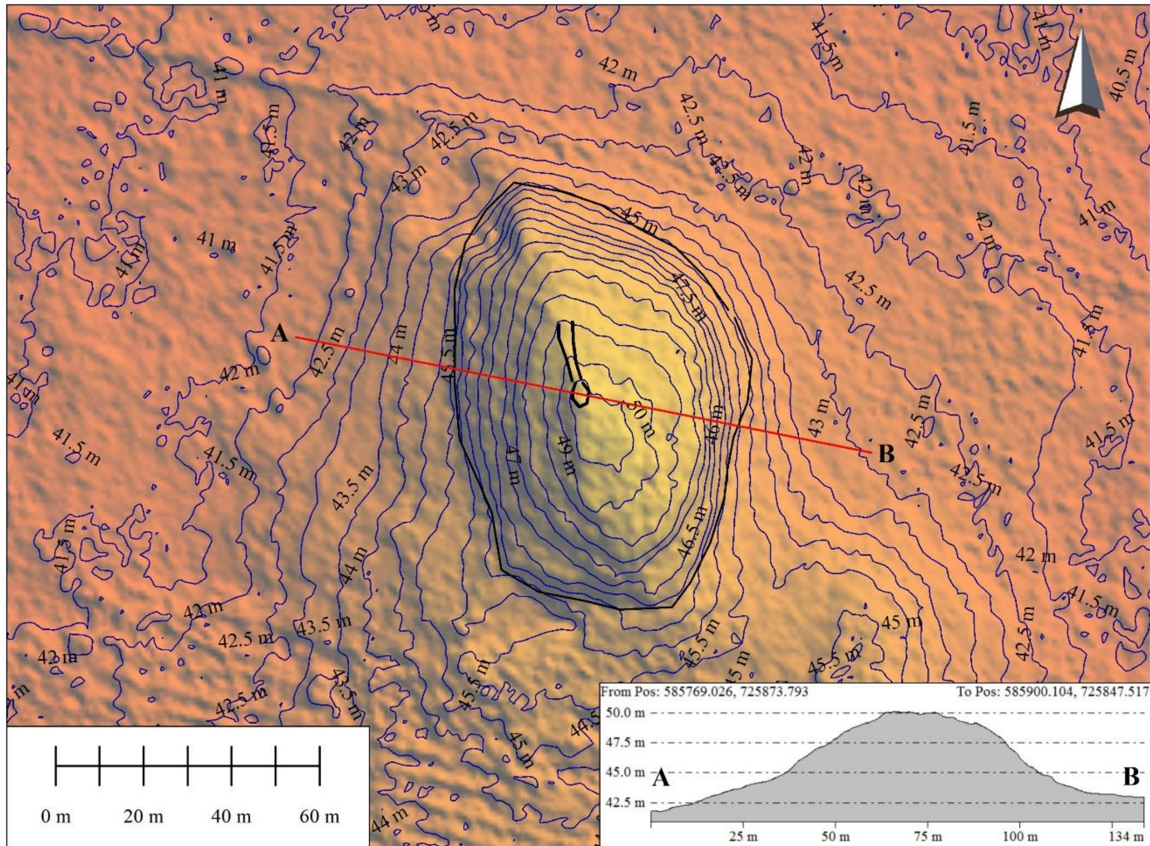

Figure 1 – Contoured topographical plan and cross-section of the natural mound adjacent to the east of Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Co. Galway. The low relief earthen features are mapped on the summit of the mound, being too subtle to have been picked up by the photogrammetric survey equipment (Data source: Bluesky Ltd.)

The case for this natural mound being used at some point in the past is strengthened by a series of low-relief earthen features located on its summit, which gives the appearance of being man-made (Fig. 1). This includes a low mound which is located roughly centrally on the hillock summit, which bears some resemblance to the low mound, categorised as a ditch-barrow (RO022-057011-), located on the summit of Rathcroghan Mound, Co. Roscommon (FitzPatrick 2004, 81-2; Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009, 156-7, 176-7, 195). This 0.5m high mound measures 5m north/south by 4m east/west, and is surrounded by quantities of loose and groundfast stone. This is located on the highest point of the mound. Excellent views over the natural hillock and the surrounding area can be had from the summit of this low artificial mound. Another feature survives on the summit of this natural rise, which seems to be connected to the low mound. This comes in the form of a slightly raised linear bank, running north away from the low mound. Measuring *c.*11m in length, on average 2m wide and less than 0.5m in height, this low embankment seems to serve as a possible path or the degraded remains of an earthen bank leading to or demarcating the summit in some way.

The presence of these features led the present writer to investigate the summit of the mound at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine with the aid of a remote sensing investigation. Initially, a 2.2km² area of elevation data was acquired in order to create a topographical plan of the area surrounding both the priory and the mound at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine (see Fig. 1; 2).

Plate 3 – Magnetic gradiometry survey being conducted on the summit of the mound at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine (Photograph courtesy of Joseph Fenwick, NUI Galway)

Due to the presence of the low-relief features on the summit of the mound, it was decided to conduct a magnetic gradiometry survey, in order to ascertain if these features are archaeological in character. This survey was carried out on a 0.5m line spacing, with 0.25m sampling along each line. The instrument used was a Bartington Grad 601-2 Magnetic Gradiometer, and a total area of 40m x 40m (1,600m²) was investigated over the summit of the hillock (Pl. 3).

This uncovered the main extents of a hitherto unknown, more-or-less circular anomaly, which measures *c.*36m north/south and *c.*33m east/west, located to the south and centre of the mound (Fig. 2). This anomaly is composed of a positive magnetic ring, the line of which is about 1.5m in width along much of its course. When the survey is overlaid on the DEM, this combination completes the dimensions of the anomaly to the south of the survey. There is a possible entrance into the enclosure, consistent with a break in the enclosure on its western side.

