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# **Rural Landscapes of Improvement in Ireland, 1650-1850: An Archaeological Landscape Study.**

Richard Clutterbuck MLitt MIAI

Volume 1 of 1

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National University of Ireland, Galway



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## Abbreviations

BSD	<i>Books of Survey and Distribution</i> , a 17 <sup>th</sup> - to early-18 <sup>th</sup> century record of land ownership and land use in certain Irish counties.
GIS	Geographical Information Systems, geospatial software, for this thesis, QGIS versions 2.4.
ha	Hectare
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
ITM	Irish Transverse Mercator, the coordinate system used to cite grid references in this thesis (EPSG: 2157)
JRSAI	<i>Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland</i>
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NIAH	<i>National Inventory of Architectural Heritage</i> , state architectural survey for the Republic of Ireland ( <a href="http://www.buildingsofireland.com/Surveys/Buildings/">http://www.buildingsofireland.com/Surveys/Buildings/</a> )
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
NMS	National Monuments Service for the Republic of Ireland, responsible for the Archaeological Survey of Ireland
OD	Ordnance Datum, 0m.
OSI	Ordnance Survey of Ireland ( <a href="http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer">maps.osi.ie/publicviewer</a> ).
OSM	Open Street Map ( <a href="http://www.openstreetmap.org">http://www.openstreetmap.org</a> )
OSNI	Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland ( <a href="http://maps.osni.gov.uk/mapconsolehistoricalmaps.aspx">http://maps.osni.gov.uk/mapconsolehistoricalmaps.aspx</a> )
PLU	Poor Law Union
PRIA	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy</i>
PRONI	Public Records Office Northern Ireland
RDS	Royal Dublin Society
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record for the Republic of Ireland ( <a href="http://www.archaeology.ie">www.archaeology.ie</a> ) and Northern Ireland ( <a href="http://apps.ehsni.gov.uk/ambit/Default.aspx">http://apps.ehsni.gov.uk/ambit/Default.aspx</a> )

## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to the memory of my niece Emily Wilson.

## **Abstract**

Ireland's modern landscapes of fields and farms were largely fashioned in the later historic period, between c.1650 and 1850. This was the infancy of modern rural Ireland, when the concepts of property and tenure, landlords and tenants took form. It was a period when political, religious, and class contests came to define Irish society. This thesis is an archaeological landscape study which explores how Irish rural landscapes reflect, and became a part of, these contested social relationships, focusing in particular on the role of Improvement in these changes. Improvement was an Enlightenment ideology which held that society could be progressively enhanced through the influence of architecture, agriculture, and commerce on people's daily lives. Improvement, and the related ideologies of capitalism, colonialism and modernity, helped to shape the elite landscapes of the land owners, the towns and villages, the farms and farmsteads, the fields and enclosures. This involved fundamentally altering the way people in Ireland thought about property and landscape. My research uses four case study parishes from counties Derry in Ulster, Meath in Leinster, Clare and Tipperary in Munster to investigate how Improvement in the landscape, in estate houses, gardens and demesnes, places of worship, towns and villages, farm dwellings and offices, field enclosures, reflected these changes and helped reshape Irish rural society. However, this was not a straightforward process of change. Improvement was contentious, not least because of its relationship with colonialism in Ireland. Improvement used modernity and change to support power-structures of the elite 'Protestant Ascendancy'. At the same time, the landscape was used as a means of legitimising these elites through the association with, and appropriation of, significant ancient landscape features. Irish landscapes, viewed as a framework for our collective past, used in conjunction with extensive documentary material for the later historic period, provide an invaluable body of evidence for understanding Improvement in later historic Ireland. Reading landscapes involves interpreting complex interactions of time, space and human agency. Landscape archaeology, with documentary research and GIS analysis, provides an important suite of methods and concepts for these interpretative tasks. I conclude that the manipulation and creation of 'improved' landscapes was a key factor in shaping later historic Irish society.

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My friends Donal, Brian and Karl, my fellow PhD students in archaeology, and my housemates, kept me sane and going forward. My four-year PhD journey was made possible by the love and support of my family in Tipperary, Kilkenny and Dublin. For my parents, and for Triona and Emma, I have been given more support than I could ever repay. But I shall try.

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Horner and Rolf Loeber, 'Landscape in transition: descriptions of forfeited properties in counties Meath, Louth and Cavan in 1700' in *Analecta Hibernica*, no. 42 (2011), pp 59–179.



## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Central Research Question**

Irish society and landscapes changed fundamentally during the later historic period, and the ideology of Improvement (with a capital 'I') was central to making and justifying changes. This is a study in historic landscape archaeology. The central research question of this thesis is, how did Improvement transform later historic (1650-1850) rural Irish landscapes and how did those landscapes reflect social change in Ireland? My study will look at Ireland in general and four case-study parishes in the provinces of Ulster, Leinster, and Munster in detail. These are Kilrea in County Derry/ Londonderry, Duleek in County Meath, Kilcooly in County Tipperary, and Kilfenora in County Clare (Fig. 1.1). I will explore how the physical, social, and documentary landscape of demesnes and estate houses, of fields, farms and farmsteads, of villages and parishes, were shaped by the practice of Improvement. I look particularly at the role of iconic features – buildings, gardens and demesnes, monuments and field enclosures – in landscape and social change.

The landscape of Improvement is at the heart of much of the modern Irish rural countryside. These landscapes are familiar, active parts of our lives and perhaps as a consequence, are generally not subject to archaeological study. The changes that landscapes underwent can tell us something about the forces that shaped rural society: landlordism, colonialism, capitalism and individualism. This is a diachronic landscape study. Whilst the main focus may be rural Ireland from 1650 to 1850, landscape and social change in Ireland must be considered in terms longer than a couple of centuries. I will look at the medieval origins of later historic landscapes and practices and their influence on the later historic landscape. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the rural landscape of enclosed fields, farms, villages, demesnes and estate houses, that we would largely recognise today, was in place. Ireland, after 1850, experienced profound social, political and demographic change which undoubtedly had significant landscape implications, but which requires a detailed study in itself. Considering the future of Irish landscapes, with the pace of change potentially about to accelerate, thereby intensifying the

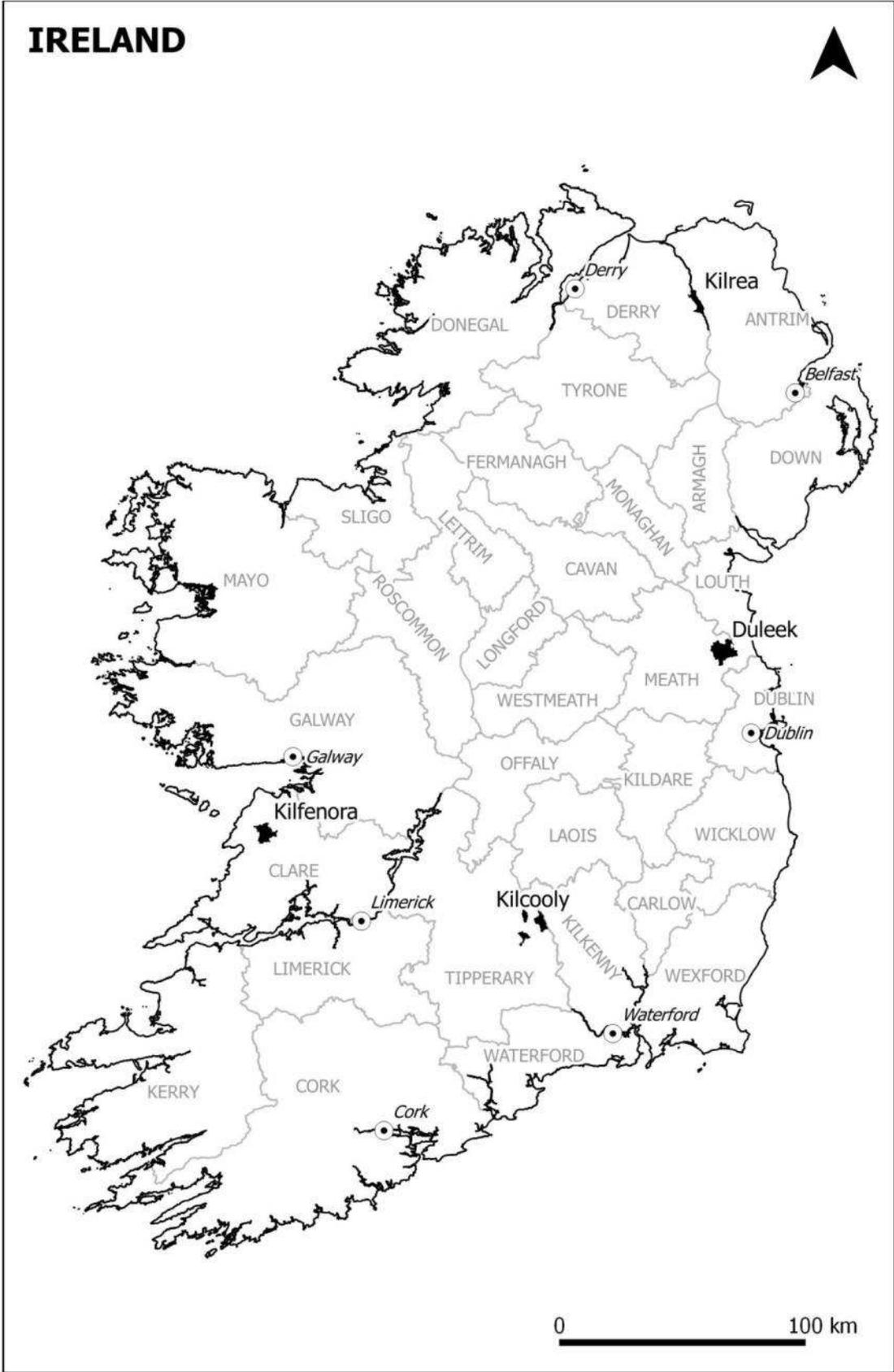


Figure 1.1 Map of Ireland showing the case study areas.

current trend towards fewer farmers, more intensive and business-orientated agriculture and a predominantly urban population, this is perhaps a good time to look with a landscape archaeologist's eye at a period in which much of the modern rural landscape of fields and farmsteads familiar to us today, took shape.

## **1.2 Improvement and Historical Archaeology**

### ***The idea of Improvement***

'Improvement' or 'to improve' were terms used to explain a range of words in Samuel Johnson's highly influential *Dictionary of the English Language*, published in 1756:<sup>1</sup> words like advance, amplify, best, cultivate, culture, edify, elaborate, enrichment, exhalt, graduate, growth, heighten, melioration, profit, refinement, rectify, refresh. However, the words 'improvement' or 'improve' were not themselves defined by Johnson. If this reflected an ambivalent attitude to, or an oversight of, the concept of Improvement in 1756, both 'Improvement' and 'to improve' ('To advance anything nearer to perfection; to raise from good to better... Progress from good to better...Instruction; edification') were included in later editions.<sup>2</sup> By the 18<sup>th</sup> century Improvement was an ideology which promoted the benefit of personal and, ultimately, societal change from an inferior to superior mode of being. Improvement sought to change the way people and society saw themselves and how they wanted to be seen, as well as how they represented themselves and their surroundings. It was an ideal which influenced multiple aspects of life, including agriculture, industry, architecture and town planning, garden design, politics, art and literature, education, manners and morals. Improvement was related to, but distinct from, the concept of 'progress', an historical current in which passive humans were swept along.<sup>3</sup> In Britain Improvement was articulated as an Enlightenment ideal, a practical exercise of philosophical principles, promoted by the intellectuals and the elite. It was an ideology of individual and collective action but it was primarily promoted by the privileged segments of society.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language; in Which the Words are Deduced From Their Originals, Explained in Their Different Meanings, And Authorized by The Names Of The Writers In Whose Works They Are Found* (2 vols, 1st ed., London, 1756).

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language; in Which the Words are Deduced From Their Originals, Explained in Their Different Meanings, And Authorized by The Names Of The Writers In Whose Works They Are Found* (2 vols, 11th ed., London, 1799).

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Tarlow, *The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 19.

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Improvement, as a concept, was in many respects implied in the stadial histories of the Enlightenment period like David Hume's *History of England* in eight volumes,<sup>4</sup> where history was laid out in a series of progressive and inevitable stages. Asa Briggs's seminal *Age of Improvement*, published in 1959, in many respects followed this whiggish structure, through employing Improvement as a unifying theme for British history between 1767 and 1864.<sup>5</sup> Briggs's work is a grand narrative of economic and political history. Landscape history and, in particular, the study of Improvement, was an innovation of British scholarship keen to explore both the physical remains and the wider ideological meaning of historic landscapes (see Chapter 2.2). This stems in part from a fascination with the origins of the modern landscape popularised by mid-20<sup>th</sup> century works like W.G. Hoskin's *The Making of the English Landscape*.<sup>6</sup> Landscape history in Britain encompasses a broad range of themes, including the importance of aesthetics,<sup>7</sup> land ownership,<sup>8</sup> enclosure and agricultural practices,<sup>9</sup> and religion in the transformation and use of landscapes.<sup>10</sup>

In many respects the transformative nature of Improvement lends itself to archaeological study. Chris Dalglish's archaeological research on the later historic landscapes of the Scottish southern highlands focuses primarily on Improvement as an Enlightenment-inspired ideology which helped to transform and modernise the Scottish landscape.<sup>11</sup> He proposes that Improvement should be understood as 'a series of social and material transformations brought about by individuals and groups addressing their own interests'.<sup>12</sup> Dalglish looks at how Improvement helped achieve these transformations by changing people's daily lives and routines. He examined, in particular, the record of changes in housing, settlement form, enclosure and land ownership for evidence of these changes. For Daniels and Seymour,

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<sup>4</sup> David Hume, *The History of England, From the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Revolution in 1688* (8 vols, Dublin, 1769).

<sup>5</sup> Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London, 1959).

<sup>6</sup> William George Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Denis E Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, *Property and Landscape: a Social History of Land Ownership and the English Countryside* (London, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Susanna Wade Martins, *Farms and Fields* (London, 1995); Susanna Wade Martins, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes: Rural Britain, 1720 to 1870* (Macclesfield, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Nicola Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Oxford, 2009); Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Chris Dalglish, 'Rural Settlement in the Age of Reason: an Archaeology of the Southern Scottish Highlands from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries A.D.' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 2000) (<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/4819/>); Chris Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason: an Archaeology of the Emergence of Modern Life in the Southern Scottish Highlands* (New York, 2003).

<sup>12</sup>Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, p. 39.

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Improvement was an ideology of change which restructured the landscape for social, economic and aesthetic ends.<sup>13</sup> Tom Williamson explores Improvement's conservatism, whereby it was a means of expressing the legitimacy of ownership in the face of radical opinion.<sup>14</sup> Sarah Tarlow's *The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850* is an exploration, and justification, of the archaeological study of the Improvement ethic.<sup>15</sup> Tarlow sets out the theoretical basis for studying Improvement as a key element of understanding modernity, focusing in particular on the ideas of utility, society, individualism and independence, reason, utopia, class and social relationships. She observes that Improvement was the result of people's active, strategic, and moral decision-making.<sup>16</sup> Tarlow looks at how archaeologies of Improvement enable studies in the development of rural and urban landscapes, ideas of the person and morals in later historic Britain. She proposes that Improvement in Britain was a distinctly modern ideology, separated from the medieval and early modern by being essentially secular and humanistic, and that it was an ideology which promoted more than just rational economic responses and pursuit of power. Both Tarlow's and Dalglish's work demonstrate a wide range of theoretical and practical approaches to the study of historical archaeology.

### ***Historical Archaeology***

Historical archaeology generally describes the archaeological investigation of the relatively recent to very recent past. The term is quite broad, and may, logically, be applied to the study of any culture which represents itself, or is represented, in a documentary record.<sup>17</sup> In general in Ireland, following the practice in Britain, post-medieval or historical archaeology refers to the study of the centuries following the medieval period. Historical archaeology is more explicitly theoretical. The American archaeologist Charles Orser proposes that historical archaeology (in an American context, post 1492) is concerned with four main themes, what he called four 'haunts': colonialism, eurocentricism, capitalism, and modernity.<sup>18</sup> Orser's historical archaeology is not geographically specific, but it is potentially global in scope. Mathew Johnson explores the role capitalism played in England, in the change from the medieval

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Daniels and Susan Seymour, 'Landscape design and the idea of improvement' in Robert A Dodgshon and Robin Alan Butlin (eds), *An Historical Geography of England and Wales* (2nd ed., London, 1990), p. 487.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Williamson, 'Archaeological perspectives on landed estates: research agendas' in Jonathan Finch and Katherine Giles (eds), *Estate Landscapes: Design, Improvement and Power in the Post-Medieval Landscape* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp 6–7.

<sup>15</sup> Tarlow, *Archaeology of Improvement*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> John Moreland, *Archaeology and Text* (London, 2001), p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Charles E. Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World* (New York, 1996), p. 22.

world of the collective to the modern world of the individual, expressed in material changes like ‘closure’: the subdivision of houses into individual rooms, and landscapes into enclosed fields.<sup>19</sup> Historical archaeology themes can also be explicitly political. Marxist archaeologies examine the origins of the unequal distribution of wealth and the origins of the capitalist system and power structures and closely identify with the class consciousness of exploited people.<sup>20</sup> Orser’s historical archaeologies have been particularly concerned with shedding light on the lives of the poor, the voiceless subaltern.<sup>21</sup> Whilst capitalism and, particularly in Ireland, colonialism, have been the most frequently visited of these four themes, modernity may be considered the most relevant to a study of Improvement. In fact, modernity can be considered to encompass the other three themes.<sup>22</sup>

Studies of modernity are perhaps the most significant development in historical or, as it is more generally called in Ireland, post-medieval, archaeology. The term ‘post-medieval’ has been considered problematic,<sup>23</sup> and, although I have no particular objection to it, I describe the period of my study (1650 to 1850) as ‘later historic’,<sup>24</sup> primarily to set it apart from the more widely used period descriptors in Irish historical terms: early-modern (1540 to 1650) and modern (1850-2000). The boundary between periods is not necessarily straight-forward. In most studies of Irish later history the Plantation period, from the later 16th century, is (not unreasonably) chosen as the end of the medieval period in Ireland.<sup>25</sup> The year 1540, when most Irish monasteries in the English-controlled or influenced part of the island were dissolved and the groundwork was laid for later Tudor-sponsored Plantations, provides a convenient date for this transition. However, both McNeill and O’Conor points out that many of the structures of medieval Ireland survived into the 17th century, and that Plantation itself did not

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew Johnson, *An Archaeology of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Miller and Christopher Tilley (eds), *Ideology, Power, and Prehistory* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 13; M.P. Leone, ‘A historical archaeology of capitalism’ in *American Anthropologist*, xcvi, no. 2 (1995), pp 251–268; Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, pp 160–161; James A. Delle, “‘A Good and Easy Speculation’: spatial conflict, collusion and resistance in late sixteenth-century Munster, Ireland’ in *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, iii, no. 1 (1999), p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, pp 160–161.

<sup>22</sup> Tadhg O’Keeffe, ‘New World angst and the Historical Archaeology of modernity (Review Article)’ in *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, xx, no. 01 (2010), pp 148–9.

<sup>23</sup> Audrey Horning and Marilyn Palmer, ‘General Introduction’ in Audrey Horning and Marilyn Palmer (eds), *Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks? Future Directions in the Archaeological Study of Post-1550 Britain and Ireland* (Woodbridge, 2009), p. p.xiii; Tadhg O’Keeffe, ‘Irish “Post-medieval” archaeology: time to lose our innocence?’ in Audrey Horning and Marilyn Palmer (eds), *Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks? Future Directions in the Archaeological Study of Post-1550 Britain and Ireland* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp 65–80.

<sup>24</sup> Tarlow, *Archaeology of Improvement*, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas McNeill, ‘Where should we place the boundary between the medieval and post-medieval periods in Ireland’ in Audrey Horning, Ruairí Ó Baoill, Colm Donnelly and Paul Logue (eds), *The Post-Medieval Archaeology of Ireland, 1550-1850* (Bray, 2007), pp 7–13.

necessarily replace the social structures of medieval society.<sup>26</sup> Although I will frequently use historic classifications throughout this thesis, I would argue that, where features and elements from multiple, widely-separated periods co-exist together, historic period divisions, as developed in modern historiography, are less important in directing a landscape study than the material landscape remains themselves. I will look in particular at the importance of the medieval landscape in the later historic period in terms of its use as a foundation for later historic landscape elements, and its significance as precedence for later historic elite landscapes.

Any study of the landscape of the later historic period faces substantial difficulties in dealing with an inherently familiar past.<sup>27</sup> This familiarity might appear to make the archaeology and landscape of the period seem unproblematic: the fields, roads and buildings I am studying are mostly still in use today. Yet society and people in the recent past did not necessarily think and act in the same ways as we do today. To assume that they did would prevent archaeologists from investigating how the modern world developed.<sup>28</sup> The archaeological study of later historic landscape has the potential to significantly enhance our understanding of how the modern world, and modern people's identities, were formed.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Irish historic landscape studies***

The archaeological study of the recent Irish historical post-medieval past has progressed to become part of the mainstream study of archaeology in Ireland. This trend has been significantly influenced by traditions of post-medieval archaeology and historical archaeology in North America and Britain. A great deal of this research in the Irish context has concentrated on the colonial past and on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially the Plantations.<sup>30</sup> Archaeologies of the later historic period in Ireland have had a relatively low profile in comparison, with some notable exceptions like Charles Orser's research in

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<sup>26</sup> Kieran Denis O'Connor, *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland* (Dublin, 1998), p. ix; McNeill, 'Where should we place the boundary between the medieval and post-medieval periods in Ireland', p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Susie West, 'Introduction' in Sarah Tarlow and Susie West (eds), *Familiar Past?: Archaeologies of Later Historical Britain* (London, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape* (Oxford, 2007), p. 128.

<sup>29</sup> Audrey Horning, 'Archaeology, conflict and contemporary identity in the North of Ireland. Implications for theory and practice in comparative archaeologies of colonialism' in *Archaeological Dialogues*, xiii, no. 02 (2006), p. 186.

<sup>30</sup> Audrey Horning and Nick Brannon (eds), *Ireland and Britain in the Atlantic World* (Bray, 2010); James Lyttleton and Colin Rynne (eds), *Plantation Ireland: Settlement and Material Culture, c.1550-c.1700* (Dublin, 2009); James Lyttleton, *The Jacobean Plantations in Seventeenth-century Offaly: An Archaeology of a Changing World* (Dublin, 2013).

Roscommon.<sup>31</sup> The Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group, founded in 2000, has become an important forum for research on the post-medieval period in Ireland.<sup>32</sup> Most archaeological investigations of post-medieval period Ireland have been associated with development-led excavations, and mostly have been focused on urban environments.<sup>33</sup> Research on rural environments tends to concentrate on buildings studies and the material culture associated with particular settlements rather than the archaeological landscape itself. In fact Irish archaeologists have had relatively little to say about later historic archaeological landscapes of fields and farms. The most recent trend in UK landscape management practice, historic landscape characterisation (HLC) has been adopted in Ireland, most notably in Co. Clare and the Boyne Valley in Counties Meath and Louth.<sup>34</sup> However, despite being promoted as a management tool by the Heritage Council,<sup>35</sup> HLC has had relatively little impact on historic landscape research in Ireland, with some notable exceptions.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Improvement scholarship in Ireland***

Most of the scholarship on Improvement in Ireland has come from the disciplines of history or geography. Mervyn Busted examined the documentary evidence for Improvement in the estate of Castle Caldwell in Fermanagh, in particular the improving activities of Sir James Caldwell, of the later 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> Busted focuses on the philosophy of Improvement and its particular development amongst the Anglo-Irish elite in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He sees Improvement as representing social power relations in Ireland. These power relations were expressed in the Caldwell estate's demesne landscape and architecture, and in Caldwell's

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<sup>31</sup> Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, pp 89–106; Charles E. Orser (ed.), *Unearthing Hidden Ireland: Historical Archaeology at Ballykilcline, County Roscommon* (Bray, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Audrey Horning, Ruairí Ó Baoill, Colm Donnelly and Paul Logue (eds), *The Post-Medieval Archaeology of Ireland, 1550-1850* (Bray, 2007); Horning & Brannon (eds), *Ireland and Britain*.

<sup>33</sup> Isabel Bennett and Richard Clutterbuck, 'Post-Medieval Sites in the Excavations Bulletins, 1970 – 2005' in Audrey Horning (ed.), *Proceedings of IPMAG X - A Retrospective Conference, Belfast 2010*, In Preparation.

<sup>34</sup> *Landscape Character Assessment of Co. Clare*, by ERM (Dublin, 2004)

(<http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/landscape/publications/landscape-character-assessment-of-co-clare/>) (4 May 2011); *An Integrated Comprehensive GIS Model of Landscape and Land-Use History in the Boyne River Valley and its Catchment*, by Helen Lewis et al., INSTAR Grant 16666, Final Report to the Heritage Council (Kilkenny, 2008)

([http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user\\_upload/INSTAR\\_Database/GIS\\_Landscape\\_and\\_Landuse\\_History\\_in\\_Boyne\\_River\\_Valley\\_Progress\\_Report\\_08.pdf](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/INSTAR_Database/GIS_Landscape_and_Landuse_History_in_Boyne_River_Valley_Progress_Report_08.pdf).) (4 May 2011).

<sup>35</sup> George Lambrick, Jill Hind and Ianto Wain, *Historic Landscape Characterisation in Ireland: Best Practice Guidance* (Kilkenny, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> *Making Christian Landscapes. Settlement, Society and Regionality in Early Medieval Ireland*, by Tomás Ó Carragáin and John Sheehan, Final Report (Kilkenny, 2010); Ken Hanley, 'Profiting from the land: mixed fortunes in the historic landscapes of north Cork' in Sheelagh Conran, Ed Danaher and Michael Stanley (eds), *Past Times, Changing Fortunes: Archaeology and the National Roads Authority Monograph Series No. 8* (Dublin, 2011), pp 31–56.

<sup>37</sup> Mervyn Busted, 'The practice of improvement in the Irish context – The Castle Caldwell estate in County Fermanagh in the second half of the eighteenth century' in *Irish Geography*, xxxiii, no. 1 (2000), pp 15–36.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

efforts to transform the broader economy through improved agricultural practice and markets. Toby Barnard's *Improving Ireland?* explored the history of Improvement in Ireland from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, from the perspective of the Anglo-Irish Anglican elite,<sup>38</sup> focusing on individuals as case-studies, including Sir William Petty, Richard Lawrence, The Earls of Egmont and Lohort in Cork, and Robert French in Galway. Barnard's is a study of the Protestant elite rather than the impact of Improvement on the general population.<sup>39</sup> Barnard saw Improvement as a 'creed' whose devotees in Ireland were the Anglo-Irish elite.<sup>40</sup> Helen O'Connell looked at the impact of Improvement on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Irish literary genre she called 'Improvement fiction'.<sup>41</sup> This was a form of literature which modelled itself on English realism, as an alternative to romanticism, fantasy and political revolutionary literature popular at the time. Kathryn Lee Webber's recent PhD thesis, *Cultivating Civilized Subjects: British Agricultural "Improvement" in Eighteenth-century Ireland*, looks at Improvement in Ireland from a post-colonial perspective, primarily through an analysis of Jethro Tull's writings on agriculture, and the fiction and non-fiction of Jonathan Swift, Maria Edgeworth and her father.<sup>42</sup> Webber approaches Improvement as an explicitly colonial undertaking, used to justify and naturalize British rule in Ireland. As is apparent from the above brief survey, Improvement studies in Ireland have been more literary, geographical and historical than archaeological.

As stated above, archaeological research on post-medieval Ireland has mainly focused on the Plantations, with colonialism as the primary theme, of which matters relating to Improvement, like enclosure, form a component.<sup>43</sup> Wes Forsyth produced the first explicitly archaeological study of later historic Improvement landscapes in Ireland, taking as his study area the islands off the north coast of Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>44</sup> He adopts a multi-pronged

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<sup>38</sup> Toby Christopher Barnard, *Improving Ireland?: Projectors, Prophets and Profiteers, 1641-1786* (Dublin, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Kevin Whelan, 'Review: Toby Barnard. *Improving Ireland? Projectors, Prophets and Profiteers, 1641-1786*' in *The American Historical Review*, cxiv, no. 2 (2009), pp 482-482.

<sup>40</sup> Barnard, *Improving Ireland?*, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Helen O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Kathryn Lee Webber, 'Cultivating Civilized Subjects: British Agricultural "Improvement" in Eighteenth-Century Ireland' (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Riverside, 2012)

(<http://search.proquest.com.libgate.library.nuigalway.ie/pqdt/docview/1220486013/abstract/13D4AD23603A8DDF1E/35?accountid=12899>).

<sup>43</sup> for example, Delle, "'A Good and Easy Speculation'"; and Colin Breen, *An Archaeology of Southwest Ireland, 1570-1670* (Dublin, 2007), p. 169.

<sup>44</sup> Wes Forsythe, 'Improving Insularity: An Archaeology of the Islands off the north coast of Ireland in the Later Historic Period, 1700-1847.' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Ulster, 2006); W. Forsythe, 'On the edge of improvement: Rathlin Island and the modern world' in *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, xi, no. 3 (2007), pp 221-240; Wes Forsythe and Rosemary McConkey (eds), *Rathlin Island: an Archaeological Survey of a Maritime Landscape* (Belfast, 2012); W. Forsythe, 'The Measures and Materiality of Improvement in Ireland' in *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, xvii, no. 1 (2013), pp 72-93.

approach to these Improvement landscapes, using archaeological excavation, land and architecture survey and documentary source analysis. Forsythe's research focuses on Improvement as a force driving landscape change on the islands off the north coast of Ulster, in particular landlord and tenant engagement with notions of modernity and capitalism, and evidence for new enclosure, housing, and industry associated with fishing and kelp-making. Forsythe also examined resistance to Improvement as expressed in the continued use of clachans and rundale land tenure, and smuggling.

Other research exploring themes relating to Improvement in Ireland include the landscapes of estate houses,<sup>45</sup> communications,<sup>46</sup> towns and villages,<sup>47</sup> and vernacular housing,<sup>48</sup> industry,<sup>49</sup> and moral Improvement.<sup>50</sup> This thesis focuses primarily on Improvement in the rural agricultural landscape of Irish estates and farms.

Improvement had a significant impact on Irish landscapes. It shaped the form of estates and farm houses and their surroundings, places of worship, roads and communications, right down to how the landscape was organised, parcelled out and enclosed. It also changed how people lived their lives by modifying their practices in agriculture, in morals and in commerce. Ultimately Improvement set out to change people's long-term identity by modifying their material environment, their daily actions and routine behaviour. Within these terms, Improvement was a highly contested ideology of coercion, exclusion, and power. I will argue that, at the heart of the Improvement ideal in Ireland, there was a duality which manifested itself as a basic contradiction in practice. Improvement in Ireland was not a unified ideological program with a set of planned aims and objectives; it evolved, was sometimes indifferently applied by different classes and sectors of society, and was actively, often violently, resisted. The term 'improvement' had featured in the literature of British colonialism in Ireland from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in relation to identifying differences between British and Irish

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<sup>45</sup> Finola O' Kane, *Landscape Design in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Mixing Foreign Trees with the Natives* (Cork, 2004); Finola O'Kane, 'Design and Rule: Women in the Irish Countryside 1715-1831' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, xix (2004), pp 56–74.

<sup>46</sup> David Broderick, *The First Toll Roads: Ireland's Turnpike Roads 1729-1858* (Cork, 2002); Edel Barry, 'Social Change in 19th-Century Rural Ireland and the Archaeology of the Narrow-Gauge Railway: The Case of Munster' in *Industrial Archaeology Review*, xxxii, no. 2 (2010), pp 116–128.

<sup>47</sup> B. J. Graham and L. J Proudfoot, *Urban Improvement in Provincial Ireland 1700-1840* (Athlone, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> Barry O'Reilly, *Living Under Thatch* (Cork, 2004); Barry O'Reilly and Colm Murray, *Traditional Buildings on Irish Farms* (Kilkenny, 2007); Barry O'Reilly, 'Hearth and home: the vernacular house in Ireland from c. 1800' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C*, 111C (2011), pp 193–215.

<sup>49</sup> Colin Rynne, *The Industrial Archaeology of Cork City and Its Environs* (Dublin, 1999); Colin Rynne, *Industrial Ireland 1750-1930: An Archaeology* (Cork, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> John O'Connor, *The Workhouses of Ireland: The Fate of Ireland's Poor* (Dublin, 1995); John Crowley, William J Smyth and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine, 1845-52* (Cork, 2012).

manners and landscapes, and justifying British colonialism (section 3.3). Although Improvement changed over the later historic period, its colonial legacy remained. Improvement continued to be a contentious ideology in the later historic period, and the Irish landscape was where a great deal of this contest took place.

### **1.3 Later Historic Ireland: The Landscape and History Overview**

The island of Ireland has an area of about 84,000km<sup>2</sup>, and is heavily influenced by its Atlantic location. Irish topography may be characterised as mild, with a flat centre with gentle hills and more mountainous coastal regions (Fig.1.2).<sup>51</sup> The island's temperate climate is predominantly influenced by the Atlantic. The warmest parts of the country are around the maritime margins of the south and west; the coldest in the uplands and the north (Fig.1.3). This mild climate was noticed by English writers in the early modern period, perhaps because of its contrast with the frequent cold spells of what has been termed 'the little Ice Age' in England and the rest of Europe.<sup>52</sup> Compared with Britain or the rest of Europe, modern Ireland has relatively little semi-wild landscapes or woodland. Agriculture has substantially shaped the faces of the country, with the possible exception of extensive areas of raised peat bog around the lowland centre, and blanket peats around the west and the mountain margins. Most modern Irish land (68%) is used for pasture and arable agriculture, with the remainder being forestry, bog, lakes and rivers, or uplands (Fig. 1.4).<sup>53</sup>

A great deal of Irish archaeological research on landscapes has focused specifically on distributions of monuments of particular type or period (section 2.3).<sup>54</sup> The Irish landscape is densely populated with recorded archaeological sites and monuments (Fig.1.5). Their distribution shows considerable variation. Significant urban spaces, like Dublin city, have a high density of monuments, as do wetland environments like bogs in Co. Offaly where detailed survey work has been carried out. Other districts like Glendalough in Co. Wicklow, the Burren in Co. Clare or the Dingle peninsula in Co. Kerry have high rates of survival of archaeological

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<sup>51</sup> Valerie Hall, *The Making of Ireland's Landscape Since the Ice Age* (Cork, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Kieran Hickey, 'The historic record of cold spells in Ireland' in *Irish Geography*, xlv, no. 2-3 (2011), p. 305.

<sup>53</sup> 'Corine Land Cover 2006 seamless vector data — European Environment Agency (EEA)' (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/clc-2006-vector-data-version-2>) (21 July 2014).

<sup>54</sup> National Monuments Service, 'Archaeological Survey of Ireland - National Monuments Service', 2013 (<http://www.archaeology.ie/ArchaeologicalSurveyofIreland/>) (25 Mar. 2013); Northern Ireland Environmental Agency, 'Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record', 2012 (<http://apps.ehsni.gov.uk/ambit/>) (11 Feb. 2012).

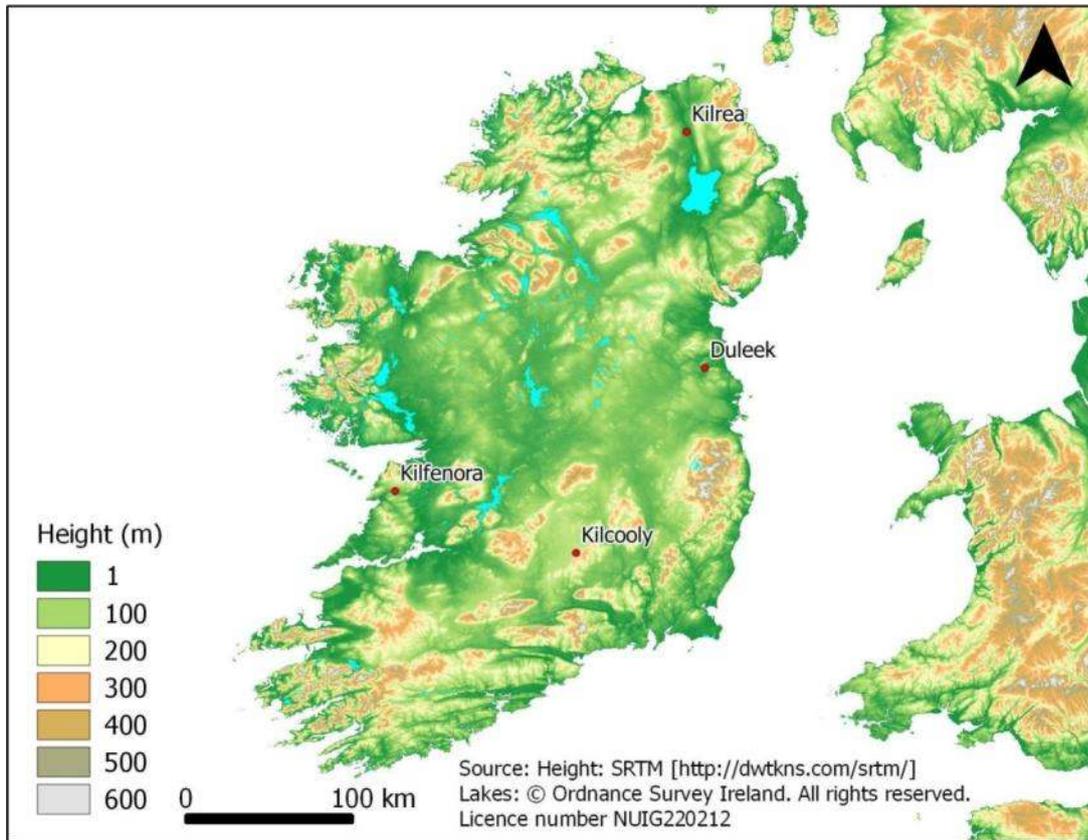


Figure 1.2 The topography of Ireland.

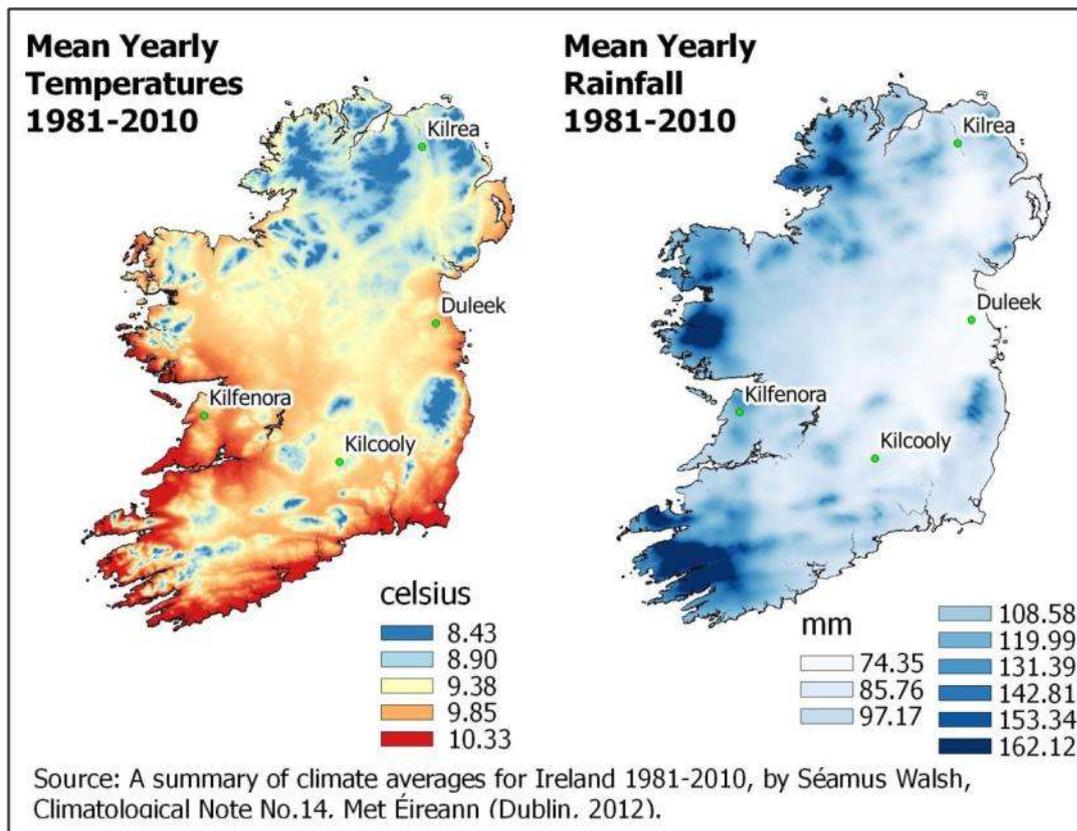


Figure 1.3 Temperature and rainfall in Ireland.

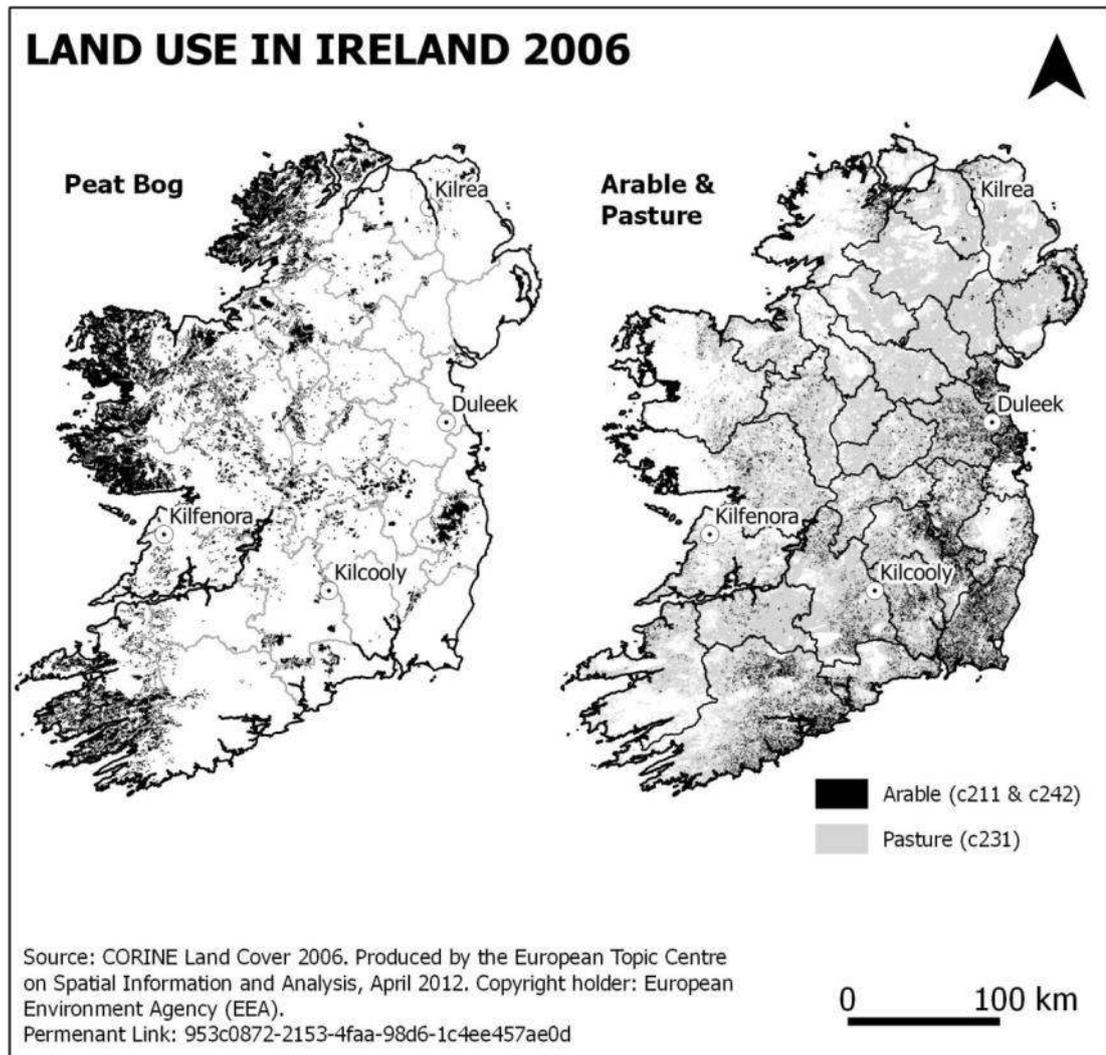


Figure 1.4 Modern land use in Ireland.

monuments. A considerable number of these monuments were initially identified for the Sites and Monuments Record from early edition six-inch maps by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI),<sup>55</sup> meaning that, to a certain extent, modern archaeologists view the monumental landscape through a 19<sup>th</sup>-century prism.

The OSI's primary role was to record the bounded space of Ireland for the purpose of taxation. Some bounded spaces, like counties, are relatively late arrivals. Wicklow was the last county shired in Ireland, in 1606,<sup>56</sup> although many of Ireland's 32 counties, like Co. Derry, were based on earlier Gaelic political units. Some boundaries may have originated in late prehistory. The Irish townland, of which there are 60,500, are at least early medieval but many are probably

<sup>55</sup> National Monuments Service, 'Archaeological Survey of Ireland - National Monuments Service'.

<sup>56</sup> Cæsar Litton Falkiner, 'The Counties of Ireland: An Historical Sketch of Their Origin, Constitution, and Gradual Delimitation' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 24C (1902), p. 187.

## DENSITY OF RECORDED ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENTS IN IRELAND

Map showing the relative density of archaeological monuments in the Sites and Monuments Record for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, with a 3D graphic illustrating spikes in recorded monument density.

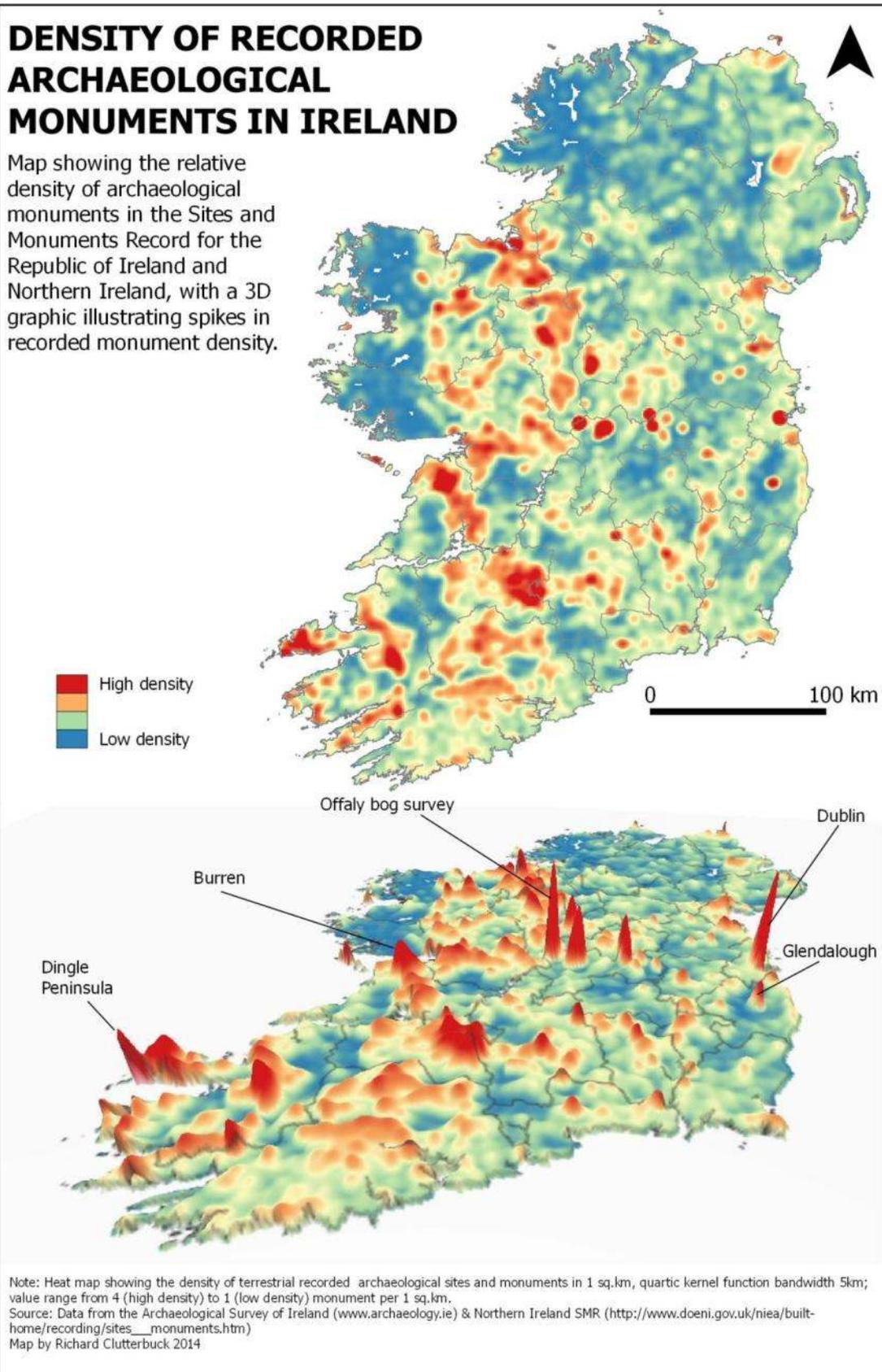


Figure 1.5 Density of recorded archaeological sites and monuments in Ireland.

prehistoric in origin.<sup>57</sup> These places were often also units of land tenure, appearing in documentary sources from medieval deeds to later historic maps, enumerating property and populations.<sup>58</sup> Townlands remain significant landscape features in modern Ireland. The largest are in upland and marginal areas. The smallest tend to be located around areas of intense long-term settlements like Dublin or coastal Co. Wexford, and around towns more generally. Townlands in south Ulster, particularly Co. Cavan, tend also to be quite small as their outline encloses the natural topography of the small drumlin hills (Fig. 1.6). Parishes have also remained important units of area from the medieval period. A parish is a collection of townlands that provided tithes for the medieval Church. Civil parishes were still cited as an administrative unit by the civil authorities into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with baronies, another medieval administrative unit which has for the most part fallen out of everyday modern use. The religious functions of the parish in Ireland after the Reformation were divided between the Anglican Church of Ireland which retained much of the medieval parish structure, and the Catholic church, which had to create another configuration, albeit using much of the medieval structure as its framework (Chapters 4 & 7).<sup>59</sup>

Fields, enclosures and bounded space are the largest elements of the Irish historic landscape. Modern field boundaries form a spider's web of some 830,000 km, occupying by themselves 1.5% of the land area of the country.<sup>60</sup> Field size varies greatly, but an average field area of 3.25 – 4 ha has been proposed.<sup>61</sup> There may have been up to 6.5 million fields in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland.<sup>62</sup> Irish field boundaries consist of bank and ditch, drystone or mortared stone walls, hedges and fences, or a combination of the above. Studies of fields in Ireland have typically distinguished between those in the east, generally seen as influenced by medieval tillage and Anglo-Norman and English culture, and those in the Gaelic west, an ancient 'Celtic'

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas McErlean, 'The Irish townland system of landscape organisation' in Terence Reeves-Smyth and Fred Hamond (eds), *Landscape Archaeology in Ireland* (BAR, Oxford, 1983), cxvi, 315–339.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.; John Harwood Andrews, *A Paper Landscape: the Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2002), pp 15–16.

<sup>59</sup> Patrick J Duffy, 'The shape of the parish' in Elizabeth FitzPatrick and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland: Community, Territory and Building* (Dublin, 2006), pp 33–61.

<sup>60</sup> F. H. A. Aalen and Kevin Whelan, 'Fields' in F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd ed., Cork, 2011), p. 200.

<sup>61</sup> F. H. A. Aalen, 'The origin of enclosures in eastern Ireland' in Nicholas Stephens and R.E Glasscock (eds), *Irish Geographical Studies in Honour of E. Estyn Evans* (Belfast, 1970), p. 210.

<sup>62</sup> This rough estimate is calculated by taking the Devon Commission (1845) figure of six million ha of improved land in Ireland (see section 3.5) divided by the 0.9 ha average field size for the case study areas.

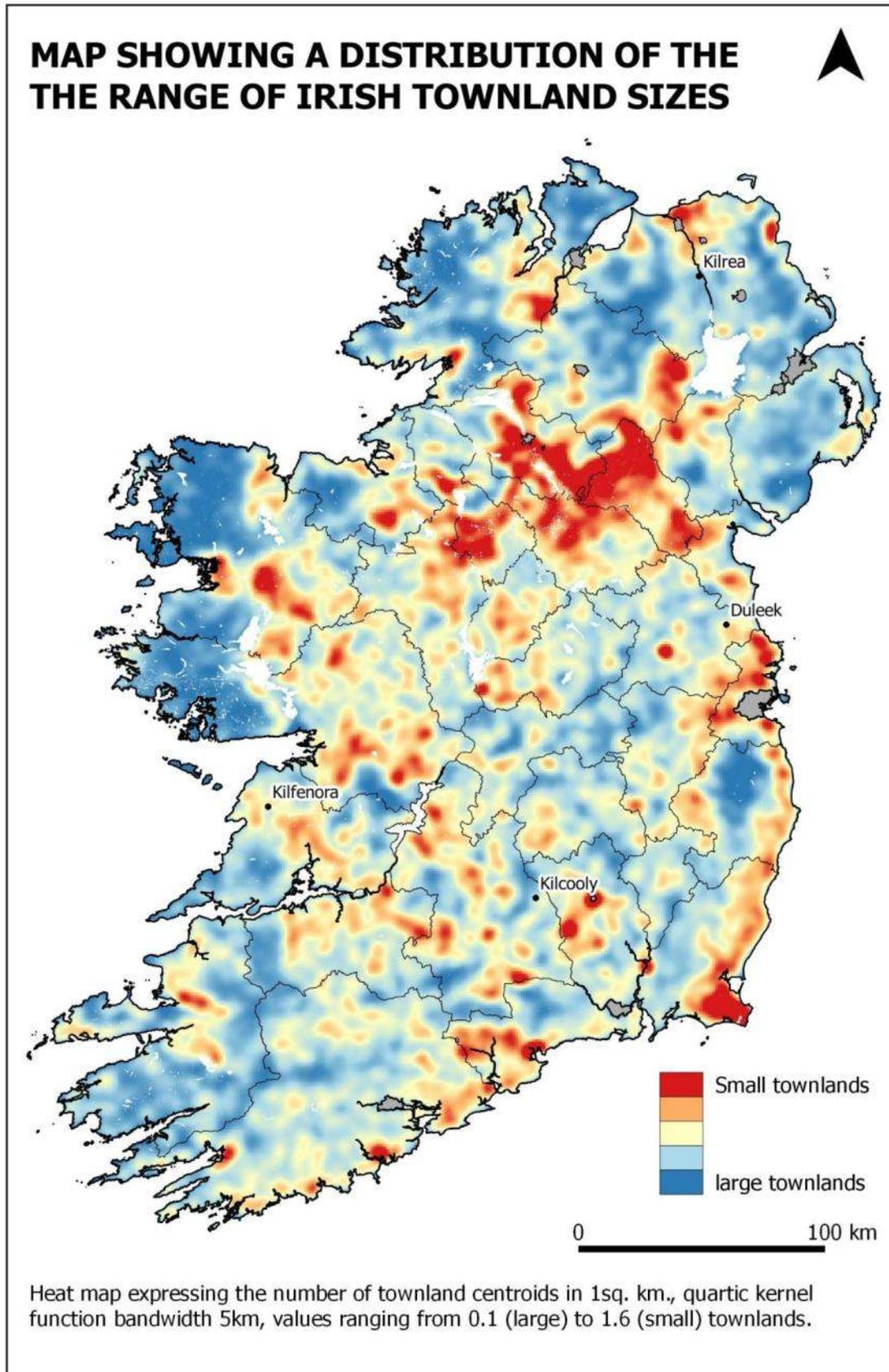


Figure 1.6 A distribution of the range of townland sizes in Ireland.

landscape of small irregular stone fields surrounding irregular settlements.<sup>63</sup> Regional patterns of field boundaries – familiar to those driving from the well-hedged and treed boundaries of the south-east of Ireland to the beautifully bare lattice of stone walls in the west – act as the material manifestation of these juxtaposed cultures of the ‘tilling’ planter owning and working land in severalty, and the pastoral ‘native’ who owned land communally.<sup>64</sup>

Ireland in the later historic period was predominantly rural. Just 0.35% of the surface area of the country was covered by towns, villages or cities in 1841.<sup>65</sup> Irish speakers were predominantly found in the west of Ireland (Fig. 1.7).<sup>66</sup> Towns and villages were important places in rural Ireland from the medieval period (Fig. 1.8).<sup>67</sup> They were the sites of markets and fairs, and, in the later historic period, either significantly altered or created by Improvement principles (Fig. 1.9; section 6.2). Historic Irish towns have arguably been the subject of more detailed and comprehensive research than later historic rural Ireland, in terms of looking at the material aspects of their origin, design and change over time.<sup>68</sup> Each of the four case study areas detailed in this thesis contains a village or town. Later historic Ireland was also extraordinarily well served by a dense network of roads, particularly in the north of Ireland between Counties Down and Cavan, and in Co. Cork (Fig. 1.10). Their quality varied, with some travel writers like Arthur Young noting their high quality relative to England.<sup>69</sup> Contemporary published guides like Taylor and Skinner’s *Road Maps* and Wilson’s *Post-chase Guide* helped plan journeys and provided, for the armchair traveller, an intimate portrait

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<sup>63</sup> Ake Campbell, ‘Irish fields and houses: a study of rural culture’ in *Béaloides*, v, no. 1 (1935), pp 57–74; Ronald H. Buchanan, ‘Field systems in Ireland’ in Alan R. H. Baker and Robin Alan Butlin (eds), *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 580.

<sup>64</sup> Aalen, ‘Irish Geographical Studies’, p. 221.

<sup>65</sup> *Abstracts of the Census of Ireland. Taken in the Years 1841 and 1851*. HC (673) [1400], Accounts and Papers (London, 1851); Leslie A. Clarkson, L. Kennedy, E.M. Crawford, M.W. Dowling and Queen’s University of Belfast. Department of Economic and Social History, *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Population, 1821-1911 [computer file]*. SN: 3578 (Colchester, Essex, 1997) (<http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-3578-1>).

<sup>66</sup> Garret FitzGerald, ‘Irish-speaking in the pre-famine period: a study based on the 1911 census data for people born before 1851 and still alive in 1911’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C*, 103C (2003), pp 191–283.