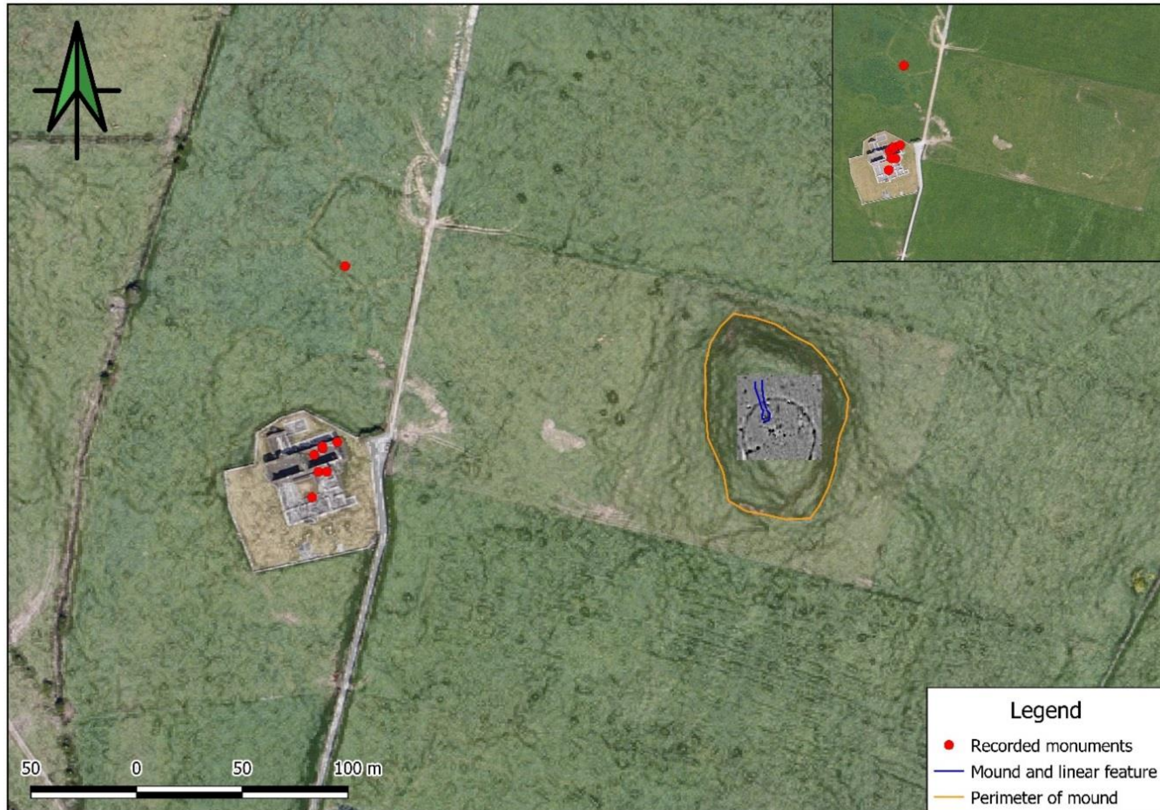

Figure 2 – Magnetic gradiometry survey of the mound at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, Co. Galway. This survey image is draped over the DEM, with the perimeter of the mound and the earthwork features on the summit. The anomaly continues to the south of the surveyed area, completing the circular feature (Data source: Bluesky Ltd).

The western edge of this ring contains two pit-like anomalies, while a faint curved anomaly seems to undercut the northern end of the ring also, continuing towards the interior. The interior of the enclosure retains the faint remains of a second small enclosure, centrally placed on the summit of the mound, measuring 12.5m in diameter. As well as this, a third circular anomaly (*c.*7m diameter) was uncovered near the eastern edge of the larger enclosure. Finally, some isolated positive magnetic points are also evident in the survey image, including a cluster of points within the area of the small mound, which may represent deposits of ferrous material (Fig. 3).

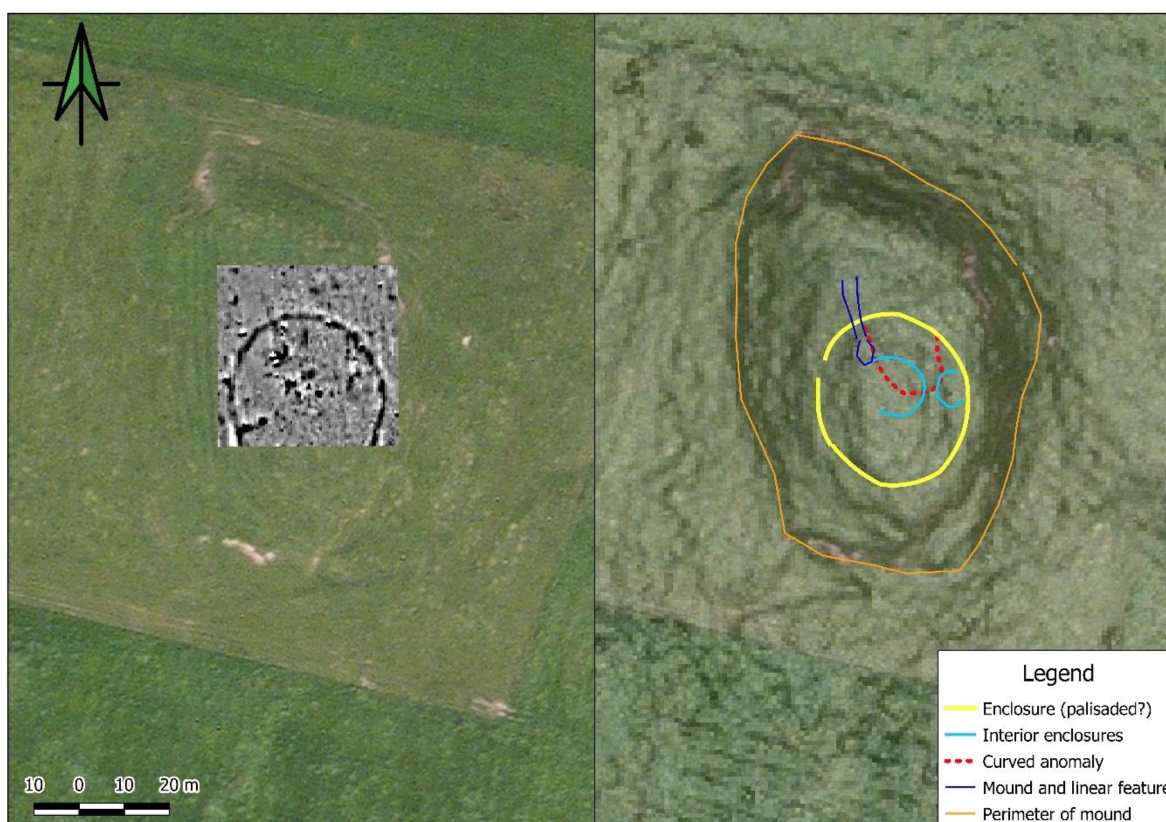

Figure 3 – Closer look at the magnetic gradiometry survey [left] and the present writer's interpretation of the survey [right] (Topographical data source: Bluesky Ltd).

The outer enclosure may represent a trench for a circular palisaded enclosure, while the series of anomalies uncovered from the magnetic gradiometry suggest the former presence of structures in the interior of the site. It's location on the summit of the mound leaves it quite exposed, therefore it is highly unlikely that this structure corresponds with a settlement site. There is also an absence of anomalies from the survey area that would correspond with industrial activity.

Based on the available evidence, the present writer believes that the uncovered monument is best described as a hilltop enclosure. A substantial timber enclosure may have topped this prominent natural mound, surrounded as it is by a generally low-lying and flat local terrain. This enclosure contained at least two small structures, which may or may not have possessed a role linked to ritual activity. The pair of structures within the outer enclosure may be identifiable as a figure-of-eight monument, an arrangement which is thought to be very significant in late Iron Age/early medieval contexts elsewhere on the island, possibly indicative of a temple architecture for the period (Gleeson 2020, 74-5). Local comparison can also be made between this feature and the larger figure-of-eight monument which underserves the medieval church site and enclosure in Carns townland, Co. Roscommon. Interestingly, the

figure-of-eight monument at Carns is part of a complex of archaeology that is ceremonially dominated by the Ó Conchobair inauguration mound of Carnfree. McNeary and Shanahan suggest that the prehistoric ritual monument, also uncovered through the application of a magnetic gradiometry survey, was linked to assembly, and may have been the motive behind why the Uí Chonchobair chose Carnfree as their primary venue of inauguration in the later medieval period (McNeary and Shanahan 2009, 129-30).

The same reasoning could also be brought to bear at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, in that the prominence is topped by a substantial enclosure, within which is located a figure-of-eight enclosure. This may point towards the hillock being a focal point of prehistoric assembly. The presence of this pre-Christian monument could in turn be the reason why an early medieval religious foundation was established, in much the same way as the church site and enclosure was placed over the figure-of-eight monument at Carns.

The low mound on the summit of the hillock at Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine seems to have been inserted later than the activity uncovered through the remote sensing survey, and its morphology and siting compares readily to a number of presumed and identifiable later medieval Gaelic inauguration sites, where a prominence is topped with a, possibly later, small mound or 'throne mound'. This is seen at Coggins' Hill at Aughris, Co. Sligo, identifiable as *Carn Inghine Briain*, one of the inauguration places of the Ó Dubhda of Tír Fiachrach (FitzPatrick 2004, 76-8), while similar features are noted at Rathcroghan Mound and the possible Meic Diarmada inauguration venue of Knockadoobrusna or *Dumha Brosnach*, both Co. Roscommon. Furthermore, at Cornashee, Co. Fermanagh, the earthen mound of *Sgiath Gabhra*, the inauguration place of the Méig Uidhir chiefs of Fir Mhanach, retains a low cairn on its summit, which, like the other sites, presents with wide-ranging views over the countryside (*Ibid.*, 81-7). In all cases, this additional tier may have been erected in the later medieval period in order that the chief-elect could stand on it during the inauguration ceremony. It is possible that the remembrance of the presumably important pre-Christian monument on the hillock adjacent to Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine led to what seems to be the later insertion of the low summit mound at this site, as part of a modification designed to establish this location as the venue of inauguration for the later medieval Uí Chellaig.