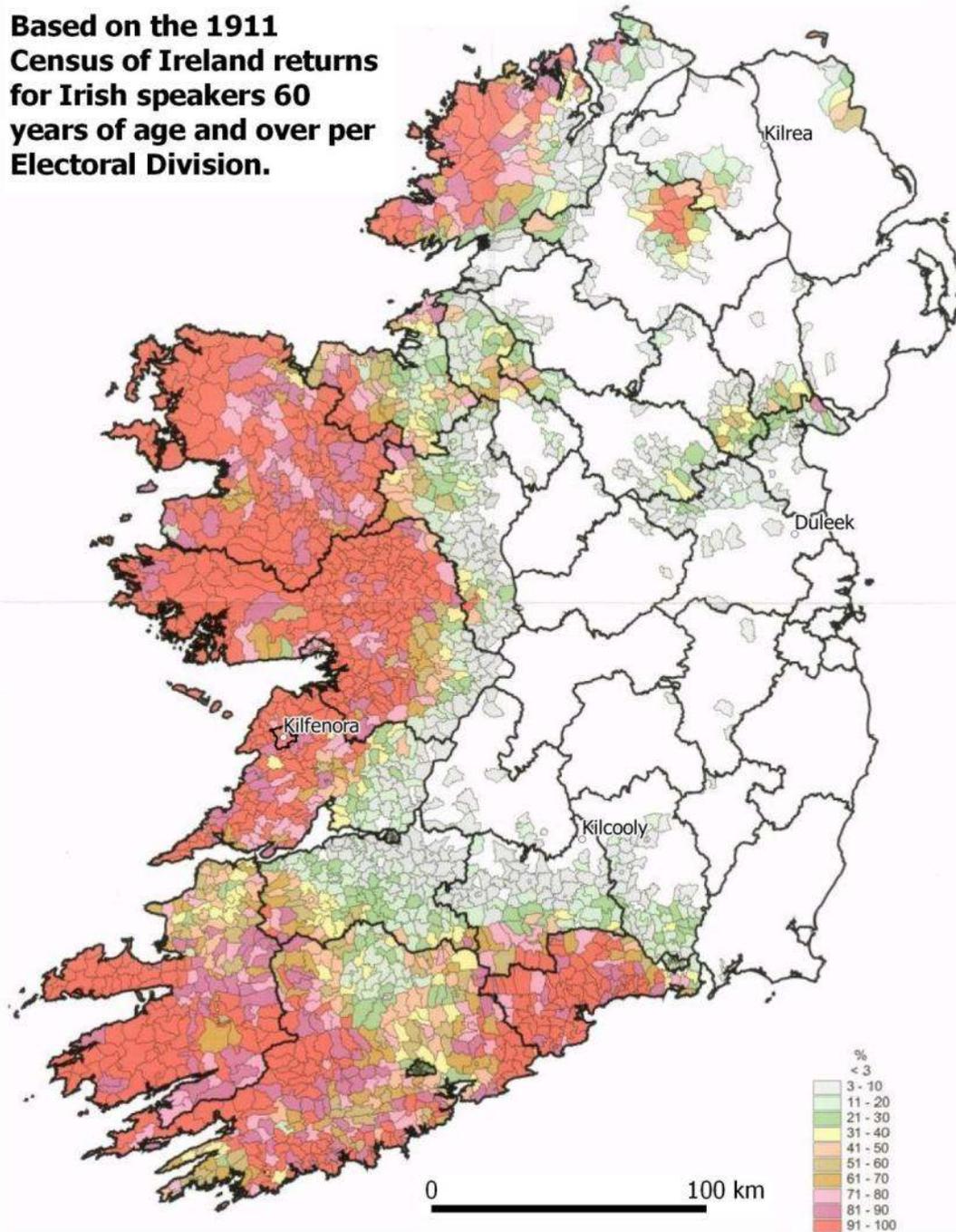
<sup>67</sup> Kevin Whelan, ‘Towns and villages’ in F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd ed., Cork, 2011), pp 256–277.

<sup>68</sup> B. J. Graham, ‘The Definition and Classification of Medieval Irish Towns’ in *Irish Geography*, xxi, no. 1 (1988), pp 20–32; William Nolan and Anngret Simms, *Irish Towns: a Guide to Sources* (Dublin, 1998); Jacinta Prunty and Howard B Clarke, *Reading the Maps: a Guide to the Irish Historic Towns Atlas* (Dublin, 2011); Howard B. Clarke and Sarah Gearty (eds), *Maps & Texts: Exploring the Irish Historic Towns Atlas* (Dublin, 2013).

<sup>69</sup> Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland with General Observations on the Present State of that Kingdom Made in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778 and Brought Down to the Year 1779* (2 vols, London, 1780), p. 157.

## PRE-FAMINE IRISH SPEAKERS (After FitzGerald 2003, Map 2)

Based on the 1911  
Census of Ireland returns  
for Irish speakers 60  
years of age and over per  
Electoral Division.



Source: Garret FitzGerald, 'Irish-speaking in the pre-famine period: a study based on the 1911 census data for people born before 1851 and still alive in 1911' in Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C, ciii (2003), pp 191-283; Map 2

Figure 1.7 Irish speakers in 19th-century Ireland (after FitzGerald 2003).

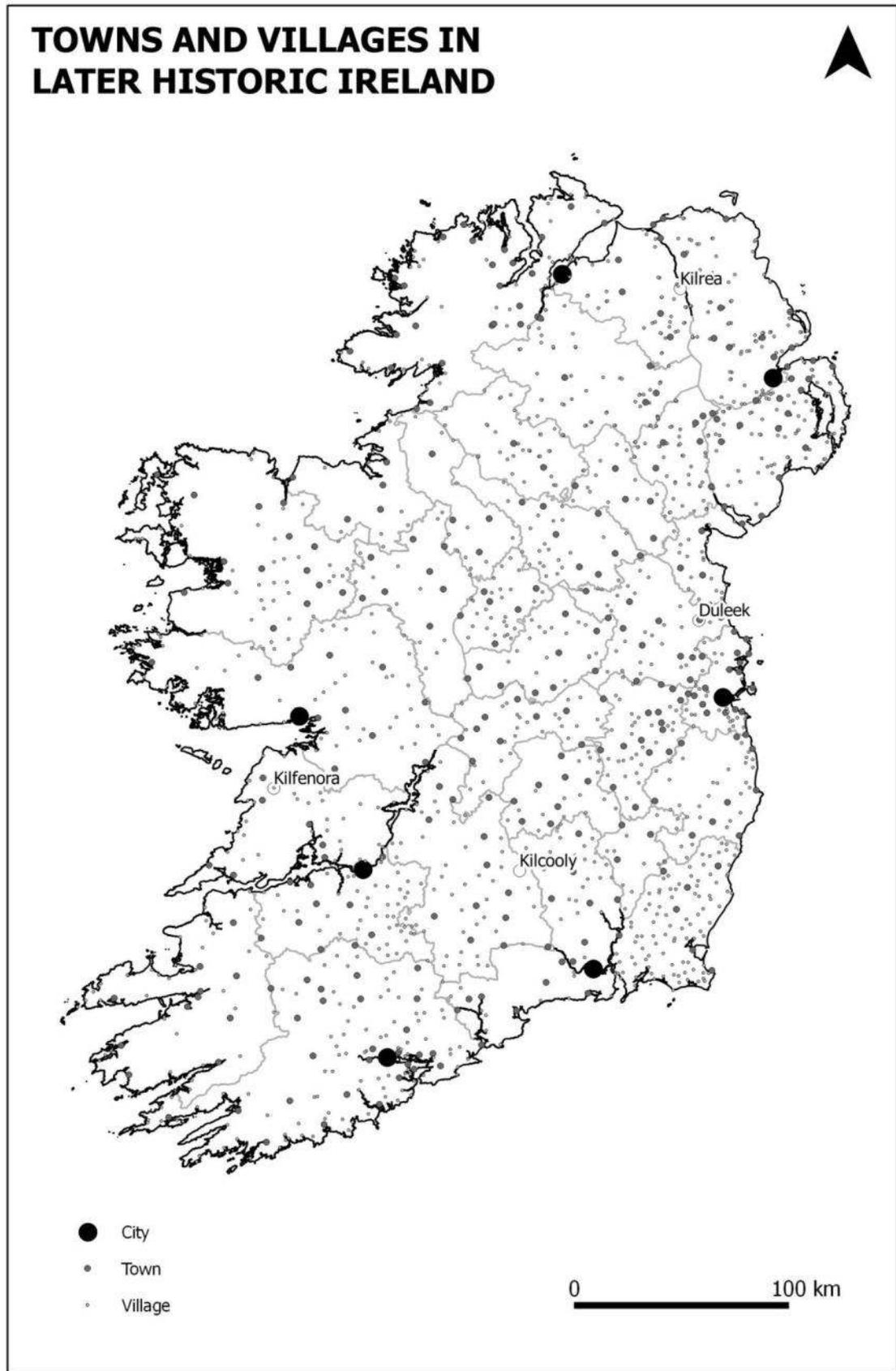


Figure 1.8 Towns and villages in later historic Ireland.

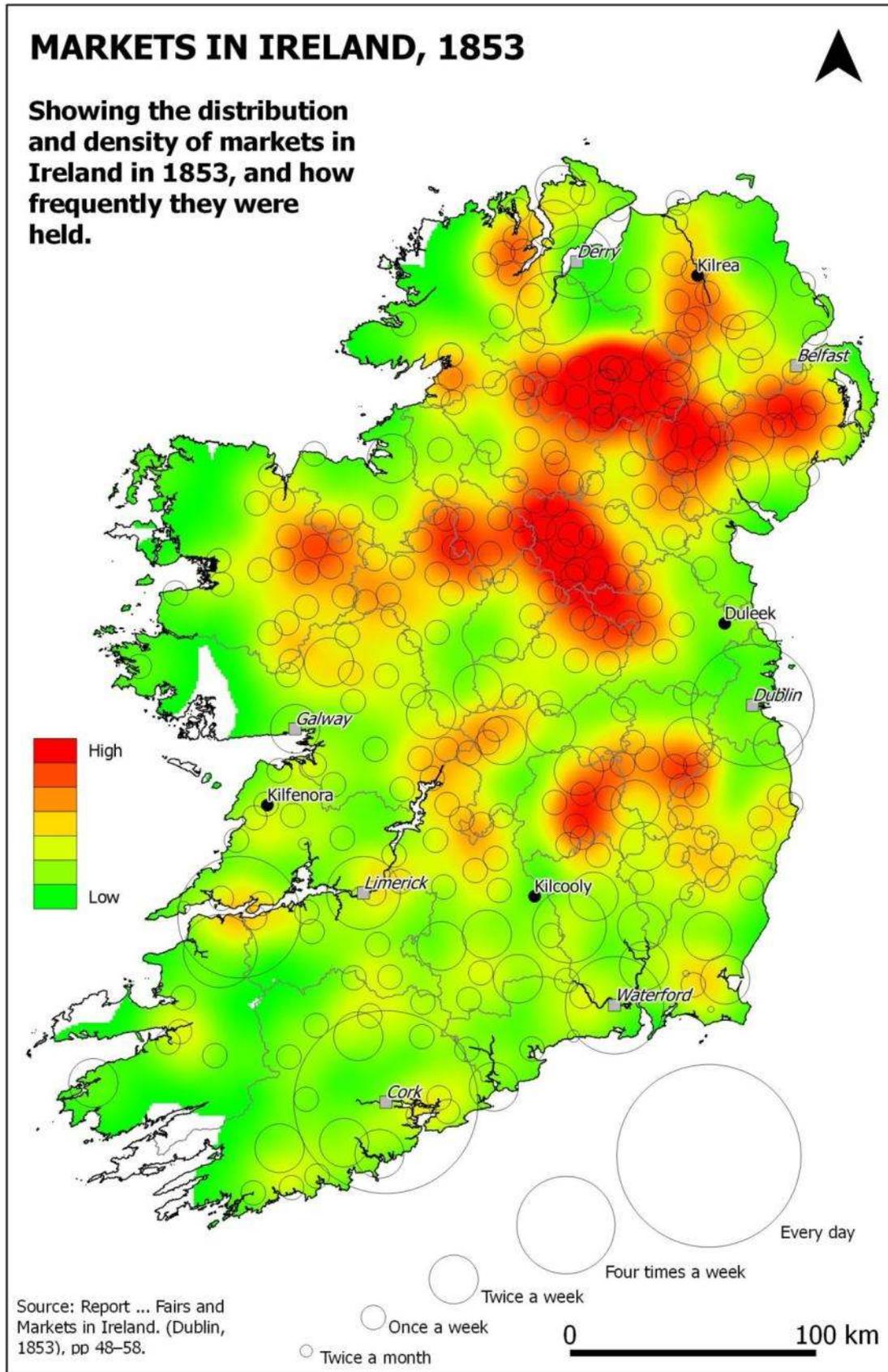


Figure 1.9 Irish markets and fairs in 1853.

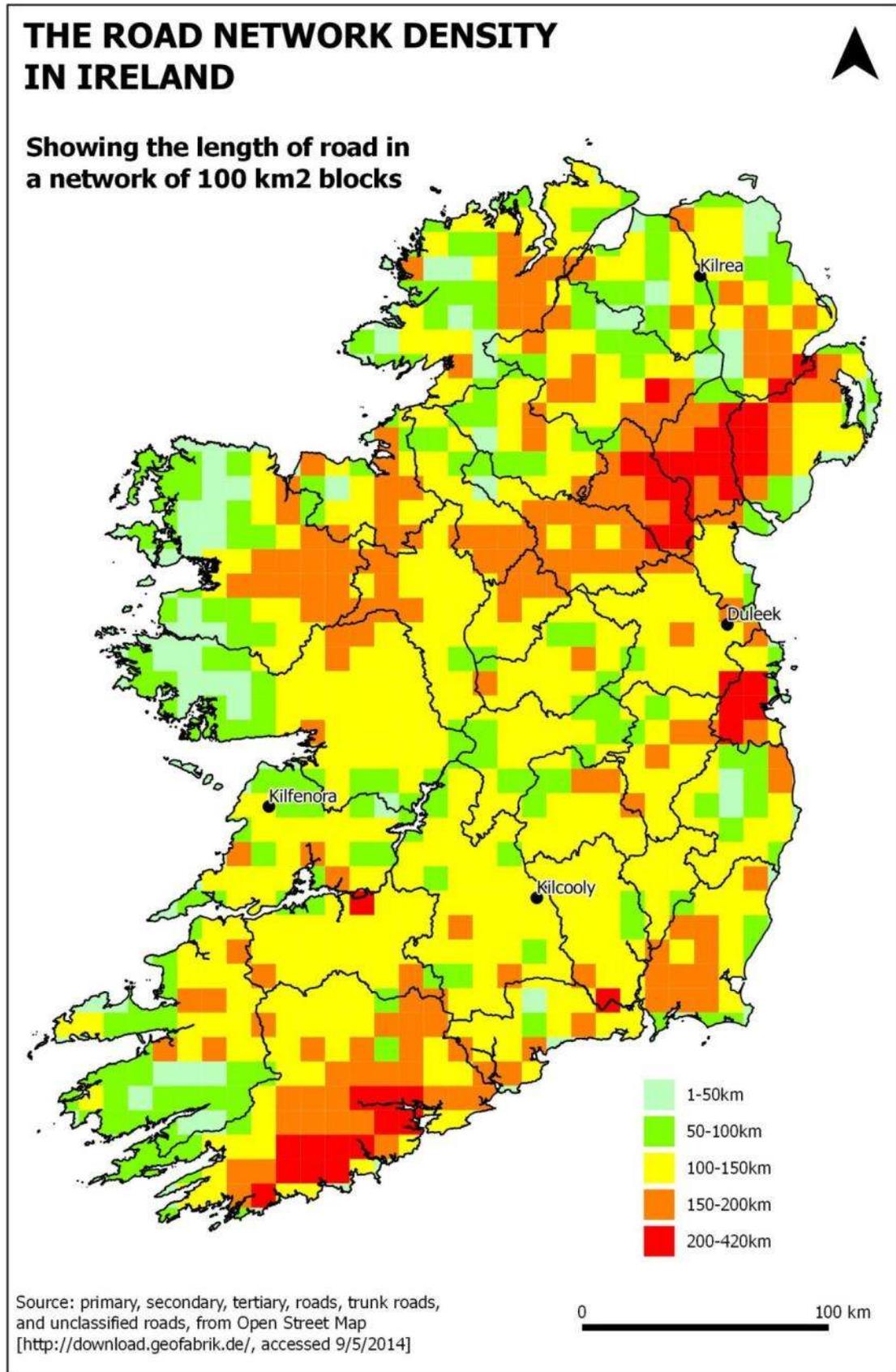


Figure 1.10 Density of roads in later historic Ireland.

of the Irish landscape, listing towns, villages, and gentlemen's seats.<sup>70</sup> A great many of these new roads were designed by landlords and financed by Grand Juries,<sup>71</sup> both part of the structures of power in later historic Ireland.

### ***Structures of power in later historic Ireland***

Power in later historic Ireland was diffused amongst the various structures, religious and temporal, from the Crown to parliament, bishops to the aristocracy and, crucially, the landowners. The structures of power in later historical Ireland were made up of the Irish government and castle administration based in Dublin and, from 1690 until 1800, the Irish parliament (for most of its history subordinate to the English parliament); the mainly protestant elite or 'ascendency'; the Anglican Church of Ireland hierarchy; and those who owned land, either outright or on long-term leases. Structural agencies included the legal and administrative machinery of government, included government departments, legal authorities including local magistrates, military authorities (in particular the local militias), local government in the form of the Grand Juries and, before them, the parish vestries. Edmund Burke, the Irish politician and essayist, described the above-described structure of power as a 'natural' order:

*We fear God, we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility. Why? Because when such ideas are brought before our minds, it is natural to be so affected; because all other feelings are false and spurious, and tend to corrupt our minds, to vitiate our primary morals, to render us unfit for rational liberty ...*<sup>72</sup>

'Improvement' was a means of legitimising the improver's position by reimagining what was 'natural' in the landscape and inserting the improver into this natural order. However, this new natural order was threatened on a number of fronts: by a large population of Catholic and Protestant tenants and by the dispossessed remnants of the old order, and by a potential Jacobite restoration, French invasion, or, after 1798, republican revolution. Following the 1798 Rebellion, John Fitzgibbon, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, advocating for a united kingdom with Britain, expressed the insecurity of the Anglo-Irish elite in Ireland in stark terms:

*The whole power and property of the country have been conferred by successive monarchs of England upon ... three sets of English adventurers who poured into the*

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<sup>70</sup> George Taylor and Andrew Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland, Surveyed 1777* (First Published 1778, Dublin, 1969); William Wilson, *The Post-chase Companion* (Dublin, 1786).

<sup>71</sup> John H. Andrews, 'Road planning in Ireland before the railway age' in *Irish Geography*, v, no. 1 (1964), pp 17–41.

<sup>72</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1790), pp 128–9.

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*country at the termination of three successive rebellions; confiscation is their common title, and from their first settlement they have been hemmed in on every side by the old inhabitants of the island, brooding over their discontents in sullen indignation [...] What was the security of the English settlers for their physical existence at the revolution [1689]? And what is the security of their descendants at this day? The power and commanding protection of Great Britain. If by any fatality it fails, you are at the mercy of the old inhabitants of the island; and I should have hoped that samples of mercy exhibited by them in the course of the late rebellion [1798] would have taught the gentlemen who call themselves the Irish nation to reflect with sooner attention on the dangers that surround them.<sup>73</sup>*

Although for much of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century the Catholic Church and remaining Catholic aristocracy were locked out of the structures of power in Ireland, they were still a significant local power in the land, where most of the population remained Catholic.<sup>74</sup> Land, the right to 'own' land, and even the legal mechanism by which land could be owned and transferred, were key contests in later historic Ireland. I will explore in later chapters how Improvement helped secure these contests.

The Irish rural landscape's smallest administrative unit, the townland, remained the most important, and is still widely recognised today. Townlands defined place, property and identity across the social and religious spectrum in later historic Ireland because they acted as basic units of tenure. Where landed estates could encompass thousands of hectares scattered across counties, people were most often identified with the more intimate world of parishes, townlands and properties. For this reason I have chosen four case study areas that constitute local geographies of small communities and families.

### **1.3 In Depth: the Case Study Areas**

As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2, scales of analysis are a significant consideration when researching historical landscapes in Ireland. Case studies are a particularly useful means of studying general themes using close and detailed analysis of easily defined

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<sup>73</sup> John Fitzgibbon, *The Speech of the Right Honourable .John, Earl of Clare, Lord High Chancellor of Ireland, in the House of Lords of Ireland on a Motion Made by Him on Monday, February 10, 1800* (Dublin, 1800), p. 22.

<sup>74</sup> Kevin Whelan, 'An underground gentry? Catholic middlemen in eighteenth-century Ireland' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, x (1995), pp 7–68.

geographic areas. My case study areas, Kilrea in Co. Derry, Duleek in Co. Meath, Kilcooly in Co. Tipperary, and Kilfenora in Co. Clare, allows me to undertake detailed analysis of the impact of Improvement on the landscape at a local level. Each of these study areas was a civil parish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and together they cover a combined area of 176km<sup>2</sup>, just 0.02% of the land surface of Ireland. Today, the study areas are predominantly (82% of their total) used for agriculture, both arable and pasture, with 10% being bog land. I have chosen widely distributed case study areas to capture some of the characteristic variations in Ireland's regional landscapes. However, each of the study areas contains within it a remarkable quantity and variation of landscape features in the 119 townlands that constitute their total area. There were 3,180 inhabited houses in the combined study areas in 1841, with a population of 19,021, occupying and sharing 2,590 individual property units by 1850. Some of these properties were the locus of elite landscapes: the four case study areas contained 16 demesnes and associated estate houses, making up a combined total of 7% of the study areas. Each of the four case study areas contain villages, two medieval in origin (Duleek and Kilfenora), one 17<sup>th</sup>-century Plantation town (Kilrea) and one village founded as a speculative venture to promote mining in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (New Birmingham). Considering the complexity of the historic landscape in Ireland, I understood that parish-level study areas provide reasonably coherent historical units facilitating both practical survey areas and access to a broad range of documentary information from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Each study area was impacted by Improvement. The key to understanding the impact of Improvement on later historic rural Ireland is detailed close reading of specific landscapes.

### ***Kilrea***

Kilrea is located in the barony of Loughinsholin at the east border of Co. Derry or Londonderry. Kilrea contains ten townlands, in total 25km<sup>2</sup> in extent, strung along the east bank of the River Bann (Fig. 1.11). The Bann is Ulster's longest river, the lowest reach of which empties Lough Neagh into the north Atlantic at Coleraine, and has been a routeway into the interior of Ulster for millennia. Kilrea parish sits on a series of low hills (20m - 60m OD), bordering the river flood plain (10m OD). The bedrock geology of Kilrea is basalt. Its soils are predominantly sand and gravel, with peat located in low-lying areas between the hills and, in larger areas, at the west margin of the parish. Farming in the parish is now predominantly pasture-based.

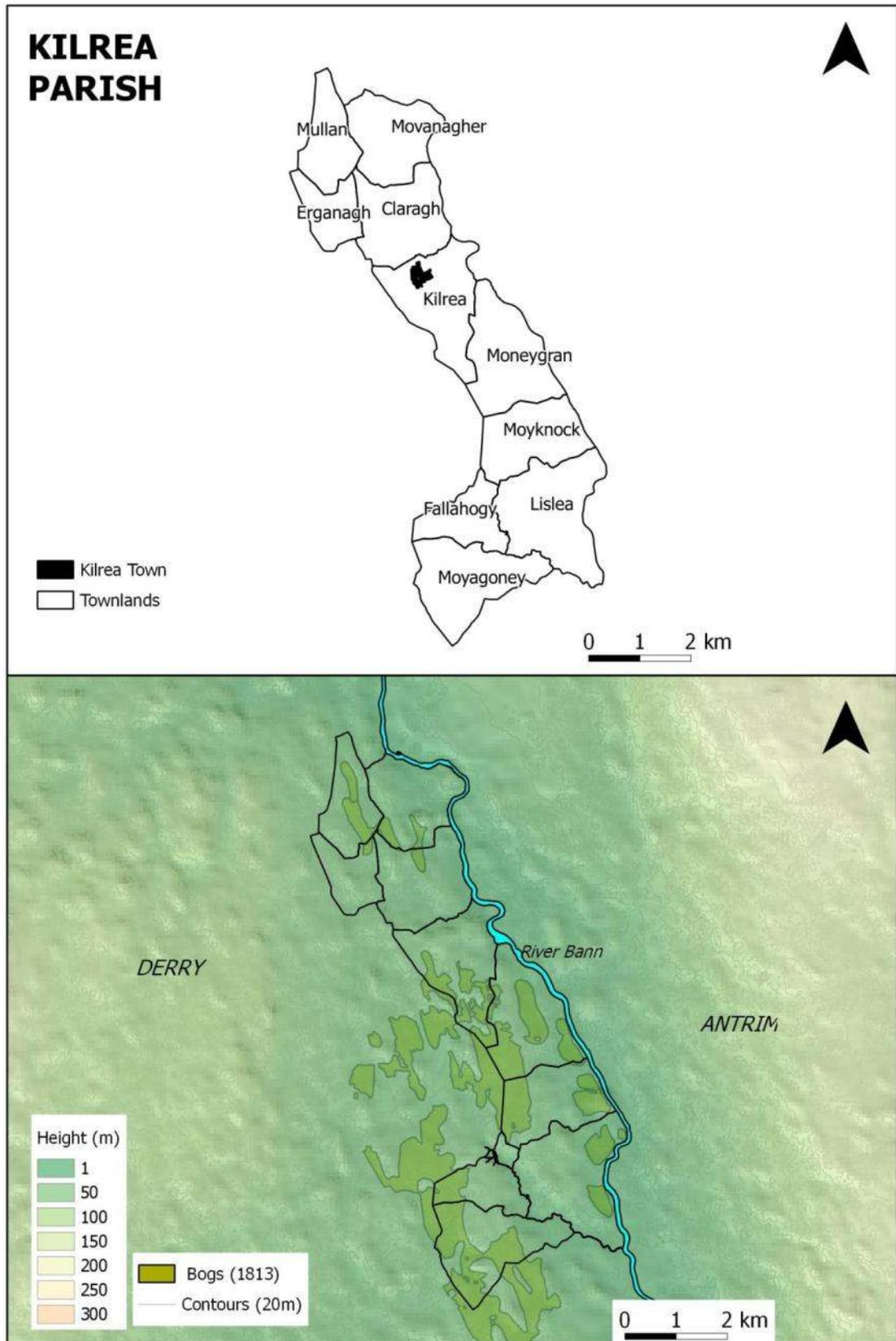


Figure 1.11 Kilrea, Co. Derry/Londonderry.

All of the townland names of Kilrea parish are Irish and medieval in origin. They make reference to settlement features and even church officials. The townland of *Airchinneach* (Erganagh), for instance, references a Gaelic steward of church land land, whilst *Clarach* (Claragh) points to a place of plank bridges or boards, and *An Lios Liath* (Lislea) refers to a grey fort. *Cill Ria* (Kilrea) means either the grey church or church of the cross, possibly referring to a cross roads.<sup>75</sup> Kilrea town, a plantation foundation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, sits on a hill overlooking the River Bann. Kilrea had been part of the Gaelic Irish lordship of Ó Catháin until 1607. During the subsequent Plantation most of Kilrea parish became part of the Company of Mercers' portion, with its main settlement at Movanagher castle. The townland of Moyagowney, in the south of the parish, was part of the Vitners' estate. This research concentrates primarily on the Mercers' portion of the parish. From the later 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Mercers' portion of Kilrea parish was leased to a series of middle men, including the politically significant Stewart family, until 1832 when the Mercers' Company took a direct hand in managing their estates in Co. Derry, through an agent. They implemented, in a relatively short period of time, a series of improvements in the town and farmsteads. Kilrea is an example of a Gaelic landscape transformed by plantation, and an estate of an absentee landlord in the later historic period. At face value, Improvement principles appeared to have played a significant part in shaping Kilrea's later historic landscape. However, within this landscape there is evidence for a more complex relationship between the inhabitants and Improvement ideology.

### ***Duleek***

Duleek in Co. Meath is situated about eight kilometres south-west of Drogheda town. The parish straddles the river valleys of the Boyne, which in part forms the north boundary of the study area, and Nanny, which runs from south-west to east across the study area (Fig. 1.12). It is also situated immediately south of the prehistoric landscape of the bend of the Boyne.<sup>76</sup> The Duleek study area, corresponding with the two civil parishes of Duleek, is 67km<sup>2</sup> and contains 48 townlands. It straddles two baronies – Duleek Upper and Duleek Lower, separated by the River Nanny. Duleek parish resembles a dish, with hills at the north (110m) and south (150m). The underlying bedrock in Duleek is predominantly limestone and shales,

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<sup>75</sup> Loganim, 'loganim.ie - Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann - Placenames Database of Ireland' (<http://www.loganim.ie/>) (14 Feb. 2012); Alfred Moore Munn, *Notes on the Place Names of the Parishes and Townlands in the County of Londonderry* (Belfast, 1925), p. 198.

<sup>76</sup> Geraldine Stout, *Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne* (Cork, 2002).

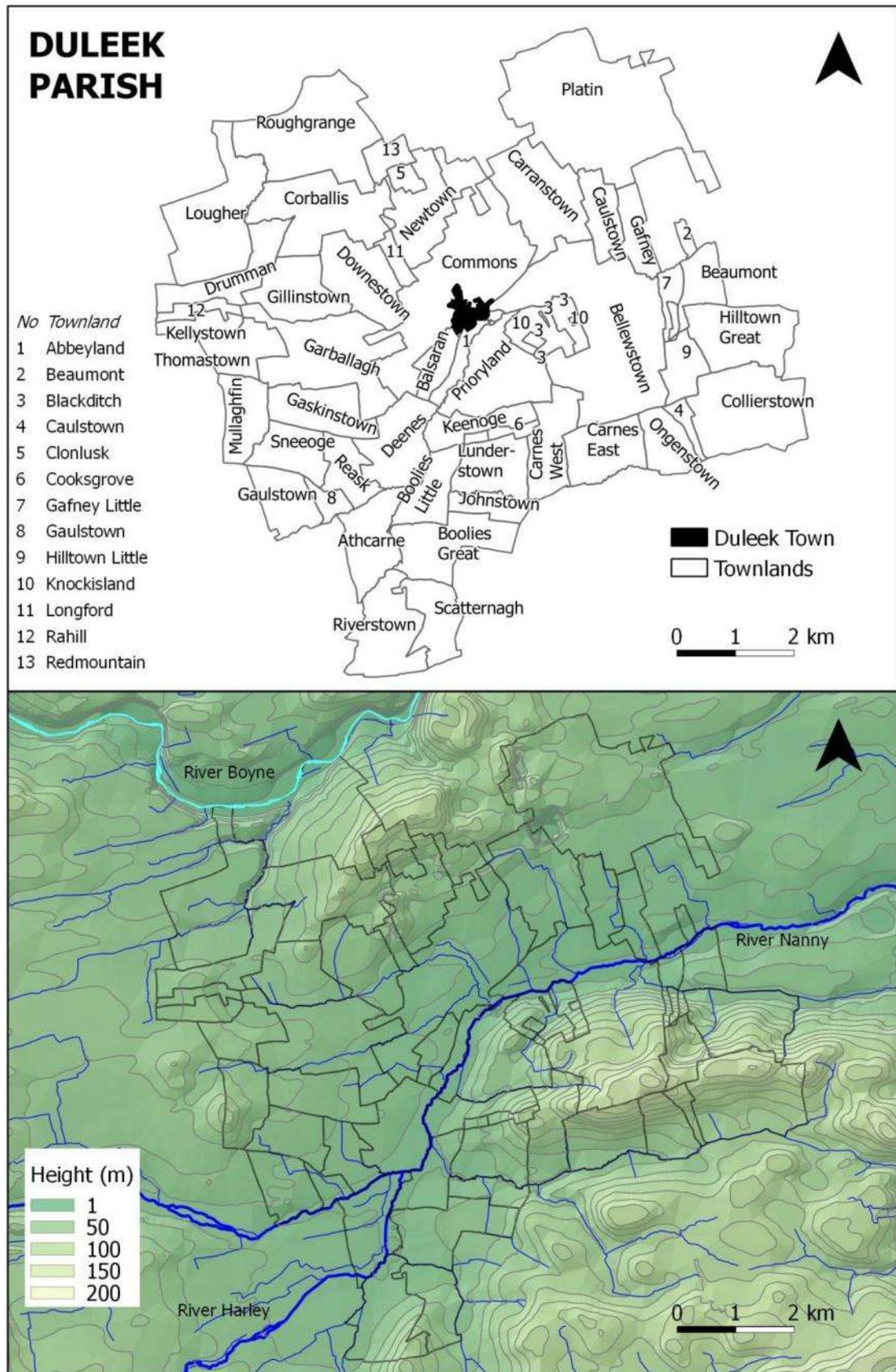


Figure 1.12 Duleek, Co. Meath.

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mudstone, and sandstone,<sup>77</sup> whilst the soils are gleys (36%), podzols (17%), lithosols (13%), rendzinas (9%) and alluvium (8%).<sup>78</sup> Low-lying ground (30m) at the centre of the parish contains the Commons and Duleek village. Duleek parish is today mainly agricultural pasture (55%) and tillage (37%) land.<sup>79</sup>

Just over half (25 of 49) of Duleek's townlands have English name elements. Most of these townlands (14) are named after late medieval land-owning families, for example Bellewstown and Thomastown. The remaining are divided between names of attributes like Abbeyland, Commons, Newtown and topographical features like Riverstown, Redmountain or Blackditch. The 23 townlands with Gaelic names derive from topographical features like *plaitín* (Platin), meaning a small plateau or green, historic attributes like *na Buailte* (Boolies) meaning 'the milking place' or *Áth carn* (Athcarne), meaning 'the ford of the cairn' or pile of rocks. Nearly all of these townland names appear in medieval or early modern documentary records for the parish.<sup>80</sup>

'Duleek' from the Irish *damhlaic* or 'stone church',<sup>81</sup> refers to the early-medieval monastery, churches and enclosure at the centre of the study area in Duleek town. Duleek was a major monastic centre in the early medieval period. During the Anglo-Norman settlement a substantial portion of Duleek was granted to the Augustinian Canons Regular from the priory of Llanthony in Wales.<sup>82</sup> Secular land owners and free tenants in late medieval Duleek were mostly Anglo-Irish families like the Bellews of Bellewstown, the D'Arcys of Platin, and the Baths of Athcarne. These families remained the principal land owners in Duleek until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their former seats lay at the heart of most later-historic demesnes in Duleek. In contrast, poorer families were settling in the marginal land of the commons of Duleek and Collierstown in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century most of the land in Duleek was divided amongst 584 occupiers and 212 lessors in a complex and multi-tiered system of landlord, tenant and subtenant. The focus of the thesis research in Duleek will be

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<sup>77</sup> Geological Survey of Ireland, 'GSI Web - Bedrock Geology 1:100,000' in *gsi.ie*, 2007 (<http://www.gsi.ie/Publications+and+Data/Digital+Data/Available+Digital+Data.htm>) (2 Apr. 2012).

<sup>78</sup> Deirdre Fay and Chaosheng Zhang, 'Soils and Subsoils: Co. Meath' in *Secure Archive For Environmental Research Data managed by Environmental Protection Agency Ireland*, 2006 (<http://gis.epa.ie/DataDownload.aspx>) (2 Apr. 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, 'CORINE Land Cover 2006 database for Ireland; CLC2006 - Ireland', ESRI Shapefile (CORINE Land Cover 2006 database of Ireland, Johnstown Castle, Wexford, 2009) (<http://gis.epa.ie/DataDownload.aspx>).

<sup>80</sup> Loganim, 'loganim.ie - Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann - Placenames Database of Ireland'.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Arlene Hogan, *The Priory of Llanthony Prima and Secunda in Ireland, 1172-1541: Lands, Patronage and Politics* (Dublin, 2008), fig. maps 1–5.

on the transformation of the medieval and early modern estates, the creation of demesnes and the landscape impact of poorer families as they settled on the commons of Duleek.

### ***Kilcooly***

Kilcooly is situated in east Co. Tipperary on the border with Co. Kilkenny, in the barony of Slieveardagh. Kilcooly civil parish is approximately 45km<sup>2</sup> and contains 25 townlands split into three detached portions here characterised as Kilcooly Abbey in the east, Longford Pass in the north and Glengoole in the south (Fig. 1.13). Kilcooly parish straddles low-lying ground to the north and west with the Slieveardagh hills to the south and east. Kilcooly parish ranges in height from 120m in the lowlands to 330m in the Slieveardagh hills. The parish is drained by a number of small streams which run from the Slieveardagh hills into the river catchments of the Suir and Nore. The geology of Kilcooly is divided between the limestones and limestone shale of the lowlands and the sandstones and shale of the higher ground on the Slieveardagh hills. Anthracite coal deposits called the Lickfinn Coal Formation are located in the south and west portions of the parish in Newpark and Blackcommon townlands, as well as in the adjoining parishes of Ballingarry, Lickfinn and Killenaule.<sup>83</sup> Coal was mined in Slieveardagh from the 17th to the 20th centuries. Nearly a third of the soils in Kilcooly are peats. The hills consist primarily of deep poorly drained mineral soils. A thin band of low-lying dry ground between the hills and the bogs contains deep well drained soils suitable for cultivation.<sup>84</sup> Today, the majority of Kilcooly is pasture land on both the lowlands and the hills, with small amounts of tillage on the dry ground; raised bog dominates the wetter lowlands. Coniferous forest was planted in large quantities in Deerpark townland, where there have been commercial plantations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the former demesne lands of Kilcooly Abbey and the marginal boggy lands of Longford Pass and Glengoole/ Ballinunty. New Birmingham village lies in the Glengoole portion of Kilcooly parish, in the former Vere Hunt estate. Gortnahoe, a chapel village founded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, lay at the centre of the eponymous Catholic parish which also encompassed Kilcooly.

Kilcooly has a mixture of modern and medieval townland names. Just over half (13 of 25) are Gaelic. These refer to historic features like *Cill Bhréanaill* (Kilbrannel), the Church of St. Brendan, or *An Lios Dubh* (Lisduff), the Black Fort.<sup>85</sup> The twelve English townland names refer

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<sup>83</sup> Geological Survey of Ireland, 'GSI Web - Bedrock Geology 1:100,000'.

<sup>84</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, 'EPA Ireland GeoPortal', 2012 (<http://gis.epa.ie/>) (11 Feb. 2012).

<sup>85</sup> Loganim, 'loganim.ie - Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann - Placenames Database of Ireland'.

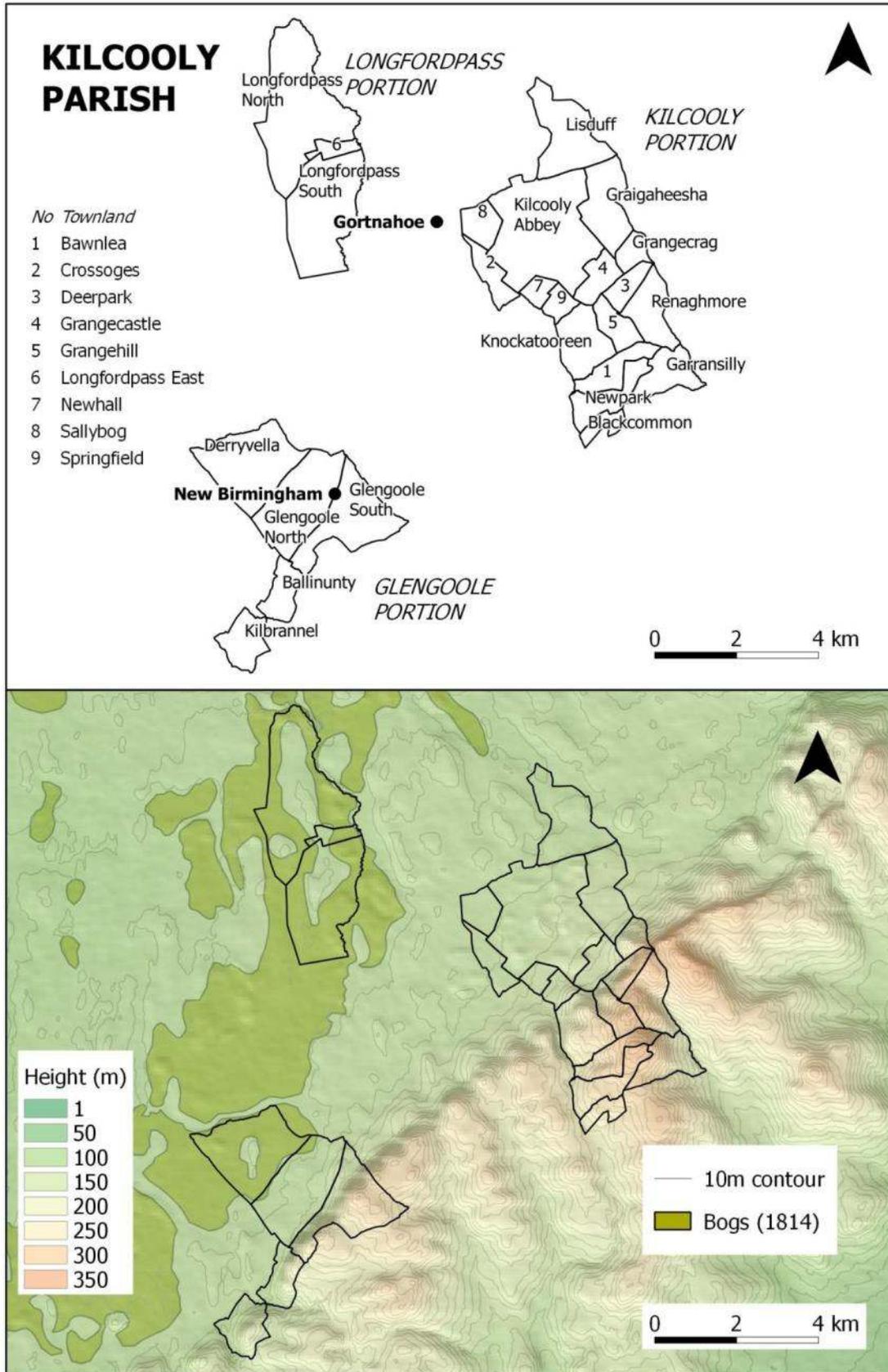


Figure 1.13 Kilcooly, Co. Tipperary.

to historic features like Grangecrag or Deerpark, whilst townlands like Newhall, Newpark and Springfield refer to improved settlement of the later historic period.

Kilcooly, or *Cill Chúile*, means ‘church in the corner’, and refers to the position of the Cistercian monastery of Kilcooly founded in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century on lands granted by the Gaelic king of Munster Domhnall Ó Briain.<sup>86</sup> The well-preserved remains of this abbey complex still survive. Kilcooly Abbey was dissolved in 1542, after which it was granted to the Earl of Ormond.<sup>87</sup> The parish remained within the massive estate of the Earl of Ormond until 1636 when an English lawyer, Jerome Alexander, purchased the estate around the Kilcooly Abbey portion. Kilcooly remained within Alexander’s family, through the Barkers and Ponsonbys, until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>88</sup> The Barkers created a substantial demesne and house in Kilcooly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were also improvers, planting large numbers of trees and encouraging settlement and cultivation on the marginal upland commonage on the Slieveardagh hills through leaseholds. The Barkers made relatively minor investments in mining coal on their estate, as most of the deposits were located outside their property, in particular on the estate of Vere Hunt in Glengoole, surrounding the speculative new town of New Birmingham.<sup>89</sup> The primary focus in Kilcooly parish is the role of Improvement in the Barker estate around Kilcooly Abbey, in particular the Barker demesne and tenant farms, the village of New Birmingham, and coal mining in the parish.

### ***Kilfenora***

Kilfenora is situated in the barony of Corcomroe in Co. Clare, straddling the southern bounds of the Burren uplands.<sup>90</sup> The civil parish of Kilfenora was approximately 44km<sup>2</sup> and contained 35 townlands in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1.14). Topographically Kilfenora ranges in height from 40m to 160m OD, with highlands to the north and south of a central east-west lowland valley. In contrast with the uplands of the Burren to the north, Kilfenora is relatively well drained by rivers and streams, although most of this drainage is in the low-lying central part of the study area. One large body of water – Lickeen Lough – is located in the southern uplands of Kilfenora. The geology of the Kilfenora study area is mostly grey siltstones and sandstones

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<sup>86</sup> Fr Columcille Conway, ‘Kilcooly Abbey: part one’ in *Old Kilkenny Review*, xxxvi (1984), pp 55–63.

<sup>87</sup> Newport B. White (ed.), *Extents of Irish Monastic Possessions, 1540-1541* (Dublin, 1943), pp 322–324.

<sup>88</sup> William G. Neely, *Kilcooley: Land and People in Tipperary* (Dublin, 1983).

<sup>89</sup> William Nolan, ‘A public benefit: Sir Vere Hunt, Bart and the town of New Birmingham, Co. Tipperary, 1800-18’ in Howard B. Clarke, Jacinta Prunty and Mark Hennessy (eds), *Surveying Ireland’s Past: Multidisciplinary Essays in Honour of Anngret Simms* (Dublin, 2004), pp 415–54.

<sup>90</sup> David Drew, ‘The Burren, county Clare’ in F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (1st ed., Cork, 1997), pp 287–298; Tim Robinson, ‘The Burren: A Two-Inch Map of the Uplands of North-West Clare. Map Scale 1:31680’ (Roundstone, 1999).

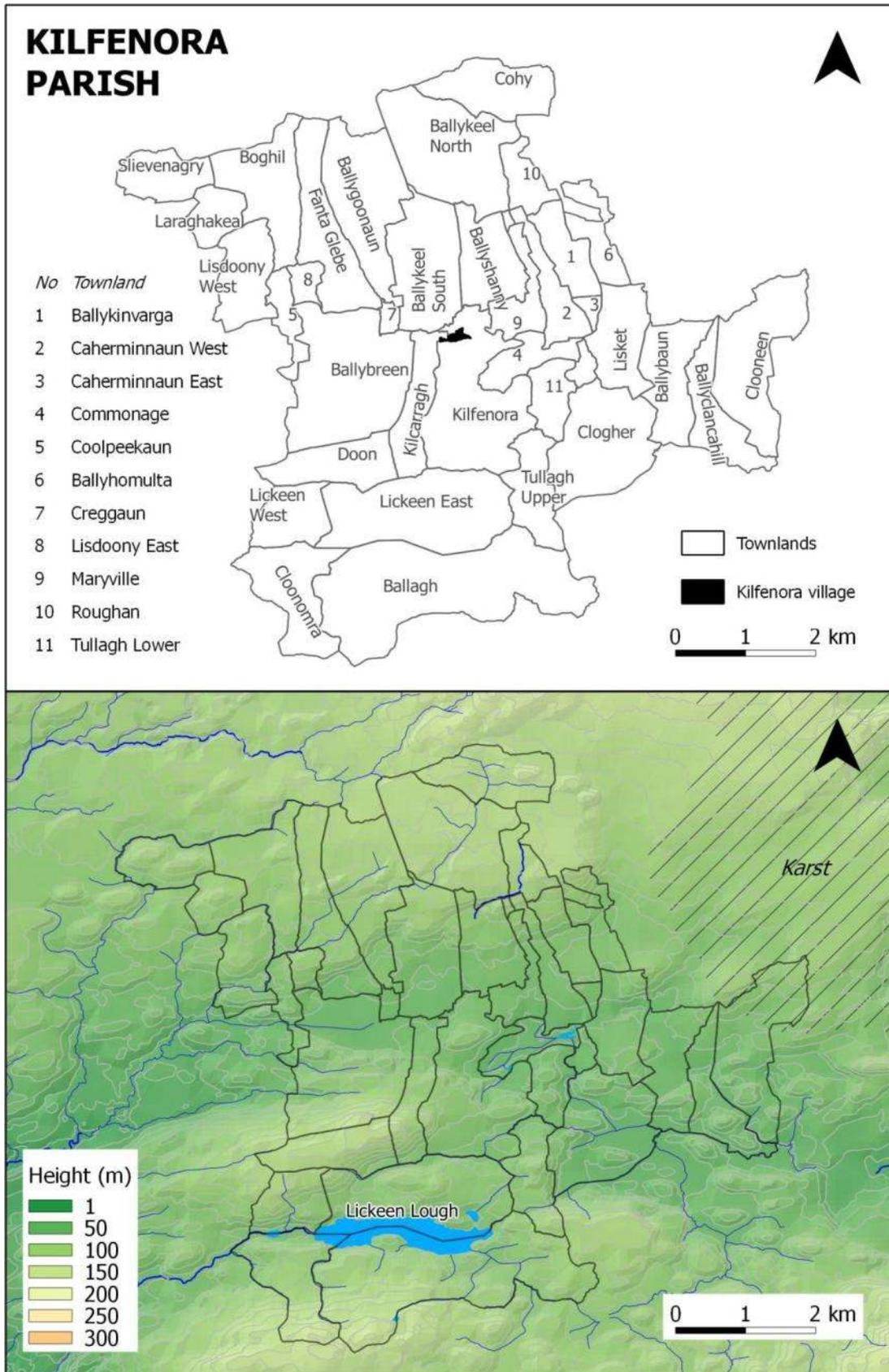


Figure 1.14 Kilfenora, Co. Clare.

(54%), this predominantly in the uplands to the north and south, with bands of mudstone and limestone towards the centre of the parish in the lowlands. Limestone pavement, a feature generally associated with the Burren, only occurs in significant areas in the north of Clooneen townland in the east of the parish. Kilfenora's soils are mostly poorly drained gleys and some peats around the uplands, with shallower well-drained soils in the central lowlands, except in Commonage townland, where the soils are predominantly peaty bog.<sup>91</sup> Soils over limestone in the middle of the parish are quite shallow, with occasional outcrops, and with limestone pavement in the north of Clooneen townland. Today, Kilfenora is predominantly a pastoral landscape (63%) but with substantial woodland scrub and heterogeneous agriculture. Planted coniferous forests cover extensive tracts of poorly-drained high ground in the north and south of the parish.<sup>92</sup> Kilfenora village is located in the centre of the parish.

Nearly all of Kilfenora's townlands have Irish names. The two townlands with English names are Commonage, referring to the commonage attached to the village of Kilfenora, and Maryville. Kilfenora's townland names derive from historic features, like *Cathair Mionáin* (Caherminnaun), the fort of the kids, or natural features *An Clochar* (Clogher), the stoney place, or *Cluainín* (Clooneen), the small meadow. *Cill Fhionnúrach* (Kilfenora) means the Church of St. Finnabhar, a medieval saint, or, possibly, Church of the fertile elevation.<sup>93</sup>

The Kilfenora case study area describes a landscape in the west of Ireland where Improvement appears to have had a limited impact. Kilfenora village was, in the medieval period, the centre of Ireland's smallest diocese and the site of an early medieval monastic centre. This diocese, comprising the baronies of Burren and Corcomroe, corresponded to the medieval Gaelic Kingdom of Corcu Modruad.<sup>94</sup> Kilfenora parish contains extensive remains of medieval settlement and ecclesiastical remains, as well an expanse of relict field boundaries. Detailed records from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century provide a valuable insight into Gaelic Irish landholding and how this land was redistributed in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>95</sup> Much of Kilfenora parish fell within the estate of the Inchiquin O'Briens who remained the major, although non-resident, landowners in the parish into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kilfenora village appears to have grown around the site of the medieval cathedral church. It

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<sup>91</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, 'EPA Ireland GeoPortal'.

<sup>92</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, 'CORINE 2006'.

<sup>93</sup> Loganim, 'loganim.ie - Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann - Placenames Database of Ireland'.

<sup>94</sup> Sinéad Ní Ghabhláin, 'Church and Community in Medieval Ireland: The Diocese of Kilfenora' in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, cxxv (1995), p. 62.

<sup>95</sup> Robert C. Simington, *Books of Survey and Distribution: County of Clare* (Dublin, 1967), pp 187–206.

was the property of the archbishop of Kilfenora and was granted a market in 1618. The village had a population of 621 in 1841, consisting of 128 families, a large proportion of whom (44%) lived in the poorest quality houses in the village, and who presumably also worked as labourers. The Inchiquin O'Brien estate records, coupled with state surveys from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, illustrate the role Improvement played, or failed to play, in shaping the modern landscape of Kilfenora.

### **1.4 Thesis Structure**

This thesis is organised in eight chapters. It is a study in historic landscape archaeology that combines documentary and material evidence. Chapter 2 sets out my methodology and theoretical framework for my study of the material and documented landscape, including the concept of landscape elements and the use of GIS. I look at the idea of what I call a 'proxy landscape', where documentary records were used to, discover, represent, change and produce social change. Rather than providing competing or alternative narratives of the role of Improvement in shaping later historic rural Ireland, the documentary and material landscapes contextualise each other. Chapter 3 looks at the historical and geographical development of Improvement in later historic Ireland, with a discussion of how the ideology and purpose of Improvement changed over time. Chapter 4 looks at the medieval and early-modern origins of later historic society and landscapes in each of the case study areas. Elite residences and designed landscapes formed the core of many of the later historic improved landscapes. These elite landscapes and their significance as places of Improvement are explored in more detail in Chapter 5. This chapter focuses on the elite in Irish rural society, the landlords, and their demesne landscapes. Focusing in detail at two specific case study areas, Duleek and Kilcooly, and the families who owned and created these landscapes, I explore the role Improvement played in shaping demesne landscapes. Chapter 6 looks at the wider landscape beyond the demesne, and examines how tenure, towns and villages, farm houses and offices and enclosure were shaped by Improvement principles. Chapter 7, the general discussion chapter, draws together the various themes explored in each chapter. The chapter explores how Improvement ideology influenced the practice of Improvement in later historic Ireland, focusing in particular on pattern and practice in the material and documented landscape. This chapter also examines what Improvement meant, what its purpose was, and whether it was successful in this purpose. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis with a synopsis of my main findings

## Chapter 1 Introduction

and suggestions for further research, as well as some final thoughts on the implications for rural Ireland of modern landscape change.

I set out in this thesis to approach Irish historic landscapes as a documented and material record which can help us to understand social change, and in particular the role of the Improvement ideologies in these changes. An archaeological study of later historic landscapes and Improvement requires particular methodologies and conceptual approaches, which are the subject of the next chapter.



## **2. Towards an Archaeological Framework for Irish Later Historic Rural Landscape Studies**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In chapter 2 I discuss the theoretical basis and methodologies used in the thesis to explore the landscapes of Improvement in later historic Ireland. This includes looking at what landscapes are and how they might be employed to study the role of Improvement in shaping Ireland in this period. Archaeologies of historic landscapes are challenging for researchers. Their analysis involves identifying the physical manifestation of ideas, ideology and agency, in part by looking for meaningful patterns in the material environment, and in part by looking for meaning in the documentary record. Historic landscape study also means choosing the appropriate techniques for research, selecting scales of analysis, source material, and deciding what is significant in the vast and deep material and documentary environment of the later historic period.

My research approach is substantially influenced by Irish historical geographical practices, much of which draw upon the French Annales school of historical research.<sup>1</sup> The Irish historic landscape is appreciated and interpreted as a documented environment. Historic landscapes exist in two related realms – the relict landscape surviving within the modern material world and the proxy landscape surviving in texts and document records. Arguably, one of the most significant problems for later historic landscape archaeologies is not the lack of data or the task of identifying material remains; it is rather the work of making sense of the vast quantities of available material and information, and of recognising, within an inherently familiar modern environment and a disparate documentary record, what is significant. Study of the later historical archaeological landscape has a greater role than simply adding pictures and material anecdotes to existing historical narratives. Rural Improvement, the principal focus of this thesis, advocated changing society by changing the built environment, with significant landscape consequences. This chapter will look at the challenges of studying these landscape consequences and introduces the theoretical and methodological approaches used in this research.

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Smyth, 'Introduction' in *Landholding, Society and Settlement in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Historical Geographer's Perspective* (Dublin, 2010), pp x–xxvi.

## 2.2 Historic Landscape Studies in Ireland: An Overview

Ireland has an early tradition of landscape-focussed writing. Ireland's medieval and early modern written tradition of onomastic texts like the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century *Dindsenchas*, topographical poems that provided origin tales for place-names in the Irish landscape,<sup>2</sup> and various chronicles, significantly influenced the early scholarly approach to the Irish landscape. The Ordnance Survey of Ireland's first principal project - mapping the island of Ireland at six inches to one mile, conducted from the 1820s to the 1840s - included a significant component of historical topographical enquiry by scholars like John O'Donovan, Eugene O'Curry and George Petrie. Their task was to identify for the Ordnance Survey the Irish language place-names from local Irish speakers and texts, as well as the antiquities in the landscape and their history and folklore, which were to be included in the printed maps.<sup>3</sup> This enormous task resulted in maps, memoirs and correspondence of unprecedented detail and scope.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the Ordnance Survey maps recorded the landscape in great detail, by recording and presenting the vast quantities of antiquities in the countryside, they also created a trap, an irresistible archive which has set the scope for Irish archaeological research into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A pioneer of Irish landscape research in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Robert Lloyd Praeger, published *The Way that I Went*,<sup>5</sup> in 1937 as a story of his early 20<sup>th</sup>-century studies in Irish botany and geology. This highly influential publication presented the Irish landscape in a detailed, multi-period context which significantly influenced subsequent publications on Irish landscapes, particularly that of Frank Mitchell.<sup>6</sup> Historic cultural landscapes in Praeger's work, and that of contemporary writers, consisted of evocative prehistoric and medieval ruins which served as picturesque backdrops to their stories, ragged material expressions of an historical narrative. The primary focus of archaeological enquiry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been 'site-orientated' rather than landscape-orientated. In general, historians and historical geographers

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Atkinson (ed.), *The Book of Leinster* (Dublin, 1880); Edward John Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindsenchas* (Dublin, 1903).

<sup>3</sup> John O'Donovan, Thomas O'Connor and Patrick O'Keefe, *Ordnance Survey Letters Meath: Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of the County of Meath Collected During the Progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1836*, ed. Michael Herity (Dublin, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Andrews, *A Paper Landscape*, pp 145–179.

<sup>5</sup> R. Lloyd Praeger, *The Way That I Went: an Irishman in Ireland* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> George Frank Mitchell, *The Irish Landscape* (London, 1976); George Frank Mitchell, *The Way That I Followed* (Dublin, 1990); George Frank Mitchell and Michael Ryan, *Reading the Irish Landscape* (Dublin, 1997).

have had most to say on the historical landscape of Ireland, but as a documented environment rather than a material one, and then significantly focusing on issues of settlement rather than landscape as an entity worthy of study in itself.

Irish historic rural studies in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century primarily focused on themes of settlement and society, driven by scholars like T.W. Freeman,<sup>7</sup> Estyn Evans,<sup>8</sup> and Thomas Jones Hughes.<sup>9</sup> Evans's scholarship was influenced by folk-life studies, whereas Freeman and Jones Hughes drew from the enormous archive of 19<sup>th</sup>-century government records to investigate regional and island-wide trends in economic and social history. Modern scholars like William Smyth, David Dickson, William Nolan, F. H. Aalen and Kevin Whelan built on this tradition with detailed studies of Irish settlement and society, including the use of estate records, carried out at a local scale of analysis, and detailed studies of individual counties.<sup>10</sup> More recently William Smyth has considered the symbolic significance of later historic and colonial landscapes in his *Map Making, Landscapes and Memory*.<sup>11</sup> These works described landscapes of economic and social history as revealed by maps and the documentary record. The material landscape generally tended not to be a primary source for these studies; archaeological input remained focused primarily on prehistoric and medieval sites and settlements.

*Landscape Archaeology in Ireland*, published in 1983, defined the key aspects of Irish landscape studies at the time as sources, settlement, economy and environment.<sup>12</sup> The approach of this publication, the first archaeological landscape study of its kind in Ireland, was to concentrate on the empirical measurement of sites and patterns of site-types rather than the social history of landscapes. It treated the landscape as a collection of discrete monuments from discrete time-periods, primarily prehistoric and, to a lesser extent, medieval. This model both reflected the manner of previous archaeological studies in Ireland and remained the model for the creation of databases of recorded and protected sites and

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Walter Freeman, *Pre-Famine Ireland: a Study in Historical Geography* (Manchester, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> E. Estyn Evans, *The Personality of Ireland: Habitat, Heritage and History* (Cambridge, 1973).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Jones Hughes, *Landholding, Society and Settlement in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Historical Geographer's Perspective* (Dublin, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> For example, William Nolan and Thomas G. McGrath (eds), *Tipperary: History and Society* (Dublin, 1985); Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Derry and Londonderry: History & Society* (Dublin, 1999); Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds), *Clare: History and Society* (Dublin, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> William J. Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory: a Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland, c. 1530-1750* (Cork, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth and Fred Hamond (eds), *Landscape Archaeology in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983).

monuments,<sup>13</sup> and published county archaeological inventories.<sup>14</sup> Today, Environmental Impact Assessments are one of the most widespread practices of landscape studies in Ireland, although still largely preoccupied with identifying pre-modern sites in the environment rather than analysing 'landscapes' as a whole. Archaeology is just one of several areas of study in these assessments, each primarily treated in isolation, in documents designed to facilitate development rather than academic research.<sup>15</sup> Within this management paradigm, landscape is treated as a habitat for archaeological sites rather than as an entity worth studying in itself.

The Centre of Landscape Studies, established at NUI Galway in 1990, published *Decoding the Landscape*,<sup>16</sup> one of the first interdisciplinary and theoretically explicit studies of Irish landscapes. In his influential paper in this collection, Keller explored what 'landscape' means,<sup>17</sup> identifying a number of different 'landscapes', depending on a person's cultural attachment. Landscapes were both solid and abstract, constituting mythical, ideological or mental landscapes. He observed that, at that time, archaeologists and human geographers view past landscapes as relict and frozen, part of what he called a 'time-capsule perspective'.<sup>18</sup> Archaeological landscapes in Ireland were then, and to a certain extent still are, treated as something special and separate from people's everyday lives. This is, it seems to me, largely a consequence of the study of archaeological landscapes as a collection of sites rather than as a greater whole.

Perhaps the most iconic historical landscape study in Ireland has been the two editions of the *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*.<sup>19</sup> These large volumes are lavishly illustrated with maps, prints, photographs and essays on the history of Irish landscapes and the components of the

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<sup>13</sup> National Monuments Service, 'Sites and Monuments Database', 2012

(<http://www.archaeology.ie/ArchaeologicalSurveyofIreland/SitesandMonumentsDatabase/>) (11 Feb. 2012); Northern Ireland Environmental Agency, 'Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record'.

<sup>14</sup> 'Fifty years of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland: Special Supplement' in *Archaeology Ireland*, xxvii, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Cooney, Tom Condit and Emmet Byrnes, 'Timescapes: understanding and managing archaeological landscapes in Ireland' in Michael Starrett (ed.), *Policies and Priorities for Ireland's Landscapes* (Dublin, 1999), pp 61–72; Conor Newman, 'Misinformation, disinformation and downright distortion: the battle to save Tara 1999–2005' in Conor Newman and Ulf Strohmayer (eds), *Uninhabited Ireland: Tara, the M3, and Public Spaces in Galway* (Galway, 2007), pp 59–101.

<sup>16</sup> Timothy Collins (ed.), *Decoding the Landscape: Papers Read at the Inaugural Conference of the Centre for Landscape Studies* (2nd ed., Galway, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> Christian Keller, 'Theoretical Aspects of Landscape Study' in Timothy Collins (ed.), *Decoding the Landscape: Papers Read at the Inaugural Conference of the Centre for Landscape Studies* (Galway, 1997), pp 79–97.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (1st ed., Cork, 1997); F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd ed., Cork, 2011).

Irish landscape including bogs, forest and woodlands, fields, houses and buildings, towns and villages, demesnes, communications, mining and industry. Each edition of the *Atlas* also contains a series of diachronic case studies.<sup>20</sup> This volume sets the template for other Cork University Press publications on specific historic landscapes.<sup>21</sup> These works have largely avoided explicit theoretical analysis. The nature of Irish historic narratives, in particular in relation to an evolutionary landscapes model, has tended to convey a sense of inevitability about the way the landscape changed. Irish rural landscapes' variability and the myriad combinations of their constituent parts or elements, shows in contrast, that there was nothing inevitable about their development. Irish landscapes were contested spaces, and Improvement was, in the later historic period, a part of this ideological contest.

### **2.3 Ideology in the Irish Later Historic Landscape**

William Smyth describes the creation of historic landscapes as 'forging': a process of changing the landscape to reflect the changing social order, in particular the destruction of Gaelic society in the early modern period and creation of the Anglo-Irish social elite and a centralised, island-wide government based in Dublin.<sup>22</sup> Irish historiography of the later historic period is dominated by themes of struggle in the economic, social, political and religious spheres of life, particularly between the powerful and subaltern. Charles Orser characterised dialogues between the landlord and tenant, as 'shouting matches', with the powerful generally having the louder voice.<sup>23</sup> Landscapes were shaped by, and helped shape these interactions, constituting active agents of change and continuity. Improvement was a significant ideology influencing this agency (section 1.2). 'Identifying the ideology of Improvement in the landscape involves looking for patterns.

#### ***Patterns in the landscape***

Archaeologists studying landscapes are looking for patterns. Regular predictable patterns, in house architecture, roads, field shapes, and landscape organisation, are significant because

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Drew, 'The Burren, county Clare'.

<sup>21</sup> Stout, *Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne*; Billy Colfer, *The Hook Peninsula, County Wexford* (2004); John Crowley and Michael Murphy (eds), *Atlas of Cork City* (Cork, 2005); Billy Colfer, *Wexford: a Town and its Landscape* (Cork, 2008); Crowley et al. (eds), *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*; Jim Mac Laughlin and Seán Beattie (eds), *An Historical, Environmental and Cultural Atlas of County Donegal* (Cork, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory*, pp 1–9.

<sup>23</sup> Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, p. 179.

their presence represents a measure of repetition suggestive of intentional, meaningful action or ideology. The absence of a regular pattern may be equally significant, not just as an indication of the absence of intention, but because the irregularity might, in itself, be meaningful: suggesting choices made to act a different way, choices restricted, or an alternate ideology. The concept of the Georgian Order offers perhaps the most influential example of pattern recognition in historical archaeology. This idea, developed by James Deetz in his study of colonial-era America, although attributed to the Georgian or 18<sup>th</sup>-century colonial period, describes a pattern of cultural changes which developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries associated with order, symmetry, segregation and individualism in people's every-day lives, impacting on issues ranging from how and what they ate, to house design and household organisation.<sup>24</sup> The idea forms a significant theme in international historic landscape studies, particularly in relation to the expression of power in designed landscapes,<sup>25</sup> and the development of capitalism (discussed below).<sup>26</sup> Leone described the Georgian order as 'a cohesive way of thought ... organized around the bilateral symmetry or the segmentary dividing of life, its functions and things, into parts arrayed into a hierarchy of isolated elements.'<sup>27</sup> This order was expressed through architecture, as well as designed landscapes of gardens. Leone even extended the concept to include the systematic observation of nature, the geology, flora and fauna, astronomy, which allowed the observer a measure of control over what was considered natural, and made them the custodians, and gate-keepers of the natural order.<sup>28</sup> The Georgian Order can be described as a set of cultural values, but whose values?

The concept of the Georgian Order is problematic, reducing artefact forms and their uses to one guiding set of principles, a universal set of rules for life, which denies other possible uses and meaning, or even the possibility that aspects of order might have been resisted or subverted.<sup>29</sup> The affect of creating this universal order was to 'flatten out' the complexities of social life, particularly failing to accommodate the depth and diversity of people's experiences

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<sup>24</sup> James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (Revised ed., New York, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Mark P. Leone, 'Interpreting ideology in historical archaeology: using the rules of perspective in the William Paca Garden in Annapolis, Maryland' in Daniel Miller and Christopher Tilley (eds), *Ideology, Power, and Prehistory* (Cambridge, 1984), pp 25–35.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *Archaeology of Capitalism*, pp 202–210.

<sup>27</sup> Leone, 'Interpreting ideology in historical archaeology: using the rules of perspective in the William Paca Garden in Annapolis, Maryland', p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 26–27.

<sup>29</sup> Dalgligh, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 45–46.

and their agency.<sup>30</sup> In these terms, it appears to be an ideology of power, designed for the elite. The later historic European elite shared a culture that looked to the classical world for inspiration in the arts, architecture, garden design, philosophy and learning.<sup>31</sup> This classicism formed a central component of a shared identity constructed on a classically-inspired education and reinforced by practices like the Grand Tour, correspondence, reading, publishing, and also governance.

Improvement may be considered an important mechanism for imposing regularity, symmetry, control, improved practices and decency in the landscape. This is particularly apparent in the creation of designed landscapes surrounding later historic estate houses (sections 5.2 & 5.3) and new villages (section 6.4), and is also expressed in the landscape of fields and enclosures (sections 5.4), as well as the architecture of estate (sections 5.3 and 5.4) and tenant (section 6.5) houses and religious buildings (section 6.3). The significance of Improvement as a landscape phenomenon was as an ideology which shaped identity, both in the appearance of the landscape and how people lived their daily lives in this landscape.

Studying historic landscapes of Improvement is, in part, a study of signs, or semiotics. Semiotics concerns itself with the innate capacity of humans to produce and understand signs.<sup>32</sup> Landscape expressed ideology as a series of signs, and this was recognised in the political and colonial literature from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century right through the later historic period (sections 3.3 to 3.5). Certain landscapes were designed to convey signs, in and around demesnes (section 5.3 & 5.4), in towns and villages (section 6.4), or amongst tenant farmers (section 6.5). Ordered landscapes, I will argue, were used to legitimise the new social and property-owning order in later historic Ireland. However, Improvement as put into practice, as we shall see, is a more complex phenomenon than solely a signifier of the new order. Improvement changed the way people lived.

### ***Daily life and practice***

Improvement was an ideology of change. Chris Dalglish, in his archaeological study of later historic rural society in the Scottish highlands, proposed that daily life and routine behaviour

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew Johnson, 'Rethinking historical archaeology' in Pedro Paulo A. Funari and Martin Hall (eds), *Historical Archaeology: Back from the Edge* (One World Archaeology, 31, London & New York, 1999), pp 28–29.

<sup>31</sup> Tarlow, *Archaeology of Improvement*, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> Ian Hodder, 'Symbolic and structuralist archaeology' in Colin Renfrew and Paul G Bahn (eds), *Archaeology: the Key Concepts* (London, 2005), p. 255; Robert W Preucel, *Archaeological Semiotics* (Oxford, 2010), pp 21–66.

was one of the main areas of social life changed by Improvement.<sup>33</sup> This was materially manifested in changes in housing and enclosure. Improvement also changed how people related to one another, and in particular influenced the growth of individualism associated with the rise of capitalism. This resulted, in part, in the transformation of people's innate understanding of how they should act, and impacted in part on their more formal, ritualised actions.<sup>34</sup> Dalglish adopted Bourdieu's idea of habitus to explain innate actions. Bourdieu reacted to structuralist rules of conduct by developing a model of social practice in which 'what people do is bound up with the generation and pursuit of strategies within an organising framework of cultural dispositions'.<sup>35</sup> Habitus, a key concept in practice theory, can be characterised as the thought and socialised routine and intuitive way of being and behaving, existing within individuals, but generated by communities. It is a way of expressing what people consider to be natural and acceptable behaviour within their society. Social life is not the aggregate of individual behaviour, and practice cannot be understood solely in terms of individual decision-making or in terms of 'supra-individual structures'. Habitus was Bourdieu's mechanism for closing the conceptual gap between the role of the individual and the group.<sup>36</sup> In these terms 'change' meant modifying or replacing people's sense of how they should live their daily lives, their sense of what was routine, innate, natural. The material world, the landscape, was both a key mechanism for, and an indicator of, these changes. Daily life in later historic Ireland dramatically changed. Ideas of Improvement influenced laws controlling property, religion, agricultural, industrial and trade practices (sections 3.3 to 3.5, 6.2 to 6.7). Improvement changed and structured people's daily lives by changing the environment they lived in, and by changing what was morally acceptable (section 7.8). The significance of Improvement in people's daily lives depended on their class, and their ability to shape and control their lives, their agency.

### ***Class and agency***

Agency in archaeology explores how people, as actors, consciously changed their material world.<sup>37</sup> Material can also be said to have agency, so that buildings or landscapes, rather than being passive recipients of change, helped shape society. How do individuals, groups and

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<sup>33</sup> Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 75–128.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 69–74.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London, 1992), p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>37</sup> John C. Barrett, 'A thesis on agency' in Marcia-Anne Dobres and John E. Robb (eds), *Agency in Archaeology* (London, 2000), p. 63.

classes relate to one another? How does agency relate to society?<sup>38</sup> With regard to Improvement and later historic Irish landscapes, archaeologists may question the relationship between the agents of change and the social structures of the time, for example, that between an individual landlord, the wider society of his peers, and his subordinate tenants. Archaeologists might question to what extent landscapes are the product of a single agent's ambition and action. For example, was a landlord who built an estate house and created a demesne also responsible for the enclosed landscape of his estate? Later historic Ireland was divided along religious, ethnic and class lines. For later historic Ireland the most important agents of change in the rural landscape, at least according to the popular narratives of the period, have been the landlords – generally characterised as Protestant and 'English' or 'Anglo-Irish'. The tenant – Gaelic and Catholic – acted as the subordinate other. However, there existed in Ireland a complex web of relationships between those who 'owned' the land, the free-holder, the long-term lease holder, their subtenants and employees, and the landless labourers (see section 3.5). Rural society in later historic Ireland was more complex than the model suggested by the straightforward powerful landlord and subaltern tenant dichotomy described, for example, Orser's study of Ballykilcline in Co. Roscommon.<sup>39</sup> Class was a significant factor in how the landscape was shaped, but it was not by itself a measure of agency. Those with an interest in the land, the landlord, long-term tenant or tenants-at-will, had different degrees of power, capital and opportunity to conceive landscape change, whether this involved creating enclosure, draining land, or deciding what crops to grow. The classes in later historic Ireland were not equal, and conflict and resistance were a significant part of later historic Irish life. I am interested in how Improvement may have been used by these different groups as a strategy for accessing the structures of power and legitimising their own position. Understanding these structures of power requires an understanding of colonialism and capitalism.

### ***Colonialism and capitalism***

Colonialism and capitalism are perhaps the most frequently explored themes in Irish historical archaeology, and feature prominently in Charles Orser's 'haunts' (section 1.2).<sup>40</sup> The material manifestation of colonialism included the large-scale transformations of landscapes 'to

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<sup>38</sup> Marcia-Anne Dobres and John E. Robb, 'Agency in archaeology: paradigm or platitude?' in Marcia-Anne Dobres and John E. Robb (eds), *Agency in Archaeology* (London, 2000), p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Orser (ed.), *Unearthing Hidden Ireland*.

<sup>40</sup> Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, p. 22.

reinvent a familiar landscape in an unfamiliar ecological zone'.<sup>41</sup> Even the seemingly mundane acts of creating houses, gardens and fences and fertilising the ground could be symbolically significant, particularly, as Patricia Seed notes, as a mechanism for English colonists in New World to legitimise their possession of lands. Building houses was a significant symbol of permanent and legitimate possession of property.<sup>42</sup> The question over whether Ireland was a colony in the later historic period is contentious, primarily, as Eagleton has suggested, because colonialism existed on different levels or dimensions.<sup>43</sup> Colonialism could be ranked in terms of its visibility, from its most obvious administrative or coercive form associated with armed subjugation of one set of peoples by another, to less visible forms of what Eagleton described as 'Settler Colonialism', 'Plantation Colonialism' and 'Mixed Colonialism', which involved movement of peoples into the colonised areas. Pure Settlement Colonies, where the colonisers grew to outnumber the natives, like in America or Australia, could eventually transform the coloniser's identity so that they would not see themselves as colonisers. 'Colonialism .... needs resistance in order to figure as colonialism.'<sup>44</sup> However, others question Ireland's colonial status. Howe proposed that Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was as integrated into the British state as Scotland or England, and that to describe later historic Ireland as a colony is factually and legally incorrect.<sup>45</sup> For Colin Rynne, later historic Ireland cannot be described as a colony because, by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Protestant descendents of settlers in Ireland did not identify themselves as colonisers.<sup>46</sup> In the course of this thesis I will suggest Improvement played a key role in legitimising the role of colonialism in later historic Ireland. From a landscape perspective, this included not only changing the material landscape, but how the landscape was valued and documented.

Colonialism was not the only external force at play in Ireland. Improvement also facilitated the rise of capitalism. Capitalism significantly shaped Irish society. Archaeological studies of capitalism deal, according to Johnson, with 'material things, how they are produced, circulated

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<sup>41</sup> Charles E. Orser, 'The material implications of colonialism in early nineteenth-century Ireland' in Terrence McDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Politics and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), p. 66.

<sup>42</sup> Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Terry Eagleton, 'Afterword: Ireland and colonialism' in Terrence McDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland a Colony?: Economics, Politics, and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 326–333.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2002), p. 230.

<sup>46</sup> Colin Rynne, 'The Rolt Memorial Lecture 2007 Technological Change as a "Colonial" Discourse: The Society of Friends in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Ireland' in *Industrial Archaeology Review*, xxx, no. 1 (2008), p. 13.

and consumed and the social and economic values people place upon them'.<sup>47</sup> For Orser, historical archaeology *is* the study of capitalism. He defined capitalism as a system where men, women and children had to sell their labour for money to capitalists, those with the means of production, in order to survive.<sup>48</sup> For Johnson, capitalism was inextricably linked with the rising level of individualism seen in the early modern world, which was materially expressed as 'closure' (section 2.4). Market penetration into the material world of the landscape was also expressed in the number of market places and fairs in rural Ireland (section 1.3),<sup>49</sup> although a significant number were medieval foundations. Unlike Britain, Ireland remained predominantly an agricultural society, although Ulster had a significant industrial base, and industrial activity was encouraged elsewhere, including in rural Kilcooly, if mostly with mixed results (section 6.7). For the purpose of this study the most significant influence of capitalism was to make the land itself, and tenure on the land, and not only the products of the land, commodities (section 3.3).

### **2.4 Methods for Studying Improvement Landscapes**

The island of Ireland is small but extremely varied and culturally complex (section 1.3), and the challenge for a landscape archaeology of an ideology like Improvement is to make sense of this complexity. Improvement had a significant, but mixed, impact on the Irish landscape. Its influence can be seen and measured in both the material landscape and documented record.

#### ***Material landscapes***

Landscapes are made up of features and elements. Whilst not wishing to suggest that a landscape is simply a sum of parts, looking at the distinctive constituents of a landscape is a well-established method of landscape studies (section 2.2). Landscape features are a broad category, including estate houses and tenants homes, farmyards and farm buildings, trees, fields and enclosures, walls and gates, lime kilns, churches, graveyards, archaeological monuments and any number of features created or modified in the later historic landscape. Landscape features may mean different things for different people. To study how landscape features have different meanings, and how Improvement impacted upon these meanings, I will look at landscape features as constituent elements of the landscape. I will call these elements

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<sup>47</sup> Johnson, *Archaeology of Capitalism*, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, p. 72.

<sup>49</sup> Patrick O'Flanagan, 'Markets and fairs in Ireland, 1600-1800: index of economic development and regional growth' in *Journal of Historical Geography*, xi, no. 4 (1985), pp 364-378; Lindsay Proudfoot, 'Markets, Fairs and Towns in Ireland, C. 1600-1853' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, cviii (2002), pp 69-96.

landmarks, nodes, places, routes and boundaries (Fig. 2.1).<sup>50</sup> These elements are attributes of landscape features, so that a house might be a landmark, a village a node, and a road a route. These elements are multi-scalar: a room, a house, a village, a parish or a whole country can be a place. How these elements are perceived depends on the perspective of the interpreter, so a house could also be a node, a village a landmark, and a road a boundary. Therefore these elements are not distinct and may describe one or more physical and cultural features in the landscape. This thesis focuses in particular on buildings and enclosures in the landscape.

Buildings – from the homes of the wealthy elite to those of the tenant farmers and rural poor, and including the farm offices, churches and civic buildings of towns – have meanings that go beyond the purely functional. They are part of the historic landscape, a projection of the builders' ideas of themselves. Their construction, whether to an architectural plan or vernacular form, shaped the landscape by manipulating space, time and agency. Buildings, as material things, make and are made from space. They convert space into meaningful places, either landmarks, or nodes, or places. This ability to focus and manipulate landscape makes buildings a significant landscape feature. The landscape significance of a building isn't necessarily a matter of high architectural merit, although no doubt, from a semiotic perspective, design as pattern had a significant role to play in this regard, especially in relation to how people's living conditions were perceived, either as improved or not (sections 3.3 & 3.4). Power was constructed through what might be considered ordinary buildings.<sup>51</sup> Improvement resulted in the projection of this power not just by the occupant, for example a farmer tenant, but also by the landlord. Buildings, particularly the homes and farmsteads of tenant farmers, reflected the principles of Improvement,<sup>52</sup> as did public buildings, particularly churches (section 3.4). There were at least 1.3 million domestic houses in 1841 rural Ireland.<sup>53</sup> Irish historic buildings studies demonstrate a clear division between research on the houses of the elite and landlords, and those of the rural poor living in vernacular structures. Research

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<sup>50</sup> The concept of landscape elements borrows from Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960), pp 46–90.

<sup>51</sup> Matthew Johnson, 'House, power and everyday life in Early Modern England' in Joseph Maran, Carsten Jwig and Hermann Schwengel (eds), *Constructing Power: Architecture, Ideology and Social Practice* (Hamburg, 2006), p. 285.

<sup>52</sup> Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 75–128; Forsythe, 'The Measures and Materiality of Improvement in Ireland'.

<sup>53</sup> Leslie A. Clarkson, L. Kennedy, E.M. Crawford, M.W. Dowling and Queen's University of Belfast. Department of Economic and Social History, *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Housing, 1821-1911 [computer file]*. SN: 3583 (Colchester, Essex, 1997) (<http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-3583-1>).

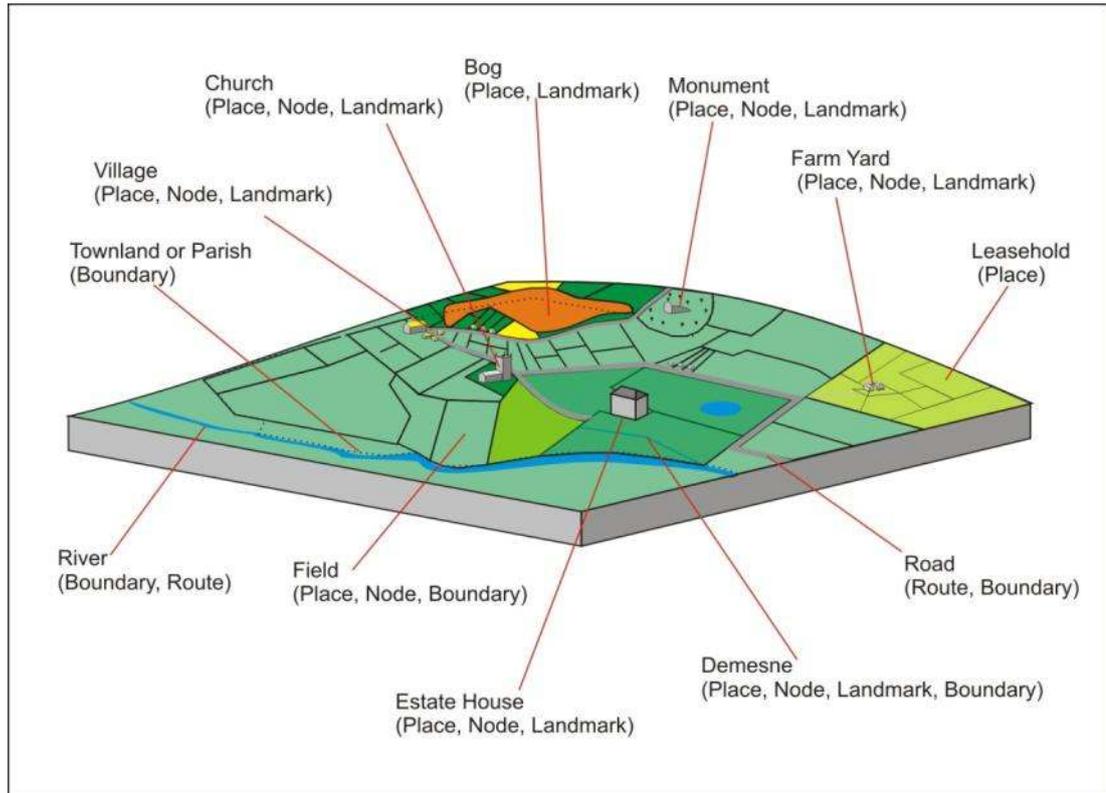


Figure 2.1 Features and elements of the Irish historic rural landscape.

into the homes of the early modern and later historic elite in Ireland has tended to concentrate on the art, architecture and biography of these buildings.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, research on traditional or vernacular buildings – rural cottages and farm houses – has tended to follow an ethnographic or folk studies model, looking at the form, roofing (gabled or hipped), position of fireplaces (central or against a gable) and doors (single or double), and internal partition of these buildings (usually two or three bays and one room deep), and their variations across the country.<sup>55</sup> Barry O'Reilly has looked at the trends towards closure and subdivision in vernacular Irish houses and farms of the later historic period, primarily from an architectural development and moral improvement perspective.<sup>56</sup> I am interested in how buildings were

<sup>54</sup>Desmond Guinness and William Ryan, *Irish Houses and Castles* (London, 1971); Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses* (2nd ed., London, 1990); Maurice James Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland: From the Earliest Times to 1880* (Portrane, 1997); Jacqueline O'Brien and Desmond Guinness, *Great Irish Houses and Castles* (New York, 1998); Trevor Hart and Amanda Cochrane, *Great Irish Houses* (Dun Laoghaire, 2008).

<sup>55</sup>Campbell, 'Irish Fields and Houses'; Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 'The bothán scóir' in Etienne Rynne (ed.), *North Munster Studies: Essays in Commemoration of Monsignor Michael Moloney* (Limerick, 1967), pp 489–498; Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 'Traditional Forms of the Dwelling House in Ireland' in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, cii, no. 1 (1972), pp 77–96; O'Reilly, *Living Under Thatch*; O'Reilly, 'Hearth and home: the vernacular house in Ireland from c. 1800'; F.H.A Aalen, 'Houses' in F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd ed., Cork, 2011), pp 212–231.

<sup>56</sup> O'Reilly, *Living Under Thatch*; O'Reilly & Murray, *Traditional Buildings on Irish Farms*; O'Reilly, 'Hearth and home: the vernacular house in Ireland from c. 1800'.

indicators of ideology and Improvement. I focus in particular on the homes of the elite (section 5.3), places of worship (section 6.3), towns and villages (section 6.4) and the homes and farm buildings of tenant farmers (section 6.5) as indicators of Improvement. I also investigate these in relation to the wider landscape of enclosed landscapes.

Enclosed fields functioned to control animal movements, manage crops, and define the legal boundaries of property. They were, in the later historic period, inherited discrete spaces or created as a division of former areas of continuous space. Field boundaries were not just functional; they were meaningful divisions of space. Boundaries shaped both mental and physical landscapes. Enclosure was a cultural activity, related to the redefinition of social relations not just between the rich and the poor, but also between neighbours.<sup>57</sup> For later historic writers about Ireland, field boundaries were a key indicator of Improvement (section 3.3). The first national survey of field boundaries in Ireland was carried out by the French geographer Pierre Flatrès (Fig. 2.2).<sup>58</sup> Flatrès differentiated fields in Ireland according to their shape, regularity and size. His study distinguished between patterns of regular and irregular, and small, medium and large fields. Emma Plunkett-Dillon produced a comprehensive study of field boundaries of the Burren, Co. Clare, focusing in particular on describing relict field boundaries (section 4.5).<sup>59</sup> Plunkett-Dillon was primarily concerned with identifying the physical characteristics, patterns and age of fields and field boundaries. My focus is the patterns of field shape and size, and field boundary orientations, as indicators of the age of enclosure, as this relates to later historic landscape Improvement and planning (sections 5.4 & 6.6), most of the evidence for which was derived from documentary records and GIS data (see below). These features can be studied at different scales of analysis.

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<sup>57</sup> Johnson, *Archaeology of Capitalism*, pp 71–73.

<sup>58</sup> Pierre Flatrès, *Geographie Rurale de Quatre Contrees Celtiques: Irlande, Galles, Cornwall & Man* (Rennes, 1957).

<sup>59</sup> Emma Plunkett-Dillon, “The Field Boundaries of the Burren, Co. Clare” (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, 1985).

Spatial scales have always played a key, if sometimes unacknowledged, role in historical archaeological research. For a discipline that ranges from the study of material things – pots and houses – to world systems like capitalism, the scale at which the research has been carried out profoundly shapes the methodology. Orser urged historical archaeologists to ‘think globally, dig locally’, recommending that multi-scalar approaches produce better scholarship.<sup>60</sup> I would agree that it does. Yet thinking in multiple scales, and particularly moving between

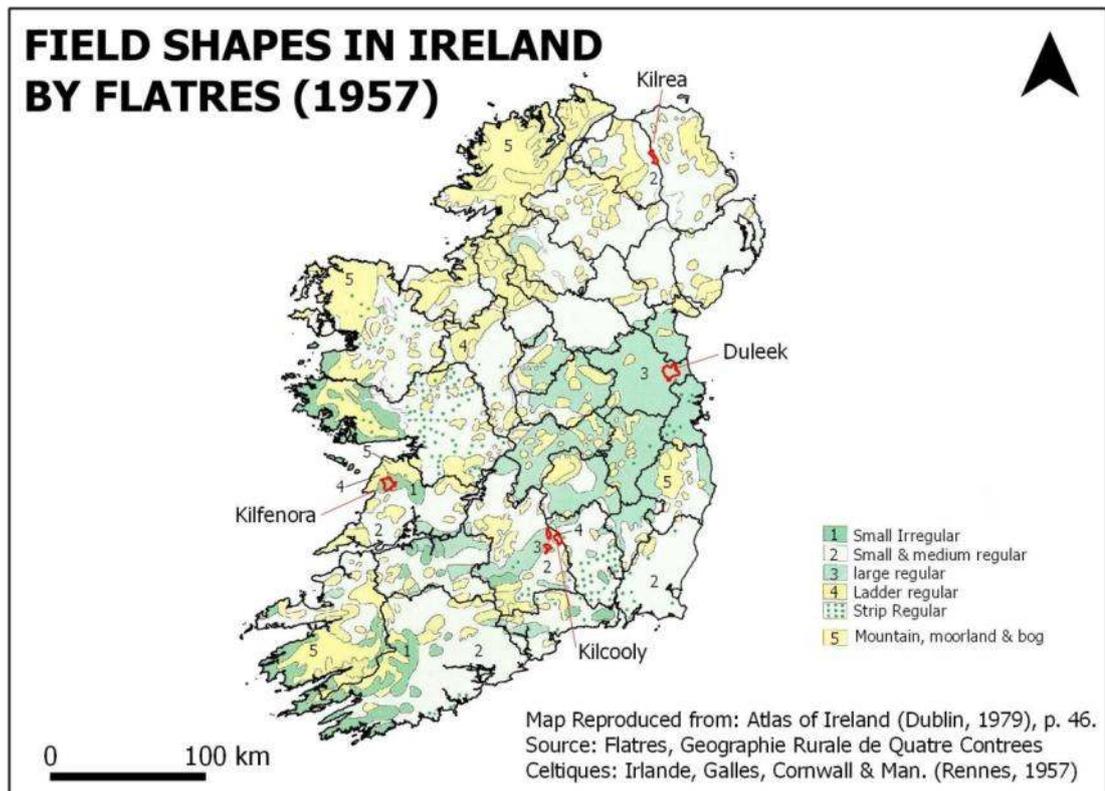


Figure 2.2 Types of fields in Ireland (after Flatres 1957).

scales, is problematic, particularly when looking at the nature of space. Rather than being a static canvas, space is a dynamic, multi-faceted series of dimensions encompassing individual buildings, gardens, fields, properties and leaseholds, and customary divisions of the cultural landscape like townlands or their equivalents, parishes, and purely administrative divisions like electoral districts and poor-law unions developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to better record and manage society. Each may be said to have formed a different scale of experience for those living in later historic Ireland. My thesis will explore how, influenced by the ideology of Improvement, people and institutions changed space and place over time.

<sup>60</sup> Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, pp 183–190.

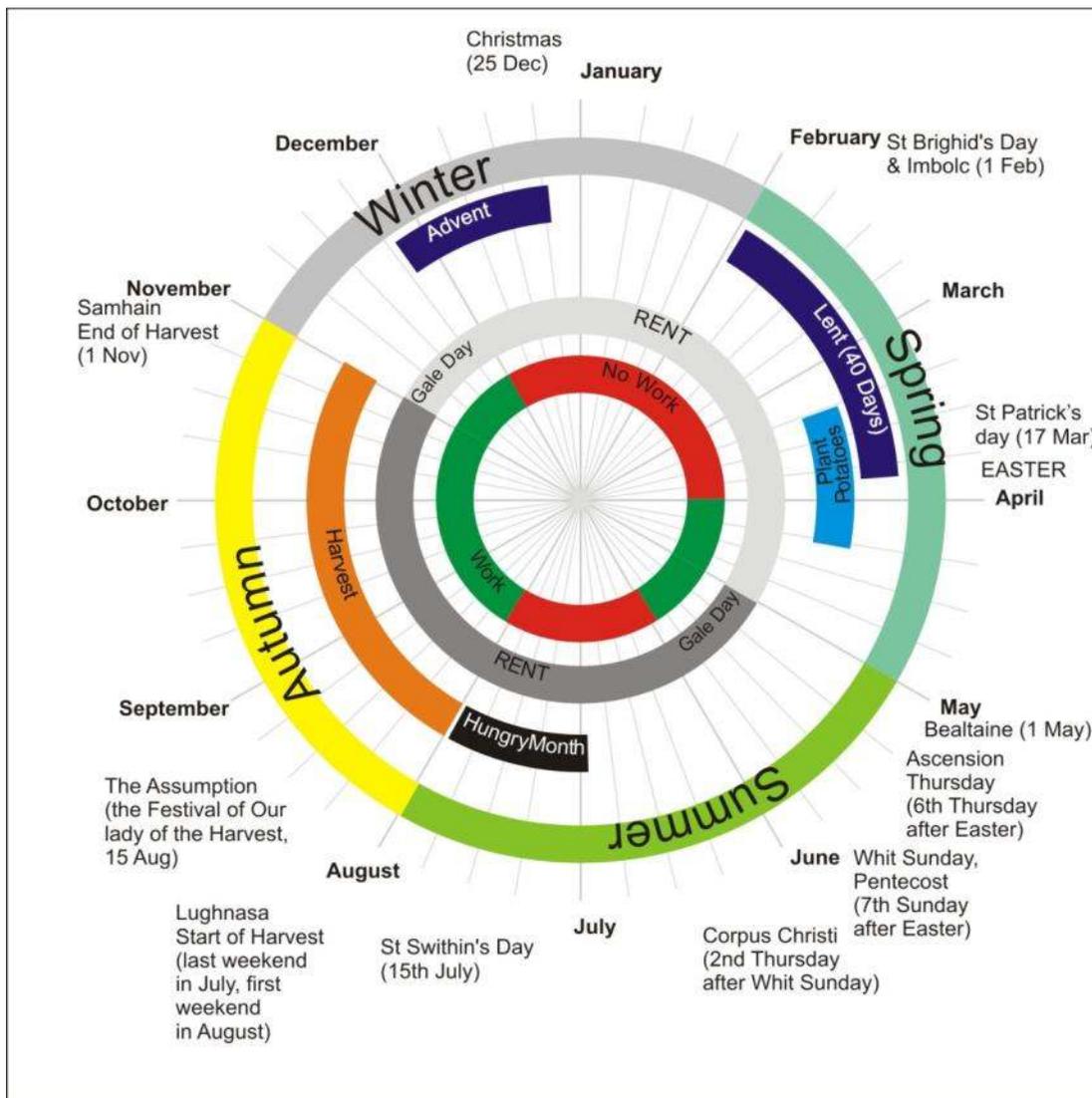


Figure 2.3 The working year for later historic Irish tenant farmers and labourers.

Time can be expressed as absolute or relative, cyclical or linear. Historical narratives often approach time as a series of events, one after another. However, for historic landscapes containing cultural features from multiple periods, time cannot be treated as a procession of events, particularly if we accept that the landscape itself played an active part in shaping people's lives. Historic studies influenced by the Annales school distinguish between the short time span or event, the conjuncture or cycles of decades, and the *longue durée* of centuries or more, where each scale of time affected the course of the other.<sup>61</sup> Archaeology can contribute to landscape studies by looking at landscape change in non-linear time,<sup>62</sup> and in particular at

<sup>61</sup> Fernand Braudel, *On History* (Chicago, 1980), pp 25–52.

<sup>62</sup> Ian Hodder, 'The contribution of the long term' in Ian Hodder (ed.), *Archaeology as Long-Term History* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 6.

the role of Improvement in changing routine cycles of activity.<sup>63</sup> In rural Ireland the yearly cycle was perhaps the most significant factor in the daily lives of farming communities, where the seasons shaped agricultural practice and the availability of work and food (Fig. 2.3). Religion punctuated the year with festivals and obligatory practices of fasting and attendance at religious services, and it dictated the customary times for paying rents. The rural economy was driven by cycles of regular markets and fairs. The passage of time was marked differently depending on the class and position of individuals or families on the social scale. A year was a significantly different experience for the insecure, landless farm labourer compared to the relatively secure landlord. Improvement required productive time management and the minimisation of 'waste' through the more efficient use of the land.<sup>64</sup> This was achieved in part by the discovery of landscapes through documentary records.

### **Documented landscapes**

Irish later history is extensively documented, and notwithstanding the loss of substantial archives in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>65</sup> a great deal of detail about specific places, individuals, and subjects survive, in manuscript, printed and digital form. The documentary record used in this thesis mostly dates from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and consists of both primary archive and secondary published material. These records can be broadly divided into the following categories: state sponsored national or regional surveys like the Civil Survey for Tipperary,<sup>66</sup> the 1659 'Census',<sup>67</sup> Griffith's 'Primary Valuation of Ireland' and its constituent records,<sup>68</sup> and the Census of Ireland of 1841 and 1851.<sup>69</sup> Private papers used included the records in the Registry of Deeds (section 5.3),<sup>70</sup> the estate papers of the Barker and Inchiquin O'Brien families,<sup>71</sup> and the records of the Company of Mercers in Belfast.<sup>72</sup> Historic maps most often consulted include estate maps with the family estate papers, maps of the Down

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<sup>63</sup> Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 79–128.

<sup>64</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism' in *Past & Present*, no. 38 (1967), pp 77–78.

<sup>65</sup> Kenneth Darwin, 'The Irish record situation' in *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, ii, no. 8 (1960), pp 361–366.

<sup>66</sup> Robert C. Simington, *The Civil Survey, A.D. 1654-1656: County of Tipperary. Volume 1. Eastern and Southern Baronies* (Dublin, 1931).

<sup>67</sup> William J. Smyth and Seamus Pender (eds), *A Census of Ireland, Circa 1659: With Essential Materials from the Poll Money Ordinances 1660-1661* (Dublin, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> James R Reilly, *Richard Griffith and his Valuations of Ireland* (Baltimore, 2000).

<sup>69</sup> *Report of the commissioners appointed to take the census of Ireland, for the year 1841* [504] H.C. 1843 xxiv, 1; *The census of Ireland for the year 1851, part VI, general report* [2134] H.C. 1856, xxxi, 1.

<sup>70</sup> 'Registry of Deeds' ([http://www.landregistry.ie/eng/About\\_Us/Registry\\_of\\_Deeds\\_Services/](http://www.landregistry.ie/eng/About_Us/Registry_of_Deeds_Services/)) (6 Jan. 2014).

<sup>71</sup> *Papers of the Barker Family Baronets and the Ponsonby Family of Kilcooley Abbey Co Tipperary*, by TCD (Barker/ Ponsonby Papers, Dublin, 1982) (T.C.D.DepositBarkerPonsonbyPapersoftheBarkerfamily.pdf) (6 Jan. 2014); *National Library of Ireland Collection List No. 143 Inchiquin Papers*, by Brian Kirby, Unpublished Report (Dublin, 2009) ([http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss%20lists/143\\_Inchiquin.pdf](http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss%20lists/143_Inchiquin.pdf)) (17 Oct. 2011).

<sup>72</sup> 'Public Record Office of Northern Ireland' (<http://www.proni.gov.uk/>) (11 July 2014).

Survey of Ireland from the 1650s,<sup>73</sup> and the Ordnance Survey of Ireland six-inch-to-one-mile map series.<sup>74</sup> Contemporary travel accounts of Ireland, in particular Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland* (section 3.4),<sup>75</sup> offer useful insights into contemporary understanding of the Irish landscape and attitudes of improvers.

Documentary records in the later historic period were primarily produced by the more powerful in society. As such it could reasonably be said that these documents were created for their benefit and were written from their perspective. Historical archaeological research has been particularly concerned with the poor, considered to be un-represented in the written record.<sup>76</sup> These people might be characterised as marginalised and voiceless, although some scholars, like Moreland,<sup>77</sup> would contest this. Within an Irish context, the rural poorer classes had less access to, and were less engaged in producing textual material about themselves. Much of what we know about the most marginal individuals comes from the writings of middle-class observers or from government enquiries (section 3.5).

Documents were artefacts in themselves, a product of their context as well as their creators. Documentary records could also be characterised as oppressive – a violent reshaping of people's landscapes by outside observers in the act of discovery, or even scholarly enquiry.<sup>78</sup> Discovery was, I will argue, a key factor in Improvement ideology in the landscape (sections 3.3, 3.5 & 7.8). Documentary records also changed the landscape. Historical documents were both the instrument and agent of change.<sup>79</sup> Later historic records of the Irish landscapes were ideologically charged, particularly those recording and promoting Improvement. Therefore, the landscape itself might reveal insights into the nature of the documentary record, record-makers and their ideology. Many of these records either directly reflect the recorder's perception of the landscapes – or at least the elements of the landscape they were documenting – like maps, or indirectly replicate the landscape by assigning particular values to landscape elements, such as valuations and rentals (section 7.6). The documentary record can act as a proxy for the landscape – a window onto perceptions of landscape, how

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<sup>73</sup> Trinity College Dublin, 'Homepage of The Down Survey Project' in *The Down Survey Website*, 2013 (<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/>) (11 June 2013).

<sup>74</sup> 'Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapviewer', 2012 (<http://maps.osi.ie>) (11 Feb. 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland: with General Observations on the Present State of That Kingdom* (2 vols, London, 1780).

<sup>76</sup> Orser, *A Historical Archaeology of the Modern World*, pp 160–161.

<sup>77</sup> Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Layton and Peter J Ucko, 'Introduction: gazing on the landscape and encountering the environment' in Peter J Ucko and Robert Layton (eds), *The Archaeology and Anthropology of Landscape* (London, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, p. 31.

landscape and its elements changed over time, and who changed them. Where these documentary records have a geographical element - most often a place-name or a cartographic representation that can be identified in the modern landscape - they can be rendered digitally, represented and analysed spatially.

### **Geographical Information Systems**

Geographical Information Systems or GIS is used extensively in this thesis as a tool for landscape research. GIS is a powerful tool for recording and analysing the historic landscape. GIS software, QGIS in the case of this thesis,<sup>80</sup> can capture, create, store and analyse geospatial data and create maps.<sup>81</sup> GIS does not itself account for the experiential, social aspects of landscape,<sup>82</sup> but it can help gather, organise, and present large and disparate sources of information, and as such it is an invaluable tool in archaeological landscape research. Data sources used in this thesis include pre-existing data generated by government bodies like digitised maps and historic boundary vector data from the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, archaeological and architectural sites data, or freely available data like Open Street Map, Google or Bing satellite images.<sup>83</sup> GIS is a valuable tool in landscape archaeology for planning fieldwork, locating recorded sites, identifying new and potentially significant features from aerial photography, historic maps, and LiDAR. GIS can also be used to compare historic maps and digitise landscape features, and combine features and attributes in novel ways, like linking census, valuation, property and rental information to places. Significantly, for this research, GIS allows researchers to visualise their data in maps and diagrams.

GIS is most powerful when used for geospatial analysis to reveal patterns and relationships between apparently unrelated landscape features and historical documentary material. However, GIS has its drawbacks. It allows data to be examined at multiple scales so effortlessly that issues of analysing landscapes at different scales are often ignored.<sup>84</sup> Whilst GIS allows researchers to join geographical spatial data, often this spatial data is relatively

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<sup>80</sup> 'Welcome to the QGIS project!' (<http://www.qgis.org/en/site/>) (5 Apr. 2014).

<sup>81</sup> Henry Chapman, *Landscape Archaeology and GIS* (London, 2006); Gianmarco Cattari and Richard Clutterbuck, 'Free Open-Source Geographical Information Systems for Irish Archaeology' in *Archaeology Ireland*, 25:1, no. 95 (2011), pp 21–25.

<sup>82</sup> James Conolly, 'Geographical Information Systems and Landscape Archaeology' in Bruno David and Julian Thomas (eds), *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, 2008), p. 591.

<sup>83</sup> 'OpenStreetMap' (<http://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=10/53.7540/-9.2457&layers=CN>) (28 Jan. 2015); 'Google Earth' (<https://www.google.com/earth/>) (28 Jan. 2015); 'Bing Maps' (<http://www.bing.com/maps/>) (28 Jan. 2015).

<sup>84</sup> Gary R. Lock and Brian Molyneux, 'Introduction: confronting scale' in G. R. Lock and Brian Molyneux (eds), *Confronting Scale in Archaeology: Issues of Theory and Practice* (New York, 2006), p. 2.

coarse when rendered at a regional, county or district level, making it difficult to make meaningful inference between these levels of detail.<sup>85</sup> Williamson criticises GIS-based historic landscape studies for ignoring features that cannot be rendered digitally.<sup>86</sup> There is also a danger that our broader understanding of historic landscapes may be limited to what we can map, ignoring, for example, areas of research dealing with sentiment, values and ideology.

### **2.5 Summary**

Improvement sought to change society by changing the landscape. My research is a landscape archaeology influenced by historical geography. Ireland has a long tradition of historic landscape studies, much of it significantly influenced by the work of the Ordnance Survey in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Much of this research focused on settlement and society, on particular sites and site types rather than on the landscape as a whole. Landscape studies have in recent years become more focused on the ideological basis of the Irish landscape. This is an area which can be particularly fruitful for landscape archaeologists. I will look at evidence for patterns in the landscape as an indicator of Improvement ideology. Improvement had a significant impact on routine practices and daily life, shaping rural societies' accepted ways of living. My thesis is also an investigation of agency and class in the improved landscape, focusing on both the improvers and the improved. My research explores the relationship between Improvement and the ideologies of colonialism and capitalism. My method for researching the landscape of Improvement encompasses detailed study of both the material and documentary records of these landscapes. The material landscape consists of features and elements, of which buildings and enclosure are particularly important for this study. Documentary records from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries provide the backbone of much of the analysis in this thesis, in particular the mapped landscapes. I use GIS extensively to handle the large volumes of data about later historic landscapes, and produce maps and diagrams to illustrate my findings. One of the main strengths of GIS is to allow the novel association of disparate types of evidence, in a sense visualising the proxy landscapes of the documentary records and associating them with the material landscape. This can be done at various scales, from the local to the national. In the next chapter I will look at the historical and geographical context of Improvement in later historic Ireland in general before approaching the four case study areas for detailed analysis.

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<sup>85</sup> Trevor M. Harris, 'Scale as artifact: GIS, ecological fallacy, and archaeological analysis' in G. R. Lock and Brian Molyneux (eds), *Confronting Scale in Archaeology: Issues of Theory and Practice* (New York, 2006), p. 45.

<sup>86</sup> Tom Williamson, 'Historic Landscape Characterisation: some queries' in *Landscapes*, viii, no. 2 (2007), p. 65.

### **3. Improvement in Later Historic Ireland: An Overview**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Improvement in Ireland was a means of establishing identity, legitimising ownership, and pacifying the country. Improvement can be considered a key part of the development of modernity in Ireland. Improvement was an extensively documented phenomenon, particularly by the landed elite and the structural agencies. It was also inextricably bound up with ideologies of capitalism, colonialism and sectarianism. Perhaps for these reasons Improvement in later historic Ireland was far from a universally accepted ideology. Its principles were contested, its underlying philosophy subverted, and its application at best uneven, and frequently completely ignored. In this chapter I will examine the history of Improvement in later historic Ireland, how the nature of Improvement changed over time, and how Improvement was promoted and subverted.

I am proposing three phases of Improvement in Ireland, each one of which built upon, and to a certain extent reacted to, the last. The first phase of Improvement is linked to the early-modern (c.1540-1650) English colonial program in Ireland, associated with the Reformation, Tudor Reconquest, plantation and the creation of a civil and Protestant society – an elite ‘ascendancy’ with an identity distinct from and, in their terms, superior to what came before. In the second phase of Improvement, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the new Protestant elite exercised their control of the structures of power in Ireland with ostentatious self-confidence, but also sought to secure their position through legislation and by manipulating the landscape and daily practice. The third phase of Improvement, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, corresponds to a relative decline in the fortunes of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy and the growing role of Government in promoting Improvement for political ends, to pacify the country.

#### **3.2 The Ideas of Improvement in Ireland**

Improvement was frequently cited in early modern descriptions of Ireland, largely for its apparent absence (section 3.3). Improvement was an ideology frequently associated with 18<sup>th</sup>

century Enlightenment ideology. Chris Dalglish, in his archaeological study of Improvement in the Scottish Highlands, explores the role of Enlightenment thought in the development of Improvement in Scotland. He makes specific connections between David Hume, a key figure in the Scottish Enlightenment, and the Duke of Argyll, the land-owning improver of Kintyre. He also demonstrated how the general environment of Enlightenment thinking, the growth of a middle-class identity, and in particular a desire for cultural assimilation with England, drove Improvement in districts like Kilfinane.<sup>1</sup> Political and philosophical enquiry in late 17<sup>th</sup>-and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland was dominated by questions of Ireland's subordinate position to Britain,<sup>2</sup> and its role as a sister kingdom under British constitutional monarchy.<sup>3</sup> The most significant Irish philosopher of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Francis Hutcheson, published, whilst living in Dublin, a number of influential works, including in 1725 *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*.<sup>4</sup> Hutcheson subsequently became the professor of moral philosophy in Glasgow, where he taught, and influenced, major figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, including David Hume or Adam Smith.<sup>5</sup> Dublin's vibrant publication and book trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw that works like *Wealth of Nations*,<sup>6</sup> *The History of England*,<sup>7</sup> and Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*,<sup>8</sup> were quickly published and widely distributed in Ireland (Fig. 3.1). John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*,<sup>9</sup> produced shortly after James II was deposed, profoundly influenced 18<sup>th</sup>-century Irish political thinking, particularly in relation to the nature of property, and the righteousness of British constitutional monarchy as opposed to the absolutism of Louis XIV or James II.<sup>10</sup> Anglo-Irish philosophical treatises were in the later historic period expressed through histories of Ireland after the Norman invasion.

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<sup>1</sup> Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 130–134.

<sup>2</sup> Ian McBride, 'The edge of Enlightenment: Ireland and Scotland in the eighteenth century' in *Modern Intellectual History*, x, no. 01 (2013), p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (Dublin, 1689).

<sup>4</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue: in Two Treatises, I Concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design, II Concerning Moral, Good and Evil* (2nd ed., London, 1726).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Brown, 'Hutcheson, Francis' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), iv, 863–66.

<sup>6</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (3 vols, Dublin, 1776).

<sup>7</sup> Hume, *History of England*.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution* (Dublin, 1791).

<sup>9</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: In the Former, The False Principles and Foundation of Sir Robert Filmer, And His Followers, are Detected and Overthrown. The Latter is an Essay concerning The True Original, Extent, and End of Civil-Government* (5th ed., London, 1728).

<sup>10</sup> David Berman, 'The Irish counter-enlightenment' in Richard Kearney (ed.), *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions* (Dublin, 1985), pp 119–140; Patrick Kelly, 'Perceptions of Locke in Eighteenth-Century Ireland' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 89C (1989), pp 17–35.

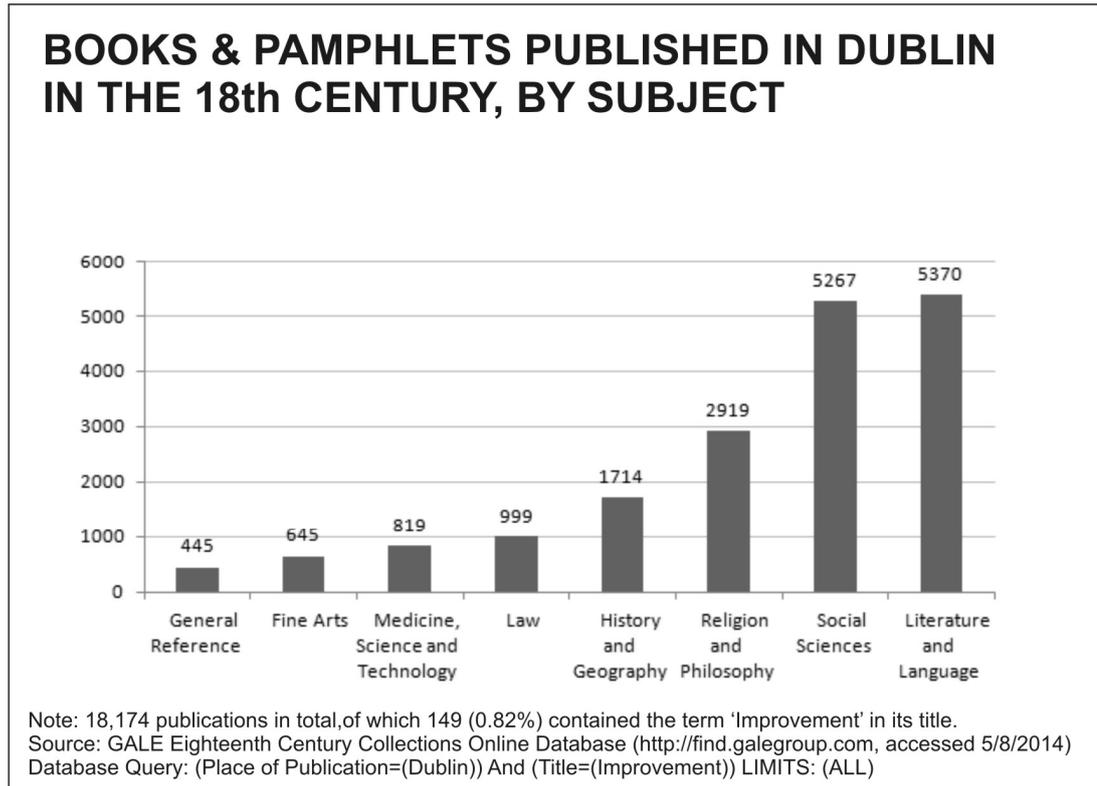


Figure 3.1 Books and pamphlets published in Dublin in the 18th century.

The foundations of this scholarship were laid in the early-modern political discourses justifying English rule in Ireland. Sir John Davies' *True Cause why Ireland was Never Subdued*,<sup>11</sup> first published in 1612, but republished in 1747, was a history of Ireland in stages, based on the reign of the English monarchs. Davies presented a political argument for English colonialism in Ireland based on medieval precedents, drawing in particular upon Cambrensis' *Topographia Hiberniae*.

Colonial writing on Ireland was generally hostile to Gaelic Irish custom and Catholicism. Both were characterised by the British as wedded to superstition and absolutist monarchy, in opposition to the Enlightenment ideals of liberty and constitutional Protestant monarchy ensured by the Glorious Revolution (1689). The Penal Laws were produced by the new ascendant Protestant parliament in Ireland to control Catholicism and the old order (see section 3.4). Histories of Ireland written to support the ascendant role of the new elite were

<sup>11</sup> Sir John Davies, *A Discoverie of the True Causes Why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued* (London, 1612).

contested, through what Kidd called the 'Catholic Enlightenment' in Ireland,<sup>12</sup> with histories produced by figures like John Curry and Charles O'Connor.<sup>13</sup> These works highlighted the antiquity, genealogy and precedent of Gaelic civility and aristocracy, and presented an alternative Catholic historical perspective on events like the 1641 Rebellion, and the narrative of barbaric massacre which were cornerstones of the Protestant ascendancy historiography. They also provided an intellectual argument for the repeal of the Penal Laws and access to property rights. However, despite the intellectual rigour of these studies, the most influential thinkers in later historic Ireland remained those closer to the establishment, men like Edmund Burke.

Burke was, in many respects, the preeminent political thinker to emerge from Ireland in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. His writing included subjects like landscape appreciation in *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*,<sup>14</sup> but his primary contributions were on political science. His *Reflections on the Revolution in France*,<sup>15</sup> written in opposition to the ideals of the French revolution and in defence of the liberties of the British Protestant constitutional social order, and hierarchy, helped articulate an agenda for modern British conservatism. However, the revolutionary ideas that Burke despised would significantly influence Irish nationalist thinking and Irish historiography in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as seen in the 1798 Rebellion, the rise of the Young Ireland movement and later Irish republicanism.

### **3.3 From 'Civility' Towards 'Improvement', the First Phase of Improvement in Ireland**

Improvement in Ireland may be considered a reworking of the early modern concept of 'civility'.<sup>16</sup> Civility dictated the proper norms of behaviour, clothing, knowledge, art, architecture, gardening, agriculture and religion. It was proposed as a binary opposite of

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<sup>12</sup> Colin Kidd, 'Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland' in *The English Historical Review*, cix, no. 434 (1994), pp 1197–1214.

<sup>13</sup> Charles O'Connor, *Dissertations on the History of Ireland. To Which is Subjoined, a Dissertation on the Irish Colonies Established in Britain. With Some Remarks on Mr. MacPherson's Translation of Fingal and Temora* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1766); John Curry, *An Historical and Critical Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland, From the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, to the Settlement under King William* (Dublin, 1786).