Summary of the Ó Cellaig Inauguration Venue at **Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine**

Armed with the surviving remains, the present writer can confidently state that there is archaeology located on the summit of this mound, possibly consisting of a prehistoric or early

historic ritual monument, while, through analogy with other sites, the low mound and degraded avenue may have been placed on the summit during the later medieval period. The present writer argues that this mound was the location of an important late Iron Age/early medieval ritual monument in the locale, the remembrance of which resulted in the survival of its significance into the later medieval period. This remembrance then led to the establishment, or re-establishment, of the hillock as a focal point for Ó Cellaig assembly and inauguration ceremonies, a survival that is attested in the fourteenth-century *Nósa Ua Maine*.

Appendix 6 – The Heritage and Heritage Tourism Potential of the Uí Maine Lordship: Feasibility Study

Due to the nature of the Irish Research Council Employment-Based Postgraduate Scholarship awarded to the present writer, one of the objectives of this archaeological research has been to link the more fully understood heritage of the study area with sustainable tourism outcomes. This objective was arrived at due to the present writer's employment as the manager of a community-established and maintained social enterprise, whose purpose is to be the interpretive resource for an internationally significant archaeological landscape. It is hoped that the experience garnered from seven years attempting to develop employment and economic activity through promoting cultural heritage in a rural environment can be used as a case study in best practice for other areas with similar attributes.

The present writer intends to use the research carried out in this thesis as a key initiator in the development of rural tourism initiatives in the south Roscommon/east Galway region, one that has historically been identified as deficient in terms of harnessing its tourism potential. Through the present writer's experience of working in a similar area of high rural tourism potential, the present writer will attempt to identify outputs that can serve as templates for similar projects in the research area, with themes including but not exclusive to archaeological, historical and heritage tourism, outdoor and walking tourism and genealogy.

To begin with, it has been deemed fruitful to summarise the nature of the community tourism social enterprise which serves as the candidate's employment hub.

Tulsk Action Group CLG – Rathcroghan Visitor Centre

Rathcroghan Visitor Centre, Tulsk, Castlerea, County Roscommon, opened in 1999 as a community-run interpretive experience and resource hub for the Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape. Rathcroghan is one of a number of provincial prehistoric royal sites in Ireland. It is traditionally seen as the symbolic capital of Connacht and the site of great communal gatherings or *aénaige* (Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009, 197-223 for a detailed summary). It is also currently part of a serial nomination for inclusion as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS), under the heading 'Royal Sites of Ireland', a group which consists of Navan Fort, Co. Armagh (*Emain Macha*), Knockaulin, Co. Kildare (*Dún Ailinne*), the Rock of Cashel, Co. Tipperary, the Hill of Tara, Co. Meath, and the Hill of Uisneach, Co. Westmeath.

To gain a full understanding of the Rathcroghan landscape involves interacting with two intertwined elements. On the one hand, Rathcroghan is the location of a vast array of archaeological monuments, ranging in date from the Neolithic to the later medieval period, with the Iron Age (*c.*500BC – *c.*400AD) serving as a period of particular focus (*Ibid*, 198-213). Each period is represented in the archaeological record at Rathcroghan, and includes funerary monuments, settlement sites, ritual enclosures, ceremonial linear embankments, and even a reputed entrance to the Irish 'Otherworld'. The significance of this multi-period landscape does not diminish into the high and late medieval, witnessed by the vast expanse of pre-modern field boundaries which cover the plain, while in the wider region of *Machaire Connacht*, archaeological remains at Cloonfree, Tulsk, Ardakillin, Ogulla, Carns, Ballintober and Roscommon among others bear testament to a continued societal interaction with the fringes of this symbolic capital into the early modern period at least.

On the other hand, there is the Rathcroghan that is attested to in the manuscript tradition. Rathcroghan is often referred to as *Cruachan Aí* in the literary and historical sources, where it also serves as a central location for an extensive corpus of medieval Irish epic literature. For instance, Rathcroghan and Carnfree are central locations in the Finn Cycle tale *Acallam na Senórach* (Dooley and Roe 1999). Chief among these medieval tales, which in some cases may hold veiled ancestral truths on the use of many of these monuments in the prehistoric period, is the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, or Cattle Raid of Cooley (Kinsella (trans.) 2002; Carson (trans.) 2009). The epic literature provides Rathcroghan as the location and residence of the great warrior Queen Medb of Connacht, and setting for a number of the stories that comprise what is known as the Ulster Cycle. The combination of these two elements, archaeology and mythology, served as the inspiration for the community project which came to fruition in 1999.

The Rathcroghan landscape consists of over 240 visible archaeological sites, 60 of which are recorded as National Monuments. These monuments are scattered over a landscape of approximately 6.5 square kilometres. The interpretation of this landscape presents a challenge for Rathcroghan Visitor Centre in Tulsk village, which is located some 4km from the core area of the landscape.

When the Centre opened in 1999, the display relied heavily on the presentation of material from traditional archaeological and historical academic sources. These included work in the 1980s published by such scholars as Mary Gormley (Gormley 1989), Michael Herity (Herity 1983; 1984; 1987; 1988) and John Waddell (Waddell 1983; 1988).

The only scientific archaeological excavation to have taken place at Rathcroghan to date was a test excavation undertaken by Waddell on a monument known as Dathí's Mound (Waddell 1988).

The traditional source material presented in the display was supplemented by the results from the ArchaeoGeophysical Imaging Project (AGIP), the Republic of Ireland's first large-scale, multi-method archaeological remote sensing survey, which commenced in 1994. The project, undertaken by the National University of Ireland, Galway with Heritage Council funding, carried out a programme of intensive topographical and geophysical survey at eleven monuments in the Rathcroghan area. The objective was to demonstrate the purpose and significance of these diverse monuments through non-invasive, non-destructive and cost-effective geophysical means that might also identify future targets for possible excavation or more refined remote sensing survey. The main results are discussed and illustrated in a monograph published in 2009 (Waddell, Fenwick and Barton 2009). However, AGIP also had a number of unexpected positive outcomes in the local community.

During the course of the AGIP remote sensing fieldwork, the landowners at Rathcroghan were happy to grant permission for land access to the research project. They enthusiastically offered their time in aiding survey data collection, as well as taking great interest and pride in considering the results recorded from the monuments on their land. One aspect of this was the use of remote sensing techniques which are non-invasive and non-destructive in terms of the landscape and any sub-surface archaeological features. The techniques did not impact the fields of pasture as might be the case with excavation. The digital images and visualizations produced showed the farmers what lay beneath the soils of their fields.

The establishment of the Tulsk Action Group Ltd in 1996, as AGIP was drawing to its conclusion, was the coming together of a section of the local community in order to use the Rathcroghan narrative as an economic and touristic resource for the area. The objective was to use the archaeological landscape as a resource to develop a long-term revenue and employment enterprise in the village of Tulsk. This local interest in harnessing the area for cultural tourism built upon interest generated by the academic work in the 1980s and 1990s as well as the results from AGIP. The community decided there was a need to present the Rathcroghan landscape in a Heritage Centre context. After much endeavour, Tulsk Action Group Ltd obtained funding from the Irish Tourist Board, now Fáilte Ireland, who saw the provision of a Centre as a flagship project in an area which had had little tourism development.

The first iteration of the Centre was called the *Cruachan Aí* Heritage Centre. The exhibition largely utilised graphic panels to narrate local mythology and folklore, traditional landscape ground and aerial photography, and some of the AGIP remote sensing results. It presented the current understanding of the archaeological and mythological landscape through the panels, some audio visual presentations and innovative display of some of the more surprising and intriguing results of the remote sensing investigations. However, the first interpretive expression of the remote sensing results was rather soberly presented, playing a secondary role in contrast to the more 'popular' epic literature and mythological connections.