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (First edition 1757, Basil, 1792).

<sup>15</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

<sup>16</sup> David Dickson, *Old World Colony: Cork and South Munster 1630-1830* (Cork, 2005), p. 170.

barbarism which, in the context of expanding European, and in Ireland's case, English, colonialism, served to separate the colonisers from the colonised. Civility and the civilising mission served as ideological justification for planting Ireland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> The transformation of the Irish landscape by creating 'modern' buildings and designed gardens contrasted with the notionally uncivilised Irish, living in rude nature or antiquated medieval 'castles'. The English use of the binary opposition of civility and barbarism with regard to Ireland was not necessarily an early modern invention; it had its origins in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Norman colonial work of Giraldus Cambrensis and his *Topographia Hiberniae*,<sup>18</sup> which continued to be cited in later historic colonial literature about Irish landscapes.<sup>19</sup> Many of the anecdotes used in early modern English accounts to characterise the Irish as barbaric, like yoking horses to ploughs by their tails and pulling wool from sheep, outlawed in 1635,<sup>20</sup> reappeared in 18<sup>th</sup>-century accounts, where they remained potent archetypes of pre-Improvement Irish husbandry.<sup>21</sup>

Ideas of change and reformation in medieval Ireland, particularly in religious and agricultural practices, were part of the Anglo-Norman colonial process from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. Within Anglo-Norman manors and the grange farms, especially those of the Cistercians, intensive cultivation of the manorial demesne, reclamation of land by assart in forests, crop rotations and fertilising were carried out.<sup>22</sup> Gaelic Ireland was considered a barbaric 'other', literally and figuratively beyond the pale, creating a narrative for social and class relations which lasted into the later historic period. The framework of modern Irish rural landscapes, of parishes, townlands or their local equivalent, villages and towns, were established in the medieval and early modern periods (sections 4.3 to 4.5). A key part of this legacy was the concept of property.

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2003), pp 249–250.

<sup>18</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *The History and Topography of Ireland (Topographia Hiberniae)*, ed. John Joseph O'Meara (Rev. ed., Portlaoise, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> Patricia Palmer, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland: English Renaissance Literature and Elizabethan Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 104.

<sup>20</sup> 10 & 11 Chas. 1 c.35, *Statutes Passed in the Parliaments Held in Ireland A.D 1310 - 1662* (Dublin, 1794), pp 301–302.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland with General Observations on the Present State of that Kingdom Made in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778 and Brought Down to the Year 1779* (2 vols, London, 1780), p. 248; Samuel Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions Proper For The Gentlemen Of Ireland: As To Their Conduct For The Service Of Their Country, As Landlords, Masters Of Families, As Protestants, As Descended From British Ancestors, As Country Gentlemen and Farmers, As Justices Of The Peace, As Merchants, As Members Of Parliament* (Dublin, 1738), p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> Margaret Murphy and Michael Potterton, *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages: Settlement, Land-Use and Economy* (Dublin, 2010), pp 287–348.

### **Concepts of property**

Early modern Irish society was defined by ethnic and religious identities composed of Gaelic, Gaelicised, and 'old' English (descendants of Anglo-Normans) elites, as well as the 'new' English and Scottish settlers, Catholics and Protestants. Irish society was defined by personal and communal interaction, acculturation and conflict. Controlling land and property was a key to control of the structures of power in historic Ireland. The concept of a modern estate emerged with the concept of rights to property.<sup>23</sup> Within an Irish context, uniform and unifying legal Common Law codes were universally imposed from the later 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to this, two legal systems operated in Ireland, English Common law and Gaelic 'Brehon' law. Brehon law was a process of arbitrations in which both parties agreed to submit themselves to judgement by a class of professional lawyers who were trained in judgements based on sometimes centuries-old precedents.<sup>24</sup> During the 'Gaelic resurgence' in the late medieval period, Gaelic legal, social and cultural practices were adopted in many areas of the Anglo-Norman colony. In 16<sup>th</sup>-century Kilkenny and Tipperary, a liberty jurisdiction of the Ormond lordship, both Common and Brehon law were practised.<sup>25</sup> By the later 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries many Brehon lawyers were training in Common law.<sup>26</sup> In Common law, all land was held from the Crown, with the King as Lord Paramount, at the summit of a hierarchy of tenure, services and rights. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, feudal aspects of the law, like obligations and services, often requiring labour, were replaced with one form commonly called 'freehold' subject to payment of an annual 'quit rent'.<sup>27</sup>

Between 1542 and 1590, in one of the largest and wealthiest lordships in Ireland, Ormond in Kilkenny and Tipperary, a number of leases demonstrate the early adoption of provisions more common in later historic 'improving' leases (Fig. 3.2). For example, in 1542 Ormond rewarded Cornelius O'Dwyer, 'captain of his nation', for his support in the Geraldine rebellion by giving him the manor or Moyaliff in Tipperary, free of rent and services, for his life. The grant was conditional, with O'Dwyer required to 'build and maintain in due and fit manner all the buildings, houses and tenements of said manor and towns, and so leave them at the end

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<sup>23</sup> Tom Williamson, 'Estate landscapes in England: interpretive archaeologies' in Mary Carolyn Beaudry and James Symonds (eds), *Interpreting the Early Modern World Transatlantic Perspectives* (New York, 2011), p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 2003), p. 57; Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> V. T. H. Delany, 'The Palatinate Court of the Liberty of Tipperary' in *The American Journal of Legal History*, v, no. 2 (1961), pp 95–117; D. B. Quinn and Kenneth W. Nicholls, 'Ireland in 1534' in T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds), *A New History of Ireland, Volume III: Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691* (Oxford, 2009), p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp 250–63.

<sup>27</sup> J. C. W. Wylie, *Irish Land Law* (3rd ed., Dublin, 1997), p. 23.

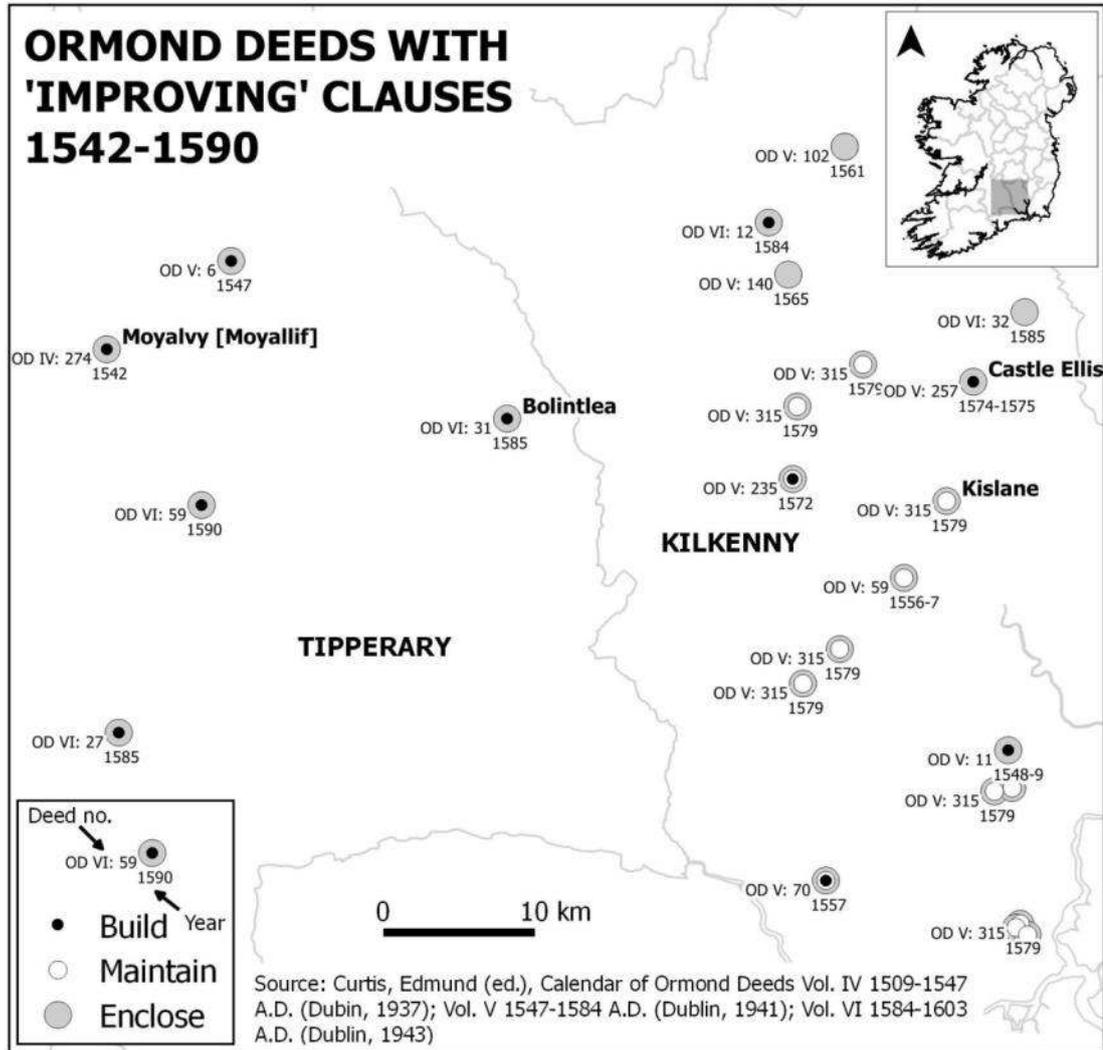


Figure 3.2 Distribution of Ormond lease agreements with improving clauses dating from 1542 to 1590.

of the term, when all the premises shall revert and remain to said Earl and his heirs for ever'.<sup>28</sup> A further lease agreement between Ormond and two leaseholders, Redmond Galde and William Brenagh, for the townland of Kislane (modern Kilfane) in Kilkenny for a term of sixteen years at a rent of £16 for the first year and £17 6s 8d thereafter, 'along with the usual perquisites and a good beef, a hogshead of good ale, a barrel of clean wheat and meat and drink convenient for Richard Shee and the Earl's Steward and officers when they come to the said towns.' In addition the grantees were required to 'commit no waste in the woods and ... fasten the towns with gates and ditches'<sup>29</sup>, a vague term by later historic standards but seeming to require enclosure, parcelling out and management of land within the manor.

<sup>28</sup> Edmund Curtis (ed.), *Calendar of Ormond Deeds Volume IV 1509-1547 A.D.* (Dubin, 1937), p. 222.

<sup>29</sup> Edmund Curtis (ed.), *Calendar of Ormond Deeds Volume V 1547-1584 A.D.* (Dublin, 1941), p. 299.

Similar requirements to maintain and build applied to leases of substantial buildings. In 1574 Ormond leased Castle Ellis in Kilkenny to John Malrony, a carpenter, for 31 years at an annual rent of £4, four carts of wheat straw and the usual prerequisites, 'provided that John shall build up the castle with lime, stone and oak timber'.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, this tower house no longer survives. In 1585 Ormond leased the townland of Bolintlea in Tipperary, just south of Kilcooly Abbey, to Thomas and Richard Comerford for 21 years with an annual rent of 6 marks provided 'they build six good thatch houses, a strong defensible garden, with a gate and strong ditches set with quickset'.<sup>31</sup> Leases like those between Ormond and Cornelius O'Dwyer demonstrate the sort of feudal relationship expected between a lord and his vassal. However, the lease between Ormond and the Comerford brothers demonstrated a landlord and tenant relationship common in the later historic period. Leases included conditions to build, maintain and enclose in a fixed term, and, except for Moyaliff, pay a money rent, were all significant features of improving leases in the later historic period.

Tudor policy in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland was to extend Royal authority over the island and make English Common law the only legal code. The policy of 'Surrender and Regrant' was a key instrument to this end. It involved an Irish lord surrendering his lordship – and right to land – to the English Crown, in return for a grant of the same land, but under Common Law title. The legal status of their estate was transformed. For example, Murchadh Ó Briain (Morrough O'Brien), King of Thomond, surrendered his titles and lands in 1543 and was confirmed in his lands under English law with the title Earl of Thomond.<sup>32</sup> English common law fundamentally changed the principals of owning and transferring property in Gaelic Ireland.<sup>33</sup> Land tenure in Gaelic Ireland generally consisted of three ways of possessing land: tenancy, pledge or mortgage, and outright ownership. A distinction was also made between inherited land which would pass to a kin-group and acquired land which could be bequeathed by will.<sup>34</sup> Gaelic property arrangements could be very complex indeed, and difficult for the early modern state to articulate in maps and ledgers. Records accompanying the quantification and confiscations

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund Curtis (ed.), *Calendar of Ormond Deeds Volume VI 1584-1603 A.D.* (Dublin, 1943), p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Simington, *BSD Clare*, pp xlii–xliii; Patrick Nugent, *The Gaelic Clans of Co. Clare and Their Territories, 1100-1700 A.D.* (Dublin, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Nugent, 'The interface between the Gaelic clan system of Co. Clare and the emerging centralising English nation-state in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century' in *Irish Geography*, xl, no. 1 (2007), pp 89–90.

<sup>34</sup> Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp 100–105; Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages*, pp 64–65.

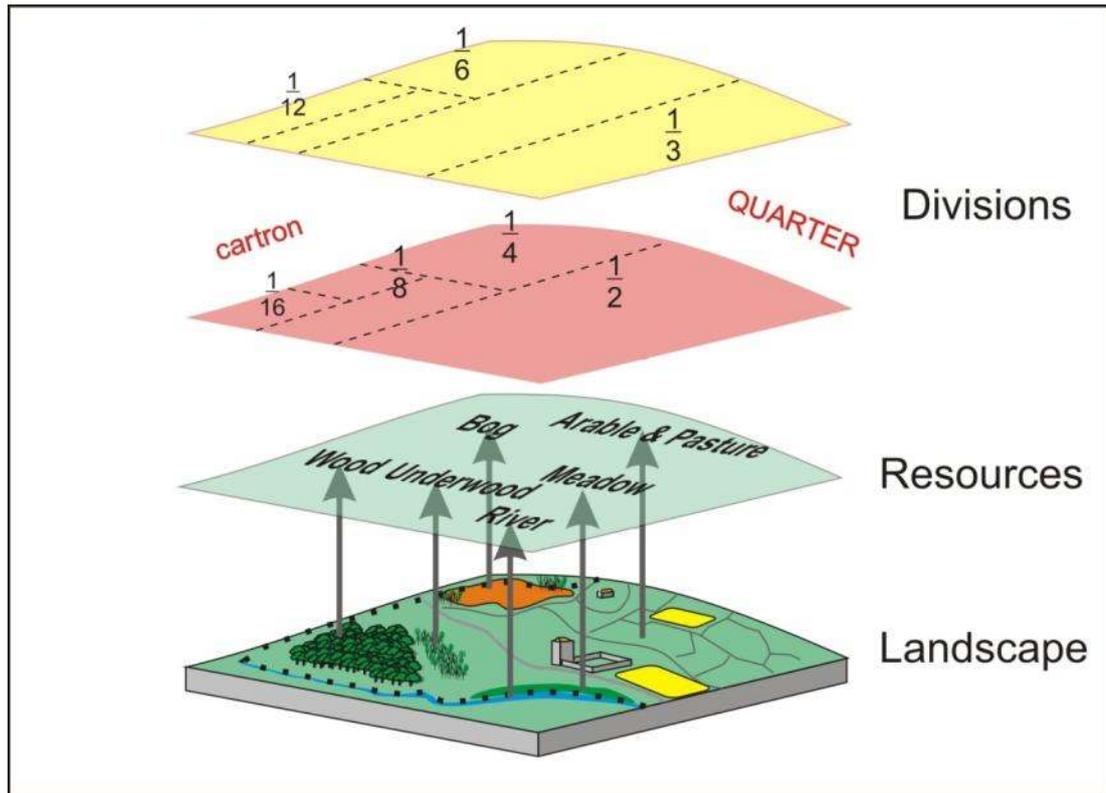


Figure 3.3 Gaelic quarters and the division of resources in early modern Ireland.

of lands from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, like the *Books of Survey and Distribution*,<sup>35</sup> illustrate this complexity, and some of the difficulties the state had in making sense of it (section 4.5). This is particularly apparent in the efforts to quantify and qualify Gaelic-owned land, where measurements in the notionally absolute 'Plantation acres'<sup>36</sup> were accompanied by the Irish measure of land called 'quarters'. Quarters were measures of the quality and potential productivity of the land, and a person's share of that productivity, and were often divided into complex fractions, so that somebody could own a complete quarter, or multiple fractions of a quarter (Fig. 3.3). The complexity of these Gaelic land-holding arrangements was considered by the state to be atavistic, the antithesis of Improvement.

Contemporary English observers equated Gaelic landholding systems with the outdated and unimproved practices of *gavelkind*, a form of partible inheritance common in Kent, and the open-field system associated with medieval feudal arable farming. In *gavelkind*, property was divided between sons, as opposed to primogeniture, where the property is given to the eldest son. This was an ideologically important distinction. Gaelic land tenure was equated with old-

<sup>35</sup> Simington, *BSD Clare*.

<sup>36</sup> John Harwood Andrews, *Plantation Acres: an Historical Study of the Irish Land Surveyor and his Maps* (Belfast, 1985), pp 4–18. A plantation or Irish acre is 1.62 statute acres or 0.66 hectares.

fashioned, backward practices, the opposite of modern English improved practices. Primogeniture meant land could be passed from one generation to the next, whole, intact, and most importantly, ready to be improved by the will of a single landlord. The Irish were characterised as nomadic, even lacking permanent homes. Gaelic land was, in a legal rather than social sense, *terra nullius*.<sup>37</sup>

For English writers like John Davies landscape features like brick- and stone-built houses, field enclosures and villages were indicators of civility which, if not absent in Gaelic Ireland, were merely poor imitations.

*[The Irish] ... possessed a Land abounding with all things necessary for the Civil life of man; yet (which is strange to be related) they did never build any house of Brick or stone (some few poor Religious Houses excepted) before the reign of King Henry the second, ... when they saw us build castles upon their borders, they have only in imitation of us, erected some few pile for the captains of the country [local Gaelic lords] ... Neither did any of them in all this time, plant gardens or orchards, enclose or improve their lands, live together in settled villages or townes, nor made any provision for posterity...*<sup>38</sup>

Davies account is a check-list of features associated with a civil and improving landscape. Irish landscapes were expected, by early modern English observers, to look a certain way, and to be characterized by absent enclosure and temporary houses. Where the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century English observers noted these features, it was with approval, for places like the Pale or Kilkenny, or surprise if in Gaelic Ireland. Fynes Moryson, writing about an English military campaign in Laois in 1600, described the landscape of Gaelic Offaly:

*Our Captains and by their example (for it was otherwise painful) the common soldiers, did cut down with their swords all the rebels corn, to the value of £10000 and upwards, the only means by which they were to live, and to keep their bonnaghts (or hired soldiers). It seemed incredible, that by so barbarous inhabitants, the ground should be so manured, the fields so orderly fenced, the Townes so frequently inhabited, and the high waies and paths so well beaten as the Lord Deputy here found them.*<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages*, pp 64–68; Nugent, 'The interface between the Gaelic and English', p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> Davies, *A Discoverie of the True Causes Why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued*, pp 169–70.

<sup>39</sup> Fynes Moryson, *An History Of Ireland, From The Year 1599, To 1603: With A Short Narration Of The State Of The Kingdom From The Year 1169. To Which Is Added, a Description Of Ireland* (Dublin, 1735), p. 178.

Most English writers of this period, however, stress the absence of enclosure in the country as a whole. Although it is possible that the traditional manner of Irish field boundaries were both unfamiliar to the English observer and unobtrusive in nature,<sup>40</sup> the importance of enclosure as a measure of civility conditioned the observations of early modern writers. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Davies drew a clear distinction between the Gaelic Irish and the civil English by the difference in their concept of land and property itself:

*... in England, and all well ordered Common-wealth's, men have certain estates in their Land and possessions, and their inheritances descend from Father to Son, which doth give them encouragement to build, and to plant, and to improve their lands, and to make them better for their posterities. But by the Irish Custom of Tanastry, the Chieferies of every Country, and the chief of every sept, had no longer estate than for life of their Chiefries, and inheritance whereof, did rest in no man.*<sup>41</sup>

Locke's views of the virtues of individual property, published in 1689, were in many respects a reiteration of the principles which informed Davies' writing some 80 years before. Locke articulated the idea that property was the fruits of labour and Improvement rather than a collection of alienable rights and obligations:

*... the chief matter of Property being now not the fruits of the earth, and the beasts that subsist on it, but the earth it self; as that which takes in and carries with it all the rest.... As much Land as a Man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the Product of, so much is his Property. He by his Labour does, as it were, inclose it from the Common.... He that in Obedience to this Command of God, subdued, tilled and sowed any part of it, thereby annexed to it something that was his Property, which another had no Title to, nor could without Injury take from him.*<sup>42</sup>

Locke wrote that liberty was freedom to own property without interference from others, including the Crown. Nearly a century later, Edmund Burke proposed that hereditary property rights and society were synonymous:

*The perpetuation of property in our families is the most valuable and most interesting circumstances attending it, that which demonstrates most of a benevolent disposition in its owners, and that which tends most to the perpetuation of society itself. The possessors of family wealth, and of the distinction which attends hereditary*

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<sup>40</sup> Buchanan, 'Field systems in Ireland', p. 601.

<sup>41</sup> Davies, *A Discoverie of the True Causes Why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued*, p. 167.

<sup>42</sup> Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 163–4.

*possession (as most concerned in it) are the natural securities for this transmission.*<sup>43</sup>

The Common Law provided the legal mechanisms for the transfer and commoditisation of property.

### ***Estate and tenure in law***

Common law practices in land law, much of which still operates today, distinguished between 'tenure', which governs the terms, and 'estate', which determined how long, a person could hold land. In purely legal terms, and reflecting the Common Law's feudal origins, a person did not 'own' land, rather they owned an estate – and interest – in the land. Estates fell into two categories: freehold and leasehold. There were three main types of freehold: fee simple, fee tail and life estate. Fee simple was the estate nearest to absolute ownership with the potential to last forever, unless the owner died intestate.<sup>44</sup> A fee farm grant was a conveyance of a fee simple subject to payment of a perpetual rent, called a 'fee farm rent'.<sup>45</sup> Fee tail was a lesser estate where the succession was confined to the descendants of the original holder of the estate. This form of estate could not be disturbed by a will, and is used to ensure the estate remained within a family descending through the male line. This was used as a significant plot device in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.<sup>46</sup> A life estate was even more limited, lasting for the duration of someone's life only, without the option to sell.<sup>47</sup>

A leasehold estate was a contract between the landlord and the tenant given the force of law but considered less than a freehold estate. 'Certain term' leaseholds were a specific, sometimes very long term (999 year) lease, unusual to Ireland. Periodic tenancy leaseholds fixed the minimum duration of the estate, usually, in later historic Ireland, at 21 to 31 years. Tenancy-at-will was a form of leasehold estate which could continue indefinitely but was generally renewed on a yearly basis, and was determinable by either party at any time.<sup>48</sup> This would be the most common form of leasehold for small tenant farmers in later historic Ireland. 'Lease for Lives Renewable for Ever', practically unheard-of in England, was one of the more common forms of leasehold for improving tenants in later historic Ireland. Usually there were three lives listed in the lease with provisions for the addition of lives thereafter. As the estate

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<sup>43</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 76.

<sup>44</sup> Wylie, *Irish Land Law*, p. 178.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>46</sup> Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London, 1985).

<sup>47</sup> Wylie, *Irish Land Law*, pp 179–180.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 180–182.

### Chapter 3 Improvement in Later Historic Ireland: An Overview

was potentially perpetual the tenant had, in effect, a freehold. The advantage to the landlord was that in addition to the fixed rent, he received fines at the succession of each life, and also increased the number of his tenants who could vote. It was estimated that in the 19th century one seventh of Ireland was held under leases for lives renewable.<sup>49</sup>

Conacre was a right to till land, sow crops in it and harvest them in due course whilst agistment was the right to graze livestock on land. Both granted the use of land for a particular purpose. Crucially, conacre was not a form of estate. It began with the cultivation and ended with the harvest, and was arranged on a seasonal basis, generally by verbal agreement, and was not protected by land law. It was popular because, as the estate remained with the landlord, it did not contravene covenants against subletting. However, most accounts of the period considered conacre detrimental as there was no obligation to maintain or improve the land.<sup>50</sup>

Perhaps the most contentious and controversial aspect of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century legal code in Ireland was the provision which made access to an estate in land a matter of religious affiliation. The Reformation in Ireland fundamentally altered the infrastructure of religious power and practice in Ireland. Large monastic estates were taken into the hands of the Crown and gifted to secular lords, in many cases themselves Catholics. The Act of Uniformity (1560) gave the Church of Ireland a privileged position as the established church of the state.<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, the Reformation in Ireland failed to convert the whole population.<sup>52</sup> However, the religious divide allowed the state to dictate who had access to the structures of power in Ireland. The Church of Ireland, as the established Church of the state and a part of the Anglican communion, took over the organisation and infrastructure of approximately 2,400 parishes on the island. The Catholic Church had to reconstruct its organisation during the later 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but largely retained its medieval geographic structure, and so mirrored the Church of Ireland in that respect (Fig. 3.4).<sup>53</sup> As the established state church, the Church of Ireland was responsible for the cure of souls of the population in each parish, regardless of

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp 1032–34.

<sup>51</sup> Sean J. Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power: the Making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), p. 157.

<sup>52</sup> Steven G. Ellis, 'Economic problems of the church: why the Reformation failed in Ireland' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xli (1990), pp 239–65.

<sup>53</sup> Duffy, 'The shape of the parish', pp 36–40.



Improvement. The *Civil Survey* of Co. Tipperary recorded how, in 1641, substantial parts of the county were owned by the descendants of the Anglo-Norman elite – the Ormond Butlers and their cadet families and other Old English families in the south and east, and Gaelic families in the north, and the Church.<sup>57</sup> The term ‘waste without improvement’ occurs frequently for properties in nearly every parish in the county. However, the majority of the parishes are also returned as profitable, with the highest concentrations of high-value land around the older medieval cores of Clonmel, Fethard, Thurles and Nenagh (Fig. 3.5). The difference between valuable land and improved land would appear to be, on the part of the surveyors, ideological rather than economic. William Petty estimated that the land of Ireland constituted 72% profitable arable and pasture, 14% unprofitable scrubby ground, and 14% waste bogs and sea shore.<sup>58</sup> Improvement was a measure of how recognisable and acceptable to the civil authorities the landscape was rather than whether it was productive or not. Much of the next phase of Improvement would involve changing how the landscape looked.

### **3.4 Improvement and the Age of Ascendancy: the Second Phase of Improvement**

The State had, in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, intervened to fundamentally alter the structure of land-holding and society in Ireland. It intervened again at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century following the Williamite wars, or the Glorious Revolution as it is called in British history, after which a Protestant Ascendancy – a term coined in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century to describe the privileged position of members of the Church of Ireland – was firmly established in Ireland.<sup>59</sup> In the second phase of Improvement in Ireland, throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Protestant elite exercised control of the structures of power with ostentatious self-confidence.<sup>60</sup> This was a period when aesthetic ‘painterly’ ideas of Improvement were fashionable amongst the British aristocratic classes, influenced by their experiences on the Grand Tour.<sup>61</sup> Many of the most familiar and iconic rural improvements in Irish landscape, estate houses and demesnes, fields and farm buildings, were formed in this period. Government left Improvement in the hands of local propertied members of the elite. This ‘Ascendancy period’ in Ireland produced influential

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<sup>57</sup> Simington, *South and East Tipperary Civil Survey*; Robert C. Simington, *The Civil Survey, A.D. 1654-1656: County of Tipperary. Volume 2. Western and Northern Baronies* (Dublin, 1931).

<sup>58</sup> Sir William Petty, *The Political Anatomy of Ireland* (London, 1691), p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Protestant ascendancy’ in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2002), pp 491–92.

<sup>60</sup> Barnard, *Improving Ireland?*, pp 35–40.

<sup>61</sup> Daniels & Seymour, ‘Landscape design’, p. 487.

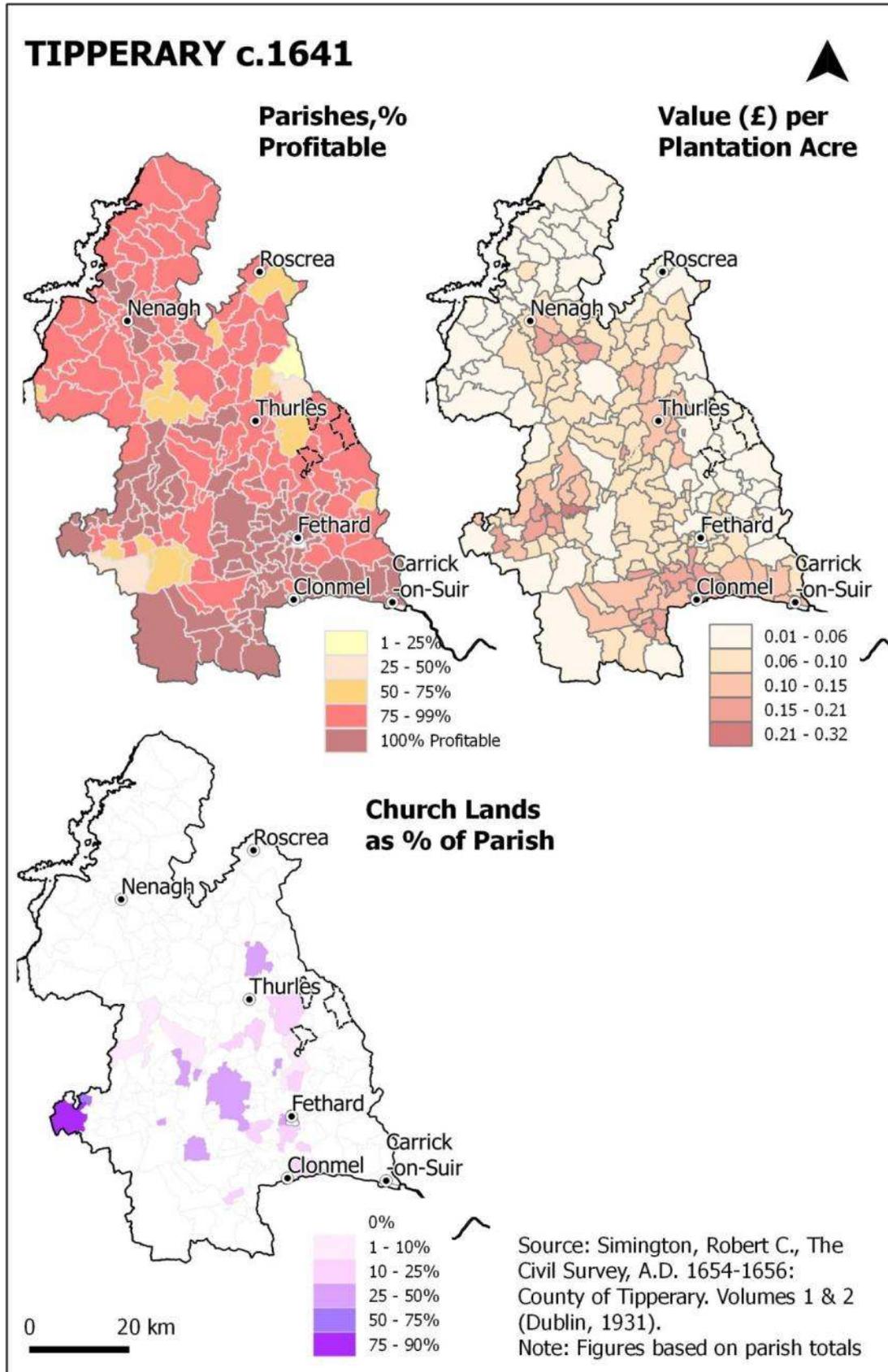


Figure 3.5 County Tipperary in the mid-17th century.

literary figures like Jonathan Swift, Oliver Goldsmith, and agriculturalists like Robert Molesworth,<sup>62</sup> Charles Varlo,<sup>63</sup> and perhaps most famously, Arthur Young.<sup>64</sup> It was mapped by cartographers like John Rocque, Taylor and Skinner and Charles Beaufort and many local cartographers surveying landed estates.<sup>65</sup> The Dublin Society – later the Royal Dublin Society – was founded in 1731 specifically to promote improvement in agriculture, industry and the arts.<sup>66</sup> As the 18<sup>th</sup> century progressed, the Protestant ruling class in Ireland developed a ‘colonial nationalism’, a patriotic pride in its parliament, institutions, and status as a sister Kingdom to Britain under the Hanoverian dynasty, but anxious for more control of its taxation and trade.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the ostentatious self-confidence of the ruling elite, there were also undertones of conflict. Those excluded from the structures of power in Ireland, the dispossessed and reduced former landowners, the Catholics and Presbyterians, secret agrarian societies like the White Boys, Jacobites and, laterally, republicans, were a source of anxiety for the Anglo-Irish Anglican elite. The Anglo-Irish ascendancy used Improvement to legitimise their position. The concept of Improvement was politically charged in the later 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries because of its ability to confer legitimacy on the improver. This was apparent in the late-17<sup>th</sup>- or early 18<sup>th</sup>-century text, *The Improvement of Ireland*, an unsigned manuscript which is likely, according to Patrick Kelly, to have been written by Nicholas Plunkett of Fingal, an Old English, Royalist, Catholic Jacobite gentleman from north Dublin.<sup>68</sup> *The Improvement of Ireland* made recommendations for the better management of commerce and trade, administration, education, monetary policy, exports, artisan skills, agriculture, tenure, planting and enclosure, and land reclamation after the expected restoration of James II to the throne. It was nationalist and socially conservative in its tone. The author was conversant in the contemporary theories and practice of Improvement, and critical of Irish Catholic gentry who were not.<sup>69</sup> *The Improvement of Ireland* recognised the power of Improvement as a political and legitimising force for the elite Irish aristocracy who had been disenfranchised after 1691. However, in the

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor* (Dublin, 1723).

<sup>63</sup> Charles Varlo, *A New System of Husbandry* (3 vols, York, 1770).

<sup>64</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland*.

<sup>65</sup> Andrews, *Plantation Acres*.

<sup>66</sup> James Meenan and Desmond Clarke, *RDS, The Royal Dublin Society, 1731-1981* (Dublin, 1981).

<sup>67</sup> John Leslie McCracken, ‘Protestant ascendancy and the rise of colonial nationalism 1714-60’ in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland, Volume IV: Eighteenth Century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 2009), pp 104–22.

<sup>68</sup> Patrick Kelly, ‘The Improvement of Ireland’ in *Analecta Hibernica*, no. 35 (1992), pp 45–84.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 49–50, 52.

18<sup>th</sup> century the use of architecture and designed landscapes to express and reinforce social position was mostly employed by the Protestant landowning elite (see chapter 5).

Old Catholic landed families, dispossessed following the Cromwellian and Williamite wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, remained in the countryside as de facto leaders of Catholic society, a shadow 'Irish Catholic nation-in-waiting' and 'underground gentry' who actively kept alive the memory of their former lordships, identifying in the landscape their lands, in some cases maintaining rentals and titles of lands in the hope of a Jacobite restoration and ultimately a restoration of their title.<sup>70</sup>

Although British and Anglo-Irish authorities were anxious about the possibility of Jacobite armed insurrection in Ireland through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this failed to materialise. Ireland did not rise with the highland Scots in 1745, despite strong Jacobite sympathies.<sup>71</sup> Secret societies posed the most serious threat to the established social order in rural Ireland, before 1798. The Whiteboys, active in Tipperary and Kilkenny in the 1760s and 1770s, were perhaps the most notable examples associated with tensions arising from Improvement. Whiteboys, so-called for their unofficial uniform of a white shirt, were first called 'levellers', as their earliest activities involved removing enclosures and filling in ditches, reminiscent of the actions of 17<sup>th</sup>-century English radicals:

*We, levellers and avengers for the wrongs done to the poor, have unanimously assembled to raze walls and ditches that have been made to enclose commons. Gentlemen now of late have learned to grind the face of the poor so that it is impossible to live . . . We warn them . . .*<sup>72</sup>

However, the new elite in Ireland secured its position through legislation.

### **The Penal Laws**

The Protestant Anglo-Irish Ascendancy viewed Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, constitutionally, as a sister kingdom of England, with, by the latter half of the century, a parliament equal to that in

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<sup>70</sup> Whelan, 'An underground gentry?', p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> J. G. Simms, 'The Irish on the Continent, 1691-1800' in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland, Volume IV: Eighteenth Century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 2009), p. 636.

<sup>72</sup> M. Bric, 'The Whiteboy movement in Tipperary, 1760-80' in William Nolan and Thomas G McGrath (eds), *Tipperary: History and Society* (Dublin, 1985), p. 153.

London.<sup>73</sup> This Ascendency secured its position through legislation. The Penal Laws or the *Laws Against the Further Growth of Popery in Ireland* were perhaps some of the most far-reaching and contentious of these acts.<sup>74</sup> They required the eldest sons of Catholic freeholders to conform to the Anglican faith in order to inherit their fathers' estate, and introduced a 'gavelling' clause whereby a Catholic holding land in fee simple or fee tail had to leave his interests in land equally to his sons unless one conformed, in which case the whole estate passed to him. Furthermore, Catholics' leaseholds could not exceed a term of 31 years. Finally, the acts introduced a mechanism whereby a Protestant 'discoverer', who could prove in a court of law that a Catholic was in breach of the penal laws, would acquire that Catholic's interests in land.<sup>75</sup> Those Penal Laws were designed to control and constrict the Catholicism of the upper class landowners rather than convert the general population.<sup>76</sup> Between 1703 and 1789 nearly 5,500 converts to the Church of Ireland were recorded, of whom farmers (28%) were the largest profession.<sup>77</sup> The numbers of converts fell significantly after the Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782.<sup>78</sup> However, the impact of the Penal Laws on the confidence of the Catholic population in the State and their attachment to it, was profoundly negative.

The Penal Laws also impacted on dissenting Protestants, in particular Presbyterians, who were excluded from higher office and required to pay tithes to the Church of Ireland. Presbyterians, a disciplined community organised in congregations of presbyteries, with strict rules of conduct and religious observance, first organised in Ireland at Carrickfergus in 1642. Presbyterian church organisation was based on a congregational rather than an episcopal model. Presbyterians were predominantly composed of Scottish immigrants to Ulster in the

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<sup>73</sup>Thomas Bartlett, 'The origins and progress of the Catholic question in Ireland, 1690-1800' in Thomas P. Power and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin, 1990), p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> Irish Legislation Database, '2 Anne c.6 of 1704: Act To Prevent the Further Growth of Popery' ([http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display\\_bill&id=899](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display_bill&id=899)) (7 Oct. 2013); Irish Legislation Database, '8 Anne c.3 of 1709: An Act for Explaining and Amending An Act Intituled an Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery' ([http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display\\_bill&id=1155](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display_bill&id=1155)) (7 Oct. 2013).

<sup>75</sup> W.N Osborough, 'Catholics, Land, and the Popery Acts of Anne' in Thomas P. Power and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin, 1990), pp 23–26.

<sup>76</sup>John Brady and Patrick J. Corish, *The Church Under the Penal Code* (Dublin, 1971), p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Eileen O'Byrne, *The Convert Rolls* (Dublin, 1981).

<sup>78</sup> 1778, 17 & 18 geo. III, c.10; 1782, 21 & 22 Geo. III, c.24; Louis M. Cullen, 'Catholic social classes under the Penal laws' in Thomas P. Power and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin, 1990), pp 57–58.

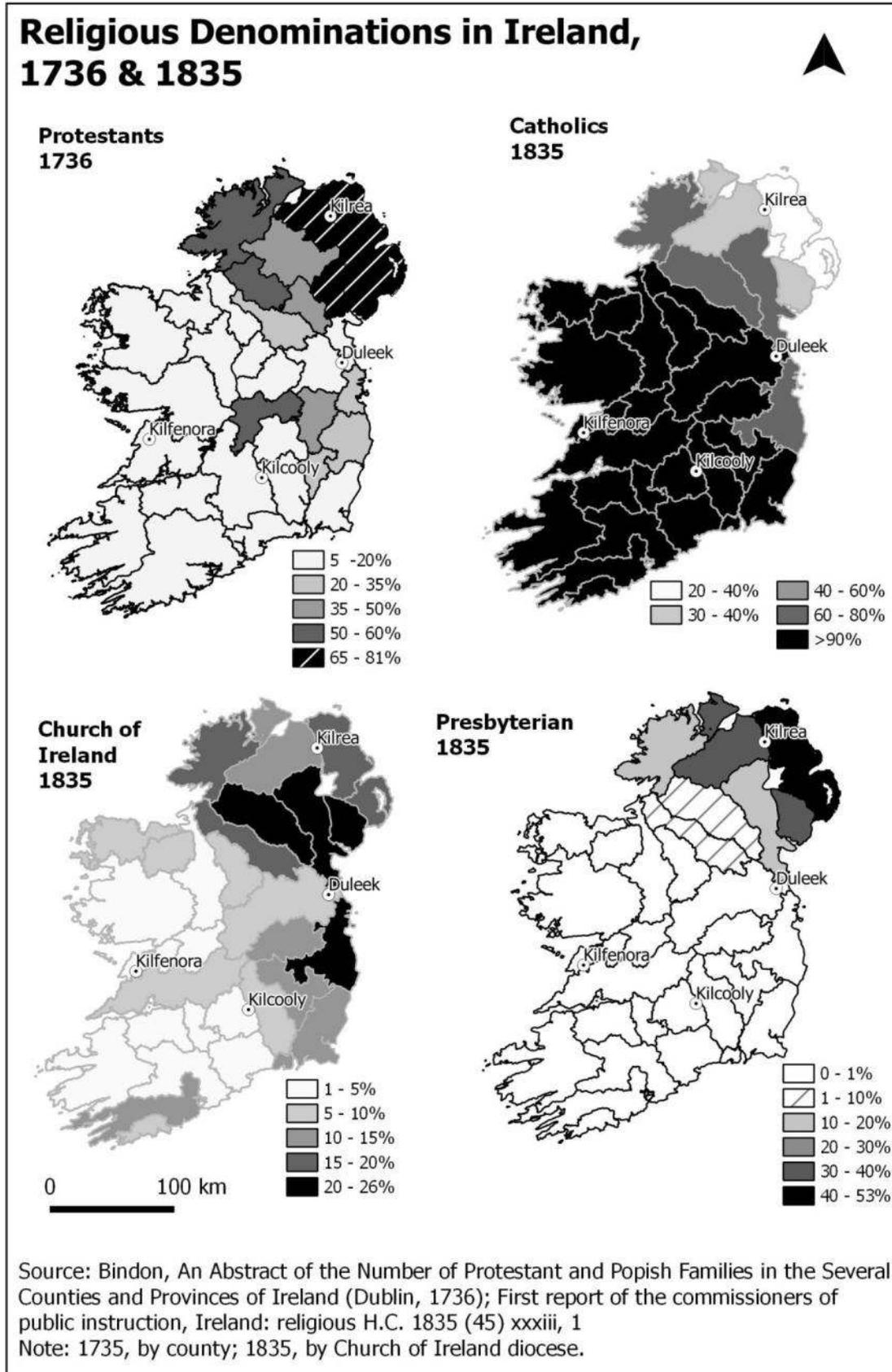


Figure 3.6 Religious denominations in Ireland in the later historic period.

17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>79</sup> Ulster was, and remains, the heartland of the Presbyterian religion in Ireland (Fig. 3.6). Immigration of Presbyterians from Scotland into Ulster had substantially fallen after the early 18<sup>th</sup> century as thousands of Ulster-Scots emigrated to north America. Although the Presbyterians loyally supported the Williamite cause in 1690, they remained a focus of suspicion for the Anglo-Irish Anglican elite.<sup>80</sup> By 1736 the Protestant population in Ireland as a whole was a minority, except in Ulster, primarily as a consequence of the Scottish immigration. Significant Protestant populations were also present in the midland county of Offaly, which had been planted as King's County, and the capital, Dublin, and its hinterland.<sup>81</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Presbyterians were still predominantly concentrated in Ulster. Members of the Church of Ireland were more evenly, though thinly, spread around the country. Catholics formed the majority everywhere except in the north-east of the island.<sup>82</sup>

### ***Enclosure and the law***

About 2,271 acts were passed by the Irish parliament in Dublin between 1692 and 1800.<sup>83</sup> Of these, 31 specifically mentioned the term 'improvement'. For the most part, these Improvement acts dealt with church lands, the promotion of linen and hemp production, and road construction. They also encouraged improvement and drainage of waste lands. Perhaps legislation's most significant impact on the Irish rural landscape was defining the responsibilities of landlord and tenant to enclose and differentiate their respective properties.<sup>84</sup>

Enclosure in later historic Ireland was predominantly a private enterprise. Parliamentary enclosure was relatively rare in Ireland compared to England. The Irish parliament only passed one act to enclose commons, in Dromiskin, Co. Louth, and then only in 1800, just before the Union. Ten more enclosure acts for Ireland were passed by the parliament of the United Kingdom between 1803 and 1839 (Fig. 3.7).<sup>85</sup> Parliamentary enclosure in 18<sup>th</sup>- and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century England involved the creation of generally private property in regular,

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<sup>79</sup> William Campbell, *A Vindication of the Principles and Character of the Presbyterians of Ireland* (Dublin, 1787), p. 56.

<sup>80</sup> Connolly, *Religion, Law, and Power*, pp 159–171.

<sup>81</sup> David Bindon, *An Abstract of the Number of Protestant and Popish Families in the Several Counties and Provinces of Ireland* (Dublin, 1736).

<sup>82</sup> *First report of the commissioners of public instruction, Ireland: religious* H.C. 1835 (45) xxxiii, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Irish Legislation Database, 'Irish Legislation Database', 2012 (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=help&section=sources>) (14 Jan. 2014).

<sup>84</sup> William Dwyer Ferguson and Andrew Vance, *The Tenure and Improvement of Land in Ireland: Considered with Reference to the Relation of Landlord and Tenant and Tenant-Right* (Dublin, 1851), p. 144.

<sup>85</sup> John H. Andrews, 'The struggle for Ireland's commons' in Patrick O'Flanagan, Paul Ferguson and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Rural Ireland 1600-1900: Modernisation and Change* (Cork, 1987), pp 1–23.

geometric fields, where before there had been commonly owned strips of tillage land.<sup>86</sup> Farming in common was a significant feature of the Irish later historic rural landscape. However, unlike in England, where common fields were a remnant of the medieval feudal custom of openfield farming, most common farming in Ireland was conducted as joint tenancy or 'partnership farming'. Its similarities to medieval openfield farming led contemporary observers to call it 'rundale'.

### **Clachans and rundale**

Rundale was most common in the west of Ireland in the later historic period, and was associated with clachan settlements, irregular agglomerations of farm houses and associated offices, surrounded by infields for gardens and haggards, and outfields with tillage strips (Fig. 3.8).<sup>87</sup> Rundale and clachan settlements have been studied extensively by historians and sociologists, including Marx in his interpretation of primitive communism.<sup>88</sup> Estyn Evans proposed that Clachans, and partnership farming in general, was an ancient form of settlement and land tenure in Ireland.<sup>89</sup> However, Kevin Whelan proposes that clachans were mostly a modern, 18<sup>th</sup> century settlement form, and an ingenious response to the poor quality of marginal land by the extensive use of spade cultivation and manure.<sup>90</sup> For Whelan, clachans accommodate a massively growing population on marginal- to poor-quality land. Rundale was a system of tenant organisation rather than a customary practice of land tenure. Leases to partnership tenants were generally assigned on a townland basis with one man as the head tenant who subsequently acted to regulate the village, collect and pay the rent. The advantage to the landlord was a simplification of administration – it was self-regulating – and an increase of rents from marginal land. These head-men became known as the *rí* or king, or *airgead rí* – money king. The rundale villages themselves had familial structures which, over generations, grew and subdivided.<sup>91</sup> In 1841, on average, 10% of Irish property was held in

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<sup>86</sup> Robin Alan Butlin, 'The enclosure of open fields and extinction of common rights in England, circa 1600–1750: a review', eds H.S.A Fox and Robin Alan Butlin, in *Change in the Countryside: Essays on Rural England, 1500–1900*, no. 10 (1979), pp 65–82; Tom Williamson, 'Understanding Enclosure' in *Landscapes*, i, no. 1 (2000), pp 56–79.

<sup>87</sup> Kevin Whelan, 'The modern landscape' in F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd ed., Cork, 2011), pp 86–91.

<sup>88</sup> Eamonn Slater and Eoin Flaherty, 'Marx on primitive Communism: the Irish rundale agrarian commune, its internal dynamics and the metabolic rift' in *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, xii, no. 2 (2009), pp 5–26.

<sup>89</sup> E. Estyn Evans, *Irish Folk Ways* (London, Routledge & Paul, 1957), pp 23–26.

<sup>90</sup> Kevin Whelan, 'Settlement patterns in the west of Ireland in the pre-famine period' in Timothy Collins (ed.), *Decoding the Landscape* (2nd ed., Galway, 1997), pp 60–78.

<sup>91</sup> Whelan, 'The modern landscape', p. 88, fig.34.

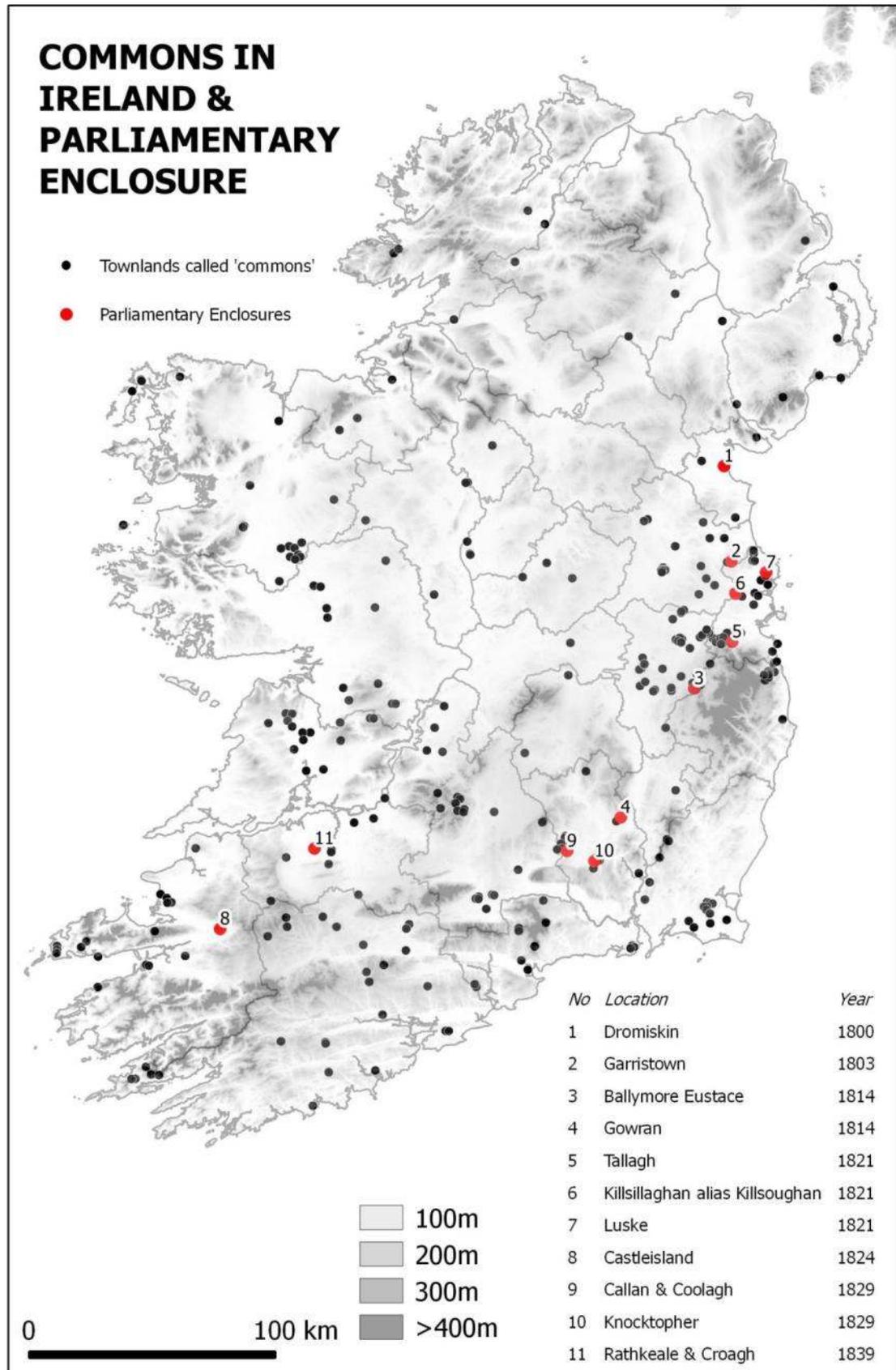


Figure 3.7 Parliamentary enclosure in Ireland.

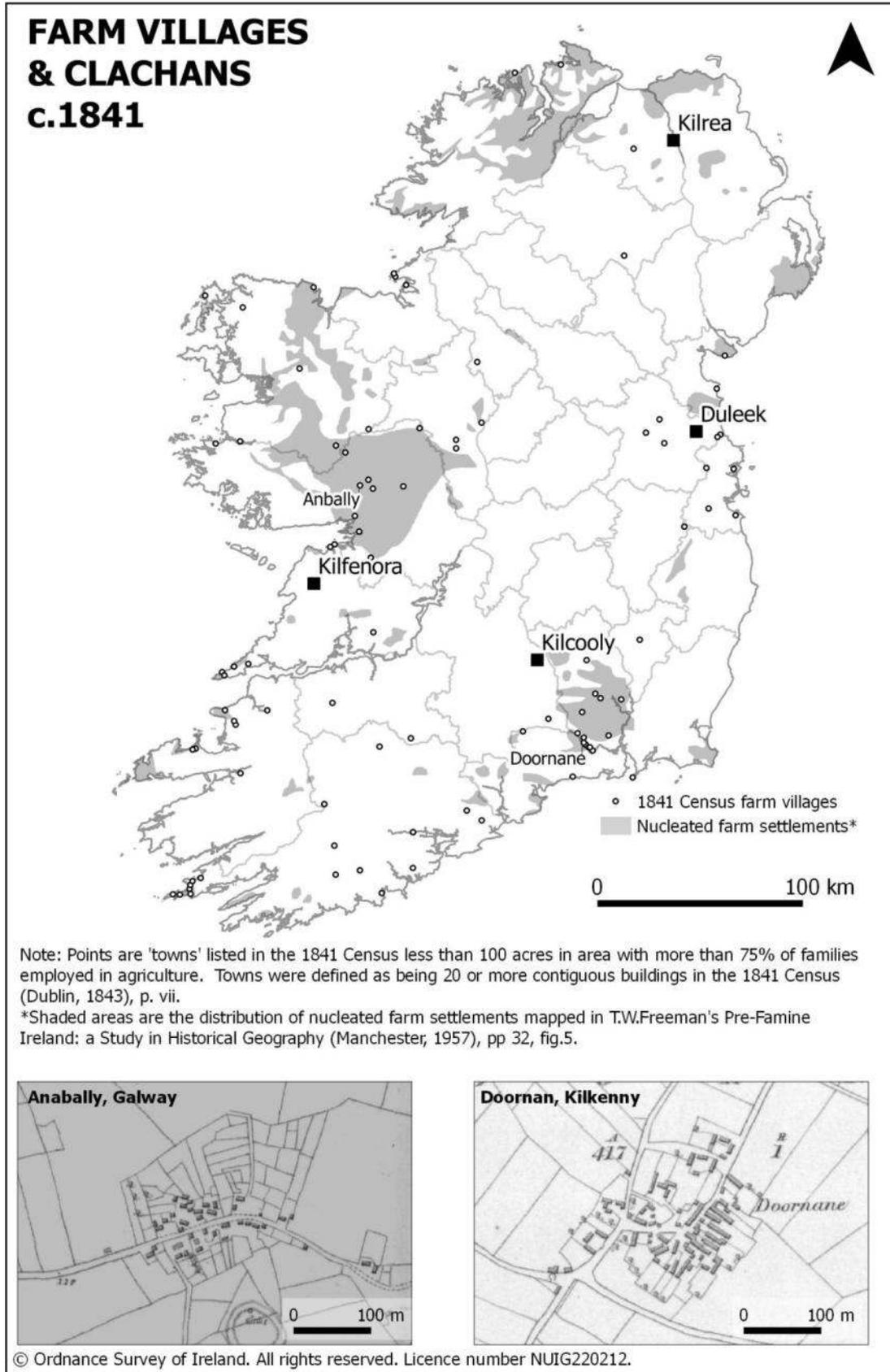


Figure 3.8 Clachans in 19th-century Ireland.

common or joint tenure (Fig. 3.9).<sup>92</sup> The highest concentrations were in the west of Ireland, especially in north-west Co. Mayo. Partnership farming in the south-east was also associated with farm villages,<sup>93</sup> for example in the Kilkenny and New Ross Poor Law Unions where up to 23% of land was held jointly. As a widespread and highly visible part of rural Ireland, clachans and rundale were frequently described, in negative terms, in Irish Improvement literature.

### ***The literature of Improvement***

Ideas of improvement spread amongst Ireland's Anglo-Irish ascendancy through publications of travel accounts and practical manuals. Busted identifies the publication of Prior's *List of Absentees of Ireland*,<sup>94</sup> Madden's *Resolutions and Reflections Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland as to Their Conduct for the Service of their Country*,<sup>95</sup> and the foundation of the *Dublin Society*, as being important milestones in the development of the ideals of Irish improvement.<sup>96</sup> Farming, for a gentleman, was considered a decent profession.<sup>97</sup> In 1723 Robert Molesworth, a senior political figure in the Whig administration in London and Dublin,<sup>98</sup> wrote *Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture and Employing the Poor*.<sup>99</sup> He advised improving landlords:

*Give your Tenant a good Bargain, Set him a long lease, or a Lease of Lives, and you prevent these mischiefs; He will Build, Plant, Improve, Live neatly, and surrender your Farm at the Expiration of his time in good Condition.*<sup>100</sup>

Molesworth favoured laws that regulated private property and agricultural practices, and warned against the spiteful tenant who would 'destroy his farm, by turning up all the green sward of it, and plowing it all (sometimes even the meadows) ... neglecting to manure it .... [and] suffering the houses, fences, and other conveniences of ornaments of it to run to

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<sup>92</sup> *Appendix to minutes of evidence taken before Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland, part IV [672] [673]*, H.C. 1845, xxii, 1, 225, pp 280–283 [appendix 94].

<sup>93</sup> Jack Burtchaell, 'The south Kilkenny farm villages' in William J. Smyth and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Common Ground: Essays on the Historical Geography of Ireland* (Cork, 1988), pp 110–23.

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Prior, *A List of the Absentees of Ireland* (Dublin, 1729).

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland* (First Edition 1738, Dublin, 1816)

<sup>96</sup> Busted, 'The practice of improvement', p. 19.

<sup>97</sup> Dickson, *Old World Colony*, p. 173.

<sup>98</sup> Patrick H. Kelly, 'Molesworth, Robert 1st Viscount Molesworth' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), vi, 549–552.

<sup>99</sup> Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 5–6.

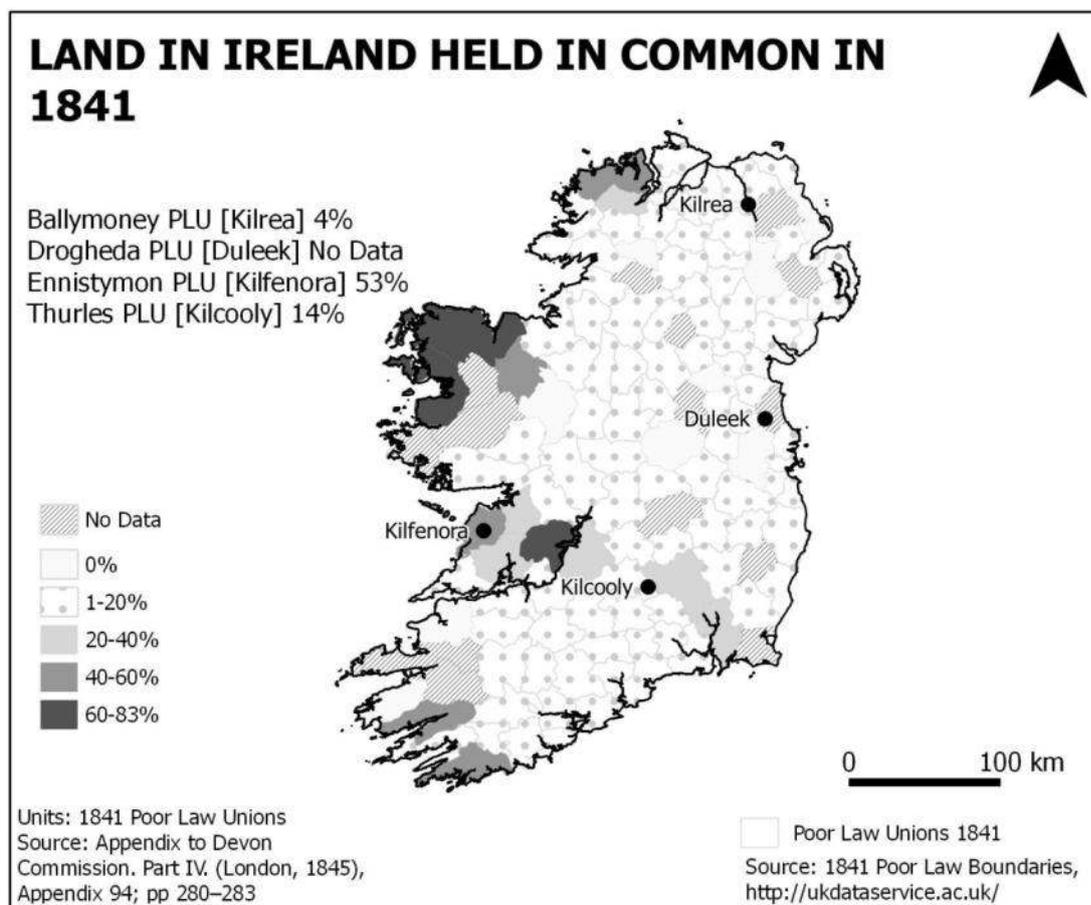


Figure 3.9 Land in Ireland farmed in common, partnership, or joint tenure, 1841.

decay...'.<sup>101</sup> For Molesworth, sub-letting by 'land-jobbers' and the alienation of leases was peculiarly Irish and particularly problematic. He recommended that landlords only let farms equal in size to the tenant's capacity to work it with his servants, to prevent sub-letting.<sup>102</sup> However, sub-letting was to remain a significant part of rural Irish landholding into the 19<sup>th</sup> century (section 3.5).

Where Molesworth was concerned with the system of land tenure and its impact on improvement, Charles Varlo (1725-1795),<sup>103</sup> an improving farmer from Yorkshire, wrote about the practical day-to-day practice of improved agricultural principles in Ireland. Varlo, employed on the estate of the bishop of Elphin, Co. Roscommon, wrote a *New System in Husbandry* in

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp 9-10.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp 12-13.

<sup>103</sup> Ernest Clarke and Rev. Anne Pimlott Baker, 'Varlo [Varley], Charles (b. c.1725, d. in or after 1795), agriculturist' in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (60 vols, Oxford, 2004), lvi, 150-51.

1770.<sup>104</sup> He described examples of improved practices around Ireland, as well as instances of poor husbandry. He proposed a revised calendar of activity for the improving farmer (Fig. 3.10). Varlo proposed a series of tasks for the 'improved' farmer, including flooding meadow lowlands and repairing ditches and enclosures in January, planting quicksets and forest trees in April, spreading dung in May, burning lime in June, managing breeding cattle and sheep in summer and autumn, making surface drains in October, and feeding stock on turnips in November. Varlo also advocated the planting of a wide variety of winter and spring crops. But Varlo's calendar also contains some tasks that were not considered improved, like using mountain commonage in March, or paring and burning land in April, suggesting a certain accommodation to local practices. Using mountain pastures, booleying, was a rational use of an off-farm resource, to save the fine pastures for later in the season. Paring and burning, a form of fertilising by stripping sod, leaving it to dry, burning it and spreading the ashes, had been condemned by 18<sup>th</sup>-century commentators because it was thought to exhaust the land. Four statutes were passed between 1743 and 1800 outlawing the 'pernicious' practice in Ireland.<sup>105</sup> Considering that the practice of paring and burning was in fact recognised as an effective and quick means of bringing marginal land into production,<sup>106</sup> these legal restrictions show the importance of suppressing unimproved practices for those controlling the structures of power in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland.

Arthur Young's account of his two journeys through Ireland in the 1770s is perhaps the most iconic description of Improvement in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland. Over the course of five months, from June to October 1776, Young travelled a combined 2,100km around Ireland, stopping at 152 different places (Fig. 3.11). He travelled an average 18km a day, and described Ireland as he observed it and as reported to him by his hosts, the landed gentry. The subjects of his descriptions included the sublime scenery of the Wicklow mountains and Killarney, and the beauty of improved demesnes and farm land around Lough Erne and Cork harbour.<sup>107</sup> Young's main source of information was the gentry, and their homes and demesne feature prominently in his account. Young described the exceptional improvements implemented on

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<sup>104</sup> Varlo, *A New System of Husbandry*.

<sup>105</sup> 17 George II c.10: *To prevent the pernicious practice of burning land, and for the more effectual destroying of vermin*. 1743; 3 George III c.29: *For the more effectual preventing the pernicious practice of burning land*. 1764; 5 George III c.10: *For the more effectually carrying into execution the laws heretofore made to prevent the pernicious practice of burning land*. 1766; 40 George III c.24: *For more effectually preventing the burning of land* 1800.

<sup>106</sup> Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson, *A History of Irish Farming, 1750-1950* (Dublin, 2008), p. 71.

<sup>107</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, pp 230, 396–97.

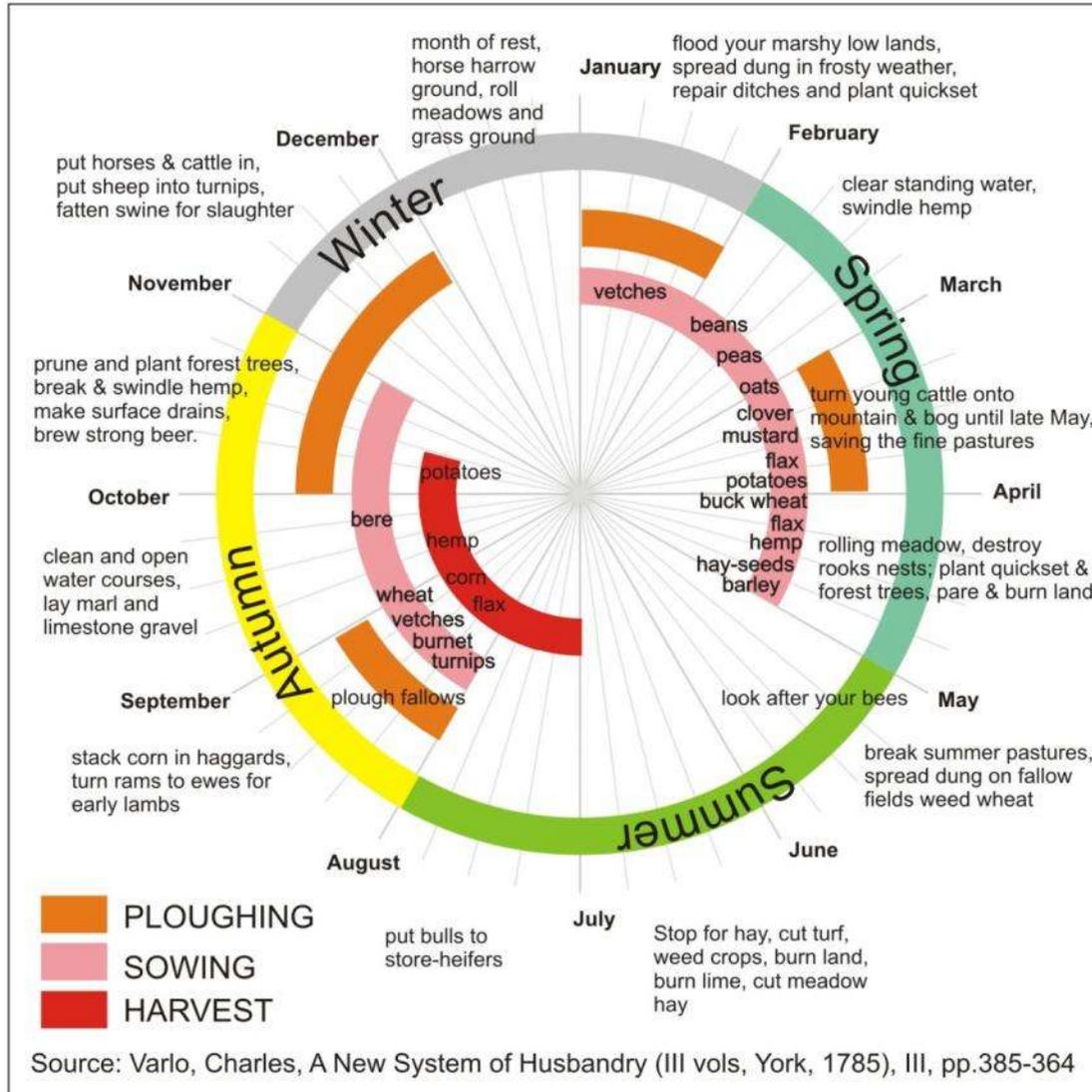


Figure 3.10 Varlo's calendar for improved farming.

the Foster estate at Collon, Co. Louth, where 5,000 Irish acres (3,277 ha) were enclosed, with farm houses and offices, and distributed amongst tenants. Foster both improved land himself in his demesne and leased land out to tenants to improve. He built 27 lime kilns burning imported culm at £700 a year and made roads and enclosed fields 10 acres each surrounded with ditches 7 feet wide and 6 feet deep. Foster also planted a colony of French and English protestant farmers, and discouraged subletting on his estate.<sup>108</sup> Foster's estate demonstrated many of the same approaches adopted by the Barker estate in Kilcooly (section 5.4). Young remained in correspondence with prominent 'improving' landlords like Sir James Caldwell of

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp 119–125.

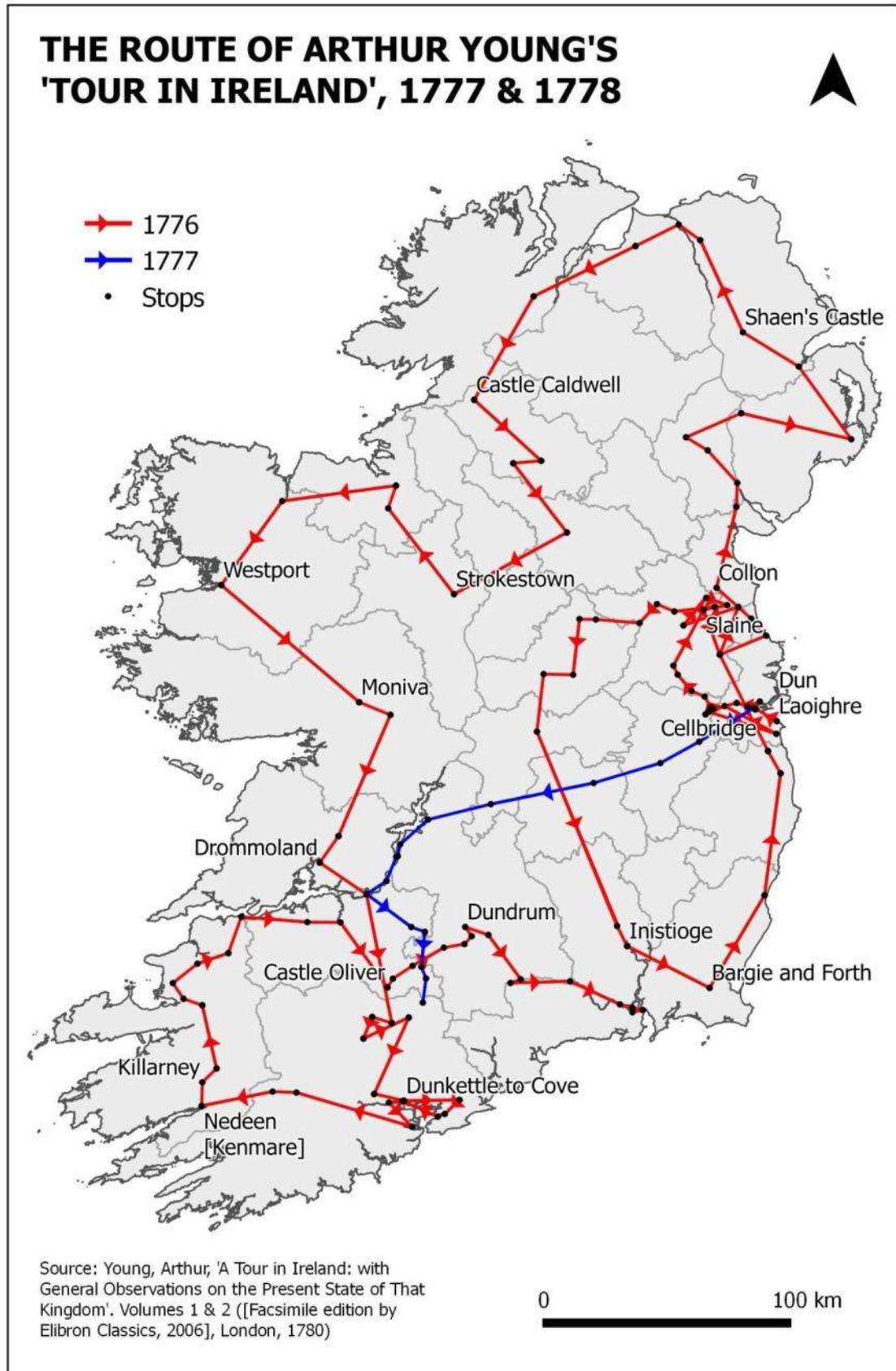


Figure 3.11 Arthur Young's progress through Ireland in 1776 and 1777.

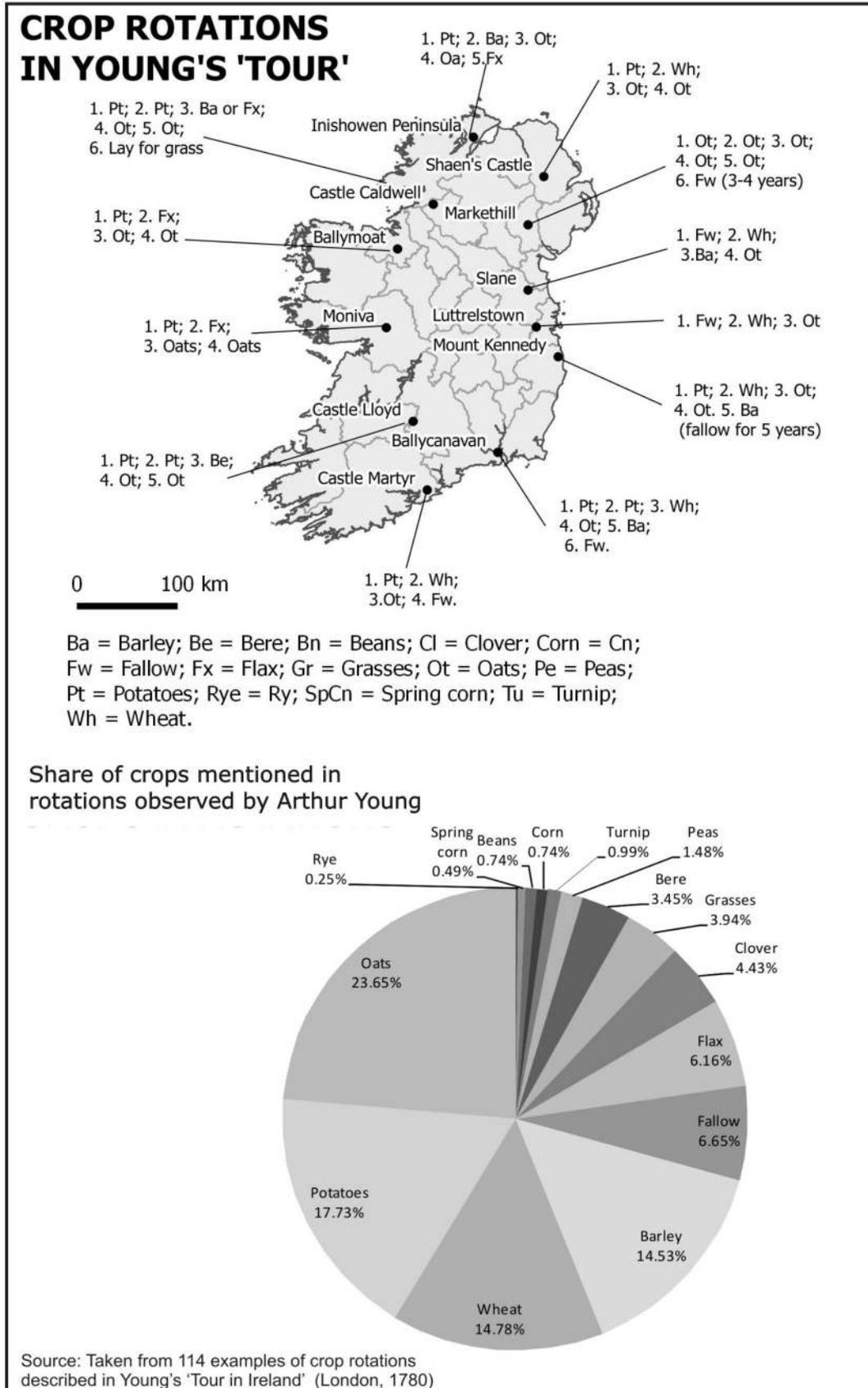


Figure 3.12 Examples of crop rotations mentioned in Young's Tour in Ireland.

Castlecaldwell, Co. Fermanagh.<sup>109</sup> Young also sought out improving farmers and endeavoured to get information on crop rotations and the average yields in their district (Fig. 3.12). The most commonly mentioned crops in his account of rotations were oats, potato, wheat and barley, in that order. Potatoes were often mentioned as the first crop used on newly enclosed and reclaimed mountain and bog land. Drainage, lime as manure, and planting clover were, for Young, indicative of improved farming; ploughing with oxen rather than horses was the mark of a gentleman farmer.<sup>110</sup> Young recurrently mentioned poor practices in crop rotations and land management, as at Lecale in Co. Down where twenty crops were taken without rest,<sup>111</sup> and at Johnstown Co. Tipperary,<sup>112</sup> where eleven successive crops were taken. In general, Young was dismissive of most Irish farming outside the improved demesne farms of his hosts. He identified particular practices, like spade cultivation and ridge-and-furrow, as characteristically unimproved. Young did admit, if somewhat reluctantly, that the results of cottier practices could be impressive, particularly for reclaiming mountain land by paring and burning, as at Sir William Osbourne's estate in Tipperary.<sup>113</sup> On the whole though, he was appalled by the cottier conditions, which he characterised in a sketch showing a house, smoke emerging from the door and thatch overgrown, wandering animals, but with a neat field of potatoes.<sup>114</sup> In contrast, Young was highly complementary of many of the great demesnes and the improving projects undertaken by the landed gentry who offered him hospitality and information on his journey.

### ***The Royal Dublin Society and Improvement in Ireland***

Many of these Anglo-Irish gentry were members of the Dublin Society (later Royal Dublin Society), founded in 1731.<sup>115</sup> This learned society was founded with the explicit aim of promoting improvement in agriculture, industry and the arts in Ireland. To that end, they offered a series of premiums or prizes each year to promote improvement.<sup>116</sup> The largest number of premiums were awarded to members from Co. Tipperary (18% of all premiums) and Co. Mayo (11%), and the 1770s were the highest point in the RDS's premium scheme. These prizes were awarded for planting crops, trees and draining, which appears to have

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<sup>109</sup>Busteed, 'The practice of improvement', p. 26.

<sup>110</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, p. 370.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>112</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland*, 2, 18.

<sup>113</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, p. 510.

<sup>114</sup> Whelan, 'The modern landscape', p. 81, fig. 17.

<sup>115</sup> Meenan & Clarke, *RDS, The Royal Dublin Society, 1731-1981*.

<sup>116</sup> The following figures are based on the Royal Dublin Society Premiums Database, an ongoing project directed by Ms Joanne Quinn, Foundation Director of the Royal Dublin Society, and kindly provided to me for this thesis.

been particularly prized. Most premiums were given for land reclamation in the 1770s (Fig. 3.13). The RDS also sponsored the compilation of a series of statistical surveys of Irish counties in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These detailed studies were carried out by prominent local improving landlords and recorded in detail the topography, agriculture and state of Improvement in each county, with recommendations for further improvements. However, the impact of these ideas varied. Dutton, in a forward to the *Statistical Survey of County Clare*, commented in withering terms about the attitude of the local gentry in the compilation of that county: 'Several other gentlemen I teased (sic) into something like information, but as a horse-laugh frequently accompanied it, I considered it apocryphal'.<sup>117</sup> His conclusion was that the gentlemen of the county did not know or care about the practice of agriculture or Improvement, or about the conditions of the cottier tenants.<sup>118</sup>

### **3.5 The Third Phase of Improvement: The 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Improving State.**

The third phase of improvement in Ireland corresponded with the increasing role, after the Union in 1801, which the Westminster government played in promoting, but not necessarily directly implementing, Improvement in Ireland. Where in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Improvement was a matter of private enterprise on the part of the elite, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was increasingly promoted by the government in London.<sup>119</sup> Following the Act of Union in 1801, the parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland sought to order, regulate, control, tax, and pacify Ireland. In the century following Union, 845 pieces of legislation were brought to Parliament relating to Improvement in Ireland (Fig. 3.14). However, most of these bills (73%) date to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most bills relating to land law, land improvement and drainage, local government and towns, and Poor Laws, health and labour were created after 1850.

Although the Anglo-Irish elite had lost their parliament in Dublin they still maintained their position as principal executors of government policy in Ireland at a local level, on the Grand Juries, as justices of the peace, as officers in local militias and regiments, and as clergy in the Church of Ireland. Unrest in Ireland was a near constant source of anxiety for the London government. A population explosion, the growth of mass political movements and demands for

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<sup>117</sup>Hely Dutton, *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare: with Observations on the Means of Improvement* (Dublin, 1808), p. vii.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>119</sup> Daniels & Seymour, 'Landscape design', p. 487.

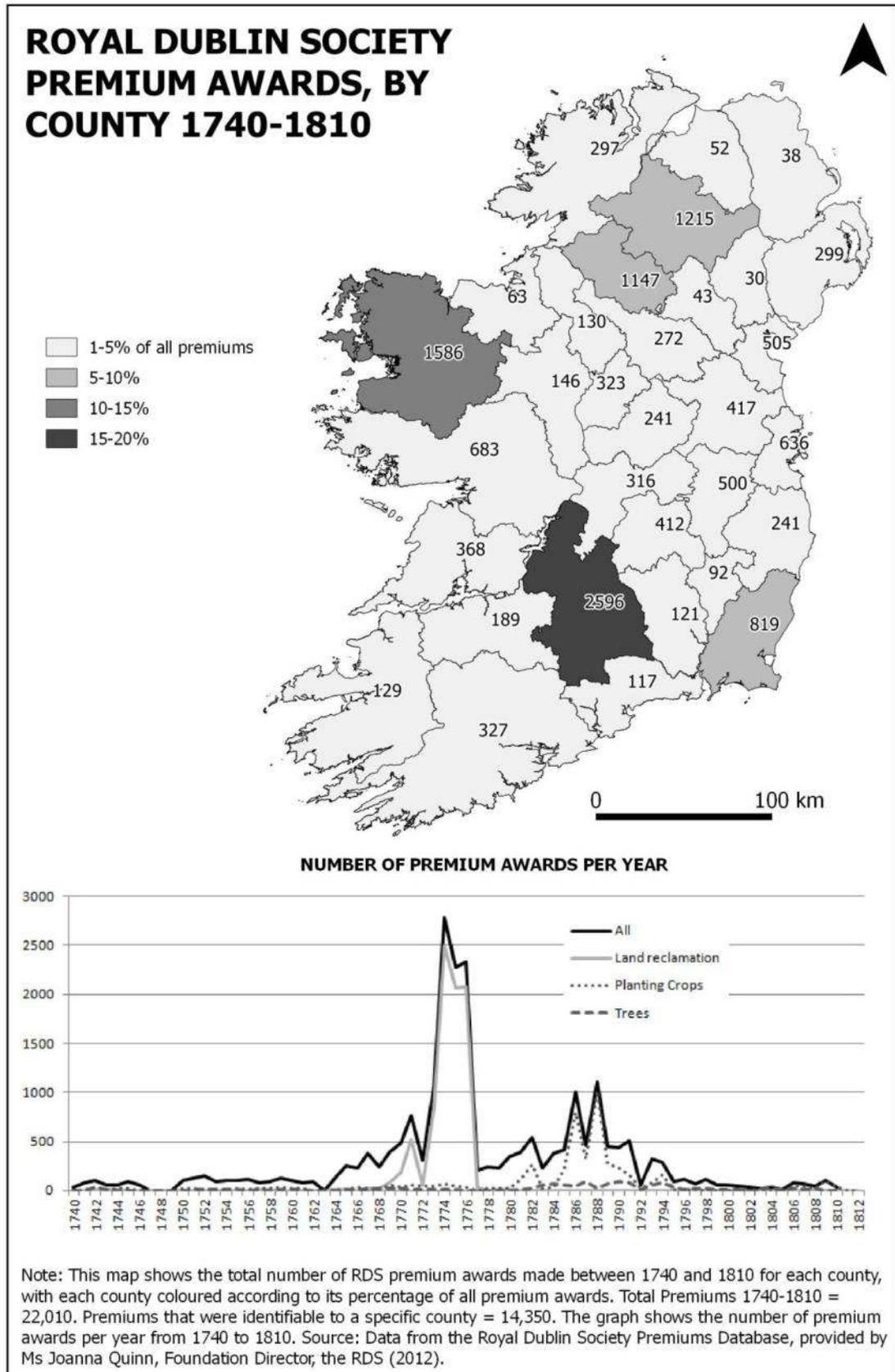


Figure 3.13 Royal Dublin Society premiums in pounds per year, showing massive increase in awards in the 1770s, most of which was directed towards land reclamation.

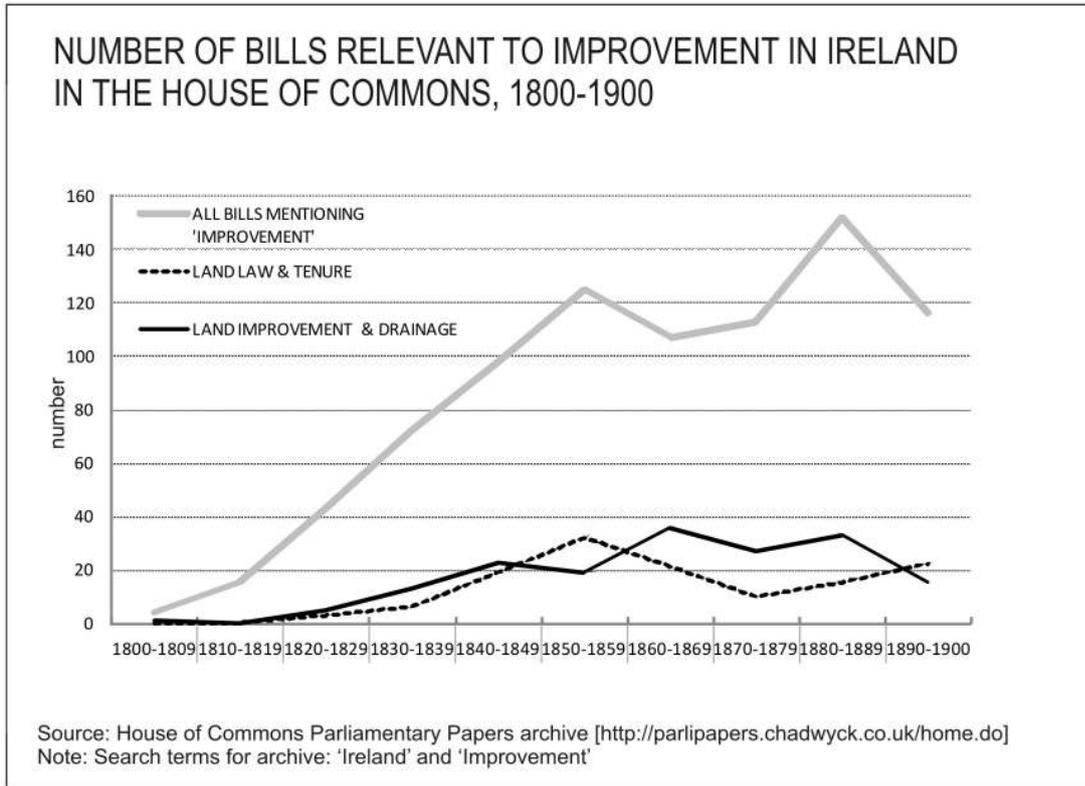


Figure 3.14 Bills before the House of Commons relevant to improvement in Ireland, 1800-1900.

Catholic Emancipation, the Tithe War, Home Rule, and land reform – what became known as the ‘Irish Question’ – threatened to overwhelm the ruling structures of power. Increasingly, Improvement in Ireland, into the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, became a strategy for pacification.

To begin with, government concerned itself with facilitating Improvement. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the House of Commons commissioned a number of detailed surveys of Irish society and landscapes. Amongst the first was an inquiry into the nature, extent, and potential for improvement of bogs, reflecting their significance as symbols of waste.<sup>120</sup> Further reports on the *Conditions of the Poor* in 1836,<sup>121</sup> the potential for railroads in 1837-38 (the Drummond Report),<sup>122</sup> and the nature of land tenure in 1845 (the Devon Commission), followed.<sup>123</sup> The

<sup>120</sup> *Commission appointed to inquire into the nature of the several bogs in Ireland the practicability of draining and cultivating them: fourth report* 1st report: H.C. 1810 (365) x, 389; 2nd report: 1810-11 (96) vi, 579; 3rd report: 1813-1814 (130) vi, Pt.I.1; 4th report: (131) vi, Pt.II,167.

<sup>121</sup> *Royal commission for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland: appendix H, part 2 - remarks by J. E. Bicheno* [35] [36] [37] [38] [39] [40] [41] [42], H.C. 1836, xxx, 35, 221, xxxi. 1, xxxii. 1, xxxiii. 1, xxxiv. 1, 427, 643, 657.

<sup>122</sup> *First report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the manner in which railway communications can be most advantageously promoted in Ireland* H.C. 1837 (75) xxxiii, 283; *Second report of the commissioners appointed to consider and recommend a general system of railways for Ireland* H.C. 1837-1838 (145) xxxv, 449.

1841 Census of Ireland recorded Irish population and society in greater detail than ever before, noting not just the populations per parish, but also the composition of age and gender, employment, housing conditions and education.<sup>124</sup> The Ordnance Survey's six-inch-to-one-mile (1:10,560) mapping project, published between 1829 and 1842, was perhaps the most technically advanced and accurate effort to map a country in the world at the time.<sup>125</sup> With a staff of 1,500 and an annual cost of £50,000, it was also, at that point in Ireland, the most expensive.<sup>126</sup> Although primarily designed to facilitate taxation, the six-inch maps also recorded topographical and cultural features in unprecedented detail. Individual fields were mapped on an island-wide basis for the first time – although not initially in Derry and the northern counties, which had to be resurveyed in the 1850s. The maps facilitated the *Primary Valuation of Ireland*, undertaken in the 1840s and 50s.<sup>127</sup> Detailed though the six-inch maps were, they failed to capture some of the more complex aspects of tenure, in particular the levels of landlords in fee, sub-landlords or middlemen, their subtenants, and their most flimsy houses (section 6.2).

Access to the limited supply of land became an increasingly pressing social question as the population of Ireland grew steadily. In 1672 Petty estimated that the population of Ireland was 1.1 million.<sup>128</sup> Between 1770 and 1841 the population of Ireland doubled to 8.2 million. The vast majority of this population were rural and made their living from the land. The average population density for the country in 1841 was 335 people or sixty families per square mile of 'arable' or 'improved' land. The west of Ireland counties appeared to have the lowest density per county (Fig. 3.15), but contained pockets of high density, later called 'congested districts', in the relatively small areas of land available to till.<sup>129</sup>

Richard Griffith, in his capacity as the Valuation Commissioner, estimated in 1845 that approximately 30% of Ireland was unimproved and uncultivated.<sup>130</sup> Most of this waste land was located in the west of Ireland, particularly in counties Donegal (64% waste), Kerry (61%

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<sup>123</sup> *Report from Her Majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland* [605] [606], H.C. 1845, xix. 1, 57.

<sup>124</sup> *Census of Ireland 1841*.

<sup>125</sup> John Harwood Andrews, *History in the Ordnance Map: an Introduction for Irish Readers* (Kerry, 1993).

<sup>126</sup> John H. Andrews, *Shapes of Ireland: Maps and Their Makers 1564-1839* (Dublin, 1997), p. 310.

<sup>127</sup> Reilly, *Richard Griffith and his Valuations of Ireland*.

<sup>128</sup> Petty, *Political Anatomy of Ireland*, p. 116.

<sup>129</sup> Freeman, *Pre-Famine Ireland*, p. 18; fig. 2; William J. Smyth, 'The story of the Great Irish Famine 1845-52: a geographical perspective' in John Crowley, William J. Smyth and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine, 1845-52* (Cork, 2012), p. 7; fig. 5.

<sup>130</sup> *Devon Commission I*, pp 48–53.

waste) and Mayo (59% waste). In contrast, counties in the east had much less waste land. Co. Meath contained just 3% waste; Co. Kilkenny, just 4%. Counties Louth, Dublin, and Wexford were all between 7% and 8% waste (Fig. 3.16). Griffith also produced estimates as to the potential for improvement of these waste lands. He estimated that 35% of Ireland's waste lands could be improved for use as pasture and tillage, and 40% as pasture. However, 24% of Ireland's waste lands were beyond improvement, or at least would not provide a return on the expense of improving the land. These areas generally consisted of the rocky uplands, blanket and raised bogs. Griffith was optimistic about the potential for improving waste in the Irish

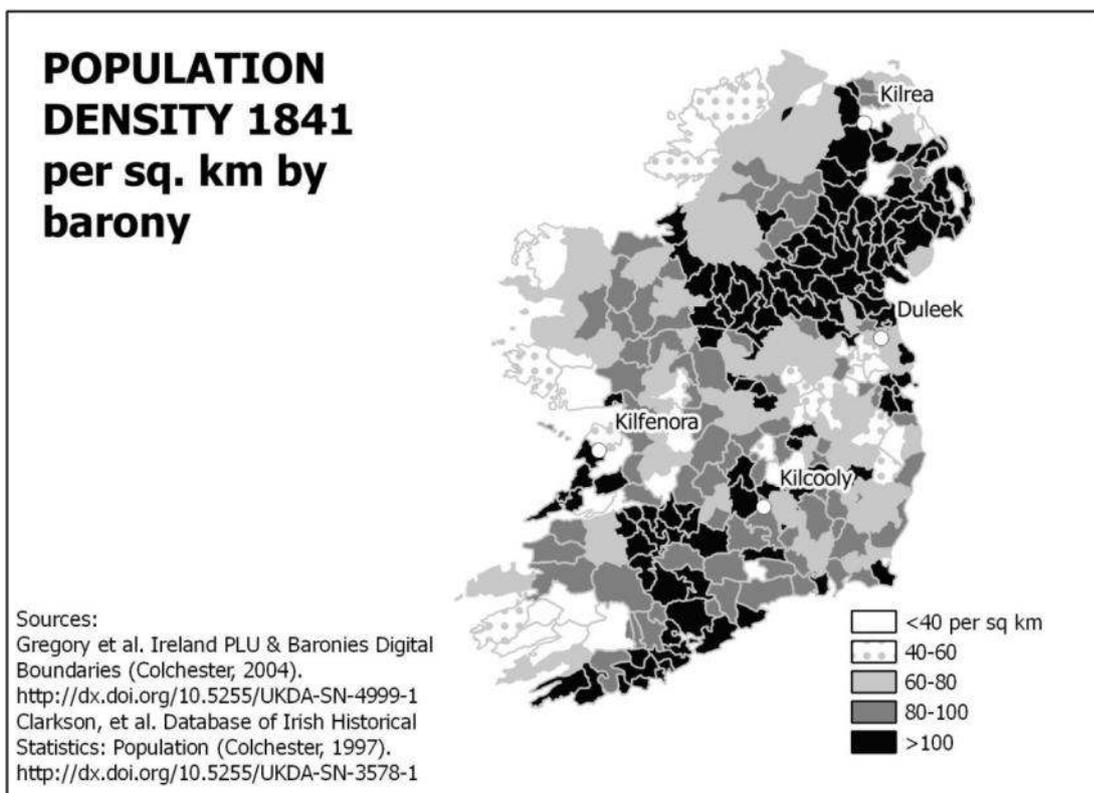


Figure 3.15 Population density in Ireland in 1841.

midlands, estimating that just 2% to 5% of Offaly, Westmeath and Longford's wastelands were beyond improvement. In other cases, like Dublin, he judged that most of the possible improvement had already been undertaken, estimating that 61% of the comparatively small area of waste land in the county was beyond improvement. However, the large area of waste in the Wicklow mountains was mostly (55%) beyond improvement. Up to half the waste land on the western sea board, especially in counties Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Donegal, was considered beyond improvement. In fact the districts of the western seaboard generally had

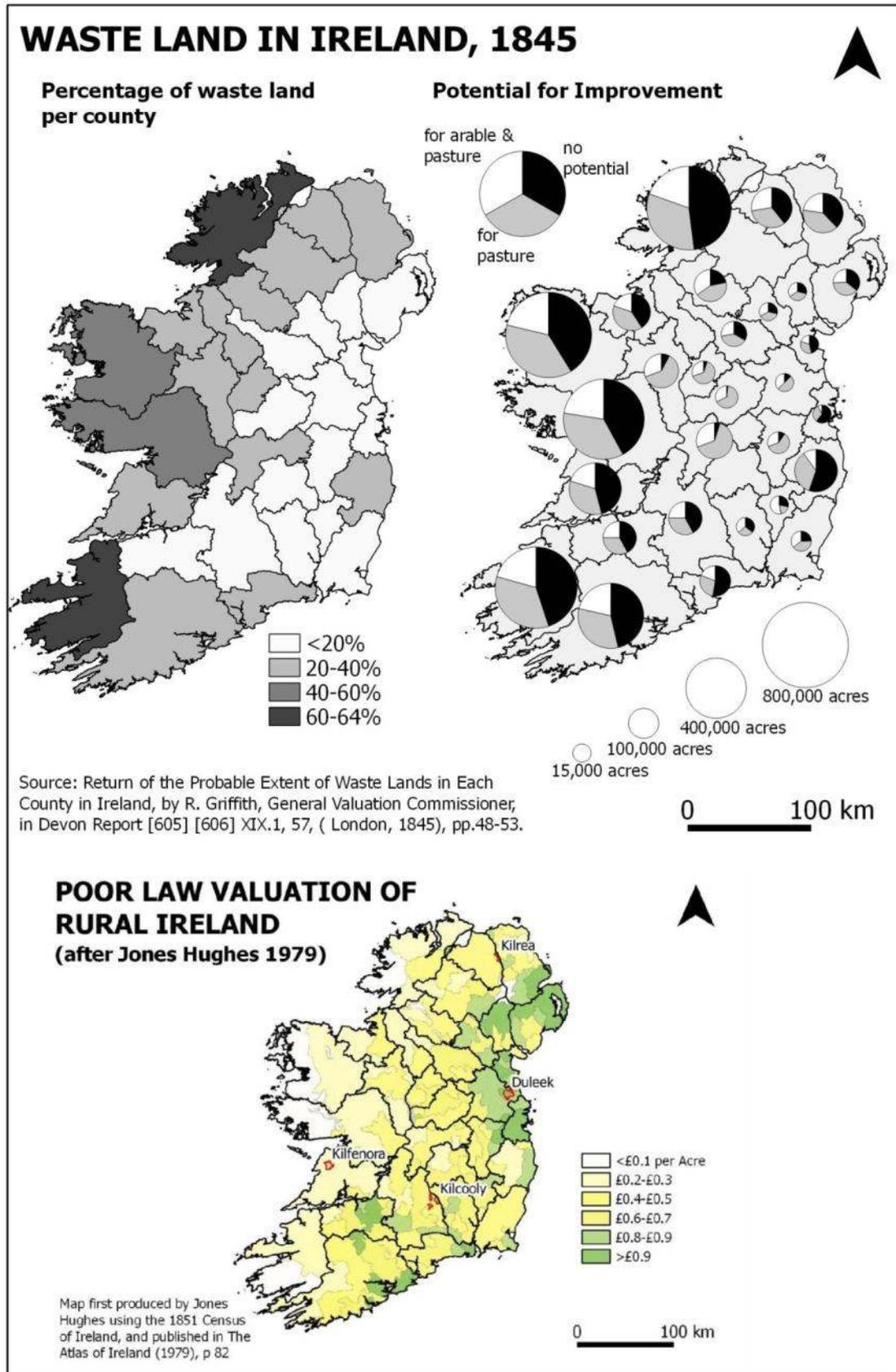


Figure 3.16 Waste land and the valuation of Ireland in the mid-19th century.

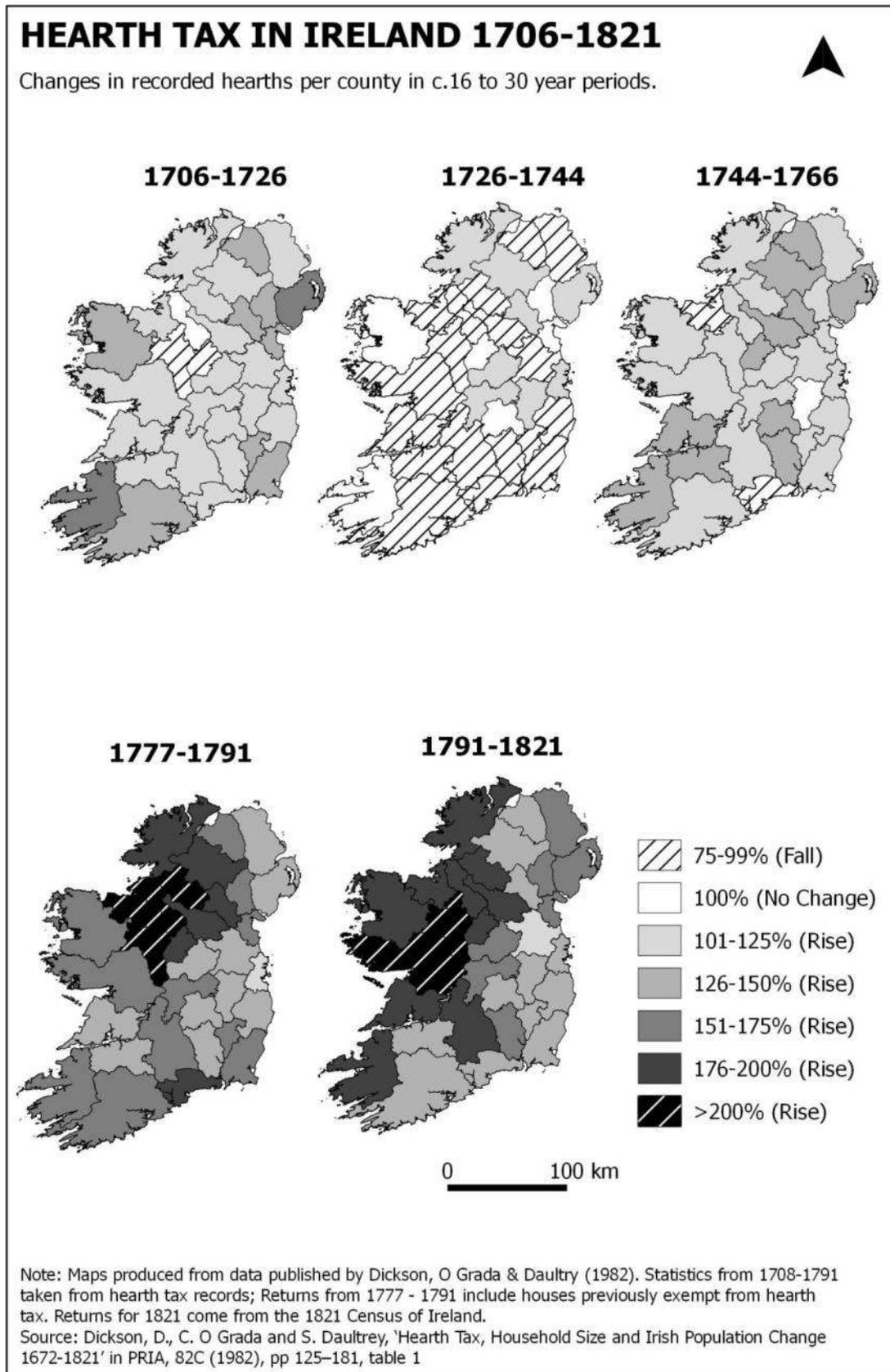


Figure 3.17 Growth in the number of houses in 18th-century Ireland, as recorded in the Hearth Tax returns.

the lowest valuations. Still, to propose that the remaining uncultivated blanket bogs and uplands of the west of Ireland were capable of being improved showed a remarkable degree of optimism on Griffith's part. His estimates, based on the returns of the ongoing General Valuation of Ireland, were also no doubt influenced by his long experience with bodies like the Bog Commissions and Railway Commissions. They were also indicative, in 1845, of the general optimism engendered by the remarkable results of the Industrial Revolution. It would be harder to reconcile this optimism with the reality 'on the ground', particularly in relation to the ongoing problems with access to land.

### ***The Middlemen***

Young, in 1776, only occasionally commented on the relationship between landlord and tenant during his *Tour* in Ireland, but he did note the presence of a particular class of tenant peculiar to Irish rural social hierarchy: the middleman. These figures were also described as land pirates<sup>131</sup> and land jobbers,<sup>132</sup> and were roundly condemned by Young as:

*that species of tenant which we know so little of in England, but which in Ireland have flourished almost to the destruction of the kingdom, the middle man, whose business and whole industry consists of hiring great tracts of land as cheap as he can, and re-letting them to others as dear as he can, by which means that beautiful gradation of the pyramid, which connects the broad base of the poor people with the great nobleman they support, is broken.*<sup>133</sup>

The novelist Maria Edgeworth characterised middlemen landlords in *Castle Rackrent*, as those who 'grind the face of the poor ... [who] ferreted the tenants out of their lives ... [with] no allowance for improving tenants – no consideration for those who built upon their farms'.<sup>134</sup> These middlemen landlords were of a different order to the general farmers, renting on a large scale, like the Keating family in Tipperary who leased in south Co. Tipperary 13,800 Irish acres worth £10,000 a year.<sup>135</sup> The whole estate of the Mercers in Derry was leased to middlemen until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (section 6.4). Where middlemen farmers operated on a large scale, subdivision of farms happened on a more local, often familial, level.

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<sup>131</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, p. 469.

<sup>132</sup> Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor*, pp 13–14.

<sup>133</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland II*, pp 56–57.

<sup>134</sup> Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, ed. George Watson (Oxford, 1964), pp 20–21.

<sup>135</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, pp 499–500.

### ***Cottiers and consolidation***

There was significant competition for labour in pre-Famine Ireland. Labourers offered their labour in lieu of money rent, and lived in cabins where ever they could find space, like on the edge of roads, or on waste ground. These cottiers subsisted primarily on a diet of potatoes grown on a small plot of ground, or they purchased conacre for potatoes and to support a cow, doing so with money earned working seasonally in the east of Ireland or even in Britain.<sup>136</sup> Although this class of people featured prominently in 19<sup>th</sup>-century descriptions of Ireland and in official reports, their relatively ephemeral homes are rarely recorded on maps – even the six-inch maps – and their physical remains are largely, today, invisible in the landscape.<sup>137</sup> Housing in general, in Ireland, increased remarkably in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the west of the country (Fig. 3.17).<sup>138</sup> Once again, the census records provide some insight into the relative proportion of homes, and by extension, occupied properties, in Ireland (Fig. 3.18). One-roomed cottages (4<sup>th</sup> class) and small, single-storey but multi-roomed farm houses (3<sup>rd</sup> class) made up most of the dwellings in rural Ireland (79%).<sup>139</sup> The highest quality houses are generally concentrated in the south-east (1<sup>st</sup> class), and east (2<sup>nd</sup> class) of Ireland. Third class houses, the two and three room cottages of tenant farmers, were the most evenly distributed type of houses in 1841, whilst the lowest class of house (4<sup>th</sup> class) were most common in the west (Fig. 3.19). This western distribution is also broadly reflected in the structure of Irish land holding in 1841 (Fig. 3.20). The smallest holdings recorded, one to five acres, are most common in the west of the country, with farms over 30 acres generally in the east and south. By the next census, 1851, landholding in Ireland had changed significantly. The number of landholdings greater than 30 acres had grown to 26%, at the expense of those less than 5 acres, which had fallen to just 20% (Fig.3.21). These changes were driven by the consolidation of leaseholds into large pasture or ranch farms worked by herds, which resulted in the eviction of small landholders and sub-tenants. The Great Famine, c.1845 – 1852, resulted in an estimated death toll of 1 million nationwide, with another million emigrating, and set in motion a period of extended population decline in Ireland. The greatest changes appear

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<sup>136</sup> Freeman, *Pre-Famine Ireland*, p. 20.

<sup>137</sup> Richard Clutterbuck, 'Wretched beyond description: the excavation of a cottier's cabin in Cookstown, Co. Meath' in *Seanda*, i (2006), pp 46–7.

<sup>138</sup> D. Dickson, C. Ó Grada and S. Daultrey, 'Hearth tax, household size and Irish population change 1672-1821' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 82C (1982), pp 125–181, table 1.

<sup>139</sup> Figures from the 1841 Census of Ireland. UK Data Service Project 3583 Irish Historical Statistics: Housing, 1821-1911. 'UK Data Service' (<http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>) (7 May 2014).

## CLASS OF HOUSES IN RURAL IRELAND, 1841



1st Class House: Gentleman's residence  
Kilrea Manor House



2nd Class House: big farmhouse  
Bawnlea, Kilcooly

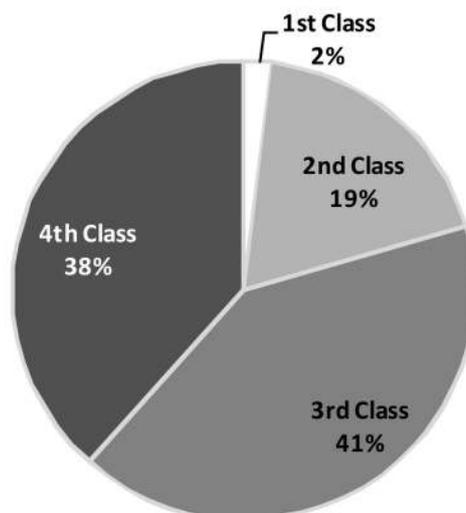


3rd Class House: small farmhouse  
& dwellings of rural craftsmen  
Clooneen, Kilfenora



CONNEMARA CABIN.

4th Class House: one-roomed dwellings.  
Drawing of a cabin in Connemara, from the  
London Illustrated News, 12 August 1843



Total number of houses: 1,271,050  
Source: Census of Ireland 1841,  
Clarkson et al, Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Housing, 1821-1911 [computer file].  
SN: 3583 (Colchester, Essex, 1997) (<http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-3583-1>) (6 June 2014)

Figure 3.18 Classes of house in Ireland recorded in the Census of Ireland.

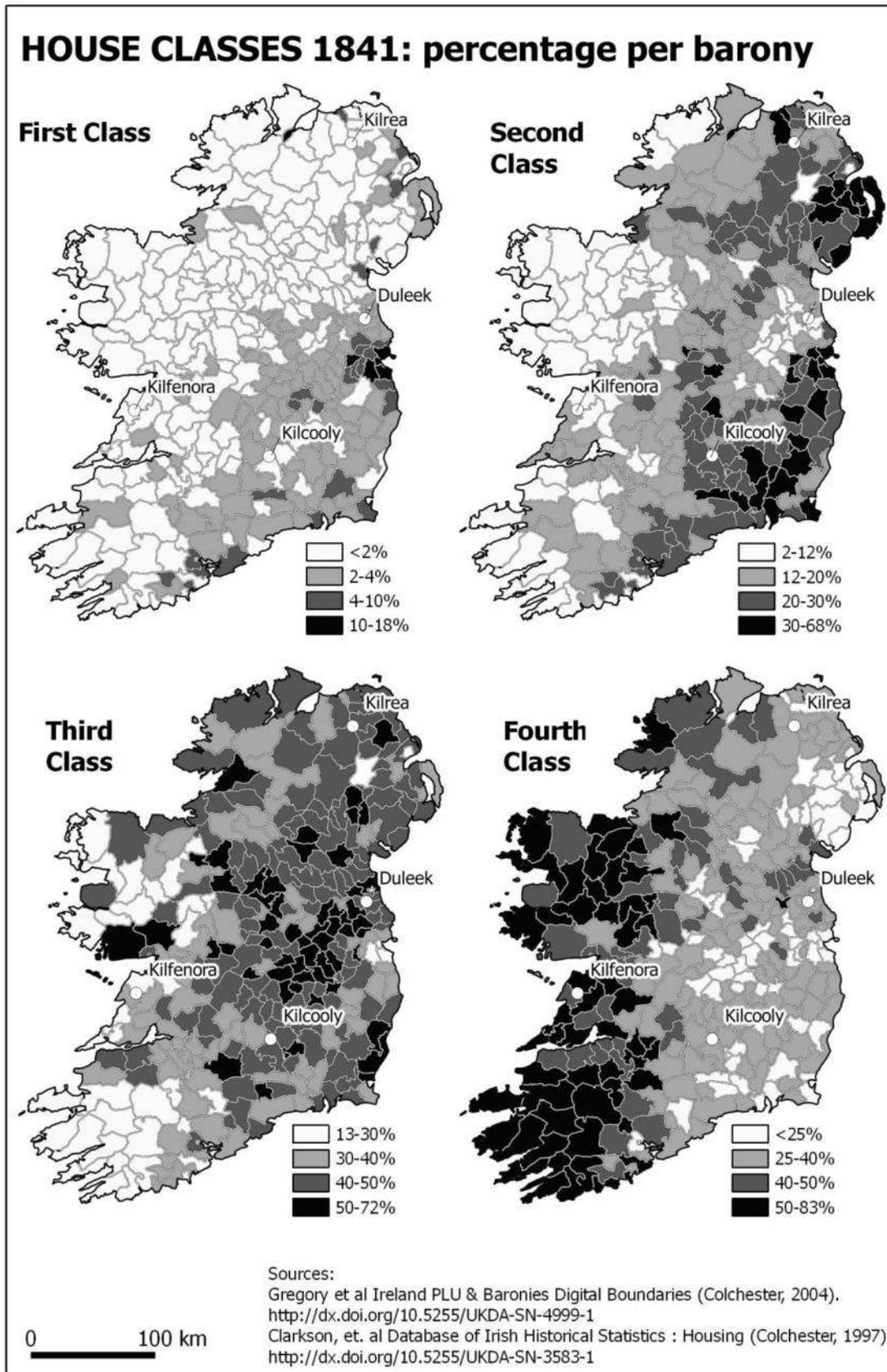


Figure 3.19 Distribution of classes of house in Ireland in 1841.

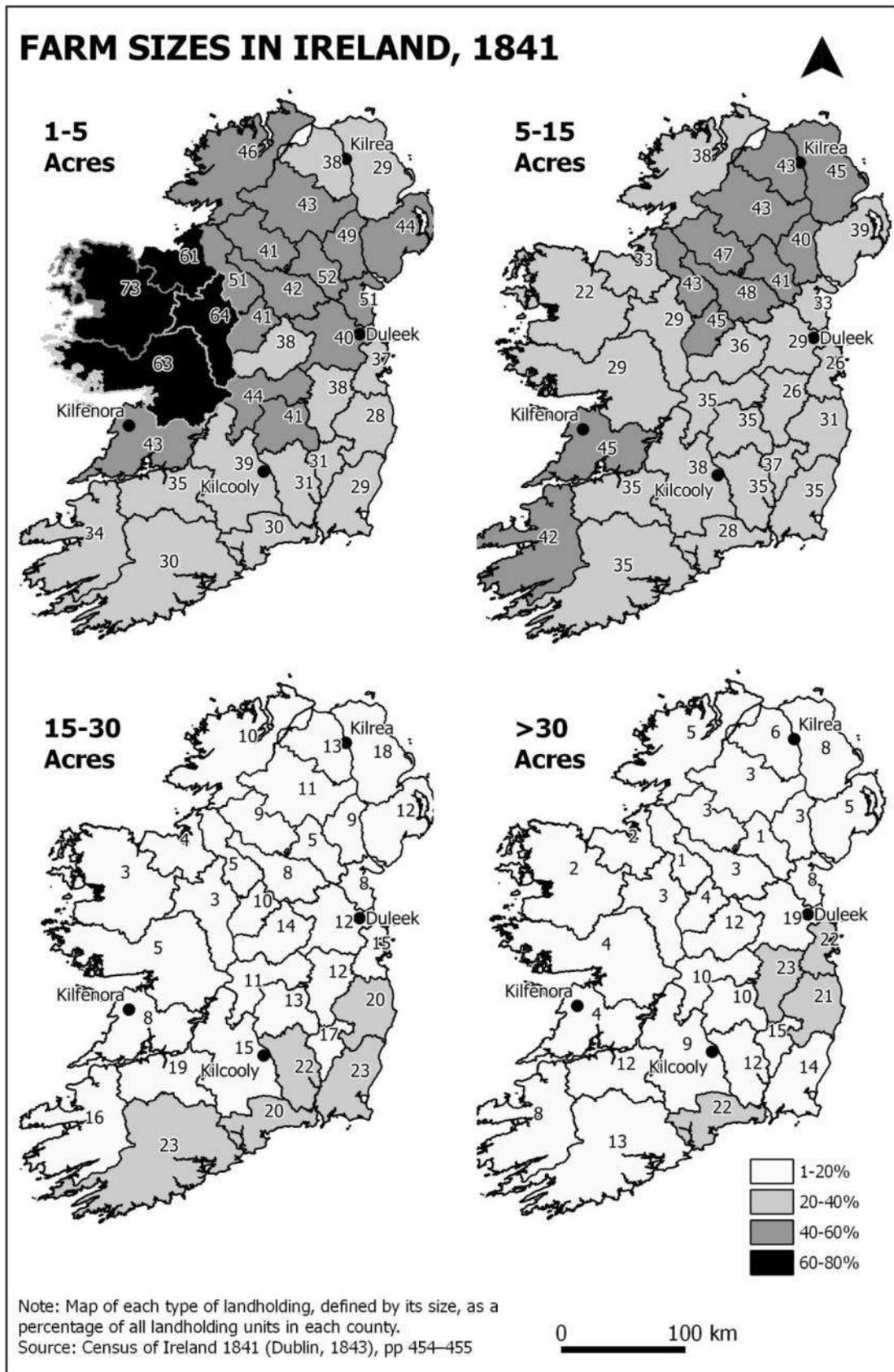


Figure 3.20 Land holdings in Ireland in 1841.