In the period from 1999 to 2020, continued academic investigation of the monuments in the Rathcroghan landscape has been undertaken almost exclusively through the use of a suite of remote sensing techniques. Advances in technology have resulted in the use of new techniques and repeat surveys at higher spatial resolution. Recent work by academic researchers and professional practitioners has assisted in the visualisation and presentation of Rathcroghan mound and surrounding landscape in new ways.

Revitalisation of Rathcroghan Visitor Centre

The availability of more detailed archaeological survey techniques, coupled with embracing new techniques, provided the foundational data when the heritage centre, renamed Rathcroghan Visitor Centre, embarked on an upgrade of the public presentations in the Centre in 2014. The impetus for this upgrade had a number of direct aims, chief among them the requirement to replace what was a fifteen year-old interpretive space which had received few updates over such an extended period. Another aspect that required improvement was the aforementioned dry academic presentation of the archaeology, which was pitched to a narrow, more scholarly audience. This arguably alienated more general visitors to the Rathcroghan landscape, and by extension, the younger demographics. Indeed general visitor feedback on the first iteration of the exhibition found that the high dependency on ground and aerial photography was difficult to relate to and for most visitors to gain a meaningful impression of the Rathcroghan landscape.

Due to these issues, as well as an academic desire to bring the display into line with up-to-date research, an approach was arrived at which allowed the new interpretive exhibition to be a platform to bring Rathcroghan to a wider and more diverse demographic of the community. This in turn served as a stimulus to reinvigorate the Centre and its services. This involved using it as a platform from which to re-engage with tourism markets which had moved away from the area, as well as attempting to interact with new markets.

The reinvigoration of the Centre occurred in a number of ways. The displays were developed directly through collaboration between the staff of the Visitor Centre, academic researchers from NUI Galway, and professional practitioners that has brought forward knowledge of the Rathcroghan landscape informed by historical sources and remote sensing techniques. The active involvement of the Centre's staff in the redevelopment of the interpretive facilities created a sense of ownership over the public presentation of the Rathcroghan landscape.

The planning of the upgrade to the facility also allowed for the Visitor Centre to actively engage with school groups from primary level up, a situation in which we can tell the unique mythological and archaeological story of Rathcroghan while also introducing the next generation to the remote sensing technology which is helping us to sustainably progress the archaeological discipline.

Upon completion of the upgrade to the interpretive rooms, the staff felt a desire to ensure that all other elements of the social enterprise were brought up to the same standard as the new product. Within nine months of the completion, the staff had repainted all interior and exterior public spaces in the centre and had arrived upon a theme that would more directly connect the café service with the rest of the facility, now called the 'Táin Café'. The retail offering was made more streamlined, and a major focus was put on developing the shop into a rare and specialist bookshop, as well as engaging with local craft businesses and operators, in order that their products could be showcased.

This ownership and associated strive for quality has also had a practical effect over the other services that the Centre provides, from the guided sites tours, through to the production of information panels and archaeological trail booklets. The unique value of this approach is borne out when interested and proactive individuals and community groups visit Rathcroghan Visitor Centre and the Rathcroghan landscape. This provides an understanding of the organisation and work of the Centre due to the presence and ownership of the staff in the ongoing development of the Centre.

Rathcroghan Visitor Centre employs eleven people on a combination of full-time and part-time contracts, and is open year-round. The Pobal Community Services Programme (CSP) provides a contribution towards the payment of the wages, and all other aspects to do with the maintenance, upkeep and progress of the centre is funded through the remuneration generated from service users partaking of its offerings. As a result, the effort and pride of the staff to the continued operation of Rathcroghan Visitor Centre is vital. This effort has been rewarded, and

can be seen with the upturn in the amount of service users to the centre and its facilities from 2014 through to 2019.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Service Users	7,507	9,065	10,106	13,325	19,594	22,259
% annual increase in number of Service Users	N/A	21%	11.5%	32%	40%	14%
Number of Tour Visits	1,600	2,321	2,604	3,327	3,762	3,884
% annual increase in number of Tour Visits	.5%	45%	12%	28%	13%	3%
% annual increase in income generated	62%	35%	30%	33%	21%	26%

Table 1 – Visitor, Tour and Income statistics Rathcroghan Visitor Centre (2014-2019)

Rathcroghan Visitor Centre has constantly strived to expand its engagement to be more than that provided in the static environment of the indoor interpretive exhibition.

This is achieved through a number of ways. Rathcroghan Visitor Centre has sought to be an integral part of the local community, not least by organising and hosting a number of outreach events throughout the year. These range from heritage and related lectures and talks, to cookery courses, coffee mornings and charity raffles. Aside from this, opportunities arise to organise and host parts of international congresses, such as the hosting of a field-trip for the 2019 Dublin Congress of the International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA). More than this, since 2014, Rathcroghan Visitor Centre has organised and hosted Ireland's only annual community archaeology conference, which has acted as a forum for community groups and interested individuals to present, debate and push forward the disciplines of archaeology and history in their own local areas.

In terms of provision for those wishing to better understand and interact with the Rathcroghan experience, the landscape offers many opportunities. The nature of interpreting a large archaeological landscape for the visitor lends itself to innovative approaches, something that has always been acted upon by the visitor centre team. This includes the development of information panels and a driving tour of the archaeological landscape. More recently, members of the team wrote the Rathcroghan guidebook (Curley and McCarthy 2018), negotiated the successful installation of a collection of local-provenance artefacts into the museum, and acquired a tour bus for the Rathcroghan landscape for the first time in its history.

However, the crowning achievement of the social enterprise to date has been the successful funding, as co-ordinators of the Rathcroghan Resource Community, of a five-year Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) European Innovation Partnership (EIP) project for Rathcroghan. Entitled 'Sustainable Farming in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape', or Farming Rathcroghan for short, this project seeks to trial innovative measures in order to provide options for the local farming community to continue to maintain a livelihood in the area while preserving and enhancing the archaeological resource that has routinely proven to be a burden to modern agricultural practices. This is one of the first steps taken in order to engender an aspiration in the local community that Rathcroghan is a resource for all, which can be sustainably harnessed for its economic, social and cultural value.

All of the above innovations, and others besides, have a potential applicability when attempting to develop the heritage resources in the Uí Maine study area, and will be used for inspiration in outlining how this might be approached. Prior to this, a summary of the impact of the tourism industry in this broad region at the time of writing will be considered.

The Tourism Industry in Uí Maine Country

The most up-to-date statistics relating to the tourism industry available to the present writer are for the years 2017 and 2018.

Table 2 – Top-line tourism statistics for the Republic of Ireland in 2017 and 2018 (Data source: CSO/Fáilte Ireland/TSB NISRA/Central Bank of Ireland)

	2017	2018	% change
Overseas visitors (inc. N. Ireland)	10,338,000	10,947,000	+5.9
Overseas revenue (inc. N. Ireland)	€5.348bn	€5.658bn	+6
Domestic visitors	9,626,000	10,919,000	+13.4
Domestic revenue	€1.879bn	€2.006bn	+7
Total visitors	19,964,000	21,866,000	+15.9
Total revenue	€7.227bn	€7.664bn	+6

Understandably, the overseas and domestic tourism market gravitates towards a range of holiday hotspots in the Republic of Ireland, and on the island more generally. Locations such

as Dublin, the Ring of Kerry and Connemara have traditionally served as focal points of this trade. More recently, Fáilte Ireland have successfully targeted a series of tourism brands, which are designed to attract visitors to different parts of the island, as well as sending tourists to areas more in keeping with what they are visiting or travelling around Ireland for. These include the *Wild Atlantic Way* (launched 2014), *Ireland's Ancient East* (launched 2015) and *Dublin: A Breath of Fresh Air* (launched late 2016).