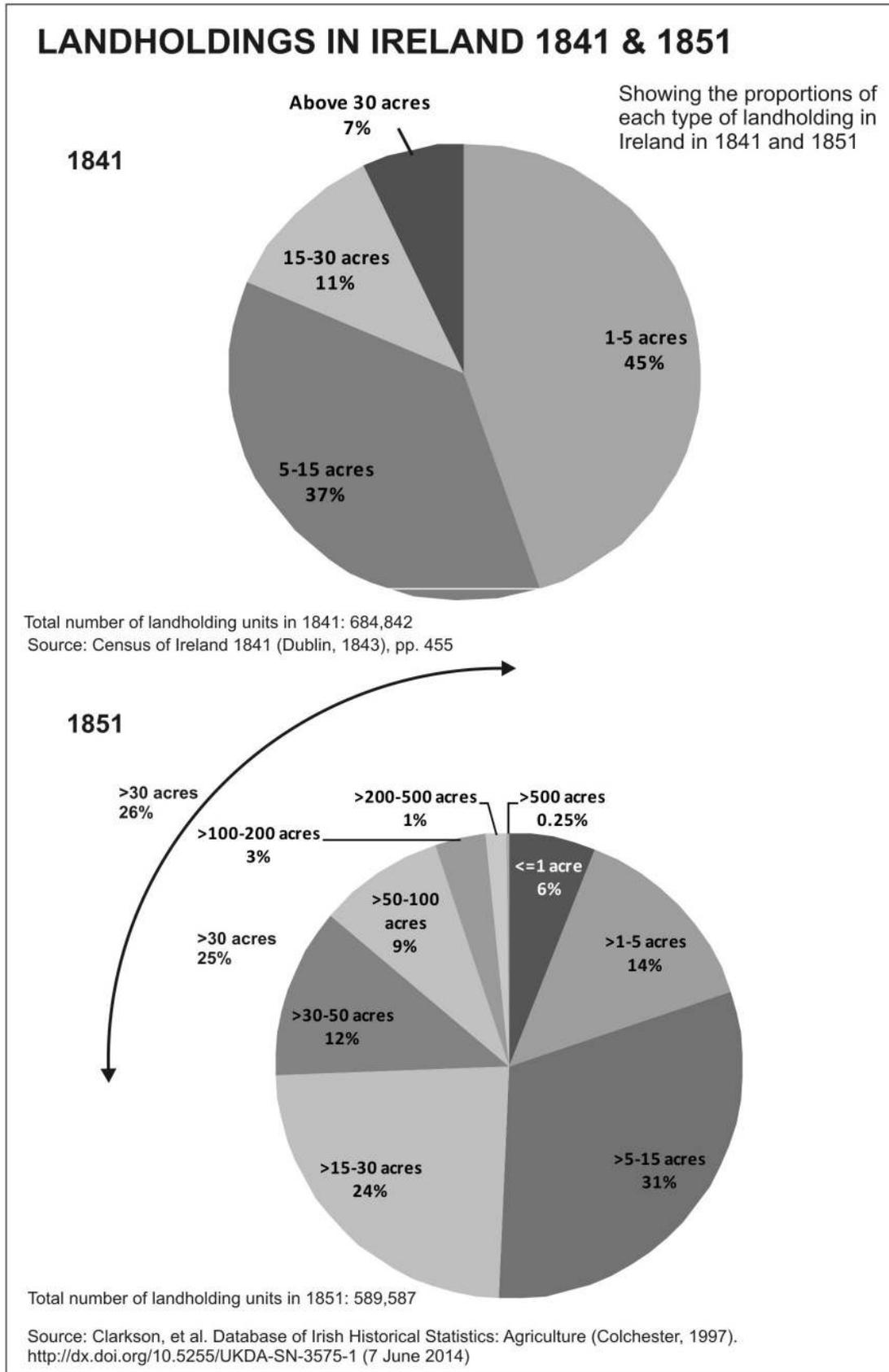


Figure 3.21 Changes in the types of landholding in Ireland between 1841 and 1851.

to have happened in the west of the country, where most of the largest landholdings (200 to 500 acres) were to be found, and where most evictions took place (Fig.3.22).<sup>140</sup>

In 1852 5.7 million acres of land was being cultivated in Ireland.<sup>141</sup> The largest single category of cultivators were the farms 15-20 acres, responsible for 1.3 million acres, or 23% of all cultivation in Ireland (Fig.3.23). Landholding units of 200-500 acres, in contrast, were only responsible for 7% of cultivation, whilst 1-5 acres landholdings produced just 3%. Potatoes were responsible for 50% of the cultivation on holdings less than 1 acre, illustrating their importance as a source of food for cottiers. In contrast, the class of landholders cultivating the most ground, 15-20 acres, planted just 17% potatoes, and 45% oats, 6% turnips, 15% wheat and 15% clover. Oats and clover are an important source of fodder for animals. Clover in particular became proportionally more important as the size of landholding increased, so that it made up some 47% of cultivation on landholdings larger than 500 acres, where providing fodder for cattle was most important, even if the total area of cultivation at these largest landholdings was relatively small. Just 1% of all cultivation in Ireland was carried out on landholdings larger than 500 acres in area.

### **3.6 Summary**

In many respects the condemnations of Irish landholding, society and landscape in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century resembles those found in colonial narratives from early modern Ireland, in describing bog wastes, rapacious landlords, convoluted tenure arrangements and land held in common. Whilst this period of two hundred years between 1650 and 1850 has been characterised as an 'Age of Improvement', Ireland went through a series of severe and traumatic changes and events during this timeframe – wars, dispossession, suppression and famine. Improvement was an ideologically charged philosophy. Rather than being inherently a practically better mode of living for everybody, Improvement was an ideology that primarily benefited those with access to the structures of power. However, despite their promotion of Improvement the later historic Irish elite singularly failed to prevent the descent of the tenure

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<sup>140</sup> David Seth Jones, *Graziers, Land Reform, and Political Conflict in Ireland* (Washington, 1995), pp 8–9.

<sup>141</sup> Statistics from Leslie A. Clarkson, L. Kennedy, E.M. Crawford, M.W. Dowling and Queen's University of Belfast. Department of Economic and Social History, *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Agricultural Statistics Crops and Stocks, 1847-1911 [computer file]*. SN: 3575 (Colchester, Essex, 1997) (<http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-3582-1>).

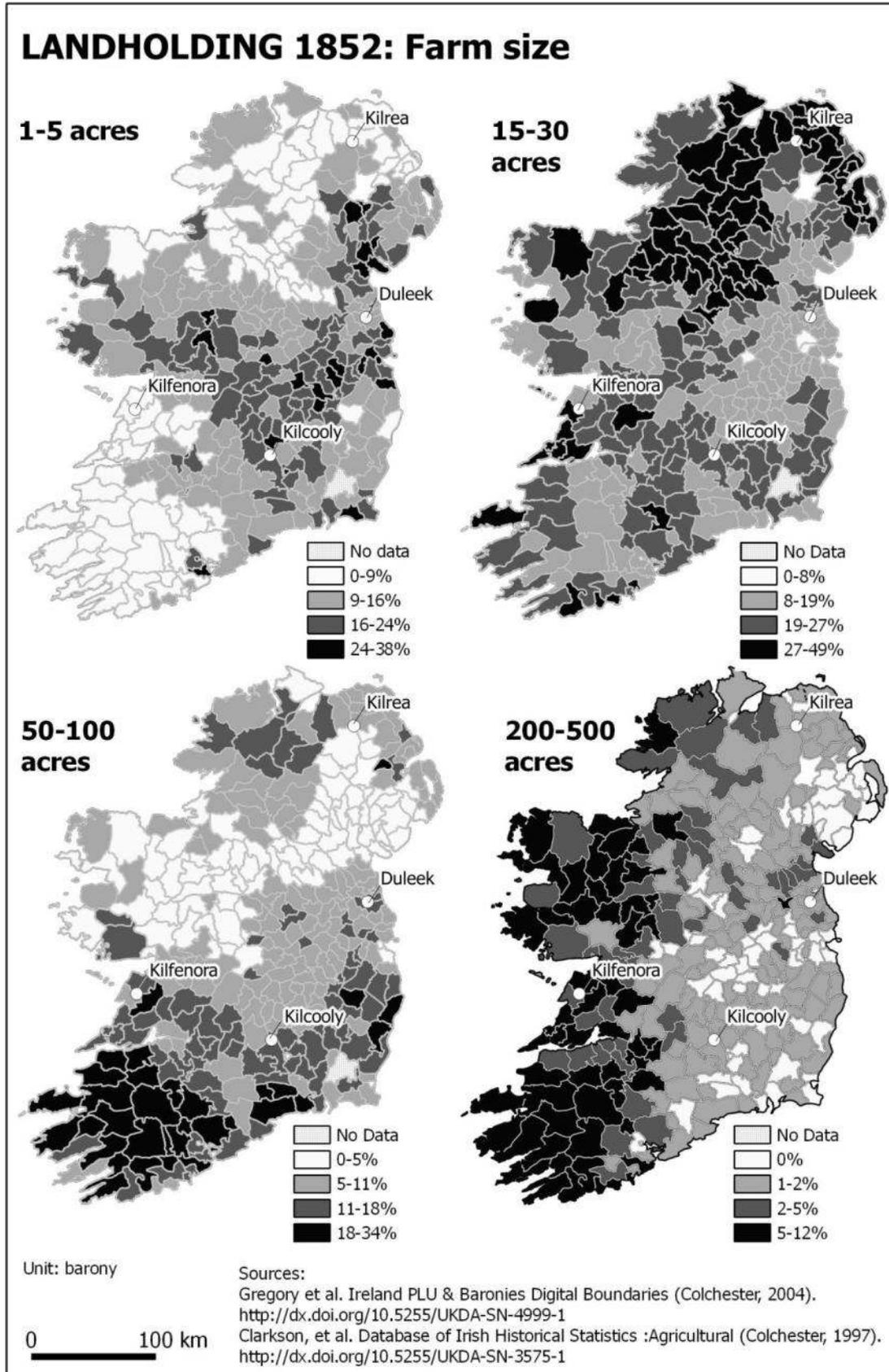


Figure 3.22 Landholding in Ireland in 1852.

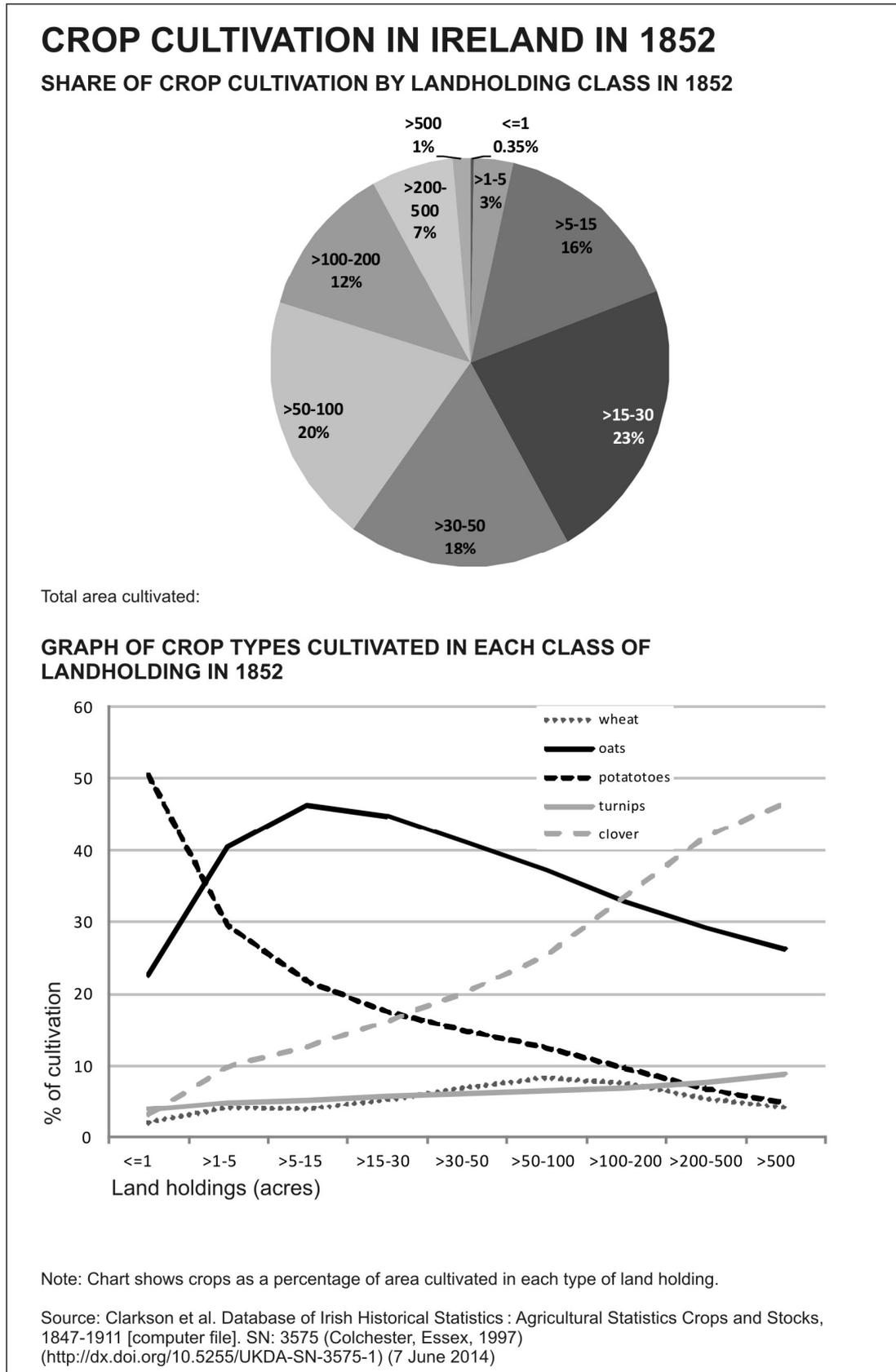


Figure 3.23 Crop cultivation in Ireland in 1852.

### Chapter 3 Improvement in Later Historic Ireland: An Overview

system into a pyramid-scheme of middlemen, tenants and subtenants. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century Improvement was adopted by the state as a means of pacifying the country. Whereas a sustained effort was made to discover Ireland through surveys, census and commissions of enquiry in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, relatively few legislative bills for improvement were brought before the House of Commons. The very name, Improvement, implies a benign project to better people's lives, but the ideology benefited the elite most, in particular by helping to legitimise their position. This rhetoric of legitimacy has its origins in the medieval period. The next chapter investigates the origins of improved landscape in the later historic period, through detailed case studies in Duleek, Kilcooly, Kilrea and Kilfenora.

## 4. Origins of Improvement Landscapes

### 4.1 Introduction

Later historic Irish landscapes are built upon, and were significantly influenced by, the landscapes of the medieval and early modern periods. This chapter will look at the foundations of Improvement in the later historic landscape by examining the later medieval features of the landscape in each of the study areas which were mindfully carried forward and incorporated into Improved landscapes of the later historic period. Medieval and early modern rural landscapes and society have been the subject of significant research in the last two decades.<sup>1</sup> The foundations and framework for the development of later historic Irish rural landscapes were laid during the medieval period. Most Irish towns and villages were founded during that time. The Christian church was a key factor in landscape creation through the establishment of a parish network.<sup>2</sup> Each of the four case study areas of Duleek, Kilcooly, Kilfenora and Kilrea are named after church sites. The iconic buildings of later historic rural Ireland, churches and estate houses, frequently have medieval predecessors. As the following discussion of each of the four case study areas will show, medieval Irish landscapes with distinctive physical and social characteristics all shared common landscape elements, and were long-lived-in places that provided the environmental framework which shaped and contained later historic Improvement.

### 4.2 Duleek: Medieval Landscape in the Pale

Duleek in Meath was a monastic centre during the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century the monastery consisted of a number of stone churches, high crosses, and, outside the *sanctus*, presumably a settlement, surrounded by a large circular *vallum*, the remains of which are preserved in the curving street pattern of Duleek town.<sup>3</sup> The commonage of Duleek (section

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages*; O'Connor, *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*; Patrick J Duffy, David Edwards and Elizabeth FitzPatrick (eds), *Gaelic Ireland, c.1250-c.1650: Land, Lordship, and Settlement* (Dublin, 2001); Murphy & Potterton, *The Dublin Region in the Middle Ages*; Horning et al. (eds), *The Post-Medieval Archaeology of Ireland, 1550-1850*; Audrey Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea: Colonialism in the British Atlantic* (Chapel Hill, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Duffy, 'The shape of the parish'.

<sup>3</sup>L. Swan, 'Monastic proto-towns in early medieval Ireland: the evidence of aerial photography, plan analysis and survey' in Anngret Simms and Howard B Clarke (eds), *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman*

6.6) likely encompasses the former mensal lands of the early medieval Gaelic monastic church. During the Anglo-Norman colonisation of Ireland, Hugh de Lacy made Duleek a seigniorial manor and a borough.<sup>4</sup> De Lacy granted a substantial portion of his manor in Duleek to a cell of Augustinian canons regular from the priory of Llanthony in Wales.<sup>5</sup> Their cell in Duleek functioned primarily as a grange farm, based around a complex of buildings to the south of Duleek town.<sup>6</sup> Monastic lands made up the greater part of the parish of Duleek by the time of the dissolution of the monastic estate in 1541.<sup>7</sup> The largest beneficiaries of these dissolved estates in Duleek were the local Old English elite. They were of Anglo-Norman descent and identified themselves as English, Catholic, hostile to the Gaelic Irish and loyal to the English Crown.<sup>8</sup> The most powerful and ambitious of these Old English families in Duleek were the Darcys of Platin, the Bellews of Bellewstown, and the Bath family of Athcarne. Their landscape, the Pale, consisted of the counties of Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Louth surrounding Dublin city, and was the only area of the country at least nominally under English control in the late medieval period. In reality, the Old English families were the main executors of the structures of power in the Pale. The Darcys provided sheriffs of County Meath in 1496, 1500 and 1546, the Bellews in 1497 and the Baths in 1520.<sup>9</sup> Each had extensive family connections through marriage and estates in counties Meath, Louth and Westmeath, but their principal residences were in Duleek.

Athcarne castle, built by the Bath family, is the only surviving late medieval elite residence in Duleek. It provides some indication of the type of homes these families built for themselves, and their transformative impact on the landscape (Fig. 4.1). Athcarne castle was a four-storey tower-house constructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> An armorial plaque on the wall of the castle is all that remains of a manor house attached to the tower, built by Walter Bath and his wife Janet Dowdall in 1590. This castle remained in use into the later historic period and was

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*Europe* (Oxford, 1985), pp 79–81; Anngret Simms, 'The geography of Irish Manors: the example of Llanthony cells of Duleek and Colp in County Meath' in John Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Mediaeval Ireland: Studies Presented to F.X.Martin*, O.S.A. (Kilkenny, 1988), pp 291–326.

<sup>4</sup>Urban archaeological survey of Meath, by John Bradley, Unpublished (Dublin, 1985), p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony in Ireland*, fig. ,maps 1–5.

<sup>6</sup>Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in Ireland* (London, 1970), p. 173. RMP: ME027-038015-

<sup>7</sup>Gearóid MacNiocaill, *Crown Surveys of Lands, 1540-41: with the Kildare Rental Begun in 1518* (Dublin, 1992), p. 28; Hogan, *The priory of Llanthony Prima and Secunda in Ireland, 1172-1541*, pp 187–188.

<sup>8</sup> Kennedy Abraham, 'Upward mobility in later medieval Meath' in *History Ireland*, v, no. 4 (1997), pp 15–20; Steven G. Ellis, 'An English gentleman and his community: Sir William Darcy of Platten' in Vincent Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann (eds), *Taking Sides?: Colonial and Confessional Mentalités in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), pp 25–29.

<sup>9</sup> Ellis, 'An English gentleman: Darcy of Platten', p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> SMR: ME033-004.

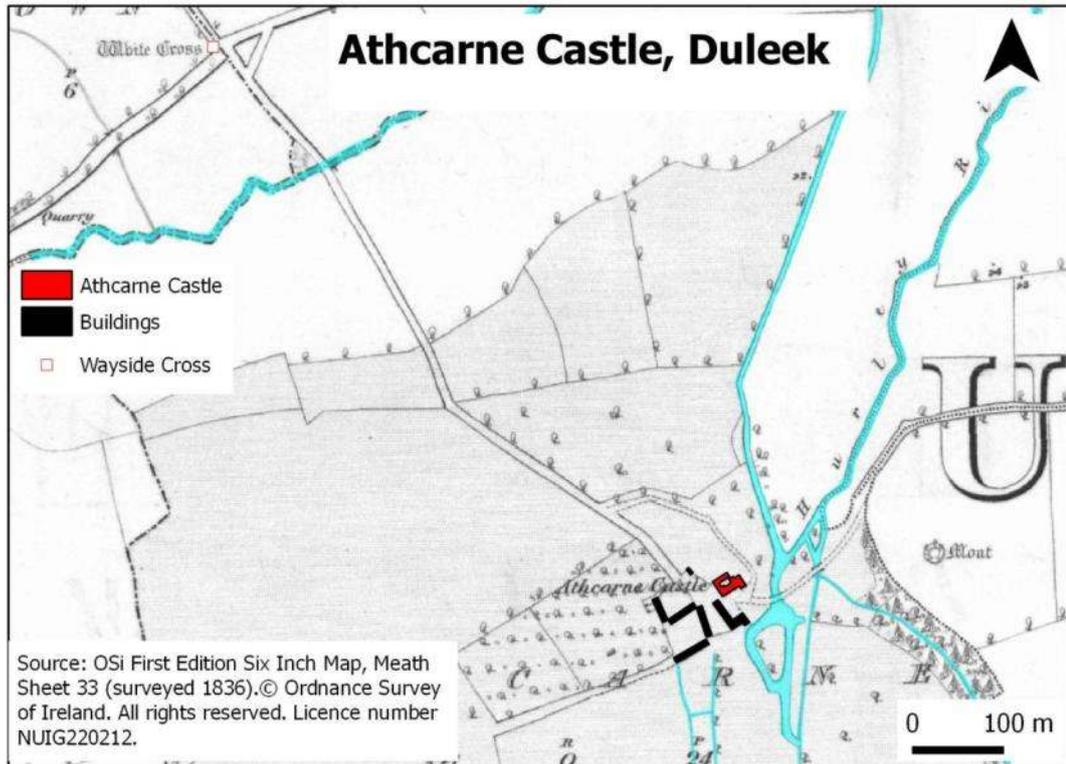


Figure 4.1 Map of Athcarne Castle c. 1836, showing substantial drainage and water channels around the castle.



Figure 4.2 Athcarne castle (ME033-004), the 16th-century tower-house (right) built by the Bath family, and 19th-century addition (left).

substantially altered (Fig. 4.2). It was built beside the river Harley and it appears that water management probably played an important part of the immediate landscape of the late medieval estate. Substantial water channels around the flood plain of the Nanny and the Harley managed water flow in and around a series of meadows, but their date and origin are as yet unknown. Channels were conspicuously constructed around the front of Athcarne to create water features. These were visible on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century depictions of the castle (Fig. 4.3).<sup>11</sup> Whilst relatively little research has been carried out on designed landscapes surrounding medieval castles in Ireland,<sup>12</sup> it is likely that the concept of a designed elite landscape, as found in England,<sup>13</sup> also operated in Ireland. Janet Dowdall also commissioned three wayside crosses at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to commemorate two dead husbands. These crosses contained distinctively Catholic iconography, with crucifixion scenes and memorials for the Dowdall and Bath families (Fig. 4.4).<sup>14</sup> These crosses form part of a group of remarkable wayside crosses in Meath which are a testament to the Counter-Reformation faith of landed Catholic families in the Pale.<sup>15</sup> The Catholic Pale families could very publicly express this faith by embellishing a devotional landscape with landmark waysides in a way that was becoming increasingly rare in Reformation England.

The Darcy family of Platin built their castle on a ridge overlooking the River Nanny and Duleek town, some 4 km from Drogheda.<sup>16</sup> The castle no longer survives, but was presumably, like Athcarne, a tower-house. The Darcys appear to have chosen to build it beside a chapel,<sup>17</sup> which they re-edified in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A similar pattern of castle and chapel appears to have been followed by the Bellews family at Bellewstown. Again, the castle no longer survives, but the chapel at Bellewstown does.<sup>18</sup> It consists of a 15<sup>th</sup>-century unicameral building with the remains of fine tracery windows and a bell-cote, incorporated into a later historic farm yard (Fig. 4.5).

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<sup>11</sup> Francis Grose, *The Antiquities of Ireland* (II vols, London, 1795), p. 33, pl. 42; Thomas Cromwell, *Excursions Through Ireland: Province of Leinster* (London, 1820), p. 57; Philip Dixon Hardy, *The Dublin Penny Journal, Volume 1, No. 28* (Dublin, 1833), p. 217.

<sup>12</sup> but see Tadhg O'Keeffe, 'Were there Designed Landscapes in Medieval Ireland?' in *Landscapes*, v, no. 2 (2004), pp 52–68; Margaret Murphy and Kieran O'Connor, 'Castles and deer parks in Anglo-Norman Ireland' in *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies*, i (2006), pp 53–70; Fiona Beglane, "'Parks and Deer-hunting: Evidence from Medieval Ireland'" (PhD thesis, NUI, Galway, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Oliver H Creighton, *Designs Upon the Land: Elite Landscapes of the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> SMR: ME027-031----; ME027-038010-; ME033-001----;

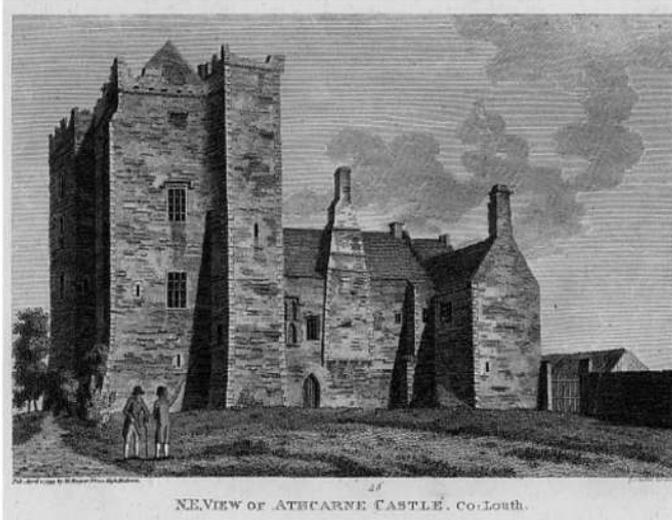
<sup>15</sup> Heather A. King, 'Irish wayside and churchyard crosses 1600-1700', in *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, xix (1985), pp 13–33.

<sup>16</sup> SMR: ME027-003002

<sup>17</sup> SMR: ME027-003001

<sup>18</sup> SMR: ME027-007----

## ATHCARNE CASTLE, DULEEK, MEATH



1786

'N.E. View of Athcarne Castle, Co. Louth' [sic]

Francis Grose, *The Antiquities of Ireland* (II vols, London, 1795), I, p. 33, pl. 42.



1820

'Athcarne castle, Co. of Eastmeath'

TThomas Cromwell, *Excursions Through Ireland: Province of Leinster* (London, 1820), p. 57.



1833

'Athcarne castle, from a sketch taken prior to the late alterations.'

*The Dublin Penny Journal*, Volume 1, Number 28, January 5, 1833

Figure 4.3 Three antiquarian drawings of Athcarne castle from 1786, 1820 and 1833.



*Figure 4.4 Wayside cross in Gaulstown (ME033-001). This cross is decorated with the Bath and Dowdall coat of arms and a large crucifixion. This was one of four crosses erected by Janet Dowdall in memory of her two husbands.*

By the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century these Old English elite families were the largest landowners in Duleek.<sup>19</sup> Sir Christopher Bellew of Bellewstown held up to 1,178 plantation acres,<sup>20</sup> or 14% of Duleek; Nicholas Darcy of Platin held 1008 plantation acres or 12%; and James Bath of Athcarne was proprietor of up to 651 plantation acres, or 7% of Duleek. However, by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century all three families had lost their properties.<sup>21</sup> The legacy of the medieval monastic

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<sup>19</sup>Robert C. Simington, *The Civil Survey A.D. 1654 - 1656: County of Meath, with Returns of Tithes for the Meath Baronies. Volume 5* (Dublin, 1940), pp 15–23.

<sup>20</sup> These values are taken from the Down Survey terriers for Duleek parish Down Survey, *County East Meath, Duleek Barony, Duleek Parish Map and Terrier* (National Library of Ireland, 1655).

<sup>21</sup>Manuscript of the “Books of Survey and Distribution” for counties Louth and Meath, compiled circa 1703, listing proprietors of land in 1641, and grantees and lands granted in 1688, with acreages. NAI Microfilm MFS 2/7’ (National Archives of Ireland, 1703).

orders and families was a landscape of iconic buildings, of churches and tower-houses, of farmed and drained landscapes which formed the core of later historic estates in Duleek (Fig. 4.6). They also demonstrate that the medieval and early-modern elites manipulated the landscape around their residences in ways more generally associated with later historic elites.



Figure 4.5 Bellewstown church (ME027-007), incorporated into a later historic farmyard.

### 4.3 The Kilcooly Monastic Landscapes

Kilcooly Abbey was a Cistercian foundation, endowed by the Gaelic king of Thomond, Domhnall Mór Ua Briain, in 1182.<sup>22</sup> Kilcooly means the ‘church in the corner’, or, in Latin, ‘St. Mary de Arvicampo’, the plain of corn. The place-name alludes to the abbey’s position on the boundary between kingdoms of Thomond and Ossory, roughly corresponding with the modern boundary between counties Tipperary and Kilkenny. The land grant from the king of Thomond covered an area of approximately 106km<sup>2</sup>. Bog lands formed a natural boundary zone to the west and north; the Slieveardagh uplands to the south and east provided upland grazing and

<sup>22</sup>Conway, ‘Kilcooly Abbey: part one’; Fr Columcille Conway, ‘Kilcooly Abbey: part two’ in *Old Kilkenny Review*, xxxvii (1985), pp 177–82.

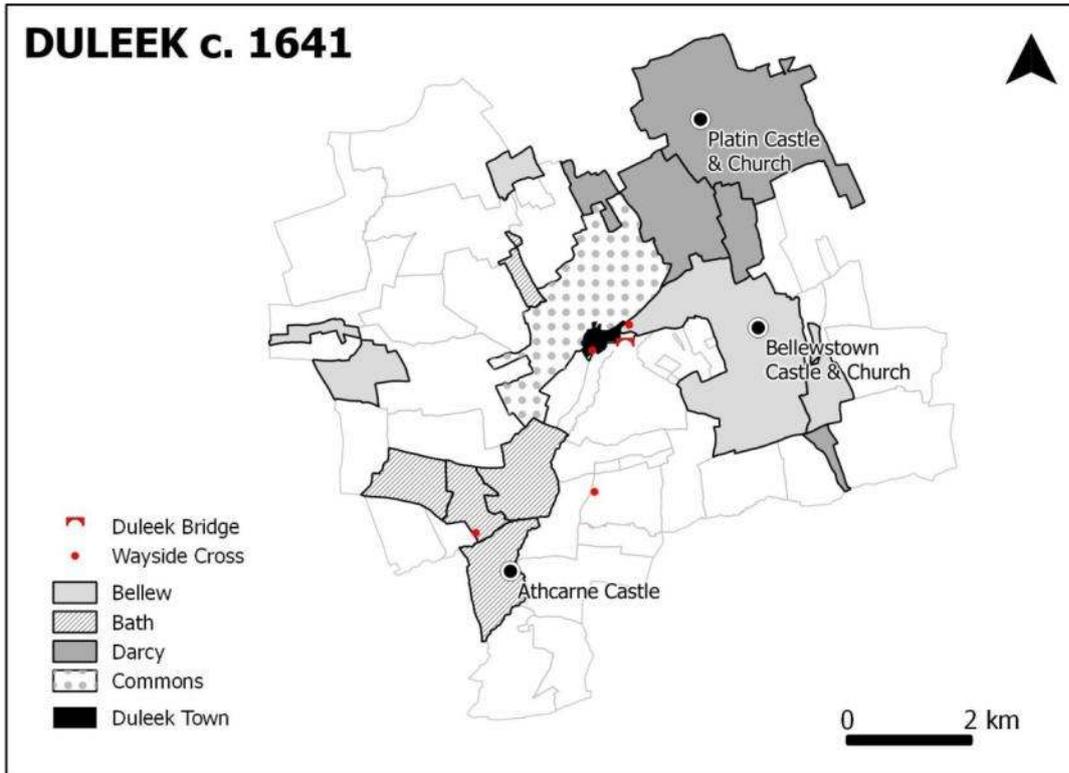


Figure 4.6 Significant landscape features in early modern Duleek.

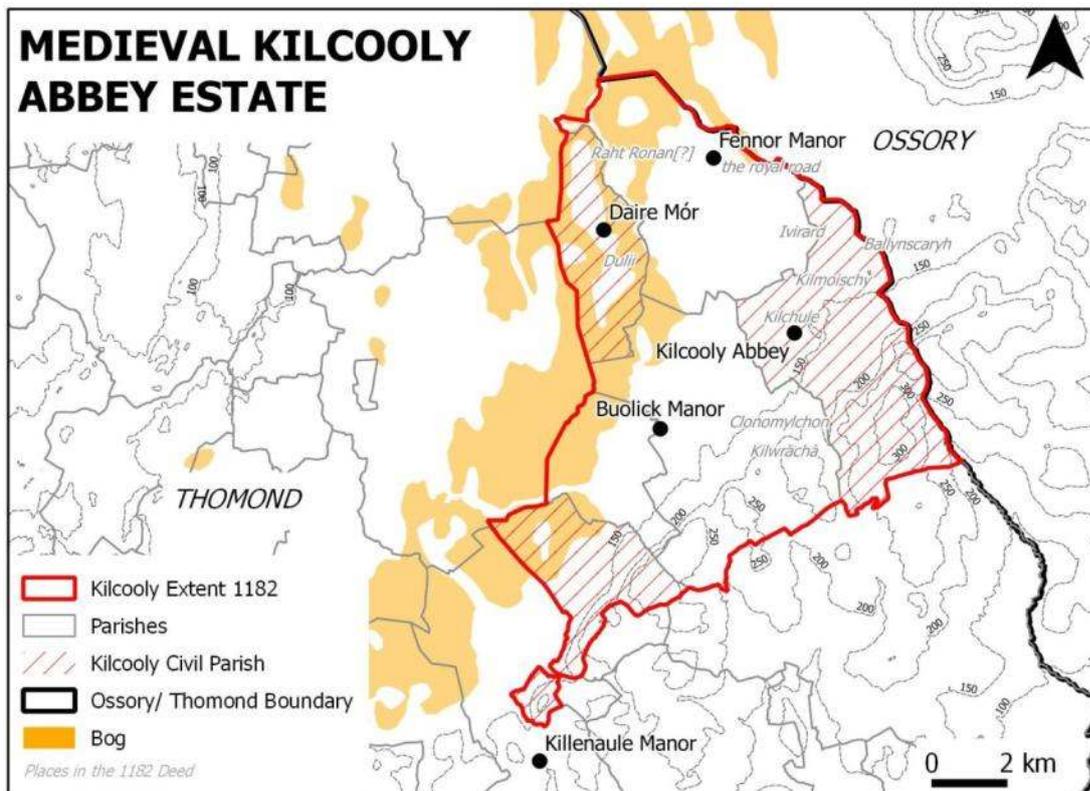


Figure 4.7 Medieval Kilcooly Abbey, showing the extent of the 1182 grant and the Anglo-Norman manors carved from this estate.

commonage. This area of Thomond had been well-settled prior to the foundation of the abbey, with 25 native enclosed settlements of ráth type, and two significant early church sites, Derryvella, "Oakwood of Mella", and Longford Pass, which appears to have been the early church site of Daire Mór.<sup>23</sup> Both church sites were situated on islands surrounded by bog lands, and each also probably had its own estate or termon lands. Up to thirty different places are named in the original foundation charter, nine of which can be located (Fig.4. 7). When the Anglo-Normans pushed into Tipperary around 1200,<sup>24</sup> they carved out the manors of Fennor, Buolick and Killenaule from former monastic estates, alienating more than half of the original endowment and dividing the remaining 45km<sup>2</sup> of Kilcooly into the three detached portions. The early medieval termon lands of Daire Mór and Derryvella remained part of the monastic estate, resulting in the curiously fragmented geography of the later historic parish. The abbey buildings in Kilcooly were started in c. 1200 and, when complete, consisted of a typical, if small, arrangement of transeptal church and cloister with ranges. A large (50m by 68m) moated site 1.7km to the south of the abbey complex probably acted as the monastic grange, and was ideally situated to take advantage of the surrounding low-lying tillage land and the uplands for grazing sheep and cattle.<sup>25</sup> However, by the later medieval period Kilcooly Abbey had lost much of its distinguishing 'Cistercian' features. The abbey was attacked and burnt twice in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, forcing the abbot, Philip O'Molbardayn to flee to England. Following his return in 1450, Kilcooly Abbey was substantially remodelled, with the addition of new private apartments, a bell tower and highly decorated interior (Fig. 4.8). These new decorations around the chancel and transepts featured several representations of the Butler coat of arms, presumably acknowledging the family, and in particular the Ikerrin branch from nearby Clonamicklon, as their main patrons. Pierce Fitz Og Butler [d.1526] of Clonamicklon was buried in the chancel of Kilcooly in an elaborate tomb chest decorated with his effigy in armour.<sup>26</sup> Kilcooly's moated grange was replaced with a tower-house. The abbacy itself had become hereditary, reminiscent of the Gaelic tradition of abbatial succession, with the O'Molbardayn family providing abbots almost until its dissolution. By 1541, when Kilcooly was dissolved, the abbey appears to have functioned as a parish church. The abbey complex

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<sup>23</sup> SMR TN042-025----; Conleth Manning, 'Daire Mór identified' in *Peritia*, xi, no. -1 (1997), pp 359–369.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Hennessy, 'Parochial organisation in medieval Tipperary' in William Nolan (ed.), *Tipperary: History and Society* (Dublin, 1985), p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Clutterbuck, "The Settlement and Architecture of Later Medieval Slieveradagh, County Tipperary" (MLitt thesis, UCD, Dublin, 1998), pp 49–58 [vol.2]. Kilcooly Abbey: SMR TS043-034; Grangecastle Moated site: TS043-039.

<sup>26</sup> John Hunt, *Irish Mediaeval Figure Sculpture, 1200-1600: Study of Irish Tombs with Notes on Costume and Armour* (New edition, Dublin, 1986), pp 151, 278.



Figure 4.8 Kilcooly Cistercian Abbey, which was substantially rebuilt in the late-15th century.

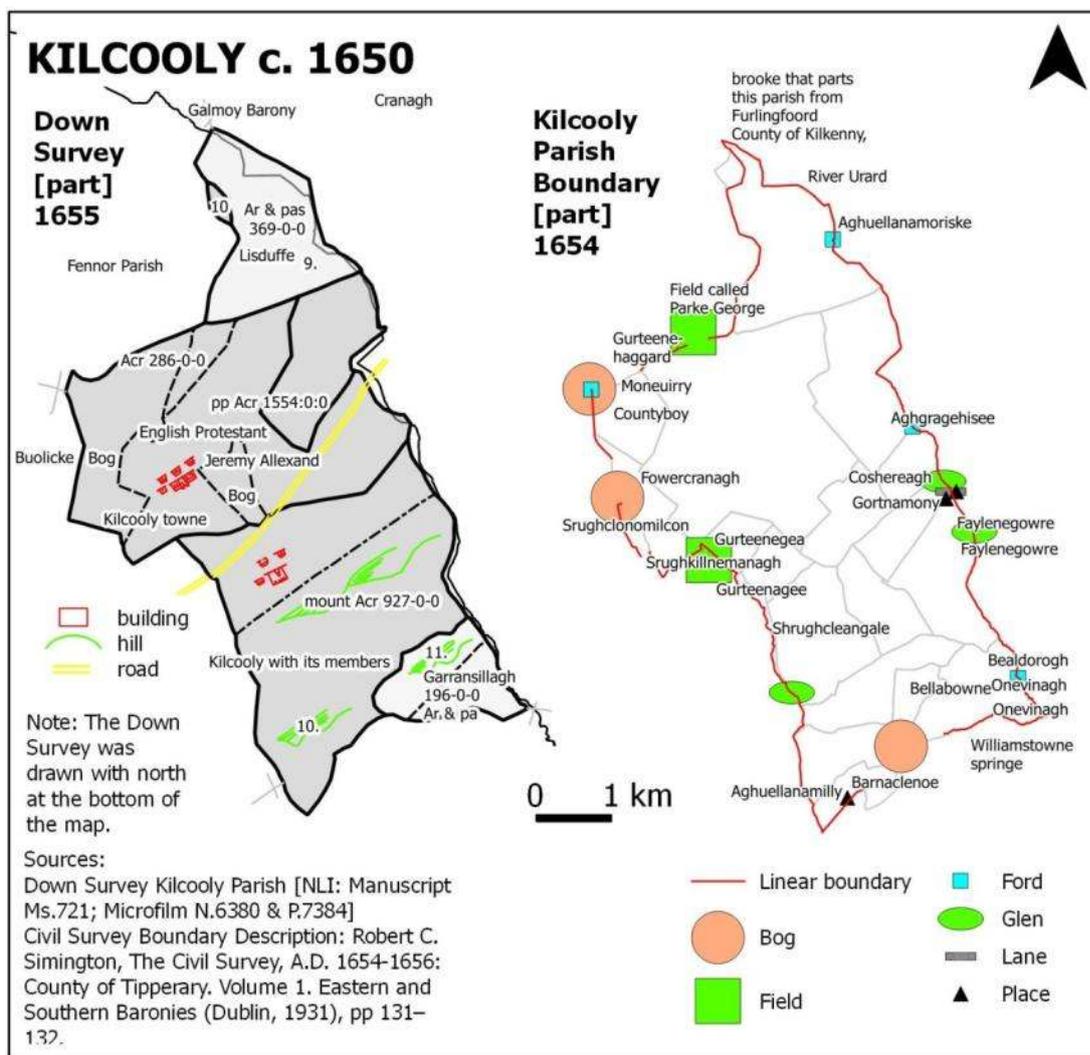


Figure 4.9 Kilcooly in the mid-17th century, recorded in the Civil and Down Survey.

included two gardens of about two acres, most likely in the abbey's original precinct, 28 acres of demesne lands rented to the Earl of Ormond, and a mill. Tenants owed the abbey provisions and labour days typical of a medieval manor.<sup>27</sup> This estate may even have included a deer park, described as the 'old deerpark' on a 1749 map (Section 5.4).<sup>28</sup> The O'Molbardayn dynasty of abbots at Kilcooly constructed an elite landscape for themselves more typical of a medieval manor than a Cistercian monastery. This raises the intriguing prospect that the demesne surrounding Kilcooly may have been emparked and designed in a manner more generally associated with later, secular elite landscapes.<sup>29</sup>

Following the dissolution, Kilcooly and its lands were granted to the Earl of Ormond,<sup>30</sup> perhaps in recognition of the resources his extended family had invested there. The Earl of Ormond, one of the premier Old English families in Ireland, owned a massive estate extending across counties Tipperary and Kilkenny. Kilcooly parish remained within Ormond until 1636 when an English lawyer, Jerome Alexander, purchased the portion of the parish surrounding Kilcooly Abbey for £4,200. Alexander (1590–1670) was an English-born Protestant lawyer who came to Ireland in 1627,<sup>31</sup> one of what were known as the 'New English'. He never lived in Kilcooly, and as an absentee landlord, his somewhat precarious position was made plain during the 1640s when the Cistercians briefly returned to Kilcooly Abbey, then in the heart of Confederate Catholic-controlled Ireland. The dissolved monastery in Kilcooly was still the dominant feature in this landscape, with people living in and around the remains of the abbey: '*Upon this land stands a great decayed Abey, & a Mill. The sd. Towne is Inhabitted, & many cabbins*'.<sup>32</sup> Whether this passage refers to a 'town' as a nucleated settlement,<sup>33</sup> or to the townland as a whole is unclear. The Down Survey map would appear to suggest it was a group of buildings around the remains of the Abbey, although most of the earthworks around the abbey today are the remains of later historic landscape gardens (section 5.4).<sup>34</sup> Kilcooly's parish boundaries, described in detail in the *Civil Survey*, reveal a cultural landscape of place-

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<sup>27</sup>White (ed.), *Extents Irish Monastic Possessions*, pp 322–324.

<sup>28</sup> Map reproduced in Neely, *Kilcooley*, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> Creighton, *Designs Upon the Land*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Conway, 'Kilcooly Abbey: part two', p. 179.

<sup>31</sup>Terry Clavin, 'Alexander, Sir Jerome' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), i, 73–74.

<sup>32</sup>Simington, *South and East Tipperary Civil Survey*, p. 132.

<sup>33</sup>William J. Smyth, 'Property, patronage and population reconstructing the human geography of mid-seventeenth century County Tipperary' in William Nolan and Thomas G. McGrath (eds), *Tipperary: History and Society* (Dublin, 1985), p. 123.

<sup>34</sup> William Petty, 'County Tipperary, Slieveardagh Barony, Kilcooly Parish Map and Terrier' (1655) (National Library of Ireland, Ms.715; Microfilm N.6378 & P.7382).

names and features, many of which no longer survive. The boundaries of the parish were formed by streams and so-called 'gutters' or man-made ditches, by places like bogs and fields such as 'Parke George' which survives today as George's Park (Fig. 4.9).<sup>35</sup> The broader landscape of tenure in this part of Kilcooly is less well documented, but it may have been similar to the portion of the parish around Glengoole that remained in the Ormond estate:

*The pasture in these lands was held in common betweene the sd. Pproetors without partition and their arable lands intermingled each with the other, soe as it could not be particularly & distinctly bounded. This colpe is wholly wast without impvemt.*<sup>36</sup>

Although this has been interpreted as evidence of manorial openfield farming,<sup>37</sup> it bears striking similarity to descriptions of partnership farming in the later historic period.

Jerome Alexander's daughter Elizabeth, who had inherited his estate in 1670,<sup>38</sup> married Sir William Barker of Bocking Hall, Essex, in 1676.<sup>39</sup> Kilcooly was leased during this period, providing an income of up to £249 per year in 1672. Some improvement was carried out on the estate, including repairs to the hall in Kilcooly, draining bogs and constructing outhouses, all costing £100.<sup>40</sup> Demonstrating that the new owners were aware of the mineral potential of their estate, miners were allowed to build houses and mine coal on the commons of Kilcooly in 1670.<sup>41</sup> Coal would be mined throughout the later historic period in Slieveardagh (section 6.7). However, the Barkers appear to have been content to let the estate out on short-term leases. An undated document to Lady Elizabeth, from her agent John Rotton, shows that the Kilcooly estate was leased to three tenants: Grange Kilcooly was leased to Mr Hicks for £60, Mrs Bird had a rent and arrears of £70, whilst Lambert & Walsh paid a rent of £27. The rental also included '*Cabbins & collops a greate many whereof are so poore that they pay nothing*', amounting to £53 5 10.<sup>42</sup> In 1697 John Rotton advised Lady Barker that '*unless your Ladyship ill bee content to make a lease of it for a good tearme you will not have any good tenant live in*

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<sup>35</sup>Simington, *South and East Tipperary Civil Survey*, pp 131–132.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>37</sup>Leister cited the Civil Survey for County Tipperary extensively for evidence of medieval openfield farming. Ingeborg Leister, *Peasant Openfield Farming and its Territorial Organisation in County Tipperary* (Marburg, 1976).

<sup>38</sup>Charles Rogers, 'Notes in the History of Sir Jerome Alexander, Second Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and Founder of the Alexander Library, Trinity College, Dublin' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, ii (1873), pp 94–116.

<sup>39</sup>Neely, *Kilcooley*, p. 40.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup>NLI, 'Ponsonby Papers: Correspondence of members of the Barker and Ponsonby families on estate, domestic and private affairs. c. 200 letters, 1697, 1707-1838. (In the possession of Maj. C. T. Ponsonby.)' in *National Library of Ireland Reports on Private Collections No.470* (Dublin), p. 3126.

*it & it will never bee Improved*.<sup>43</sup> Such close attention from the Barker family would only be forthcoming when Lady Barker's grandson made his home in Kilcooly (section 5.4). Kilcooly in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century exemplified some of the difficulties facing new and often absentee landowners in Ireland – how to maintain their position and profit from their estate. Similar issues were faced in Plantation Ulster during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **4.4 Towards Kilrea's Plantation Landscape**

County Derry/ Londonderry was first shired as the county of Coleraine in 1585 and had been the lordship of the Gaelic Ó Catháin family prior to the Ulster Plantation.<sup>44</sup> Following the Nine Years War, Domhnall Ballagh Ó Catháin (Donal Ballagh O'Cahan) had submitted to English authority and had sought protection under English law, primarily to secure his position with an English title. However, with the Flight of the Earls in 1607 and subsequent suppression of O'Doherty's rebellion in 1608, Ó Catháin's country was seized by the Crown.<sup>45</sup> A plan was devised, largely by Sir Thomas Phillips, to pacify the country and make it profitable for the Crown by plantation under royal license. The Londonderry Plantation would be undertaken by livery companies of London, which included the Worshipful Company of Mercers.<sup>46</sup> The Mercers Company were reluctantly drawn into the Plantation scheme in Derry in December 1613, receiving a lot for 21,600 plantation acres in two parcels of 48 townlands. One parcel was located beside the river Bann centred on Kilrea parish (the study area) and the other, containing the large forest of Glenconkeyne on the Sperrin Mountains, was centred on Swartragh (Fig. 4.10).<sup>47</sup>

The Mercers' portion was considered one of the more desirable land holdings available to the London livery companies, incorporating the valuable salmon and eel fisheries on the lower River Bann, access to Coleraine town at the mouth of the river, and woodlands on the uplands. Kilrea itself appears to have been a well-settled landscape. The place-name 'Kilrea',

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 3125.

<sup>44</sup> Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, p. 186.

<sup>45</sup> James Stevens Curl, *The Londonderry Plantation, 1609-1914: The History, Architecture, and Planning of the Estates of the City of London and its Livery Companies in Ulster* (Chichester, 1986), p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, p. 222.

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*Figure 4.10 Extract from Raven's map of the Mercers' portion of Derry, 1622. North is at the base of the map. Note the large outlined area marked 'Church Lands of Kilrea' (A).<sup>48</sup>*

meaning either 'the grey church',<sup>49</sup> or 'church of the cross',<sup>50</sup> reveals that the church was a significant landscape feature in the locality in the medieval period. Kilrea's curving churchyard boundary, located at the south end of Kilrea plantation town (Fig. 4.11) would appear to preserve part of a circular *vallum* typical of the early medieval church in Ireland.<sup>51</sup> The church itself, which continued in use into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as a Church of Ireland parish church, was typical of medieval churches in Ireland, being a small unicameral structure with a bell-cote (Fig. 4.12). A holy well, Toberdorney,<sup>52</sup> located some 900m northeast of Kilrea church provides further evidence for this being an early church site. Secular settlement in Kilrea

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<sup>48</sup> Image source: [www.greatparchmentbook.org/book-history/](http://www.greatparchmentbook.org/book-history/).

<sup>49</sup> [logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie) - Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann - Placenames Database of Ireland, 'Kilrea' (<http://www.logainm.ie/1416667.aspx>) (7 Oct. 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Munn, *Notes on the Place Names of the Parishes and Townlands in the County of Londonderry*, p. 198.

<sup>51</sup> Northern Ireland Environmental Agency, 'Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record'; SMR Number LDY 027:003.

<sup>52</sup> SMR: LDY 027:004

consists of two probable crannogs or lake-island dwellings, one some 400m east of Kilrea church on Washing Lake,<sup>53</sup> the other 400m southeast on Kathleen's Lake,<sup>54</sup> and four raths.

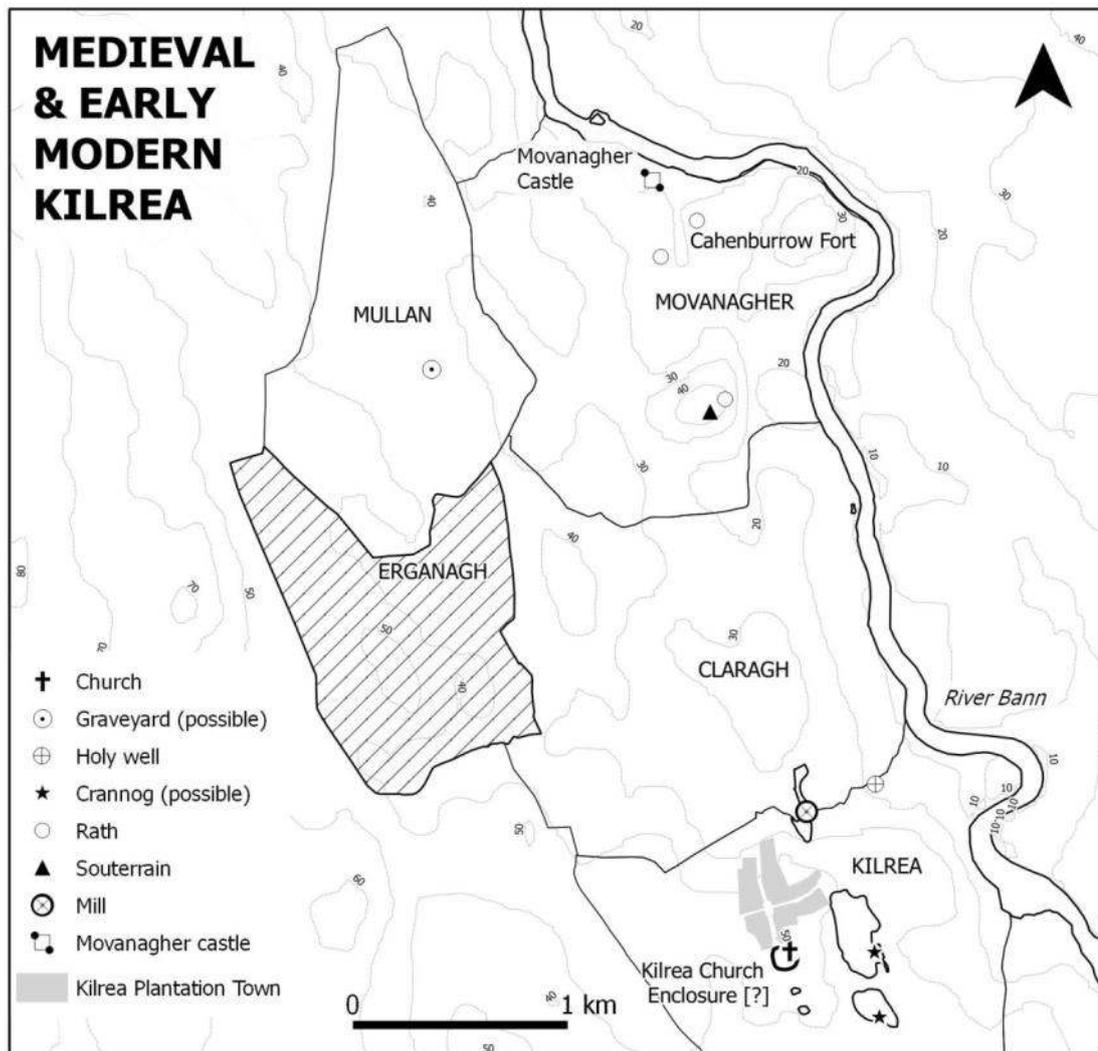


Figure 4.11 Later medieval and early modern Kilrea.

Both crannogs and raths have their origin in the early medieval period, although recent research has highlighted the use of native enclosed settlements in the later medieval and early modern periods.<sup>55</sup> The raths, and for that matter Kilrea church itself, were located on hills overlooking the lower, generally boggy ground. Conyburrow rath in Movanager,<sup>56</sup> was a particularly impressively example of one of these hill-top raths overlooking the Bann river.

<sup>53</sup> SMR: LDY 027:009

<sup>54</sup> SMR: LDY 027:010

<sup>55</sup> Niall Brady and K. O'Connor, 'The later medieval usage of crannogs in Ireland' in *Ruralia*, v (2005), pp 127–36; Elizabeth FitzPatrick, 'Native enclosed settlement and the problem of the Irish 'ring-fort'' in *Medieval Archaeology*, liii, no. 1 (2009), pp 271–307.

<sup>56</sup> SMR: LDY 019:001

Crannogs are artificial lake dwellings most numerous in south Ulster and had been in use from the prehistoric period. Both raths and crannogs remained significant places in the Gaelic landscape as symbolic indicators of lordship, into the later historic and early modern periods,



Figure 4.12 Depiction of Kilrea church from the Ordnance Survey memoirs for Kilrea parish, c. 1833.<sup>57</sup>

and feature prominently in early 17<sup>th</sup>-century maps of Ulster.<sup>58</sup> Whilst we cannot say that these sites in Kilrea were being used as places of residence in the late-medieval and early modern period, they are at least indicative of a well-settled pre-plantation landscape. This is in marked contrast to the observations of contemporary observers like Davies and Moryson (section 3.3), and propagated by modern historians like Stephen Curl, who presented Ulster at the time of the plantations as an unsettled, unimproved landscape where the native Irish had to be coaxed from a 'nomadic existence and ... subsistence farming'.<sup>59</sup> Some details in Thomas Raven's 1622 map of the Mercers' portion of the Londonderry plantation suggest that these early settlements remained in use. Raven depicts a circular enclosure with three houses at 'Donglade', which is probably the large multivallate enclosure or rath at Dunglady (Fig. 4.10, D).<sup>60</sup> Erganagh townland preserves in its name its pre-Reformation status as termon or church-owned lands under the stewardship of an *airchinnech* (or *erenagh*), an hereditary clerical office in the Gaelic tradition.<sup>61</sup> Erenaghs provided food and drink or 'refection' for the annual episcopal visitation, provided hospitality for pilgrims and travellers on behalf of the

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<sup>57</sup> Angélique Day and Patrick McWilliams, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Parishes of Co. Londonderry VIII, 1830, 1833-7, 1839, Volume 27 East Londonderry* (Belfast, 1994), p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> Aidan O'Sullivan, *The Archaeology of Lake Settlement in Ireland* (Dublin, 1998), pp 167–177; Brady & O'Connor, 'The later medieval usage of crannogs in Ireland' *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> Stevens Curl, *The Londonderry Plantation*, p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> SMR: SMR LDY 33:3; Angélique Day and Patrick McWilliams, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland. Parishes of Londonderry V 1830, 1833, 1836-7, Volume 18, Maghera and Tamlaght O'Crilly* (Belfast, 1993), p. 61.

<sup>61</sup> Henry A. Jefferies, 'Erenaghs in pre-Plantation Ulster: an early seventeenth-century account' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, liii (1999), pp 16–17; Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory*, p. 365.

## Chapter 4 Origins of Improvement Landscapes

diocese, collected rents due to the diocese and, with the rector and vicar, maintained the parish church and its lands.<sup>62</sup> Kilrea's erenaghs were the Ó Díomáin or Dimond family. Sean Ó Díomáin was, in 1607, the last recorded incumbent.<sup>63</sup> Raven's map of the Mercers' portion, drawn in 1622 (Fig. 4.10, A), clearly shows Kilrea church land roughly corresponding with the position of Erganagh townland (Fig.4.11). The parish priest of Kilrea was appointed by the Abbot of St Peter and Paul of Armagh, to whom the tithes of the parish were paid. Kilrea's living or tithe was a lucrative source of income because it included the salmon and eel fisheries on the River Bann.<sup>64</sup> Kilrea was then, at the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, an attractive prospect for the Mercers' Company not just because of its physical attributes, but also because it was a complex landscape of settlement with a well-developed fishery on the Bann River.



*Figure 4.13 Movanager castle, south-west flanker tower and bawn wall.*

The Mercers' Company took possession of their estate in 1618. They divided their portion amongst five freeholds, with the immediate focus of settlement in Kilrea at Movanager beside the River Bann (Fig. 4.13). The leasehold agreements issued by the Mercers included a requirement to build substantial houses in timber, stone, and brick, in an English fashion.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Henry A. Jefferies, 'Derry diocese on the eve of the plantation' in Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Derry and Londonderry: History & Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1999), pp 180–181.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>64</sup> Munn, *Notes on the Place Names of the Parishes and Townlands in the County of Londonderry*, pp 198–199; Rev. James Leslie, *Derry Clergy and Parishes* (Enniskillen, 1937), pp 244–246.

<sup>65</sup> Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, p. 224.

Movanagher castle was built quickly by the leaseholder Richard Vernon. In 1619 Nicholas Pynnar described Movanagher as:

*... a good strong work, and well built, and a very large bawne of 120 feet square, with four flankers, all of good stone and lime [and] six houses of cagework, some covered with shingles and some thatched ... There are divers other houses of slight building, but they are far off, and dwell dispersedly in the wood...*<sup>66</sup>

Pynnar's description and Thomas Raven's map of Movanagher from four years later make a clear distinction between these English-style houses with cage-work design, second floors and pitched roofs and so-called Irish houses which were drawn as single-storey, thatched roof dwellings (Fig 4.14). The Mercers' estate, like most of the other London Livery Company estates, relied on leasing land at high rents to the Gaelic Irish, rather than settling British planters, contrary to the terms of the Plantations scheme which required that the native Irish be removed and replaced with British settlers.<sup>67</sup> Sir Thomas Philips reported in 1622 that the Mercers' portion contained just 79 British settlers compared to 203 natives.<sup>68</sup> Raven's maps did not show Kilrea's town, which would appear to have been founded sometime between 1622 and 1639. The Crown acted upon the evidence of Pynnar and Philips and removed the London Livery Companies from their plantations, instead taking the estate in hand themselves, handing out freeholds and 21 years leaseholds - although largely, it must be said, reconfirming leases already in existence. This provides a valuable insight into the state of the Plantation in 1639. The former Mercers' portion of the Plantation was divided into 30 leaseholds, including 17 for the town of Kilrea (Fig. 4.15).<sup>69</sup> Leaseholders in Kilrea town included four husbandmen or farmers, four yeomen, and also trades people, including three carpenters, a miller (Thomas Miller also received the 'grinding' for 20 townlands), butcher, wheelwright and a tailor, each of whom received a messuage or house, a tenement, orchard and backside or garden as well as various quantities of arable, pasture, meadow and bog land in Kilrea townland. Thomas Church of Movanagher was the largest leaseholder in the former Mercers' Company estate with 1,730 plantation acres, the rights to ferry and passage on the

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<sup>66</sup> Charles William Russell and John Patrick Prendergast, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reign of James I, 1603-1625* (London, 1872), p. 383 (<http://archive.org/details/cu31924091770853>).

<sup>67</sup> Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, p. 225.

<sup>68</sup> Sir Thomas Phillips, *Londonderry and the London Companies, 1609-1629 : Being a Survey and Other Documents Submitted to King Charles I* (Belfast, 1928), pp 138-139.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Great Parchment Book of The Honourable Irish Society' (<http://www.greatparchmentbook.org/>) (26 Feb. 2014).

Crown copyright. View image at <http://niarchive.org/trails/plantation-rewriting-the-story/img/plantation/merciers-company.jpg> (Accessed: 30/1/2015)

Figure 4.14 Extract of Raven's map of Movanager c.1622.

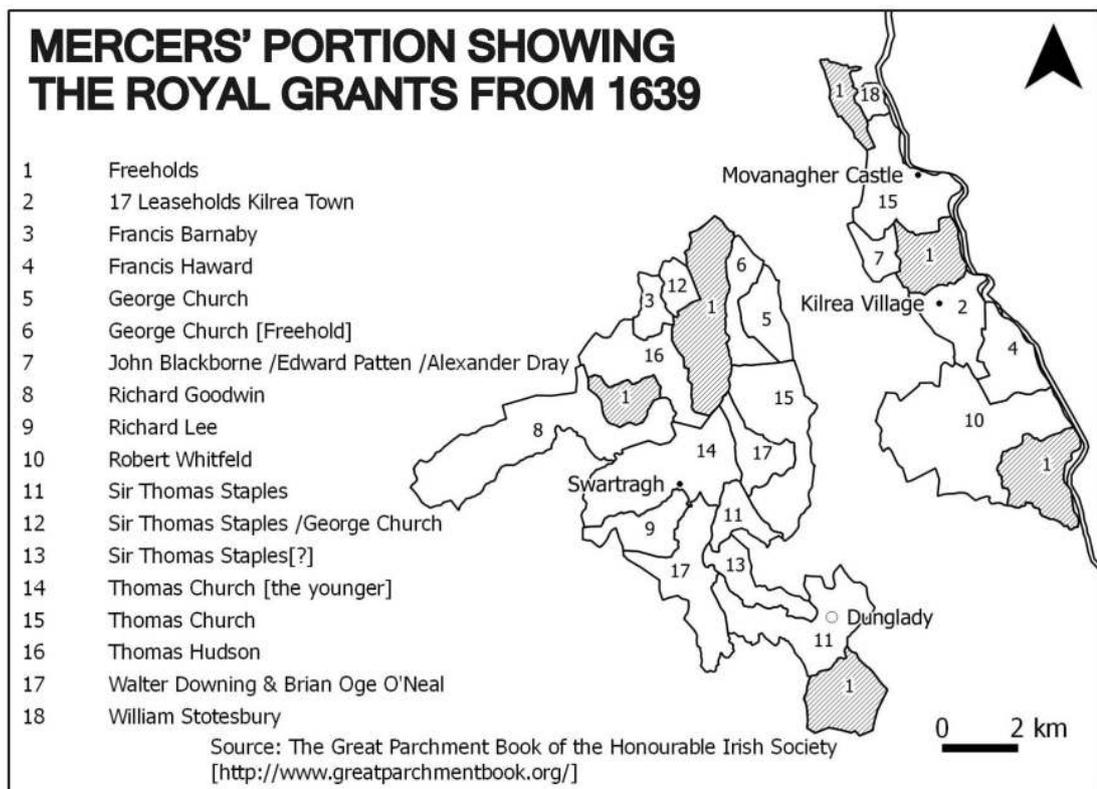


Figure 4.15 The Mercers' Company estate in 1639, redistributed by the Crown.

Bann river and a weekly market in Kilrea town. Conditions of the lease also included a requirement to mill corn in the manor mills of Kilrea and Swartagh. The lucrative Bann fisheries were retained by the Crown. As Thomas Church's lease agreement shows, the Crown was anxious to put its stamp on the landscape in the Derry plantation:

*[Thomas Church] shall within five yeares now next comeing erect and build and fully finishe uppon the p[re]misses one good and sufficient house after the manner of Englishe houses two storyes highe and to conteine fower roomes att the least and keepe and mainteine the foresaid Capitall Messuage or Mannor house and all other the foresaid houses edifices and buildings in good and sufficient rep[ar]ac[i]ons during the said terme and shall within seaven yeares now next comeing make sever and devide the foresaid p[re]misses with dike and double quicksett where quicksett will grow and with other good and sufficient fences and inclosures where quicksett will not growe into six severall closes more then the same now are and the same being soe severed inclosed and made and all other the hedges ditches and inclosures uppon or belonging to the foresaid p[re]misses shall keepe and mainteine well and sufficiently fenced ditched inclosed and quicksetted during the said terme and shall yearly during the said terme sett and plant uppon some part of the foresaid p[re]misses tenn young trees of oake or ashe fitt or likely to grow to be timber trees and the same or others to be sett or planted in the roomes and steeds of such of them as shall happen to dye shall mainteine p[re]serve and keepe from hurt and spoile during the said terme and att his and their costs and chardges shall keepe cleane and decent and well and sufficiently repaired scoured and emended from time to time during the said terme.<sup>70</sup>*

The Plantation set out to create a landscape distinct from the existing, essentially Gaelic, landscape that still existed in 1639. Buildings were to be of an English style, and the landscape was to be organised and partitioned by enclosures and drainage. Kilrea town, although incorporating the Gaelic church and its surrounding enclosure, was laid out in a regular pattern of streets, houses and house-plots, with a central 'diamond' added in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century from which four streets radiated. The town was established on a high point some distance from the Bann (section 6.4). By contrast, Movanager, the other major plantation settlement in Kilrea, consisted of an untidy random collection of houses surrounding the castle. It was destroyed, along with Movanager castle, in 1641 when war broke out. The settlement at Movanager never recovered, but Kilrea town, with its market and fair,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

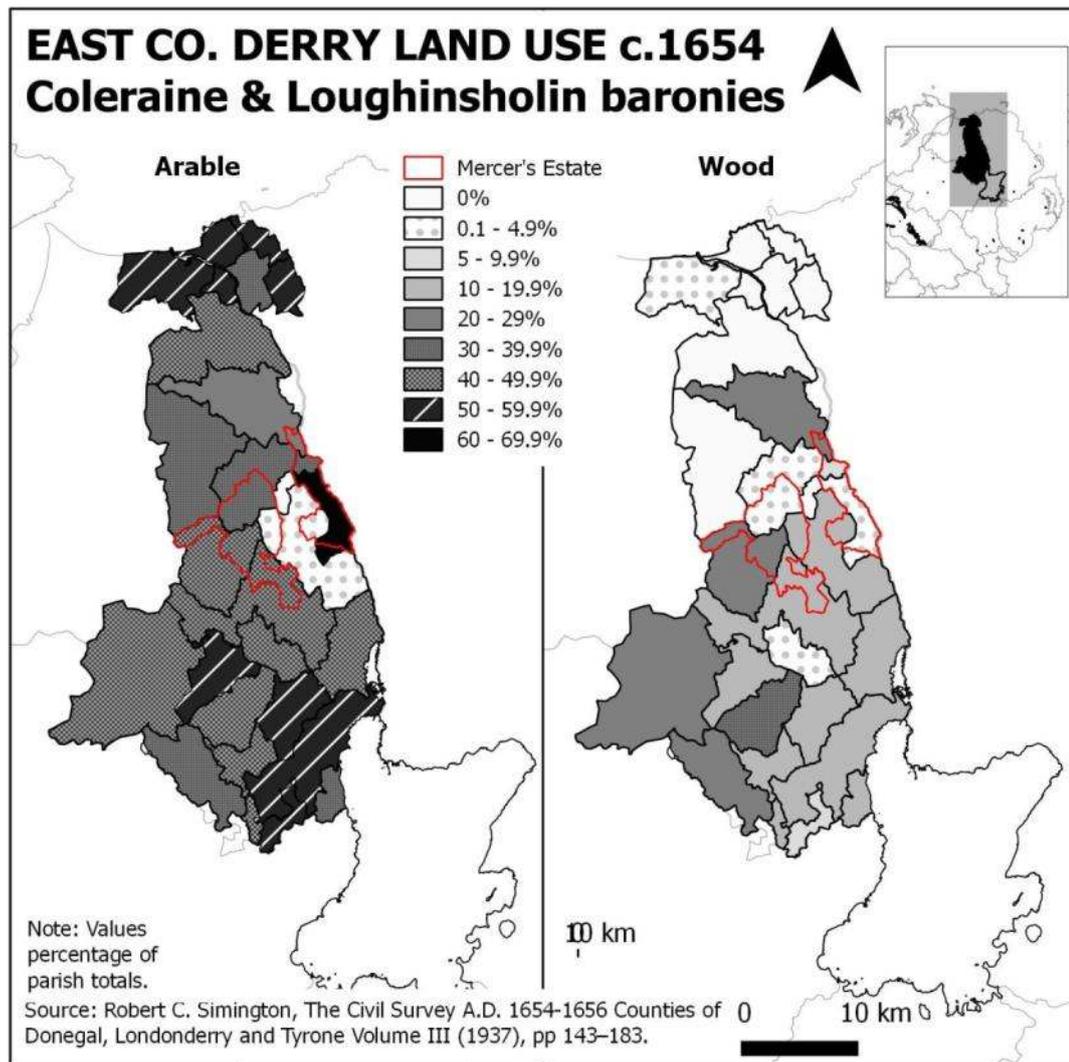


Figure 4.16 Land use in the baronies of Coleraine and Loughinsholin, showing the relative proportions of arable and woodland.

prospered.<sup>71</sup> Despite the aim of the plantation to attract British settlers, most of the population were still Irish. The landscape of Kilrea in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century was predominantly, it would appear, open and unforested. Kilrea had, according to the *Civil Survey*, the largest percentage area of arable land in east Co. Derry, whilst the more forested lands were mainly to the south. But even there, large areas of the landscape were being used for tillage and pasture (Fig. 4.16). Although the Cromwellian regime restored the London livery company charters for Derry, from 1663 the Mercers chose to let their estate in Derry on long terms, for multiple lives, to middlemen.<sup>72</sup> The company was not to take a direct hand in managing their Derry estate until after 1831. Over the following centuries Kilrea's landscape took a particular form which, at least at face-value, appeared regular, planned and highly organised and improved

<sup>71</sup> Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, pp 227-229.

<sup>72</sup> Joseph W. Kernohan, *The Parishes of Kilrea and Tamlaght O'Crilly* (Coleraine, 1912), p. 19.

(section 6.6). In this sense Kilrea appeared to diverge significantly from the landscape in Kilfenora, Co. Clare in the west of Ireland.

#### **4.5 Kilfenora**

Kilfenora in Co. Clare was a significant locus in the Gaelic Irish lordship of the Burren in the later medieval period. Kilfenora is located in quite a unique physical environment on the margins of the karst uplands of the Burren. Kilfenora was, in the early medieval period, a monastic centre, allegedly founded by St Fachtna, a 6<sup>th</sup>-century saint from whom the parish is named. Relatively little remains of the early monastery, with most of the upstanding archaeology dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The monastic centre would appear to have been the current site of the medieval cathedral, which itself largely dates to the 12<sup>th</sup> century when the diocese of Kilfenora was created.<sup>73</sup> The diocese of Kilfenora, the smallest in Ireland, comprised the baronies of Burren and Corcomroe, corresponding with the medieval Gaelic *mórthúath* of Corcu Modruad, possibly centred on Caherballykinvarga in Kilfenora (Fig. 4.17).<sup>74</sup> This chieftom was divided in the 12<sup>th</sup> century between the Uí Lochlainn (O'Loughlin) in what was to become the barony of Burren, and Uí Chonchobhair (O'Connor) in the barony of Corcomroe.<sup>75</sup> Kilfenora's seven high crosses also date to this period.<sup>76</sup> The Uí Bhriain (O'Brien) family extended their control over this area in the later medieval period. Their overkingdom of Thomond, largely coterminous with modern Co. Clare, was transformed into an earldom after 1543 by the submission of the overlord Murrough O'Brien to King Henry VIII. This signalled a shift in the political and legal status of this territory, from Gaelic overlordship to English earldom, and over time, from Brehon to Common law. Murrough O'Brien adopted the title Earl of Thomond.<sup>77</sup> Kilfenora in the later 16<sup>th</sup> century existed within a complex social hierarchy with the Earl at the top, his kinsmen Baron Inchiquin in Leamenah and the Bishop of Kilfenora in the second tier, and local wealthy families like the Neylans, and clerical agents, the Dean and Archdeacon of Kilfenora, in a third tier.<sup>78</sup> As with the other study areas, relatively

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<sup>73</sup> Ní Ghabhláin, 'Church and Community in Medieval Ireland'.

<sup>74</sup> Blair D. Gibson, *From Chieftom to State in Early Ireland* (Cambridge, 2012), pp 49–53.

<sup>75</sup> Ní Ghabhláin, 'Church and Community in Medieval Ireland', p. 62; Gibson, *From Chieftom to State in Early Ireland*, p. 47.

<sup>76</sup> Peter Harbison, *The High Crosses of Ireland: an Iconographical and Photographic Survey* (Bonn, 1992), pp 115–116, fig 375–7.

<sup>77</sup> Nugent, 'The interface between the Gaelic and English'; Simington, *BSD Clare*, p. xlii–xliii.

<sup>78</sup> Nugent, 'The interface between the Gaelic and English', p. 88.

little historical detail is known about those living and working in Kilfenora at the bottom of this social hierarchy in the late medieval and early modern periods. However, the archaeological record provides some insights here.

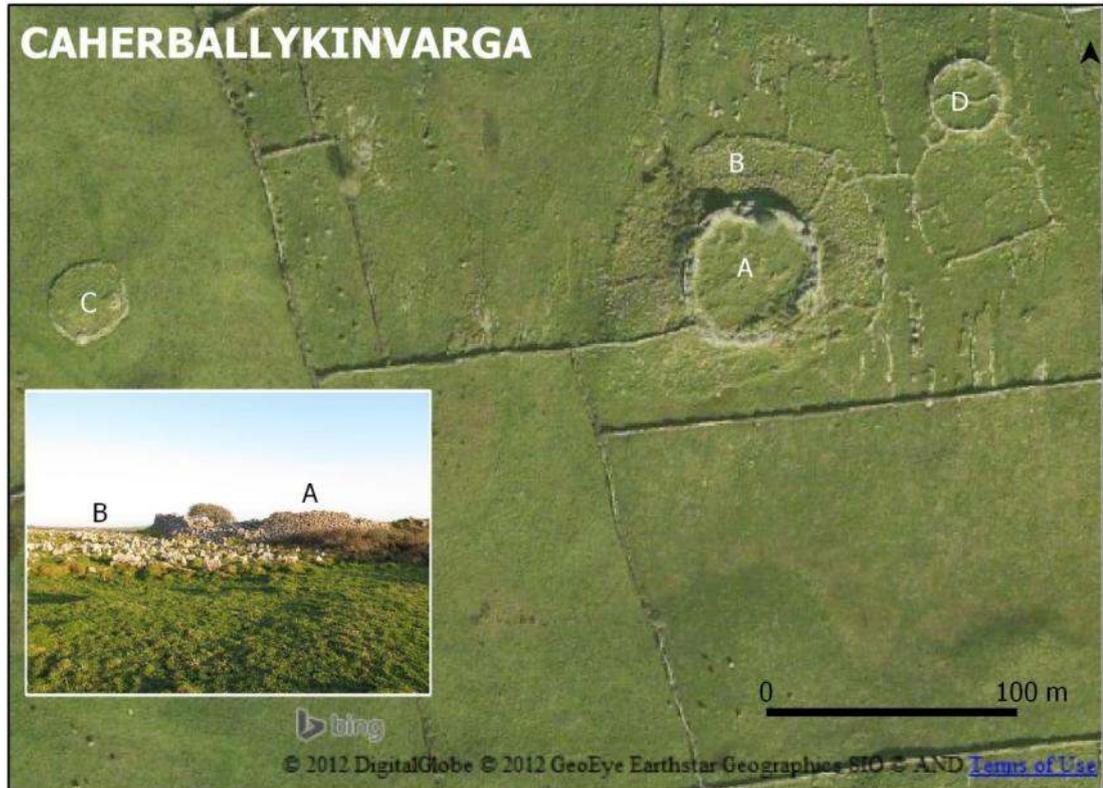


Figure 4.17 Caherballykinvarga (A) surrounded by a field of chevaux-de-frise (B). The church site of Caherminaun lies to the west (C), and another smaller cashel to the north east (D).

The Burren in Co. Clare is a profoundly rich archaeological environment, where the thin soils and bare karst landscape contain preserved archaeological remains from the Neolithic to later historic periods, in large numbers (Fig 1.5). The survival of monuments provides an opportunity for archaeologists to explore and investigate types of historic and prehistoric landscapes that rarely survive elsewhere in Ireland. The extensive archaeological remains, religious and secular, in Kilfenora parish, dating from the medieval period, include four churches, five castles, 19 raths and 45 cashels or stone-built enclosures. This area of Co. Clare is noted for its concentration of cashels,<sup>79</sup> including Caherballynkinvarga, perhaps one of the most impressive in this region and surrounded by a field of *chevaux-de-frise*.<sup>80</sup> Cashels

<sup>79</sup> Michelle Comber, 'Ringforts and the settlement of the Burren in the first millennium AD.' in Carleton Jones and Michelle Comber (eds), *Burren Landscape and Settlement: Developing a Research Framework. Final INSTAR Report 16675* (Kilkenny, 2008), pp 89–109.

<sup>80</sup> SMR: CL009-059012-

## Chapter 4 Origins of Improvement Landscapes

in the Burren have a long history of use. Excavations at Caherconnel, some 5km north of Kilfenora, indicate that the cashel was occupied between the 10<sup>th</sup> and mid-17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>81</sup> The cashel at Cahermacnaghten was, until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the residence of the O'Davoren kindred, hereditary Brehon lawyers to the O'Loughlins.<sup>82</sup> The early church site of Caherminnaun lies some 400m to the west of Caherballykinvarga.<sup>83</sup> This site remained a significant place of Catholic worship and burial into the later historic period (section 6.3). Kilfenora Cathedral, a relatively small late-12<sup>th</sup>-century cathedral church with gothic decorated



*Figure 4.18 Kilfenora Cathedral. This building has an impressive, if unusual, stepped west tower. The nave was renovated in the 19th century, whilst the chancel was left roofless.*

windows, lies at the heart of the parish and the diocese of Kilfenora (Fig. 4.18).<sup>84</sup> This subsequently became a Church of Ireland place of worship in the later historic period.

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<sup>81</sup> Michelle Comber and Graham Hull, 'Excavations at Caherconnell Cashel, the Burren, Co. Clare: implications for cashel chronology and Gaelic settlement' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C*, 110C, no. -1 (2010), pp 133–171.

<sup>82</sup> George U. Macnamara, 'The O'Davorens of Cahermacnaghten, Burren, Co. Clare' in *Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society*, ii (1912), pp 63–93; *The Uí Dhábhóireann Brehon Law School and Estate Landscape, Burren, Co. Clare.*, by Elizabeth FitzPatrick, Report to the Archaeological Committee, RIA [Unpublished] (Galway, 2006), pp 22–31; FitzPatrick, 'Native enclosed settlement'.

<sup>83</sup> SMR: CL009-059007-

<sup>84</sup> SMR: CL016-015004-

Kilfenora also contained a number of tower-houses. Cashlaunawogga or Caislen-an-Mhaga, meaning ‘the “Funny” or “Foolish” castle’, sited some 350m west of Kilfenora Cathedral, appears to be the remains of a tower-house and square bawn, built on the edge of a natural rock face. It was called the foolish castle because, according to local tradition, it was never finished.<sup>85</sup> Tullagh castle was the residence of a minor or cadet branch of the O’Briens and was built on the edge of a deep ravine in the south of the parish.<sup>86</sup> Ballyshanny was a rare example of a tower-house built in a cashel. Ballyshanny tower-house may have used the cashel simply as a convenient enclosure, like a bawn. However, its position also created continuity, a link to an iconic landscape feature of an ancestral past.<sup>87</sup>

Relict fields, in the form of mound and slab walls, are found in 13 townlands across the middle and east of the study area, covering an area of 253 ha with approximately 67km of field wall, most of which pre-date the 19<sup>th</sup>-century fields depicted by the Ordnance Survey (Fig. 4.19).<sup>88</sup> Most of the relict fields in Kilfenora are of the mound-wall type and probably date to the medieval period.<sup>89</sup> Some of these relict walls surround the cashels with irregular small fields, as in Caherminaun West and Ballykinvarga, and are probably contemporary with the cashel occupation. These fields are palimpsests, reusing prehistoric fields and, in turn, being reused in the later periods.<sup>90</sup> Relict field forms in Kilfenora were influenced by the natural topography, with those in relatively flat areas like in Caherminaun East and West spreading out in irregular small fields, and those on sloping ground generally tending to follow the strike of the slopes in Ballyclancahill and Clooneen townlands, with the regular field layouts extending for up to one kilometre. Whereas the small irregular field layouts suggest gradual growth and subdivision, or perhaps the creation of pens, gardens and closes surrounding cashels, the long regular field layouts following the slope of the ground appear to have been laid out in more-or-less one effort, suggesting some degree of common purpose and planning on the part of their builders.<sup>91</sup> The long regular field layout in Ballyclancahill and Clooneen townlands

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<sup>85</sup> SMR: CL016-011; John O’Donovan and Eugene O’Curry, *Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of County Clare Collected During the Progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1839*, ed. Michael O’Flanagan (Bray, 1928).

<sup>86</sup> SMR: CL016-075002-

<sup>87</sup> SMR: CL009-093002-; FitzPatrick, ‘Native enclosed settlement’, p. 302.

<sup>88</sup> The line and extent of relict field walls were digitised from Google Earth using a range of satellite images from 2005, 2009 and 2011. Only the relict fields in Kilfenora were digitised; relict fields can be found over very large areas of the Burren.

<sup>89</sup> Plunkett-Dillon, ‘The Field Boundaries of the Burren, Co. Clare’; Carleton Jones, ‘The discovery and dating of the prehistoric landscape of Roughan Hill in Co. Clare’ in *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*, ix (1998), pp 27–43.

<sup>90</sup> Comber, ‘Ringforts and the settlement of the Burren in the first millennium AD.’, pp 101–103; 107–109.

<sup>91</sup> Plunkett-Dillon, ‘The Field Boundaries of the Burren, Co. Clare’’, pp 54–57.

seem to extend across the quarters of Belaghclancaghill, Magherbalanagh and Cloonin West, as depicted on the Down Survey maps, without regard for their boundary. The boundaries of quarters in the Burren appear to be particularly fluid in the early modern period,<sup>92</sup> and this may be a reflection of the complex system of Gaelic land holding. It also illustrates that the actual day-to-day working of the landscape, as expressed by the relict field boundaries, could operate separately from the quarters division, which, as discussed (section 3.3), measured shares of the product of a landscape rather than the actual physical landscape itself. This concept no doubt presented the early-modern English administration with a problem about how best to measure the landscape they intended to control. The *Books of Survey and Distribution* for County Clare and the Down Survey map of the barony of Corcomroe both provide detailed descriptions of land holding and landscapes in Co. Clare from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Both also relied directly upon the assistance and knowledge of local jurors, often Gaelic landowners themselves, most likely gathered by the Strafford survey of Clare in 1637.<sup>93</sup> These essentially colonial accounts, describing the Clare landscape and how it was divided and redistributed, reveal a complex system of landholding and organisation that, despite nearly a century of conformity to the English common law system, following Murrough O'Brien's submission to Henry VIII, still retained its essentially Gaelic quality.

Looking at Kilfenora in detail, of the 56 land parcels that comprised the 37.8 quarters of the parish, most (32) correspond in whole or in part, although occasionally with different names, with the 35 later historic townlands in Kilfenora (Fig. 4.20). The Down Survey calculations indicate that the Kilfenora study area contained 6,758 plantations acres. Just over half this area (57%) was classified as pasture land, a third was profitable arable and pasture, whilst the remaining lands were classified as underwood (5%), mountain bog (3%) and meadow (2%). Kilfenora had 27 proprietors with holdings ranging from whole quarters to fractions of quarters, sometimes as small as a  $\frac{1}{12}$  part. The O'Brien family were the largest land holders in Kilfenora, owning between them 14.75, or 41% of the quarters in Kilfenora. But these properties were highly fractured. Teig O'Brien from Dromore, Co. Clare (d.1641), second son

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<sup>92</sup> Elizabeth FitzPatrick, 'Denomination boundaries and settlement change in Cahermacnaghten' in Carleton Jones and Michelle Comber (eds), *Burren Landscape and Settlement: Developing a Research Framework. Final INSTAR Report 16675* (Kilkenny, 2008), pp 132–143.

<sup>93</sup> William Petty, 'Down Survey, Barony of Corcomroe [Surveyed 1658-1659; numbered as per Books of Survey and Distribution; no terriers]' (Southampton, 1908) ([http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/maps/images/petty\\_corcomroe.djvu](http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/maps/images/petty_corcomroe.djvu)); Simington, *BSD Clare*, p. xxxvii .

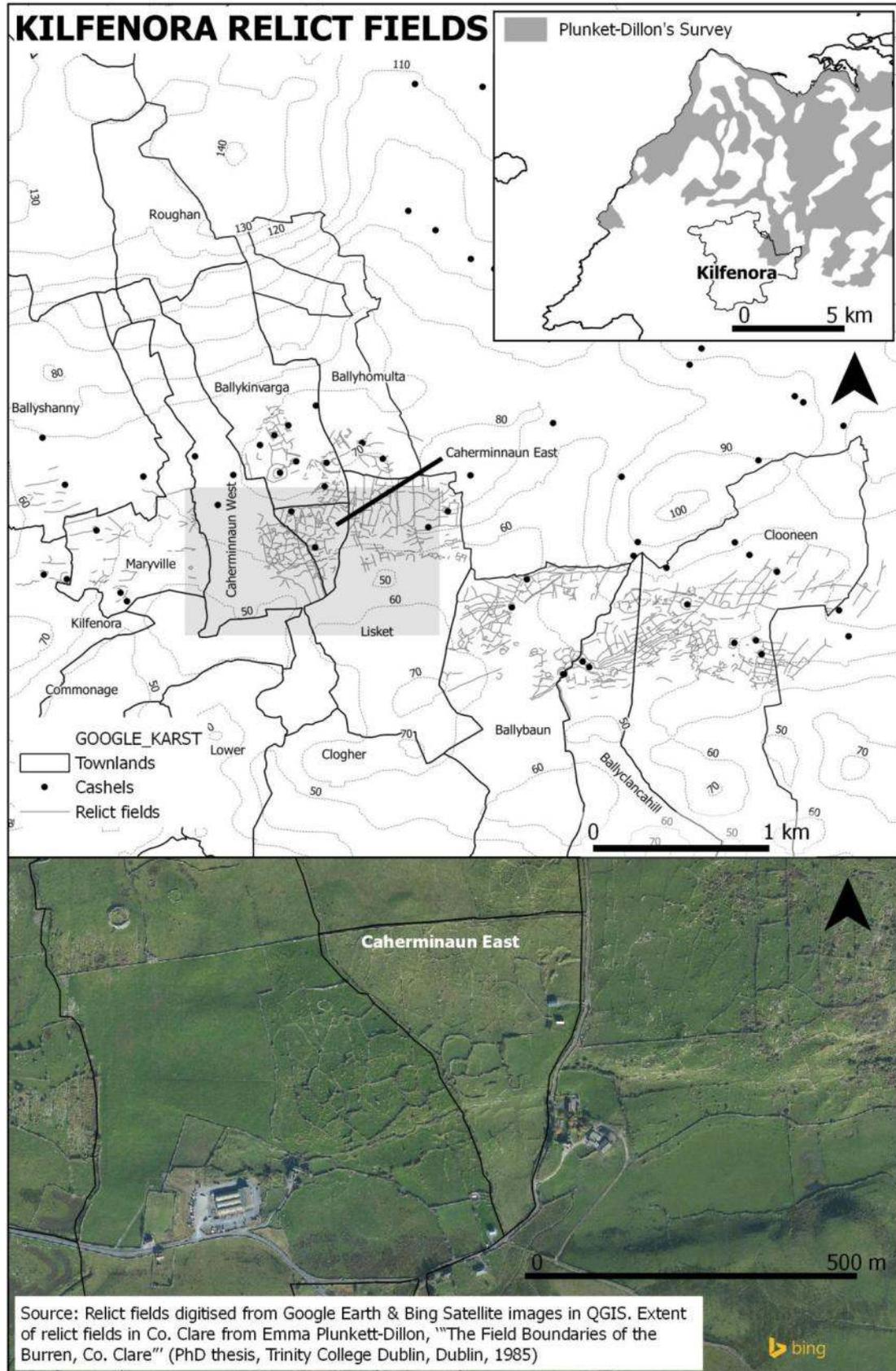


Figure 4.19 Relict fields in Kilfenora.

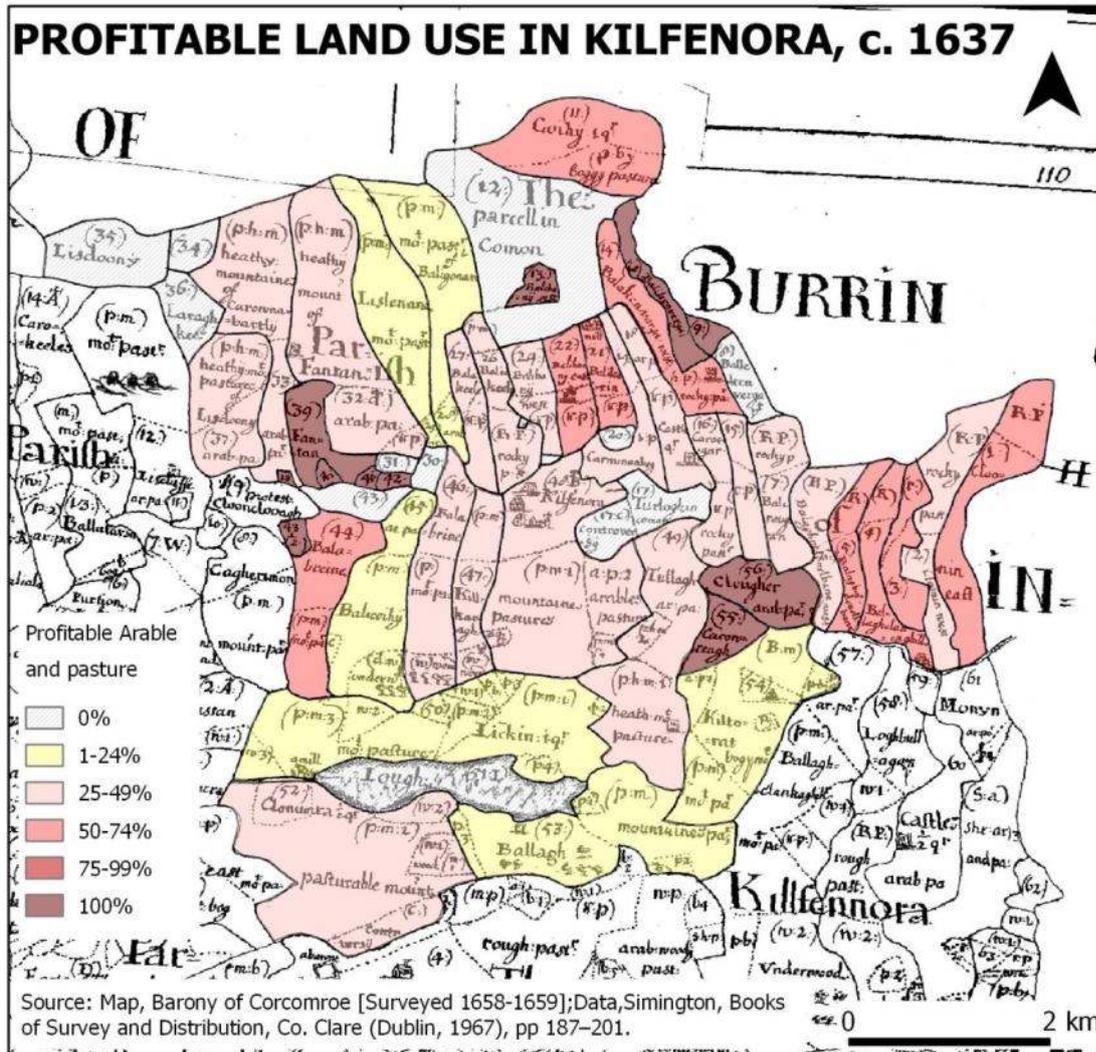


Figure 4.20 The quarters of Kilfenora as recorded in the Books of Survey and Distribution (BSD) and mapped by the Down Survey. The BSD records probably took its information from the Stafford Survey from 1637.

of Conor O'Brien, Earl of Thomond,<sup>94</sup> was the largest O'Brien land owner with 5.5 quarters of land. However, this property was scattered across eight parcels, of which he owned three completely, and just a half share in five other quarters. These lands were relatively poor, only 14% profitable arable and pasture. Donnogh O'Brien (d.1717), of Leamaneh Castle,<sup>95</sup> owned just one quarter divided between two parcels and his father, Conor O'Brien, held 1 1/12 quarters in two parcels. Only two of Kilfenora's proprietors were resident in the parish in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Murrough O'Brien of Tullagh castle held land in 3 quarters scattered across four parcels, whilst Daniel O'Shanny of Ballyshanny, presumably resident in the tower-house

<sup>94</sup>National Library of Ireland Collection List No. 143 Inchinquin Papers, p. 24.

<sup>95</sup>ibid., p. 9.

and cashel, held  $3\frac{3}{4}$  quarters scattered amongst nine parcels. The other landowners were resident elsewhere in Co. Clare. William Neylan in Dysert, Co. Clare, owned 3.46 quarters scattered amongst seven parcels, and Boetius Clancy from Knockfinn, Co. Clare owned 1.5 quarters scattered amongst five parcels. The Anglican Bishop of Kilfenora, in 1641 Robert Sibthorp,<sup>96</sup> unsurprisingly also not resident, nominally held at least three quarters in two parcels, including the village and townland of Kilfenora.

Following the Act of Settlement, Donough O'Brien of Lemenagh increased his property in Kilfenora substantially, to 587 plantation acres. Most significantly, he was now the sole owner of these properties at the expense of eight former proprietors, and they were measured in acres rather than quarters. Smaller properties were disposed to Arthur Hide, Lord Powerscourt, William Neylan, Timothy and Cornelius McDonnogh, and Maurice Thompson. Neptune Blood, the Anglican Archdeacon of Kilfenora Church received 19 acres in the quarter of Turlough, part of Commonage townland. As in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, these new proprietors mostly lived outside the parish, and this continued to be the case into the later historic period. In 1659 an admittedly partial 'census' put the population of Kilfenora as 229 people, only five of whom were 'English', most likely in this case meaning Protestant. The largest population was in Ballyshanny, where a William Rumsey and his son and namesake were recorded as 'tituladoes'. The Rumseys were presumably the chief tenants of Timothy and Cornelius McDonnogh, and probably lived in O'Shanny's old tower-house. Daneill McDonogh, gentleman, a relative of Timothy and Cornelius McDonnogh, was resident in Ballykeele.<sup>97</sup> His was most likely the 17<sup>th</sup>-century T-plan house in Ballykeel of which little survives,<sup>98</sup> except the partial remains of two cross-walls surviving only for the ground floor (Fig. 4.21).<sup>99</sup> This design was a new architectural departure for Kilfenora, and represented a form of modern building which ultimately replaced the tower-house as the iconic prestige building. Donald MacDonagh appears to have played an important, if somewhat ambiguous, role in the parish in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century. MacDonagh had built a small stone house over a holy well, Toberfaughtna, beside Kilfenora village.<sup>100</sup> This well-house included the inscription

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<sup>96</sup>James Frost, *The History and Topography of the County of Clare: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the 18th Century* (Dublin, 1893), p. 106; Sir James Ware and Sir John Davies, *The Antiquities and History of Ireland* (London, 1705), p. 256.

<sup>97</sup> Smyth & Pender (eds), *Census of Ireland, c.1659*, p. 182.

<sup>98</sup> Ballykeel was depicted on the first edition OS map for Kilfenora, where it measured 28m by 10m wide, with an annex to the rear measuring 10m by 7m.

<sup>99</sup> RMP: CL009-090002-

<sup>100</sup> SMR: CL016-015009-

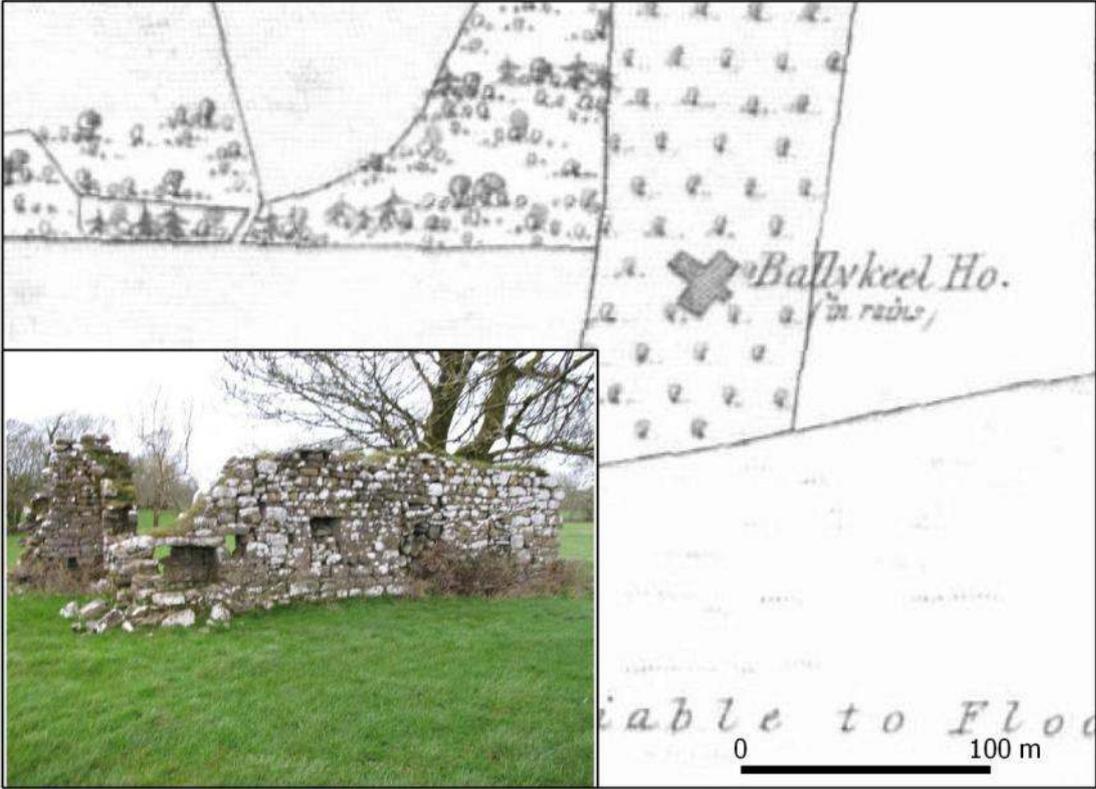


Figure 4.21 Figure 4.21 OSI six-inch map showing the remains of Ballykeel house, the residence of Mac Donogh, and an inset photograph showing the building today. Clare Sheet 9 (surveyed 1840), © Ordnance Survey of Ireland. All rights reserved. Licence no. NUIG22021



Figure 4.22 Toberfaughtna holy well, Kilfenora.



Figure 4.23 MacDonagh memorial in Kilfenora Cathedral, built c.1685.

(translated from Latin): 'Donald MacDonagh by license and the permission of the Bishop of Finebor [Kilfenora], founded this little work to God, Anno Domini 1687' (Fig. 4.22).<sup>101</sup> Assuming the Bishop in question was Anglican, the period during the reign of the Catholic James II may have allowed such overtly Catholic monuments to be freely constructed. MacDonagh also had built an elaborate tomb and memorial in Kilfenora Cathedral with the inscription in Latin which reads:

*Donald Macdonagh and his wife Maria O'Conor caused this monument to be made for themselves and for their posterity, on both sides, A.D. 1685. Remember death. A fine form, the good will of the people, youthful ardour and wealth have snatched from thee how to know what man is. After the man, a worm, after the worm foul smell and horror. Thus even man is turned into what is not a man. Thus the glory of this world passes away. Whoever thou art who shall pass by. Pause, read carefully, and lament. I am what thou wilt be, and have been what thou art, pray for me, I beseech thee.*<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Clare County Library, 'Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead, Ireland. 1888-1916: Kilfenora Parish' in *Clare County Library*, 2012 (<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/genealogy/memorials/kilfenora.htm>) (7 Mar. 2012).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

The tomb includes the coat of arms of the MacDonagh family, and is positioned prominently in an alcove in the nave of the church (Fig. 4.23). The inscription itself, an example of a warning epitaph, includes an injunction to pray for the deceased in an overtly Catholic form, where the reader was often requested to pray for their soul.

### **4.6 Summary**

The later historic Irish landscape of places, properties and landmarks mostly have their origins in the medieval period. Places mentioned in documents from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century are identifiable as later historic townlands. The Anglo-Normans, although adding significantly to this cultural landscape in those parts of the country they controlled, also tended to adopt and adapt the pre-existing Gaelic landscape for their purpose. A corner-stone of this continuity was the Christian church in Ireland. Early Irish church sites in Duleek, Kilfenora and Kilrea, founded in the first millennium, remained in use throughout the medieval period and would continue to be used into the later historic period. Early Christian church lands in each of the four case study areas formed the foundation for the medieval and later historic parishes, whilst the church buildings themselves remained significant landmarks in the landscape. The importance of church sites was apparent to the secular elite, who often deliberately sited their homes, the centre and expression of their power, near churches, as at Kilfenora. This trend was to continue into the later medieval period. The landowning Old English families of Duleek, even whilst benefiting from the dissolution of monastic houses, also made sure to have a chapel church close to their principal residences. This manifestation of 'pedigree of place'<sup>103</sup> was also apparent in Kilfenora with the adoption of earlier cashel sites as residences by the landowning families. Most later medieval and early modern landscapes were created by the day-to-day work of farmers, planting their crops and tending their animals. Even where the old elite were swept away, as in the Plantation of Derry, the Irish lower class remained. The importance of shaping this work-a-day landscape was not lost on the Plantation authorities. Planters in Kilrea were to build houses in an English design with multiple rooms, and enclose their holdings with field boundaries, drains and quickset hedges. However, all of these improvements continued to be carried out within the medieval, Gaelic framework of townlands and parishes.

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<sup>103</sup> Elizabeth FitzPatrick, 'The material world of the parish' in Elizabeth FitzPatrick and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland: Community, Territory and Building* (Dublin, 2006), pp 70–72.

## Chapter 4 Origins of Improvement Landscapes

Medieval landscape elements of the elite, the tower-houses, manor houses and abbeys, tend to dominate our perception of the medieval landscape because this is what they were designed to do. As landmarks of lordship and power, they drew the observer's eye and shaped the way the broader landscape was viewed. They formed the core of the later historic elite landscapes, the demesne landscapes.



## **5. Demesnes of Improvement: Elite Landscapes in Later Historic Ireland**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will examine how elites in later-historic rural Ireland shaped the Irish landscape to secure their position. Ireland's later historic elite landscapes are primarily associated with the 'big house' and its surrounding property, the centre-piece of Improvement in the Irish landscape. These were primarily the homes, gardens, home-farms and houses of the primary tenants of the landed gentry. This chapter will explore Irish elite landscapes in Ireland generally, and in the four study areas in particular, focusing on case studies from Duleek and Kilcooly for a closer, in-depth analysis of how such landscapes were formed and how they changed by Improvement during the later historic period.

### **5.2 Elite Landscapes in Later Historic Ireland**

In 1834 the Ordnance Survey of Ireland allowed, at the request of the landed gentry, the individual land owners – both owners 'in fee' and long-term lease holders – to define the limits of their demesnes, so that they could be demarcated on the published maps.<sup>1</sup> The resulting first edition of the Ordnance Survey six-inch maps showed that 6% of Ireland was demesne land,<sup>2</sup> a figure close to the combined 7% demesne land found in the combined four case study areas for this thesis (Fig. 5.1). Demesne, a medieval French term, refers to a portion of an estate not leased out but retained for the use of the lord of a manor.<sup>3</sup> Demesnes were, in the medieval period, the economic and administrative focus and home-farm of the manor. So, for example, when in 1541 the Augustinian priory of Llanthony was dissolved in Duleek, it had 11 medieval acres, including roughly 11 ha,<sup>4</sup> of demesne land scattered amongst two townlands (see chapter 4). In the later historic period the demesne had become a designated area

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<sup>1</sup> Andrews, *A Paper Landscape*, pp 102–103.

<sup>2</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth, 'Demesnes' in F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd ed., Cork, 2011), p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth, 'The natural history of demesnes' in John Wilson Foster (ed.), *Nature in Ireland: A Scientific and Cultural History* (Dublin, 1997), p. 549.

<sup>4</sup> The size of a medieval acre in Ireland varied, depending on the soil quality and local custom. In the Dublin region Mills proposed that a medieval acre was equivalent to about 2.5 statute acres. James Mills, 'Notices of the Manor of St. Sepulchre, Dublin, in the Fourteenth Century' in *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, ix, no. 78 (1889), p. 36.

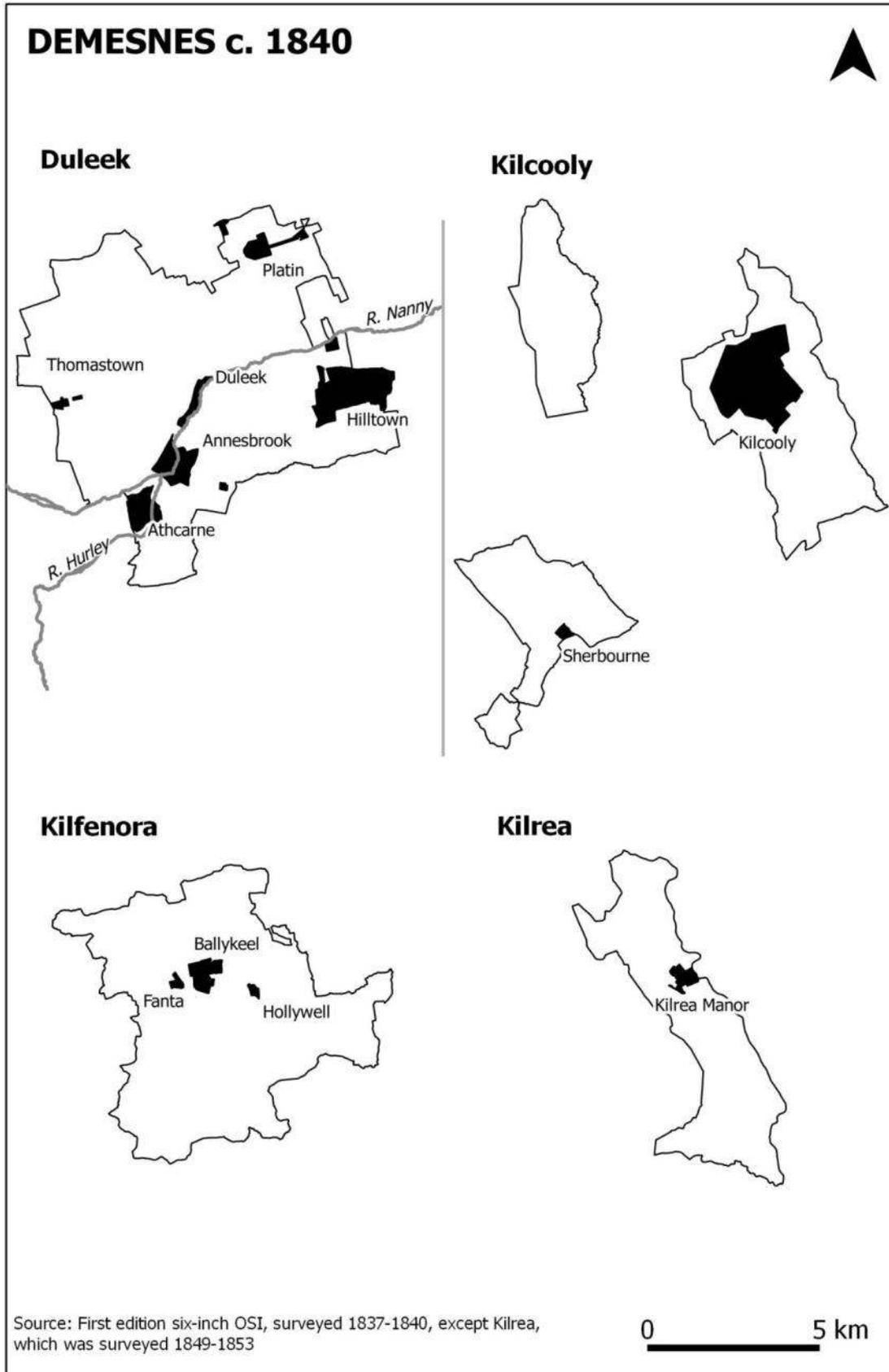


Figure 5.1 Study area demesne extents.

surrounding the estate house, used for pleasure grounds and the home-farm, rather than being let to tenants like the rest of the estate. This typically was an area of landscaping, gardening and model farming. It was a place where elements of the landed estate were arranged for display as well as practical use, and where experiments in the newest forms of improved agriculture were conducted. Demesnes and park landscapes were also places where ideological identity was expressed, through architecture and landscape design. The proprietors of demesnes were, for the most part, the new landed elite. In 1770 some 95% of the landmass of Ireland was owned by about 1% of the population, approximately 5,000 landed families amongst a population of approximately four million people. By 1840, the overall population had doubled, to eight million, with 10,000 land-owning families.<sup>5</sup> Land ownership was, as previously discussed (section 3.3), composed of a complex mix of freeholders, those who held land in fee or on very long-term leases, and those who were short-term leaseholders. The landowning elite, those with large estates and access to the structures of power, built demesne landscapes.

### ***The Landowning elite***

A list of Irish landowners from 1876 revealed, on a national basis, the relative size and ranking of estate holders in Ireland,<sup>6</sup> ranging from those who held their property in fee to lessees for terms exceeding 99 years, or with a right to perpetual renewal.<sup>7</sup> Admittedly, significant social and land-holding changes had occurred in Ireland between 1850 and 1876, in particular the massive changes in the aftermath of the Famine.<sup>8</sup> However, landholding from 1876 still broadly reflected the landholding patterns from earlier in the century, particularly in relation to the great estates.<sup>9</sup> Proudfoot identified three classes of landowners in this list, ranked in order of the size of their holdings. The first consisted of about 300 families who owned estates of over 10,000 acres (4048 ha). The second category consisted of 3,400 families each owning between 1000 and 10,000 acres (405-4048 ha). The third and largest class consisted of 15,000 families who owned less than 1000 acres, and many of whom owned considerably

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<sup>5</sup> Lindsay J. Proudfoot, 'Spatial transformations and social agency: property, society and improvement, c. 1700 to 1900' in Brian J. Graham and Lindsay J. Proudfoot (eds), *An Historical Geography of Ireland* (London, 1993), p. 224.

<sup>6</sup> Landowners including land held in fee and lessees for terms exceeding 99 years or with a right to perpetual renewal.

<sup>7</sup> *Land Owners in Ireland: Return of Owners of Land of One Acre and Upwards, in the Several Counties, Counties of Cities, and Counties of Towns in Ireland* (Dublin, 1876).

<sup>8</sup> R. V. Comerford, 'Ireland 1850-70: post-famine and mid-Victorian' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, Volume V: Ireland Under the Union 1801-70* (Oxford, 2010), pp 372–395.

<sup>9</sup> Jones Hughes, *Landholding, Society and Settlement in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Historical Geographer's Perspective*, pp 52–83, 84–116.

less.<sup>10</sup> A great many of these landowners were descendants of New English and Cromwellian soldiers and adventurers from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, who received up to 11 million acres of confiscated land.<sup>11</sup> The largest landowner in Ireland in 1876 was the Marquess of Lansdowne, descendant of the Down Survey cartographer Sir William Petty, who owned 120,000 acres across six counties, but who lived in London. The later historic Irish landed elites would be known for their grand country homes, but also for their preference for living elsewhere as 'absentees'.

It is ironic that the defining characteristics of the Irish land owner in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at least in the historical narrative of the period, would be both the grand estate house with its surrounding demesne, and the absentee landlord. Absenteeism was a touch-stone issue of later historic Ireland. Considerable effort had been expended in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to secure Ireland within the British empire. A substantial component of this involved, in the first instance, defining the terms of how land could be owned, substantially replacing the old landed elite, and ensuring who those that remained or were newly planted maintained their loyalty (section 3.3). The plantation schemes of the later 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century had mostly failed to introduce a large population of loyal British subjects uniformly across the country. Keeping Ireland within the British Empire, first as a subordinate kingdom, and then as a constituent of the United Kingdom, relied on secure, resident, loyal landowning elites. The landlord system was founded on attracting and maintaining this landowning elite. A landlord's absence ultimately undermined the landlord system. The transfer of capital from Irish estates outside the kingdom, Irish absentees' apparently profligate lifestyles, and the practice of mortgaging Irish property as collateral for ruinous loans, were all subjects of both concern and parody for the British establishment.<sup>12</sup> By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century absentees became a symbol, for Irish nationalists, of the failings of the landlord system in particular, and of British rule in Ireland more generally.

Thomas Prior's *A List of the Absentees of Ireland and the Yearly Value of their Estates and Incomes Spent Abroad*,<sup>13</sup> published in 1730, was an effort to force these absentees to reform by naming and shaming them. Prior listed three classes of absentees. The first, those who lived constantly abroad and were rarely seen in Ireland, were responsible for removing nearly

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<sup>10</sup> Proudfoot, 'Spatial transformations', p. 224.