The region of south Co. Roscommon and east Co. Galway, which will henceforth in this chapter be described as Uí Maine Country, falls under the most recently-established Fáilte Ireland tourism brand, *Ireland's Hidden Heartlands* [IHH] (launched 12th April 2018). This region, which stretches from Cavan in the north, to east Clare in the south, is defined by the River Shannon, and IHH replaced a previous incarnation, known as *Ireland's Lakelands.*

Historically, Uí Maine Country has never been a strong tourism destination, and this is borne out in the wider regional visitor numbers and revenue. Revenue and visitor number figures are not yet available for the discrete areas of south Roscommon and east Galway as part of the new IHH brand, so this argument must be tempered by the more general data available. Due to these limitations, the present writer has decided to use the Co. Roscommon tourism statistics as a proxy for the Uí Maine Country numbers, due to the attributes shared by both. These characteristics include a predominately rural population, the presence of a number of small market villages and one larger market town in both cases, and a range of communications routes linking the region to the wider island. It is by these criteria that the present writer has concluded to use the Roscommon statistics as a proxy for Uí Maine Country.

*Table 3 – Tourism statistics for the past two years which are publicly available on Co. Roscommon. Co. Roscommon has been chosen here as a proxy for south Roscommon and East Galway (Uí Maine Country) due to the inclusion of county figures for Galway providing an imbalance. * indicates the combining of figures for Longford and Roscommon in 2014 (Data source: CSO/Fáilte Ireland/TSB NISRA/Central Bank of Ireland).*

		Ireland	Roscommon	% of overall
Visitors (Domestic & Overseas)	2014	16,167,000	150,000*	0.92
	2017	19,964,000	184,000	0.92
Revenue (Domestic & Overseas)	2014	€6,565bn	€0.023bn*	0.35
	2017	€7.227bn	€0.045bn	0.62

As can be seen in Table 3, Roscommon tourism currently contributes less than 1% to both visitor numbers and revenue collected throughout the previous decade. However, given the development of the IHH tourism brand, as well as the extant and potential tourism resources available in Uí Maine Country, the present writer believes that this area is perfectly placed to capitalise on future investment and developmental opportunities as part of Fáilte Ireland’s IHH tourism proposal.

Heritage-Based Tourism

Based upon the qualitative data collected by Fáilte Ireland on what visitors and holidaymakers want from their time in Ireland, a persuasive picture emerges on the values and characteristics that appeals to the tourist to this island.

The Fáilte Ireland Tourism Experience Port Survey 2018 asked overseas holidaymakers the level of importance or value placed by them on aspects of their expected holiday experience. 85% of those surveyed cited the importance of them experiencing ‘Interesting history and culture’ as part of their holiday. Another 2018 survey aimed at the overseas visitor recorded that 2.6 million tourists engaged in hiking or cross-country walking as part of their holiday (Fáilte Ireland Research, September 2019, 9, 7). Both of these statistics portray the expectations of the overseas visitor to the Irish market, and this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Considering the overseas tourist interested in exploring Ireland’s history and culture first, 85% of the total overseas visitor numbers for 2018 equates to 9.3 million visitors. If even an arbitrary figure of 2% of the overall heritage interested overseas visitors was to be attracted to Uí Maine Country, it would have amounted to 186,099 tourists in 2018. Considering as 1.9 million overseas visitors travelled to the ‘West’ (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon) in the same year, the vast majority of which travel the major east-west communication routes in order to achieve this visit, then it is not an impossible figure to suggest.

Statistics relating to the domestic tourism market are framed by the activities engaged in on their holiday. The following (Table 4) are the activities engaged in by the group that was polled in 2018 (Fáilte Ireland Research, September 2019, 11):

Table 4 – Activities engaged in by domestic holidaymakers (2018) (Data source: Fáilte Ireland Domestic Omnibus 2018)

Activity	Hiking/ Walking	National Parks	Houses/ Castles	Heritage/ interpretive centres	Monuments	Museums/art galleries
Engaged	26%	21%	21%	15%	12%	11%
% overall domestic holidaymakers	2,838,940	2,292,990	2,292,990	1,637,850	1,310,280	1,201,090

These are not inconsequential figures, and indicate very strongly that there is a market for the development of heritage-based tourism resources as a means of driving social, economic and employment benefit into rural communities, such as the communities of Uí Maine Country. Such an approach would need to be broad-based, in order to engage in a substantial cohort of both the local host populations, as well as the prospective visitor.

As such, the present writer has decided to briefly describe the socio-economic character of the study area, followed by outlining a series of short, medium, and long-term projects, which could be targeted as a means of sustainably harnessing heritage resources to the benefit of rural communities in the study area.

Socio-Economic Character of Uí Maine Country

The initial first step in developing the concept of Uí Maine Country (this title would be open for replacement) would concern the (re)development of an awareness amongst the local population as to the origins of their area. The present writer has been struck by the general disconnect between the people of the locales explored and their local areas, from the point-of-view of knowledge of the prehistoric and medieval periods. The origins of this disconnect are beyond the scope of the current research, however, they may bear some relationship with the general lack of academic research into this geographical area prior to the current study, as discussed in Chapter 1. This absence of foundational, high-quality historical and archaeological information on the area, as well as the absence of its public dissemination, has ultimately led to a lack of interest amongst the local populace in finding out more. In essence, this has a negative effect on how people identify themselves with a landscape. This disconnect has been seen quite acutely by the present writer in his place of employment at Rathcroghan, where the farming community perceived the archaeological heritage of the area in a negative light, due

to the heavy restrictions placed by legislation upon their agricultural practices, as well as the lack of an identifiable future for those wishing to continue to live and work in the area. Certainly, a process has begun to attempt to redress this situation with the establishment of the Farming Rathcroghan EIP in late 2018.

This lack of knowledge, pride, and loss of identity with a landscape can have a detrimental effect on the people of an area, particularly a disadvantaged one. The case of both Tulsk and its surrounding area, and the rural villages and towns of research study area, are that they are blighted by unemployment, the growing lack of take up in farm inheritance, migration and emigration for work, and the 'brain-drain' of the next generation away from these rural areas. This 'vicious cycle' portrays the landscape as a burden, a limiter to success, and ultimately a reason why one may choose to move away from the area.

These issues are borne out on the Pobal Deprivation Indices, which report for 2016 that a substantial number of discrete geographical areas termed 'Small Areas' within the study area fall into the socio-economic category of 'Marginally Below Average' or 'Disadvantaged'. The main market town of the study area, Ballinasloe, possesses a number of 'Small Areas' which are categorised as 'Very Disadvantaged', and one zone reports as 'Extremely Disadvantaged' (https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DeprivationIndices/index.html). Considering Ballinasloe's location in close proximity to regional economic hubs such as Athlone and Galway, its siting next to the major east-west communication routes, and the large amount of educated young people graduating from two substantial secondary schools in the town, this is a puzzling situation.

While the present writer is not naïve enough to think that the development of heritage resources will be able to greatly improve the socio-economic character of the region, the development of sustainable and viable social, and potentially economic and employment, opportunities in the areas of heritage, and heritage tourism, can go some of the way to engendering a pride and renewed sense of positivity and belonging in the landscape. The model proposed by Historic England elicits the range of wellbeing benefits that can be derived from those involved in heritage-related activities and projects, from the act of visiting a historic site, through to actively volunteering in a heritage-related project. This research indicates that interaction with the historic environment can directly promote personal wellbeing, in terms of developing social engagement, building resilience, competence and automony, and fostering pride and self-esteem (Reilly, Nolan and Monckton 2018, iii, Figure A).

This has been achieved, particularly in a UK context, and range from the reframing of public parks to better represent the community of an area, through to the regeneration of depressed urban locales in order to tell their story, and remember their significance to an area (Andrews 2006, 33-9). All of these actions give communities access to and ownership over their heritage, and this is something that can also be attempted in the study area.

Short-Term Approaches

As regards the short-term approach to developing a community-based heritage project for Uí Maine Country, initially, a baseline can be established and information shared, by the proper provision of public lectures, talks, schools visits, and the development of booklet material (similar to Murphy and O'Conor 2008; Curley and McCarthy 2016; 2018; Conroy 2018; O'Conor and Shanahan 2018), based on the research conducted to date. A key intermediary in the development of these links between the academic community and the general public and local community is the local authority Heritage Officers. All of this helps to raise the profile of the topic under inspection, and generate a groundswell of excitement over the project. Importantly, it is as much with what the audience can provide, or their experience of an environment, monument, or artefact, that can enliven these experiences. Out of these outreach events, it could be left to the communities to consider the possibilities for furthering the project, and of branding the region in a manner that would represent their shared identities. If a consensus and an interest was to result from these conversations, then the next stages of the project could begin. This groundwork could also eventually result in the identification of candidates in these communities who would be interested in being involved, and becoming drivers of some of the medium and long-term projects to be suggested below.

Thereafter, an inventory could be taken of the currently available heritage resources in the study area. From a facilities point-of-view, the Athleague Angling Centre, Derryglad Folk Museum and Drum Heritage Centre, Co. Roscommon, and the Battle of Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Co. Galway, are the primary operational heritage-related facilities in the study area (https://www.discoversuckvalleyway.ie/visitor-centre.php; http://www.drumheritage.ie/; https://www.derrygladfolkmuseum.com/; https://www.discoverireland.ie/galway/the-battle-of-aughrim-visitor-centre) . None of these facilities currently relate anything of the archaeological or medieval historical (or indeed prehistoric) origins of this region, and approaches would be taken in the medium-term to complementing their exhibits and

information panels in a measured and consistent manner with information relating to the Ó Cellaig lordship in their area.

In terms of waymarked trails in and around Uí Maine Country, a number are already established. These include the Suck Valley Way and the Green Heartlands Cycle Route in Co. Roscommon, both managed by the Roscommon Rural Recreation Development Officer and Roscommon LEADER Partnership. Both of these routes either currently, or with slight amendments or looped walks, pass by established Ó Cellaig *cenn áiteanna* and their hinterlands, making them very suitable vehicles via which the visitor can engage in and explore the Ó Cellaig lordship. The Hymany Way, managed by Aughrim Development Company Ltd. in Co. Galway, is already thematically-tied to the history of the Uí Chellaig, and is served by a series of informational panels along the course of the route. Much as in the case of the Suck Valley Way and the Green Heartlands Cycle Route, the Hymany Way would serve, in the medium term, as a very suitable vehicle to expand on the public dissemination of information relating to the historic environment. Exploring the possibility of an additional looped walk off the Hymany Way to Cluain Tuaiscirt O Máine, and to Kilconnell and Callow Lough would be well-spent endeavours in terms of understanding the cultural heritage of the area also.

In keeping with the utilisation of the waymarked trails, the opportunity which presents itself with the national interest in establishing the Beara-Breifne Way as a top-class walking experience for domestic and overseas visitors to experience. As stated above, there is a strong overseas market attracted to hiking and walking experiences, something which could be capitalised on by the Uí Maine Country concept. Considering as both the Hymany Way and the Suck Valley Way already form sections of the wider Beara-Breifne Way, the Uí Maine Country project, if positioned properly, could become a flagship in terms of promoting and maintaining heritage-related walking tourism, as well as indirectly encouraging health and wellbeing benefits for the communities who avail of these amenities.

Medium-Term Approaches

Progressing from these initial approaches, consideration might next be drawn to the development of a series of information panels and signage which could be reasonably and inexpensively installed at safe and publicly-accessible locations of historical and archaeological interest in the Ó Cellaig lordship area. These could take the form of the saw-horse interpretive panels, which are already successfully in place in predominantly agricultural environments such as Rindoon and Rathcroghan, both Co. Roscommon.

Plate 1 – Saw-horse information panel, located in the remains of a tower house castle at Tulsk Dominican Priory, Co. Roscommon (Author's photograph).

These information panels, and indeed the project as a whole, should also be promoted through social media relating to the aforementioned trails and cycle routes. Social media platforms could also be utilised as a means of attracting interest in the project and their progress, as well as whetting the appetite of those interested in a broad range of themes, from biodiversity,

through to genealogy, and of course, the understanding and promotion of aspects of society and life in later medieval Gaelic Connacht.

Some form of summary information and more detail relating to the area surrounding the aforementioned existing heritage centre facilities could be established also, all the while building the identity and brand of the region amongst local and visitor alike. In time, this could correspond with a smartphone application and/or paper literature which enables the visitor to drive from one site of interest or interpretive facility to the next, thus connecting the entire region for the visitor.

In the medium-term, and with the meaningful engagement of the two local authorities in the study area, feasibility studies should be conducted to identify additional heritage resource hubs for Uí Maine Country, which, following the approach taken in Tulsk, must be village or market town-centred, so as to drive economic and employment benefit to the nearest gateway hub which can sustain and derive greatest indirect value from increased interest in the area. This comes in the form of accommodation services, transportation services, souvenirs and gifts, refreshments, and the laying on of regular events and entertainments. Candidate locations for these resources hubs could be Ballinasloe, Kilconnell and Knockcroghery, while also developing the existing hubs of Athleague and Aughrim, in particular, which should be undertaken as a priority. One obstacle which must be recognised and addressed relates to cases where the heritage resource is located at a geographical remove from the modern community hubs which possess and infrastructure and logistically ability to accommodate tourism traffic. Any divergence or ownership debate which might emerge over the location of the resource, as opposed to where the economic and possible employment benefit is perceived to being harnessed, must be handled diplomatically, with a view to informing any protests of the ultimate value being leveraged for the area, as opposed to a 'them/us' divide occurring within the Uí Maine Country communities.

One of the outputs which the present writer intends to achieve from the current doctoral research in the medium-term is the editing of the study into a monograph suitable for publication. If this is to be achieved, the present writer would hope to accompany it with a companion fieldguide or guidebook, which would be more suitable for consultation in the field, and written in a manner that would be more open, and accessible to a non-specialist but nevertheless well-read audience. It would be hoped that this would serve as one of a number of awareness-generating opportunities for the Uí Maine Country project. The viability of such

a publication is validated by comparison with the guidebook published by Rathcroghan Visitor Centre in 2018, entitled *Rathcroghan: The Guidebook*, which at time of writing has sold 952 copies, the entire proceeds of which provide a key financial return to the operations of the community social enterprise in Tulsk (Curley and McCarthy 2018). Interestingly, while the academic monograph is likely to have a limited shelf-life, and eventually go out of print, the less expensive guidebook-format is open to being repeatedly revised, updated and reprinted, as new visitors are attracted to the area.

In the medium-term, opportunities should be explored in the realm of developing a community-based archaeological survey project or projects in Uí Maine Country, in order to continue to build and further investigate the current research. In order to achieve this, the present writer would advise that the project be embedded within the research aims of *The Connacht Project*, the inter-disciplinary and collaborative research initiative by the School of Humanities and School of Geography and Archaeology, NUI Galway, under the joint direction of an tOllamh Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, for its historical and literary component, and Professor John Waddell, Dr Kieran O'Conor and Joseph Fenwick for its archaeological component (https://www.nuigalway.ie/colleges-and-schools/arts-social-sciences-and-celtic-studies/geography-archaeology-irish-studies/disciplines/archaeology/research/ireland-atlantic-europe/the-connacht-project/).

The ethos of the *Connacht Project* is as follows:

'The principal aim of the Project, which is divided into three related parts, is to combine data from the extremely rich literary and surviving historical sources relating to the province with the extensive archaeological evidence from the region to understand the development of society and the landscape in Connacht from the earliest times but mainly from later prehistory to more recent times. An important question for the Project, too, is to comprehend how early and later medieval peoples in Connacht viewed their landscape and how they explained its evolution over time, as well as the contemporary world around them. Furthermore, using the rich dataset and inter-disciplinary evidence from Connacht, the Project aspires to take part in current international debates about how society, settlement and landscape developed, particularly throughout these islands and north-western Europe.

Lastly, as the research evolves, it has become abundantly clear to the academic participants in the Connacht Project that local communities throughout the province in recent years have become increasingly interested in their heritage, for a variety of economic, educational and

social reasons. In response to this growing interest, the Project will endeavour to share its research with local communities and heritage networks throughout the province but most particularly in Co. Roscommon. This has involved numerous lectures and the preparation of guidebooks, guide-leaflets and Information Boards for important monuments and archaeological complexes in the county to enhance the cultural tourism experience at these places. This will bring a sense of pride of place, an awareness of cultural value and an economic gain to the parishes and regions in which these monuments and complexes are located.' (Waddell, Fenwick, and O'Conor, The Connacht Project: Introduction to the Connacht Project, 2020)

The present writer would see the aims of what is being suggested for Uí Maine Country as very complementary with that of the *Connacht Project*, thus serving as an ideal framework within which to operate, as well as developing a partnership with the university which is most in tune with the needs of western Ireland.

As to how the proposed ongoing archaeological survey work would manifest itself, the present writer would look at the lessons learned at the long-established archaeological field schools which have successfully operated in the west of Ireland for inspiration and detail. These would include, but not be limited to: the Castles in Communities – Ballintober Castle Archaeological Field school in Co. Roscommon, the Achill Archaeological Field school, Co. Mayo, the Lough Key Archaeological Project, Co. Roscommon, the Caherconnell Archaeology Field School, Co. Clare, and the Galway Archaeological Field school, which has to date focussed on Isert Kelly tower house and environs, Co. Galway All of these field schools are either directly or indirectly linked to NUI Galway. Ideally, the fieldwork would be an annual occurrence, utilising a combination of remote sensing investigations and targeted limited excavation in order to answer specific research questions of the most prospective archaeological monuments in Uí Maine Country.

The beauty of the above cited field schools is that they are embedded in the communities that they operate from. Not least does it assist the economic viability of rural villages and the hinterland (in the form of rented accommodation, improving the viability of rural shops, pubs and food outlets etc.), but it again engenders a pride and interest from the local populations in their own heritage, due to it being 'valued' enough to being inspected by academic disciplines. However, supplementary to the approach taken by the above field schools, the present writer would propose that the any and all archaeological survey work be undertaken with a

‘community archaeology’ approach in mind. Marshall outlined the explicit methodology for community archaeology in 2002, involving the community as follows:

‘[the methodology] should include seven components. These concern all parts of an archaeological project from the initial point of devising research questions or areas of interest, to setting up a project, field practices, data collection, analysis, storage and dissemination, and public presentation.’ (Marshall 2002, 211)

This level of community ownership and control over the project is critical in the mind of the present writer, in order to ensure that the project develops a longevity that runs beyond the immediate period. The proposed level of involvement would therefore conform to the fourth or final threshold of community interaction with heritage, as defined by Kador in his 2014 paper on observations of community archaeology in Ireland:

> ‘The final threshold is community-based archaeology in which members of the public who are not professionally trained archaeologists have a large degree of control over all aspects of the planning and running of the project. Although there might be professional or academic archaeological partners, the community maintains the lion’s share of intellectual copyright, and the right to publish and present their work.’ (Kador 2014, 36).

The present writer would view the inclusion of the community in as many aspects of an archaeological survey or research excavation project to be crucial, not least because it may encourage additional institutions to explore the region, based not only on the value of the archaeological and heritage resources being revealed and better understood, but also on the innovative model of enquiry that has been adopted. Such an approach will go a long way to retaining the project’s relevance for a long period, thus increasing the social and economic value of the project to the area as a result. At the outset of engaging in these surveys, it is envisaged that targets of archaeological investigation should be drawn from among the series of sites discussed in the current research. As new information is uncovered, future targets can be approached, and new research questions asked. Chapter 9 outlined a number of candidate sites for inspection.

It is proposed that, in the medium-term, it could also be a suitable opportunity to embark upon organising between one and three annual events tied to the heritage project, either as stand-alone events or connected with annual festivals or engagements that already take place in the region. The potential to connect with a national annual event such as the Ballinasloe Horse Fair, the origins of which were discussed in Chapter 6, is one option. Indeed, any of the fair

days described over the course of the research could be targeted as suitable locations, within which one could embark on an event or events related to the Uí Maine Country brand.

It would also be possible to harness the genealogical tourism potential of Uí Maine Country, both through an annually organised event, as well as maximising the resources provided by existing and additional family history researchers in the region. The Clan Gathering concept is one that has become well-established in recent years in certain quarters, allowing the Irish diaspora to engage with their ancestry and family trees. The Central Statistics Office indicates that the Kelly surname is routinely the second most common name amongst children born in Ireland. Globally, Kelly is regarded as the second most common Irish surname amongst the entire diaspora, bettered only by Murphy in popularity. All of this spells of the possibilities available if family research tourism is approached in a suitable manner in Uí Maine Country. The present writer is aware of the Kelly Clan Association as an active association with a bi-annual gathering, while the senior line of the Ó Cellaig is represented by the holder of the title of O'Kelly de Gallagh et Tycooly, Robert O'Kelly of Naas. However, the most active clan association in the wider region appears to be the O'Mannion Clan Association, which could serve as an excellent role model from which to base any future approaches to this field. In time, a centre of genealogical research could be established, at a central point in Uí Maine Country, such as Ballinasloe, where those wishing to trace not just Ó Cellaig ancestry, but all of the service kindred and other traditional, and more recent additions, to the region can be research, and their questions answered.

Long-Term Approaches

The long-term focus of such a project should centre on its sustainability, and cautious continuous growth. Given that this approach would arguably be the first instance nationally where a cultural heritage brand was to be attached to a specific historic region, it could serve in turn as a role model for sustainable heritage projects elsewhere on the island. This proposition has taken inspiration from the successful natural heritage landscape projects such as the BurrenLife project in Clare and south Galway, the AranLife project on the Aran Islands, as well as the heritage-based Farming Rathcroghan EIP, which the present writer has been involved in from the outset, albeit its area of focus is geographically much narrower than what is being proposed here.

As a result, it is envisioned that the long-term approaches to the project would be broad-based and flexible enough to adapt to the challenges it faces as it hopefully grows. Potential

adaptations and evolutions of the project could relate to the establishment of an interpretive centre, museum and resource hub for Uí Maine Country, which would obviously be a welcome undertaking. The development of a scheme enabling landowners and farmers to operate as local tour guides for their individual landscapes would also be a reasonable long-term goal to achieve.

In essence, the longest-term approach would be one which raises the sense of place and the elevation of a sense of identity and pride amongst the people of the region, a pride that is rooted in the cultural and natural heritage that surrounds them.

Outreach Undertaken to Date

To date, the present writer has engaged in a number of outreach events, which could be considered as being part of the first steps indicated in the section entitled 'Short-term approaches'. These are outlined in the below table:

Table 0.5 – Table outlining the local outreach conducted in 'Uí Maine Country' and nearby in years two and three of the doctoral research.

Title	Event & Location	Date
Reconstructing the Lough Croan *cenn áit* of the medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine	Rathcroghan Conference 2019 – Archaeology Above & Below, Tulsk, Co. Roscommon	7th April 2019
Reconstructing the Lough Croan *cenn áit* of the medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine	Meeting of the Co. Roscommon Historical and Archaeological Society, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon	14th May 2019
O'Kelly Lordship of Uí Maine: 1100-1600	Loughrea Medieval Festival, Loughrea, Co. Galway	24th August 2019
Reconstructing the Lough Croan *cenn áit* of the medieval Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine	Dysart Rural Men's Group & 6 local National Schools, Co. Roscommon	26th November 2019

Aside from this, the present writer has worked with a small number of communities over the course of the research. Discussions and input has ranged from assisting in preparing representations to local authorities regarding the development of their heritage resources, assisting in the application process for grant funding, the development of information signage

at one Ó Cellaig *cenn áit*, and contributing on a number of fieldtrips relating to the archaeology of these areas.

To date, the present writer has worked primarily with the following:

- Aughrim Development Company, and members of the 'Aughrim Remembered' conference organising committee, Co. Galway.
- Members of the Lough Croan community, Dysart Rural Men's Group and primary schools in this area of Co. Roscommon.
- Members of the Mote Park Conservation Group, Co. Roscommon.
- Members of the Athleague community, Co. Roscommon.

Aside from this, the present writer has presented a case to the Heritage Officer in Roscommon County Council to include research and development efforts relating to the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine into the next iteration of the Roscommon County Council Heritage Plan, which is scheduled to be enacted in 2022. A letter of support to this effect is attached. The Heritage Officer in Galway County Council has also expressed their support and willingness to assist in developing outputs relating to the research, should they be complementary to the aims of the Galway County Council Heritages Plans, present and future.

Subject to there being an appetite amongst the communities of Uí Maine Country for this to continue, the present writer will make a commitment to progressing with this type of work in some form.

Summary and Conclusions

In order to summarise what is being conceived as regards a proposed multi-pronged community heritage project for Uí Maine Country, it is divided in the following:

Short-term approaches (Year 1 & 2):

- Public dissemination of research to date.
- Gauge interest and seek commitment from communities and investment and support from local authorities.
- Establish inventory of currently available assets.

- Create the public presence for the project, a brand identity, and generate awareness and interest.

Medium-term approaches (Year 3, 4 & 5):

- Develop information panels for inclusion on established walking and cycling routes, lobby for the inclusion of identified loops to specific points of heritage interest.
- Establish a series of local hubs for information and interpretation of the research, engage in a feasibility study to explore the need/benefit of creating a central hub for the project area.
- Publish academic monograph and field guide/guidebook for the Ó Cellaig lordship of Uí Maine.
- Inaugurate a community-based archaeological field school for Uí Maine Country, in order to initiate ongoing research into the lordship and answer current and future research questions.
- Develop a genealogical resource centre for Uí Maine Country, which can be used to attract those seeking more information on their ancestors in the region. Couple this with one or more events that become part of a calendar of events linked to the heritage of the region.

Long-term approaches (Year 6 and on):

- If a central hub is advocated for, this should be operational at this point.
- Schemes should be in place to assist the community in actions relating to the further interaction with their heritage, such as training community tour guides.
- Explore approaches that will lead to the continuing sustainability and cautious expansion of the project into the future.

The present writer firmly believes that the heritage resources located in what has been termed Uí Maine Country are not only deserving of preservation, conservation, better interpretation and further study, but that the approach outlined in this chapter would enable this heritage to sustainably contribute to the economic and social fabric of this region, if harnessed and utilised in a meaningful and egalitarian manner.

Email of Support for PhD Research on the archaeology of the medieval O'Kelly lordship of Uí Maine by Daniel Curley

From: Nollaig Feeney (nfeeney@roscommoncoco.ie)

To: curleydaniel@rocketmail.com

Date: Friday, April 24, 2020, 10:31 PM GMT+1

To whom it may concern,

I wish to express the support of the Heritage Office of Roscommon County Council for the PhD research underway by Daniel Curley 'Exploring the archaeology of the O'Kelly Lordship on Uí Maine, c. 1100-1600'. An element of this research was supported by the Roscommon County Council Heritage Research Bursary in 2018. An aim of the PhD research was to explore how the cultural heritage uncovered and better understood through the academic research could be utilised in future in order to inform and develop community-centred heritage outputs in the area under investigation, to derive social and potentially economic/employment benefit for the area.

This linkage between the local authority and the PhD research has already created positive engagement and opportunities for collaboration between the academic research and the local community, for example Daniel Curley has given a talk to the County Roscommon Historical & Archaeological Society on the element of his research funded by the bursary. Many future possibilities exist as outputs from this research – an information panel on an established walking route, educational talks and lectures, information booklets through to archaeological field schools etc.

The link created with Roscommon County Council via the Heritage Research Bursary, between the academic research, the Heritage Office and local community has developed a foundation from which future heritage opportunities, based on the research findings on the O'Kelly lordship, can grow.

The aim of the County Roscommon Heritage Plan 2017-2021 is to continue to create and promote an increased knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the natural, built and cultural heritage of County Roscommon, and to conserve it for future generations, in other words: notice – care- enjoy. Research projects such as this make an invaluable contribution to the achievement of this aim. The

Heritage Office of Roscommon County Council welcomes and supports this research.

Yours sincerely

Nollaig Feeney

Nollaig Feeney, Heritage Officer

Roscommon County Council, Áras on Chontae, Roscommon, F42 VR98

090 6637135 www.roscommoncoco.ie

If you wish to be added to the **Heritage Office email mailing list** please reply with 'Mailing List' in the subject box. If you wish to be removed from the Heritage Office mailing list please reply with 'Remove' in the subject box.

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Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

20th April 2020

RE: Postgraduate study of the medieval Úa Cellaig (O'Kelly) lordship of Uí Maine

To whom it may concern,

I welcome the multidisciplinary archaeological research being undertaken by Daniel Curley in his postgraduate study of the medieval Úa Cellaig (O'Kelly) lordship of Uí Maine. I think it will lead to a greater awareness, knowledge and understanding of this important facet of the heritage of the county of Galway.

Galway County Council Heritage Office would be happy to consider and potentially support any future outputs that arise from this research, particularly if they align with the current and future Heritage Plans.

Should you have any further queries do not hesitate to contact me @ 087 9088387 or email mmannion@galwaycoco.ie

Regards,

Marie Mannion,
Heritage Officer,
Galway County Council

Tá míle fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras agus ghnó i nGaeilge.

Appendix 7 – Listing of Service Kindred Families and Landholdings in the Study Area

Service kindred Surname	Anglicised version	Landholdings (townland)	Role	County	Chapter
Clann Síthigh	(Mac) Sheehy	Fearmore?	Military service (galloglass)	Roscommon	2
Clann Dubhghaill	(Mac) Dowell	Cornageeha; Ballygalda	Military service (galloglass)	Roscommon	2
Mac an Bhaird	(Mac) Ward	Annagh; Cooloorta	Poets	Galway	5, 7
Mac Aodhagáin	(Mac) Egan	Park West & East; Lissyegan Hodson & Mahon	Brehons	Galway	5, 7
Ó Cobhtaigh	(O) Coffey	Liscoffy Kelly & Madden; *Tuaim Cátraige* (now Kellysgrove)	Poets	Roscommon, Galway	4, 7
Ó Cuindlis	(O) Conlisk/ Cunlish	Ballaghdacker; Curraghbaghla; Clooncannon	Brehons	Galway	5
Ó Dubhagáin	(O) Doogan/ Duggan	Coolderry; Ballydoogan; Cartrondoogan; Rinnegan	Poet historians	Roscommon, Galway	5, 6
Ó Longorgáin		Ballynabanaba	Harpers	Galway	5
Ó Mainnin	(O) Mannion	Killaclogher; Menlough	Military service	Galway	5, 7
Ó Maoltuile	(Mac) Tully	Lecarrowmactully	Physicians	Galway	5
Ó Miadhacháin	(O) Meehin	Abbeypark	Coarbs	Galway	7
Ó Máelalaid	(O) Mullally	Tullinadaly (now Castletown)	Historians	Galway	2

Ó Sideacháin		*Lis na Cornairead* (poss. in Ballynabanaba)	Horn-players	Galway	5