<sup>11</sup> Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory*, p. 165.

<sup>12</sup> Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*; Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee* (New York, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Prior, *Absentees of Ireland*.

## Chapter 5 Demesnes of Improvement

£200,000 from the country per annum. Lord Burlington, descendant of the planter Richard Boyle was, alone, responsible for removing £17,000 per annum from his Irish estates for his use abroad.<sup>14</sup> The second class, those that generally lived abroad and occasionally visited Ireland ‘for a month or two’, were led by Lord Shelbourne, at £9000 per annum.<sup>15</sup> Shelbourne was a descendant of the Cromwellian cartographer William Petty. The third class, those that generally lived in Ireland but visited abroad for ‘health, business or pleasure’, included amongst its top-spenders “William Grahame” esquire of Platin in Duleek (see below in this section), who expended £3,000 per annum from his Irish estates abroad.<sup>16</sup> In total, Prior calculated that some £621,000 from Irish estates was taken out of the kingdom in 1729. To put this in perspective, this was 72% of the value of Irish exports in 1720. Prior was illustrating, with his list of absentees, that money which might otherwise be spent on improvements and creating employment in Ireland was being spent abroad. However, absenteeism was inherently part of the landlord system. The gentry and lords of Ireland who featured prominently on Prior’s lists split their time between their grand houses and demesnes, and their residences in Dublin when the Irish parliament was in session – the grand town houses of Georgian Dublin. Their own Irish estates stretched over several counties, and were leased to tenants on long-term leases. Others of the nobility owned substantial estates in Britain. Many would at some point would spend time in fashionable London or Bath. Following the Act of Union in 1801, the centre of power had shifted to London, removing this class from Dublin and Ireland on a more regular or permanent basis. The greatest impact of absenteeism on later historic rural Ireland was not necessarily the absence of the highest tier of the social elite, but rather the absence of lower-order landlords, the minor gentry class which would be relied upon most to promote and implement landscape improvement.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

## Chapter 5 Demesnes of Improvement

<b>Clare</b>	<b>No. of landowners</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Rateable value (£)</b>	<b>% No.</b>	<b>% Area</b>	<b>% Value</b>
Clare Landowners	782	306,595	343,305			
Living in Ireland	688	253,684	289,439	88%	83%	84%
Living in Ireland outside Clare	189	92,184	117,104	24%	30%	34%
Living in County Clare	499	161,500	172,335	64%	53%	50%
Living in Britain	38	29,476	31,146	5%	10%	9%

<b>Meath</b>	<b>No. of landowners</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Rateable value (£)</b>	<b>% No.</b>	<b>% Area</b>	<b>% Value</b>
Meath Landowners	1,046	233,701	543,713			
Living in Ireland	898	198,581	464,715	86%	85%	85%
Living in Ireland outside Meath	433	84,037	197,967	41%	36%	36%
Living in County Meath	465	114,544	266,748	44%	49%	49%
Living in Britain	61	22,454	53,298	6%	10%	10%

<b>Derry</b>	<b>No. of landowners</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Rateable value (£)</b>	<b>% No.</b>	<b>% Area</b>	<b>% Value</b>
Derry Landowners	1,383	261,064	381,931			
Living in Ireland	1,317	137,616	213,631	95%	53%	56%
Living in Ireland outside Derry	141	24,675	45,926	10%	9%	12%
Living in County Derry	1,176	112,941	167,706	85%	43%	44%
Living in Britain	31	67,676	90,952	2%	26%	24%

<b>Tipperary</b>	<b>No. of landowners</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Rateable value (£)</b>	<b>% No.</b>	<b>% Area</b>	<b>% Value</b>
Tipperary Landowners	1,651	415,078	648,834			
Living in Ireland	1,445	349,613	550,574	88%	84%	85%
Living in Ireland outside Tipperary	472	126,858	206,980	29%	31%	32%
Living in County Tipperary	973	222,755	343,593	59%	54%	53%
Living in Britain	132	51,235	78,799	8%	12%	12%

Table 5.1 Landowners in 1876 in counties Clare, Meath, Derry and Tipperary<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Land Owners in Ireland.

Looking at the four counties of Clare, Derry, Meath, and Tipperary, a picture of the complexity of landowner's absenteeism emerges from the 1876 list of landowners (Table 5.1). Absentees in this case can be defined as those living outside the county where they owned land. Between 86% and 89% of landowners in these four counties lived in Ireland in 1876. Many of these – up to 40% in Derry – were small-scale freeholders, owning less than 10 ha. The largest landowners in Derry were the London livery companies and the Honourable the Irish Society, sharing between them up to 26% of the county; the Mercers' Company alone owned 8,596 ha, and was represented in Ireland by its agent, living in Kilrea.<sup>18</sup> Just 2% of Derry's landowners were living in Britain. In fact, of the four counties, Tipperary had the largest proportion of British-based landowners at 8%, owning 12% of the county's land. In general in Ireland, absentees, those living outside the county where they owned land, made up a significant portion of Irish landowners: 31% owning 41% of the land. Many of these absentees lived elsewhere in Ireland. For example, 41% of Meath landowners lived in Ireland but outside of the county; a fifth of Meath's landowners lived in or around Dublin city.

This complex system of land owning and residency in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland created an equivalently complex pattern of elite landscapes. Dublin city, and in particular in the later Victorian period the leafy suburbs of south Dublin, were home to a substantial number of County Meath landowners. For those landowners resident in the countryside, perhaps the most significant landscape feature attributed to them was their demesnes.

### ***Demesnes in Ireland***

Estimates of the number of country houses and designed landscapes in later historic Ireland vary. The 'Big House Estate' in Ireland shared some common attributes. They were, as I explored in Chapter 4, often contiguous with the medieval parish centre cores with castle and churches. There was a significant correlation between medieval landmarks and later historic demesnes. Up to a quarter of later historic demesnes and gardens were located within 1km of a late medieval tower-house (Fig. 5.2). This is in part a consequence of the dense distribution of these medieval monuments in the Irish landscape. However, it also indicates the degree to which the former elite landscapes of the later medieval period were adopted by the new

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

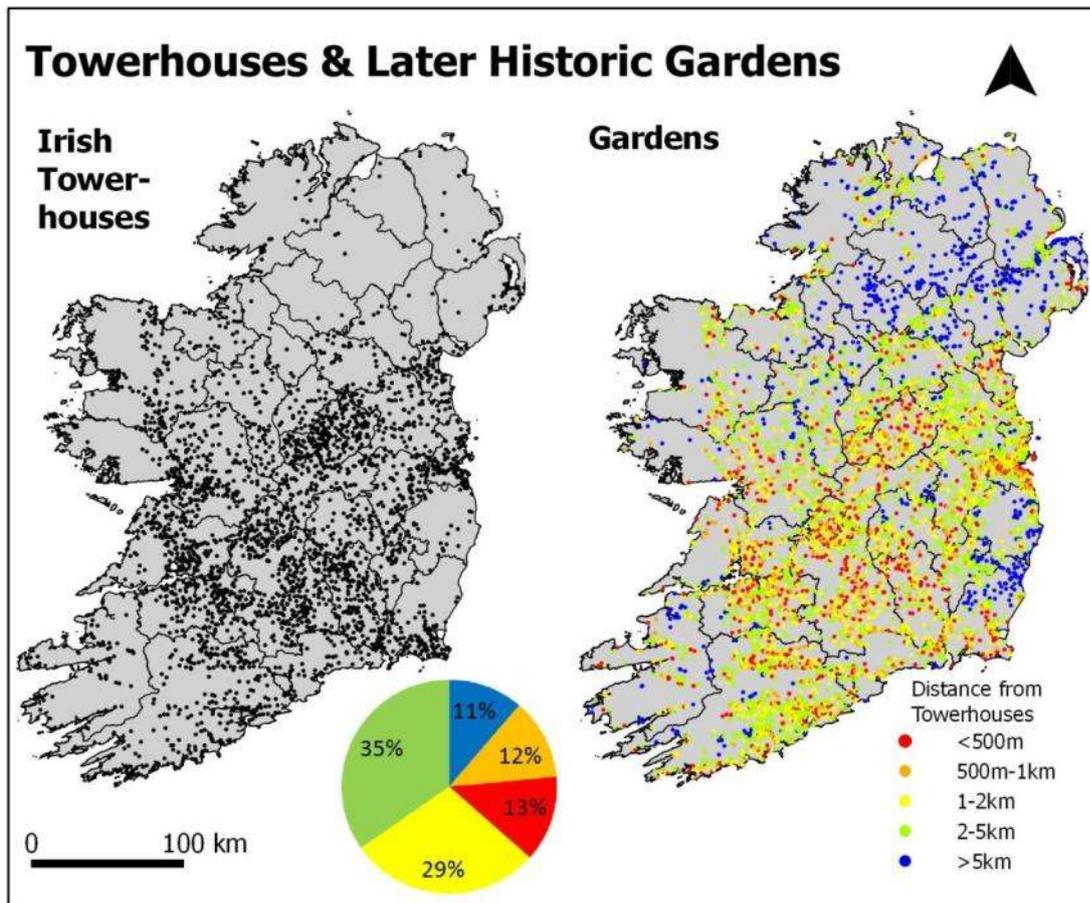


Figure 5.2 The relationship of later medieval tower-houses with later historic gardens and designed landscapes.

Ascendancy elite, not just as places of residence, but also as landmark features in an improved landscape. Demesnes often had an associated Anglican church and a glebe house, a police barracks, and a village.<sup>19</sup> Proudfoot examined the first edition Ordnance Survey six-inch maps and noted 10,188 named houses, ranging from the large estate house to the relatively small houses of tenant farmers with secure leases, and rectories.<sup>20</sup> Bence-Jones, also using the OSI maps, found that 2,596 houses were surrounded by demesnes of 50 acres (20 ha) or more.<sup>21</sup> Designed gardens and landscapes were widespread throughout Ireland in the later historic period, up to 6,500 for the island of Ireland as a whole, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recorded gardens were more densely concentrated around the major

<sup>19</sup>William Nolan, 'Patterns of living in County Tipperary from 1770 to 1850' in William Nolan and Thomas G. McGrath (eds), *Tipperary: History and Society* (Dubin, 1985), p. 301.

<sup>20</sup>Proudfoot, 'Spatial transformations', p. 246.

<sup>21</sup>Mark Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, pp 77–97.

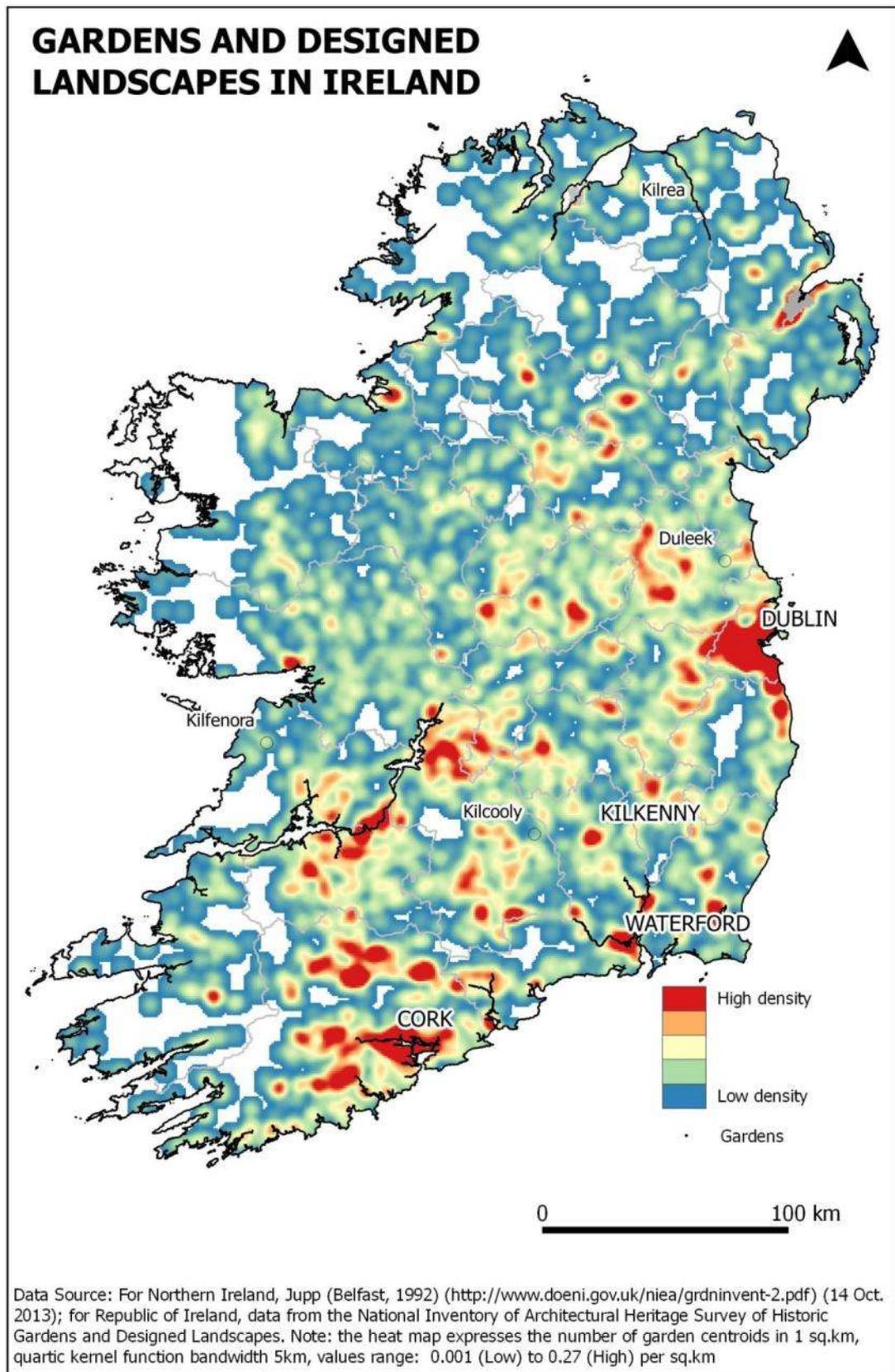


Figure 5.3 The distribution of designed gardens and landscapes in Ireland.

towns and cities, in particular Dublin and Cork, but also the relatively smaller urban centres like Waterford and Kilkenny (Fig. 5.3). These are for the most part associated with villa homes of the suburban-dwelling professional elites. In addition, certain other areas appear to have had relatively more gardens, in particular the river valleys of the Bann and Blackwater in Co. Cork, the Shannon in Co. Limerick and the Boyne in Co. Meath. The aesthetic qualities of water-side locations and proximity to urban centres were particularly important factors determining where these landscapes were created. North Co. Tipperary had a particularly concentrated distribution of demesnes which are depicted on the first-edition OSI six-inch maps as almost continuous across the county without intervening tenant farmland. In contrast, there were areas with relatively few designed gardens in the extreme west of the country, in counties Galway, Mayo and Kerry, and in the Wicklow mountains in Leinster, corresponding with areas of relatively few roads (see Fig. 1.10). In general, these demesnes and garden landscapes favoured the lower-lying ground; 80% were located below 100m OD. Two-thirds of demesnes and gardens were located on warmer south-facing slopes or level ground. Unsurprisingly, demesnes and gardens favoured the better sort of soils, in particular acid brown earths (27%). However, these general site location characteristics show that substantial numbers of demesnes were also located in what might be considered less favourable, colder locations, suggesting that cultural, ideological factors also influenced their position. Two-thirds of Irish demesnes were located within one kilometre of a substantial river, lake or the coast. Within the Duleek study area four of the ten case-study demesnes were beside rivers. Nolan has previously noted that in Tipperary 50 big houses were sited near the River Suir, reflecting a preference for river locations with their views, vistas and prospects. In fact the demesne landscapes, their designed gardens and landscaping were often more commented upon in contemporary accounts than the estate house.<sup>22</sup>

Relatively few explicitly archaeological studies of later historic elite houses and demesnes have been carried out in Ireland. Charles Orser carried out a multi-season excavation of Tanzafort House, Riverstown, Co. Sligo.<sup>23</sup> This 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century estate house was the home of the Cooper family. Orser examined the archaeology of the first estate house remains, dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, exploring in particular the landscape significance of the

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<sup>22</sup> Nolan, 'Patterns of living in County Tipperary from 1770 to 1850', pp 303–305.

<sup>23</sup> Charles E. Orser, 'Bulletin No. 2003:1670. Coopershill House, Riverstown, Sligo' in Isabel Bennett (ed.), *Excavations 2003: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (Bray, 2006); Charles E. Orser, 'Bulletin No. 2004:1538. First Coopershill House, Riverstown, Sligo' in Isabel Bennett (ed.), *Excavations 2004: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland* (Bray, 2007).

estate buildings.<sup>24</sup> Tanzyfort house was replaced by a Georgian house in 1755, after which, part of the old building was partially demolished and remodelled as a picturesque ruin incorporating kennels for Cooper's hounds. Orser suggested the Cooper family consciously reused the remains of their first house in such a manner as to emphasise their family's long-standing, and legitimate, place in the landscape. This was, according to Orser, a use of the building and demesne by the Cooper family as 'social capital', a form of landscape education which reinforced the family in their position of power.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Garden design and Improvement in Ireland***

Early modern and later historic Irish practices in designed landscapes were, according to the historiography of Irish garden design, substantially influenced by contemporary practices in England.<sup>26</sup> Ideas of civic humanism and the Enlightenment were finding material form in designed landscapes.<sup>27</sup> Irish garden design is generally classed according to regnal periods, architectural styles or exemplary gardens of particular wealthy, and usually male, aristocrats. So, in Ireland, most discussions of garden design begin with the formal renaissance gardens of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century associated with the New English colonists. These were characterised by the use of parterres, flights of steps and fountains. The earliest recorded example is the garden of the Great Earl of Cork at Youghal, Co. Cork in 1597. Other notable gardens were made by Sir Arthur Chichester, at Belfast Castle and Joymount in Carrickfergus in 1618, by the Earl of Clanrickarde at Portumna in 1618, and by the Earl of Cork at Lismore in 1620.<sup>28</sup> A new French Baroque style of gardens was introduced into Ireland following the Restoration, promoted by returning grandees like the Earl of Ormond, who remodelled Kilkenny castle and employed a French gardener to create new gardens, fountains, ornamental statues and vistas in imitation of what he had seen when he accompanied Charles II into exile in France.<sup>29</sup> This style promoted a mixture of tree plantations with long vistas in 'crow's foot' avenues, parterres with complex embroidered designs, clipped hedges and bowling greens, the precursors of lawns. A fine example of this type of garden survives at Kilruddery in Co. Wicklow, home of

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<sup>24</sup> Charles E. Orser, 'Estate landscapes and the cult of the ruin: a lesson in spatial transformation in Rural Ireland' in Jonathan Finch and Katherine Giles (eds), *Estate Landscapes: Design, Improvement and Power in the Post-Medieval Landscape* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp 77–93.

<sup>25</sup> Charles E. Orser Jr., 'Symbolic violence and landscape pedagogy: an illustration from the Irish countryside' in *Historical Archaeology*, xl, no. 2 (2006), pp 28–44.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Greenway Malins and Desmond John Villiers FitzGerald, *Lost Demesnes: Irish Landscape Gardening, 1660-1845* (London, 1976); Keith Lamb and Patrick Bowe, *A History of Gardening in Ireland* (Dublin, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Proudfoot, 'Spatial transformations', p. 249.

<sup>28</sup> Lamb & Bowe, *A History of Gardening in Ireland*, pp 18–20.

<sup>29</sup> Malins & FitzGerald, *Lost Demesnes*, pp 6–7.



*Figure 5.4 Castle Town House, Co. Kildare, built in 1722-29 by William Conolly, speaker of the Irish House of Commons.*

the Earl of Meath and designed by the French gardener Bonnett in 1682.<sup>30</sup> Early 18<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch styles of garden were adopted following the accession of William and Mary, incorporating simpler geometric panels, sloping grass lawns, canals, ponds and gravel walks, emulating Queen Anne's gardens at Hampton Court.<sup>31</sup> From the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, British garden styles changed, moving away from the 'geometricisation of the countryside', towards a less formal 'rococo style'.<sup>32</sup> Castle Town House and gardens in Kildare, the home of William Conolly, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, was in many ways the exemplary garden and country estate house in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland. The house, started in about 1722, was the first and amongst the largest house in Ireland built in the Palladian style (Fig. 5.4). The gardens, laid out beside the River Liffey, incorporated formalised views, avenues of lime trees and vistas to features, but also large areas of parkland and tree planting.<sup>33</sup> Informal forms of landscape design, a studied naturalism, developed in England through the middle and later

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9; Lamb & Bowe, *A History of Gardening in Ireland*, p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 25–27.

<sup>32</sup> Lamb & Bowe, *A History of Gardening in Ireland*, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> O' Kane, *Landscape Design in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, pp 48–87.

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18<sup>th</sup> century, led by professional garden designers like Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, and were based on park land, trees and 'natural' water features.<sup>34</sup> This style was emulated extensively in Irish demesne gardens. Irish aristocrats and the landed elite were, like their counterparts in Britain, undertaking the Grand Tour, and developed a taste for the arcadian landscapes of Italy, with its open countryside and ruins, exemplified in paintings by Claude Lorrain. The Irish architect John Aheron gathered and published neoclassical designs in what amounted to a pattern book of architectural design for houses and gardens,<sup>35</sup> whilst in 1821 Thomas Milton published a series of fine engravings which exemplified the ideals of the rustic demesne landscape.<sup>36</sup>

Demesne landscapes featured prominently in Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland*. He stayed primarily in the country homes of the landed gentry, who were in turn the principal source of information about Improvement in the locality (section 3.4). Young rarely commented on the grand homes of his hosts, but rather described their surrounding gardens and demesne landscapes. His descriptions are an illustration of the power these designed landscapes had to express their creators' respective visions of Improvement. One of the most impressive for Young was Castle Caldwell on Lough Erne in Co. Fermanagh, his description of which has an almost dream-like quality.<sup>37</sup>

*Nothing can be more beautiful than the approach to Castle Caldwell; the promontories of thick wood, which shoot into Loch Erne, under the shade of a great ridge of mountains, have the finest effect imaginable: as soon as you are through the gates, turn to the left, about 200 yards to the edge of the hill, where the whole domain lies beneath the point of view. It is a promontory, three miles long, projecting into the lake, a beautiful assemblage of wood and lawn, one end a thick shade, the other grass, scattered with trees, and finished with wood.<sup>38</sup>*

Castle Caldwell demesne was designed to be viewed from the hills surrounding it. By 1778 Sir James Caldwell had spent £16,000 on the house, gardens, courts and 700-acre demesne.<sup>39</sup> Whilst the overall effect of the Castle Caldwell estate was sublime, Young's hosts were also keen to point out the progress their improvements had made, no doubt aware of the reputation

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<sup>34</sup> Laura Mayer, *Capability Brown and the English Landscape Garden* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> John Aheron, *A General Treatise of Architecture, In Five Books* (Dublin, 1754).

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Milton, *The Seats and Demesnes of the Nobility and Gentry in Ireland* (Revised ed., Kilkenny, 1982).

<sup>37</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, pp 225–228.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>39</sup> Malins & FitzGerald, *Lost Demesnes*, p. 79.

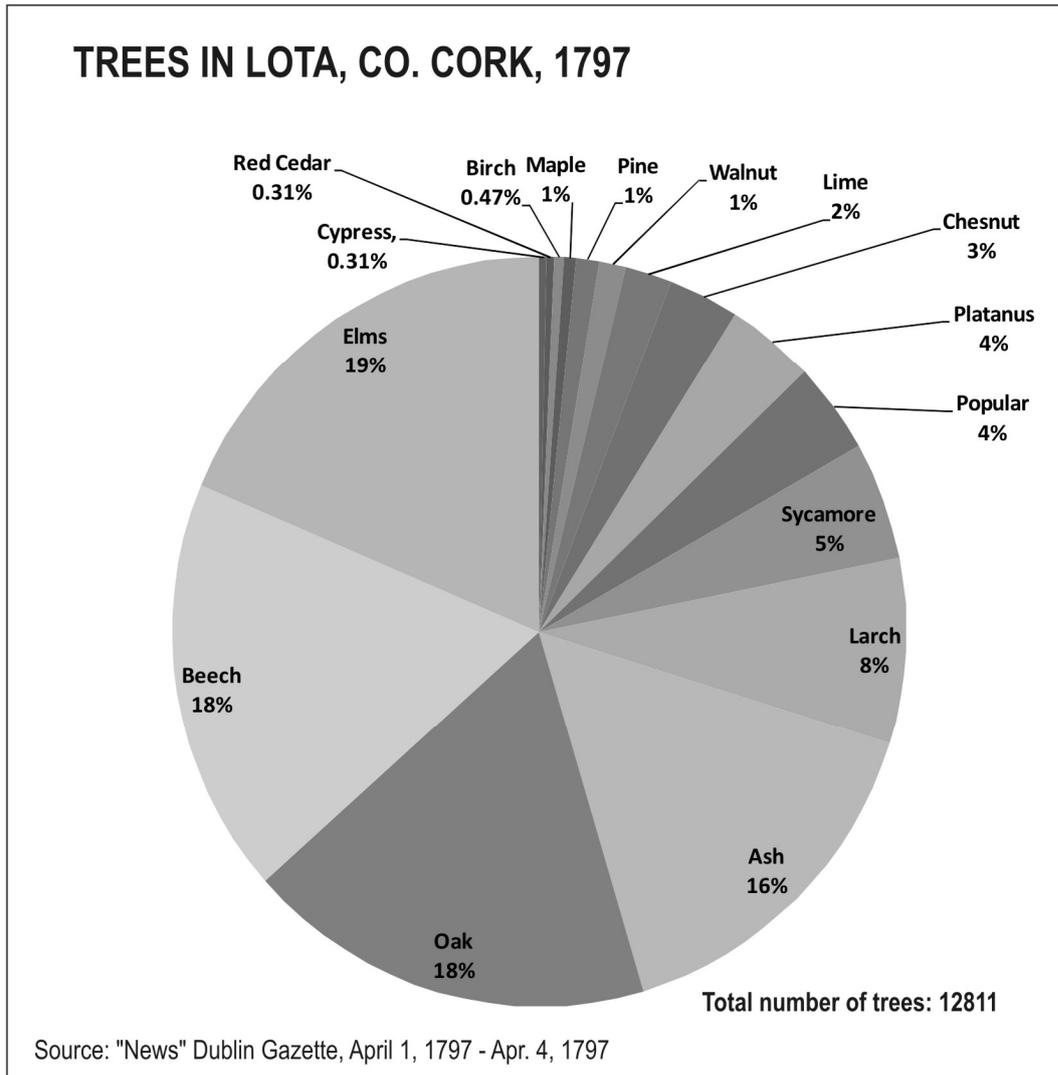


Figure 5.5 Types of trees registered at Lota, Co. Cork, in 1797.

of their English visitor and his intention to publish his account. However, within these accounts there is apparent a genuine pride in their respective achievements. In Castle Oliver in Co. Limerick the Oliver family had improved their home 'from a house, surrounded with cabbins and rubbish', to one whose owner 'has fixed it in a fine lawn, surrounded by good wood'.<sup>40</sup> At Dundrum House in County Tipperary the process of change was ongoing:

*... Dundrum, a place which his Lordship [Lord de Montalt] has ornamented in the modern style of improvement: the house was situated in the midst of all the regular exertions of the last age. Parterres, parapets of earth, straight walks, knots and clipped hedges, all which he has thrown down, with an infinite number of hedges and ditches, filled up ponds, &c. and opened one very noble lawn around him, scattered negligently over with trees, and cleared the course of a choked up river, so that it*

<sup>40</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, p. 489.

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*flows at present in a winding course through the grounds. He continues this work of dressing the fields contiguous to him, and to give them a neat appearance, and advances in it every year: even his tillage lands are all kept in the same neat manner, with fences new done, and the whole carrying the most cultivated appearance.*<sup>41</sup>

The combined impact of these designed landscapes was best illustrated in Young's description of Cork harbour, where he was conducted by boat from Dunkettle to Cove. Young admired the lawns, houses and trees creating a near continuous front onto the River Lee and Cork Harbour. Some of these demesne landscapes were created on freeholds with long-term leases. Lota, part of the Galway family estate,<sup>42</sup> and visited by Young in 1776,<sup>43</sup> was leased by Richard Kellett junior in 1797. In April that year Kellett published a notice of intent to register some 13,000 trees for Lota (Fig. 5.5),<sup>44</sup> illustrating the investment these leaseholders placed in the improvement of their demesne.

Irish elite landscapes were compared by some travel writers with those in England. Thackeray, on a tour around Ireland in 1843, described visiting the demesne at Annesbrook in Duleek (Fig. 5.6):

*We waited for the coach at the beautiful lodge and gates of Anns- brook ; and one of the sons of the house coming up, invited us to look at the domain (sic), which is as pretty and neatly ordered as—as any in England. It is- hard to use this comparison so often, and must make Irish hearers angry. Can't one see a neat house and grounds without instantly thinking that they are worthy of the sister country; and implying, in our cool way, its superiority to everywhere else? Walking in this gentleman's grounds, I told him, in the simplicity of my heart, that the neighboring country was like Warwickshire, and the grounds as good as any English park. Is it the fact that English grounds are superior, or only that Englishmen are disposed to consider them so?*<sup>45</sup>

For Thackeray, Annesbrook was beautiful because it reminded him of England. The qualities of these landscapes were, for Thackeray, enhanced by their exclusivity. He approvingly described Muckross house demesne in Kerry, as being open to the 'right sort' of people:

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 501.

<sup>42</sup> Landed Estates Database, 'Galway/Galwey (Lota) Estate' in *Landed Estates Database* (<http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie:8080/LandedEstates/jsp/family-show.jsp?id=2794>) (22 Mar. 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, p. 417.

<sup>44</sup> 'News' in *Dublin Gazette*, no. Apr. 1-4 (1797).

<sup>45</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Irish Sketch Book: and Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (First Published 1843, London, 1869), pp 260–261.

*There is just enough of savagness in the Turk Cascade to make the view piquante. It is not, at this season at least, by any means fierce, only wild; nor was the scene peopled by any of the rude red-shanked figures that clustered about the trees of O'Sullivan's Waterfall, - savages won't pay sixpence for the prettiest waterfall ever seen, so that this only was for the best of company'.<sup>46</sup>*

Each demesne landscape was an individual property with a complex landscape history. Despite their mapped uniformity and stylistic pattern, each had a past involving landscape transformation, social change and Improvement. Landscapes are both particular and general. Each place has its own peculiar story, not least the demesne landscapes of the elite. In many cases these stories can be told as part of the socio-political history of the wider regional and national environment. In others, they tell us about the very personal history of families and individuals.

### **5.3 The Landscape of Demesnes in Duleek**

The Battle of the Boyne in 1690, a key turning-point in Irish and British history, took place immediately north of Duleek.<sup>47</sup> Two former elite landscapes in Duleek, Platin and Bellewstown, undertook two very different paths in the following century which illustrate the different roles Improvement played in shaping the landscape.

#### ***Platin Demesne***

Nicholas Darcy, a Jacobite, lost his estates, including his castle at Platin, following the Battle of the Boyne. A survey of 1700 described the condition of Platin after confiscation:

*In ye Parish of Duleeke, now Occupied by Andr Dowdall, And Others, Subtents to Mr Jennett of old bridge, Who holds it Vertue of a Mortgage, contain's by computation 700 Acres, of w[h]ich 20 bad Meadow, 500 Arable, And ye rest of upland pasture, pretty good, On ye Premises is a Stately Old Castle, a large Dwelling house, Mault house. Kill, Barn, Stable, Brew- House, Granaries & Bake house ye Mault house is tyled And might for a Small Charge be putt in Repair, the other houses allmost gone to ruin, Occasion'd by one Merriman, a former Ten[an]t Who tore ye timbr from ye house, & Barr's from ye Windows, for sale. There is a Kitchen Garden & Orchd of ½ an Acre Each, ye Last is in pretty good Ordr. The*

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>47</sup> Stout, *Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne*, pp 113–123; Conor Brady, Emmet Byrnes, Gabriel Cooney and Aidan O'Sullivan, 'An archaeological study of the Battle of the Boyne at Oldbridge, Co. Meath' in *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, iii, no. 1 (2007), pp 53–77.

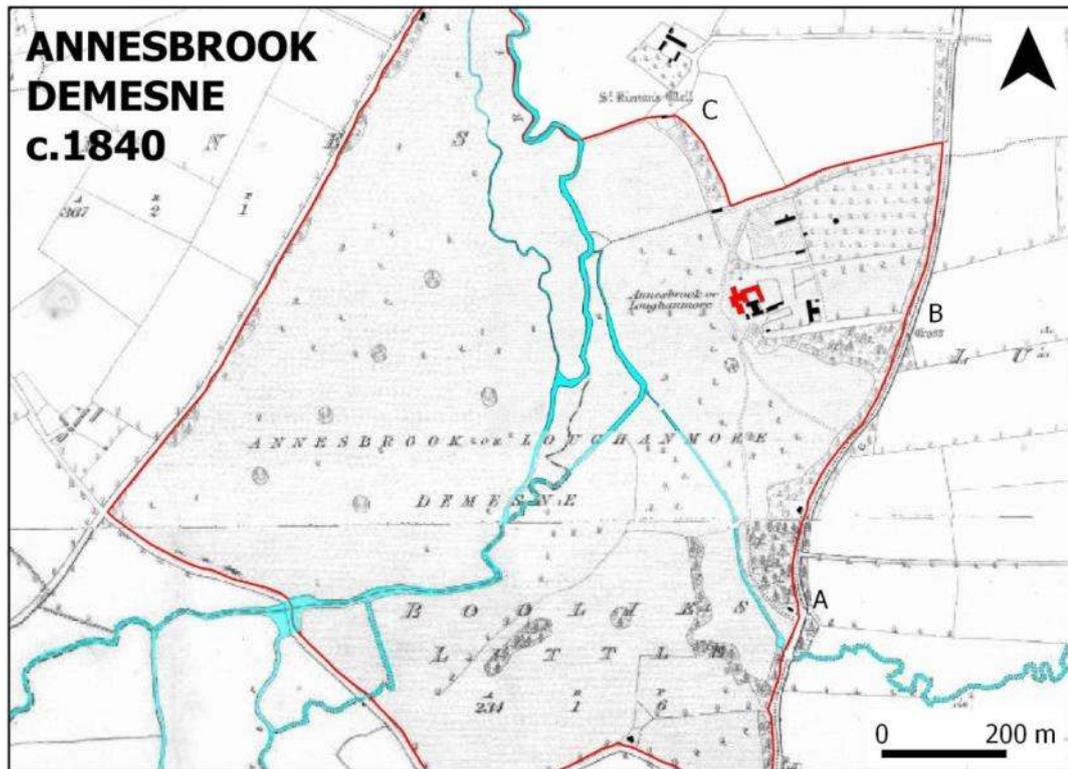


Figure 5.6 Annesbrook Demesne, c.1840. © Ordnance Survey of Ireland. All rights reserved. Licence number NUIG220212.

*first now Sow'dwth potatoes, & both Surrounded with a very good Wall of Stone and Lime, 6 foot High, About 10 Cabbins & 3 Barn's, neither Bogg or water on the Whole farme, valued at 9sh:00 p Acre Drogheda ye nearest Markettowne Distant a Large Mile.<sup>48</sup>*

This survey, or perhaps it would be more accurately described as a prospectus, briefly outlined the condition of the former Darcy estate and the elements considered attractive to buyers, in particular its buildings, gardens and its proximity to Drogheda market town. The castle of Platin had obviously suffered in the previous ten years as a result of tenants more interested in recovering the value of the timber from the building than maintaining it.

Platin, acquired by Thomas Keightley, an English official,<sup>49</sup> was subsequently sold to John Graham.<sup>50</sup> Graham was an alderman and MP for Drogheda from 1710 until his death in 1717. He was succeeded by his son William, MP from 1727 to 1741, and member of the Irish Privy

<sup>48</sup>Horner & Loeber, 'Landscape in transition: descriptions of forfeited properties in counties Meath, Louth and Cavan in 1700', pp 81–82.

<sup>49</sup>John Bergin and Patrick M. Geoghegan, 'Ram, Abel' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), viii, 386–86.

<sup>50</sup>Sadleir & Dickinson, *Georgian Mansions in Ireland, with Some Account of the Evolution of Georgian Architecture and Decoration*, pp 80–85.

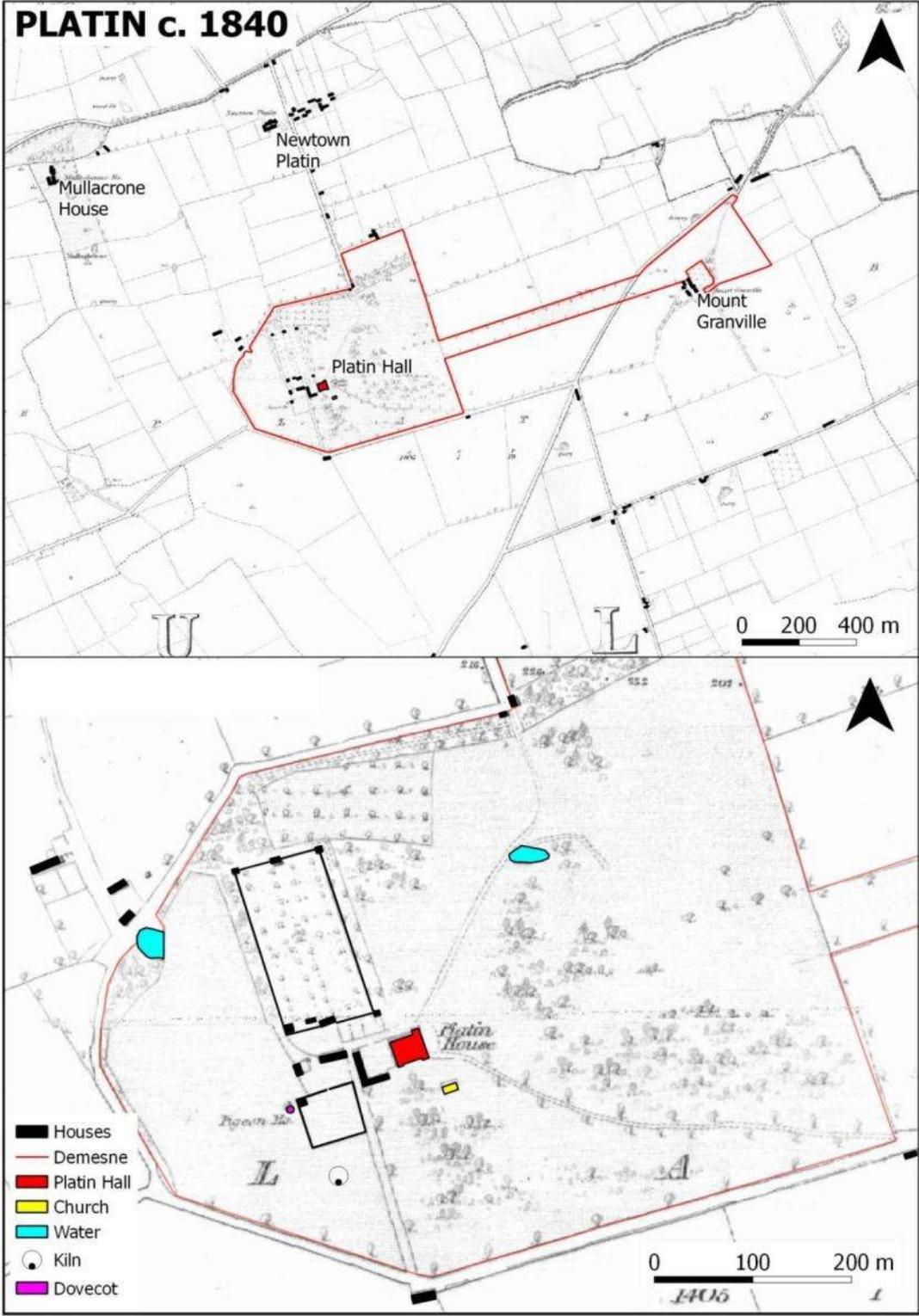


Figure 5.7 Platin demesne in c.1840. © Ordnance Survey of Ireland. All rights reserved. Licence number NUIG220212.

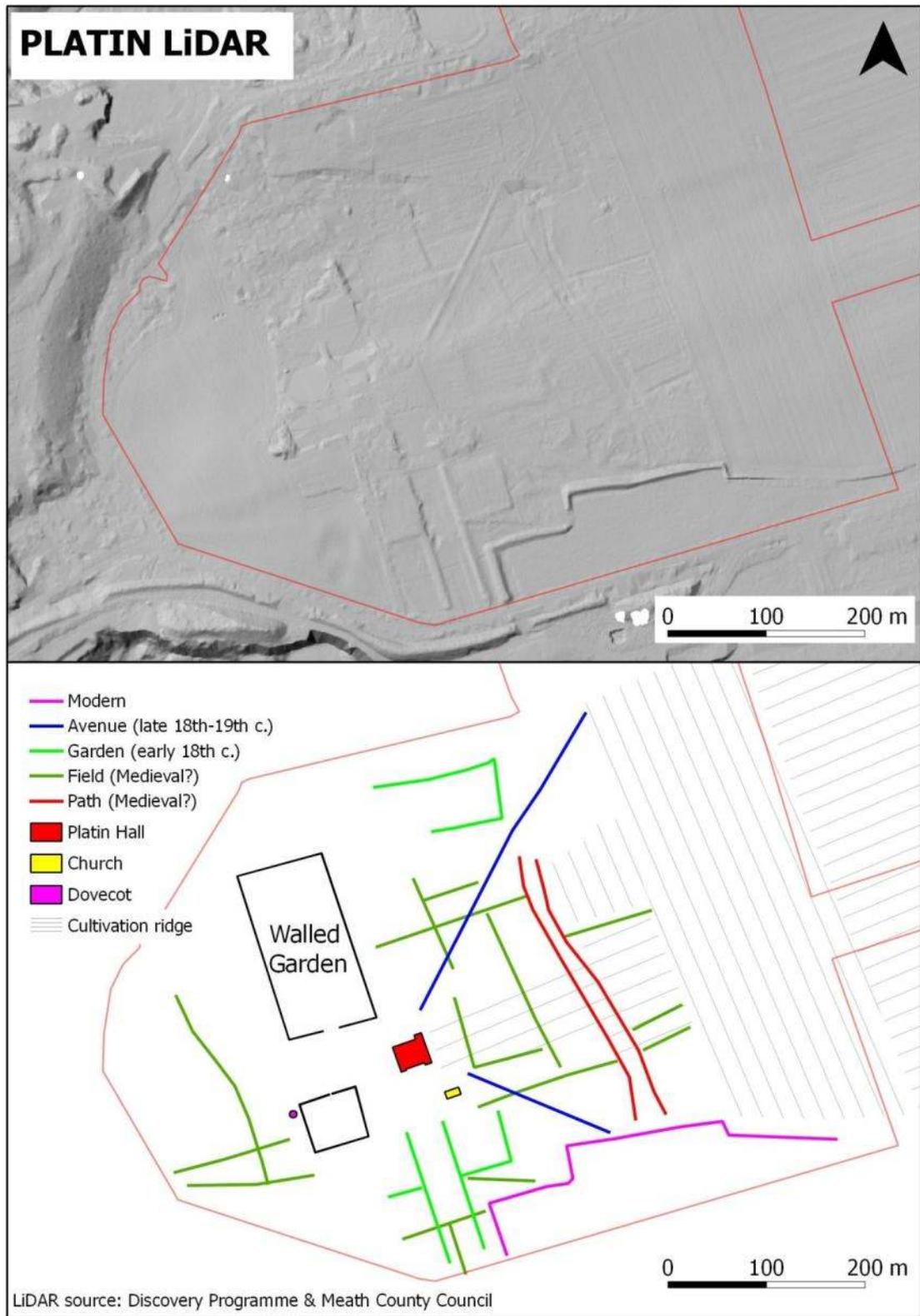


Figure 5.8 Platin demesne LiDAR.

Council.<sup>51</sup> In turn William Graham's son John was an MP from 1749 to 1768.<sup>52</sup> When John Graham acquired Platin at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century he implemented some substantial changes to his new estate core, starting with the house and surrounding demesne. He created a geometric demesne, which largely survives in outline (Figs. 5.7 & 5.8), and a fine red-brick building, Platin Hall, which unfortunately has not survived (Fig. 5.9). Platin demesne and house reflected the aspirations of a member of the Anglo-Irish elite, suitable for a member of parliament, and presented itself as on a similar vein to William Conolly's Castletown House, though much more modestly conceived. Platin Hall, or 'Platten House' as it was also sometimes called, may have been designed by architect William Robinson, Surveyor General in Ireland.<sup>53</sup> It was described as being of an 'early Georgian' design,<sup>54</sup> although, from surviving photographs, it might be more accurately described as 'English Baroque' or Queen Anne style. These photographs and published descriptions show a large, square, nine-bay building made of brick with two, and possibly originally three, storeys.<sup>55</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup>-century estate buildings were replaced with stable yards, walled gardens and a dovecote, much of which still survives. The stable courtyard contains two ranges of buildings and was located to the immediate rear of Platin House. The west range dates to the later 18<sup>th</sup> century and consists of an elaborate three-bay barn or stables built in limestone with external ashlar finished facing stone, cut-stone quoins, and door and semi-circle window surrounds in cut limestone (Fig. 5.10). To the north of the house, a large walled garden enclosed approximately 1.5 ha. The whole garden, in its current state, is mostly overgrown with trees and bushes, some of which appear to have been part of the original planting. The south wall of the garden has been removed for the construction of modern farm sheds. The walled garden is depicted on the first edition OSI six-inch map with neat internal paths and shrubs and potting sheds in its north-east and north-west corner. The garden walls were made of stone externally, with brick internally, a common feature of walled gardens to help retain heat.<sup>56</sup> The garden was entered through an elaborate cast-iron gate. A smaller (0.3 ha) walled kitchen garden was located to the south west of the house. An octagonal pigeon house was built to the rear of a second

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>52</sup> John D'Alton, *The History of Drogheda: with its Environs, and an Introductory Memoir of the Dublin and Drogheda Railway* (Dublin, 1844), p. 245.

<sup>53</sup> John Gibney, 'Robinson, Sir William' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), viii, 552–3; paddi, 'Platten Hall, Donore, Co Meath, Republic of Ireland', 2011 ([http://www.paddi.net/?func=display\\_structure&structure\\_id=5572&structure\\_location\\_id=7834](http://www.paddi.net/?func=display_structure&structure_id=5572&structure_location_id=7834)) (15 Dec. 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Sadleir & Dickinson, *Georgian Mansions in Ireland*, pp 80–85.

<sup>55</sup> (Sadleir & Dickinson 1915, Plates LXV–LXIX)

<sup>56</sup> Susan Campbell, *Walled Kitchen Gardens* (Princes Risborough, 2006), pp 21–29.



*Figure 5.9 Platin Hall, Duleek, c.1900. Photo kindly provided by Mr Colin Byrne.*



*Figure 5.10 Platin Hall stables.*

walled garden. This was of mortared stone structure, heavily overgrown with ivy and brick-lined internally. The pigeon house appears to be later 18<sup>th</sup> century in date and is probably contemporary with the offices and outhouses.

The formal garden arrangements of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century garden at Platin were overwritten when the gardens were remodelled in a less formal style, presumably in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. LiDAR reveals some surviving earthwork features from the later medieval period to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 5.8). These include probable medieval or early modern enclosures and paths, most likely associated with the Darcy castle. A series of geometric platforms, possibly lawns and parterres, can be seen to the south and north of the site of Platin House. Linear features radiating northeast and southeast from the house are the lines of later 18<sup>th</sup>-century avenues leading into the house. The tree-lined avenue visible on the six-inch maps no longer survives. Cultivation ridges in these fields to the east of the house post-date the garden features, and probably date to the later 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Platin House demesne was 56 ha in area. Its boundary forms a regular half-hexagon to the west, with a 1.1 km long tree-lined avenue facing east, leading from the Drogheda road directly to the front of Platin House. The demesne's boundary is a short bank and ditch with an internal planted screen of trees and shrubs. Platin demesne was entered from a number of points. The first, and probably original early 18<sup>th</sup> century entrance, was to the east, along a wide avenue or vista focused on Platin House. This would have provided an impressive entrance for those coming from Drogheda, the political power-base of the Graham family. Another entrance to the south of the demesne facilitated direct access to the courtyards and farm offices to the rear of the estate house. The formalised elite landscape was extended beyond the demesne by the road design. Straight roads formed the polygonal west boundary of Platin's demesne, whilst a long straight road extended north from Platin demesne towards Newtown Platin.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the main entrance to Platin house was from the north, along a sweeping avenue past randomly-placed trees. This drive into the demesne would also have provided impressive views across the Nanny river valley (since obscured by Platin cement factory). Platin House itself would not have been visible on the drive until the visitor had progressed some distance into the demesne, revealing the house stood between two planted stands of trees. This sweeping entrance contrasts with the earlier, more formal long vistas offered to the viewer, where the house itself formed the primary focus and destination. This change in part

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reflected changing tastes in landscape garden design from the formal to the less formal, and as such it conformed with the more general pattern of landscapes being created by their peers. This change also reflects the diminished significance of the approach to Platin from the direction of Drogheda as the Graham family's political significance waned.

The success of the Graham family in negotiating structures of power in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were clearly expressed in the landscape of their demesne. However, not all families were successful. The fate of the Bellew family, the last remaining of the late medieval Old English families in Duleek (section 4.2) could hardly be more different.

### ***Bellewstown: a failed demesne***

John Bellew, Lord Duleek, was injured at the Battle of Aughrim and died in London in 1692; he was eventually buried in the parish church in Duleek, Co. Meath.<sup>57</sup> Despite being outlawed in 1691 the Bellews were able to recover their estates and titles under the terms of the Treaty of Limerick. His first son, Walter, succeeded him but died in 1696. His second son, Richard, a captain in James' army, became Lord Duleek.<sup>58</sup> Lord Duleek conformed to the Established Church in 1705 and sat in the Irish House of Lords in 1707.<sup>59</sup> Bellew appears to have taken a significant loan, £2,250 sterling, from Sir Thomas Smith, merchant of Dublin, in 1713.<sup>60</sup> The loan was secured against Bellew's property, with Henry Dowdall of Athcarne and John Mulhollan of Clonkerane acted as guarantors. However, just a year later another deed recorded that Bellew was unable to repay his loan, and Smith was going to recoup its value with interest from the property of Bellew, Dowdall and Mulhollan. These included farms in Bellewstown called Domegan's farm, Great Close, Great Wood, Mill meadow, Killmashing, Half wood, Savages farm, McNutley's farm, McEvans farm, Great meadow near Duleeke and Old and new Orchards, as well as 'the Mansion House and other Houses in Bellewstowne', all

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<sup>57</sup> The inscription on Bellew's tomb, in the south aisle of Duleek church, reads 'THIS TOMBE HATH BEEN REPAIRED AND THE VAULT MADE BY DAME MARY BERMINGHAM OF DUNFERTH WIFE TO JOHN LOD BELLEW WHOE WAS SHOT IN THE BELLY IN OUGHRIM FIGHT THE FIRST OF JULY 1691 ASSOONE AS HE FOUND HIMSELF ABLE TO UNDERTAKE A JOURNEY HE WENT TO HIS LADY TO LONDON WHERE HE DEYED THE 12 OF JANUARY 1692 HE WAS LAID IN A VALT IN WESTMINISTER [T]ILL THE APRILL FOLLOWING HIS CORPS [WAS BROUGHT HI]THER. Séamus Bellew, 'Coats of Arms and the Bellew Family' in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society*, xxv, no. 4 (2004), p. 432.

<sup>58</sup> Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical History of the Dormant, Abeyant, Forfeited, and Extinct Peerages of the British Empire* (London, 1866), pp 41–42; Bellew, 'Coats of Arms and the Bellew Family'; Richard Hawkins, 'Bellew, Sir John 1st Baron Bellew of Duleek' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), i, 435–6.

<sup>59</sup> John D'Alton, *Illustrations, Historical and Genealogical, of King James's Irish Army List, 1689*. (Dublin, 1855), p. 278.

<sup>60</sup> Registry of Deeds, 'Bellewstown, Lib. 14; No. 6078: Bellew & Smith' (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 1714).

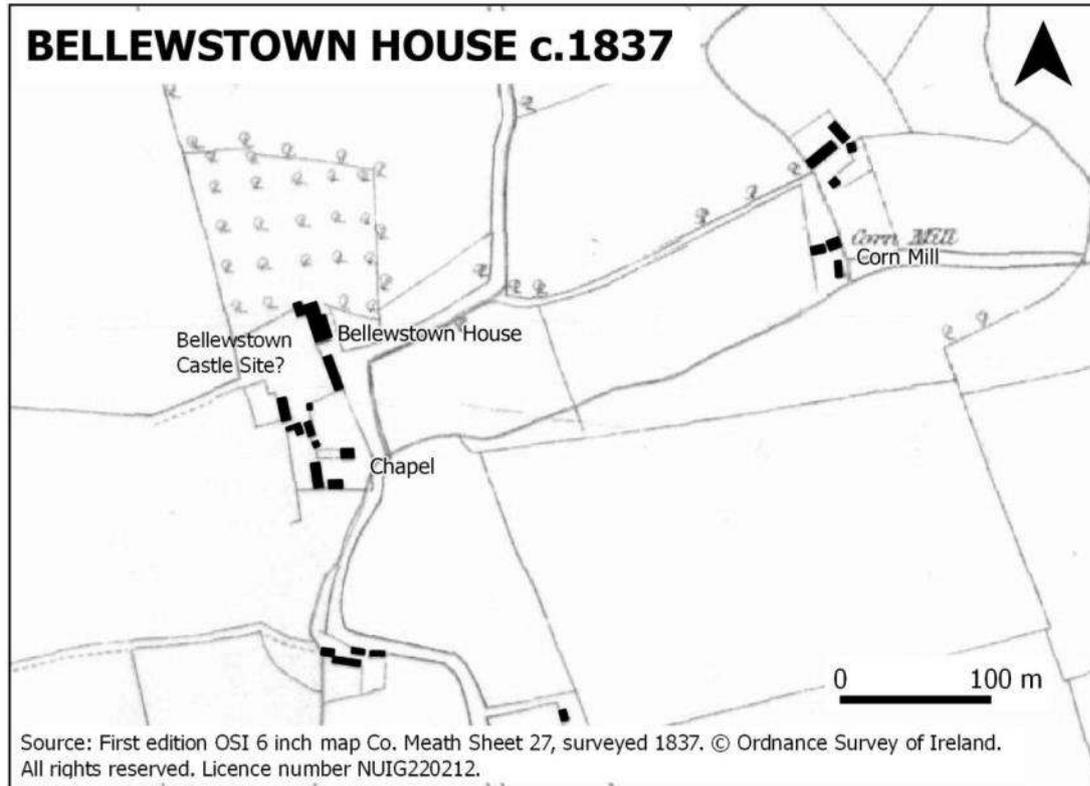


Figure 5.11 Bellewstown house in 1837.

coming to about 400 profitable plantation acres. Smith also planned to take Bellew's horses, cows, sheep and other chattels, to be sold to pay off Dowdalls and Mulhollan's portion of the loan. A further deed from March 1714 records that the lands of Hilltown Little, Fasagh and part of Bellewstown called 'Colliers farm, Sealford, part of Great Meadow, Lady Moor and Newtown and Mullaghcarin', as well as 36 acres intermixed near Duleek, 16 houses and tenements in Duleek town, and the mill of Bellewstown, all containing 500 profitable plantation acres, were to be rented for a period of 61 years to Edward Crofton to pay off Bellew's loan. The only concession for Lord Bellew was that he could continue to live in his house for a nominal rent of one peppercorn a year, if he wished.<sup>61</sup> The reason why Bellew borrowed this massive sum of money is unrecorded. Perhaps he meant to build a home worthy of his title. In any case, Bellewstown was divided. Richard Bellew died in 1714. His son John inherited the title but he appears never to have lived in Bellewstown, and he died in London without issue in 1770, after which the title became extinct.<sup>62</sup> Bellewstown House never developed into a later historic demesne landscape, but rather remained a farm, albeit one incorporating the material

<sup>61</sup>Registry of Deeds, 'Bellewstown, Lib. 14; No. 6083: Bellew & Smith' (Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 1714).

<sup>62</sup>D'Alton, *King James's Irish Army List*, p. 278; Burke, *Burke's Dormant Peerage*, pp 41–42; Hawkins, 'Bellew, Sir John 1st Baron Bellew of Duleek'.

remains of the elite, in the form of a ruined chapel and Bellewstown castle (Fig. 5.11). The Bellew's estate, which had consisted of nearly 1,500 plantation acres in six separate townlands and property in Duleek town in 1641 was divided amongst several proprietors. Although Bellewstown manor centre may not have become a demesne landscape like Platin, it was still the centre of a significant landholding unit in the later historic period. In 1854 Bellewstown house was the home of John Waring Maxwell, who held the largest and highest-valued property in Duleek, 224 ha, including house and offices, in fee, valued at £350 per annum. A mill 325m east of Bellewstown house, most likely the site of Bellew's tuck mill mentioned in 1654,<sup>63</sup> was in 1854 part of a separate 17 ha farm owned by Thomas Boylan and let to Andrew Callaghan.<sup>64</sup> In recognition of the former importance of Bellew's manor centre, plaques from Bellewstown castle commemorating the construction of a staircase in 1599 were incorporated in Bellewstown House, and the chapel at Bellewstown was preserved in the farmyard (section 4.2).

Family succession and land possession were key considerations for the elite landowners of Ireland in the later historic period. The collapse of the old Catholic order at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was, in many respects, measured in their curtailed rights to succession, and the confiscation of their lands. Relatively few families managed to maintain their social position, estates and family successions for an extended period of time, and these tended to be from the upper strata in society, those with most ready access to the structures of power. The demesne of the Barker family of Kilcooly exemplifies the deep stratigraphy of elite landscapes.

### **5.4 Kilcooly and the Changing Elite Landscape**

In 1876 the Ponsonby-Barker family of Kilcooly owned estates of 6,000 ha, which stretched over the three counties of Tipperary, Kilkenny and Limerick, with a rateable value of £10,810 per annum.<sup>65</sup> The core of the Barker estate was at Kilcooly Abbey in Tipperary. Kilcooly demesne in 1840 covered 500 ha of fields, tree plantations and gardens. The Barker home at the centre of this demesne, a Palladian-style house – modest compared to Castletown –

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<sup>63</sup> Simington, *Meath Civil Survey*, p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Griffith, 'General Valuation of the Rateable Property in Ireland, Parish of Duleek, Barony of Duleek Upper, Union of Drogheda' in *General Valuation of the Rateable Property in Ireland, Union of Drogheda, Counties of Louth and Meath. Act 15 & 16 Victoria, CAP. 65* (Dublin, 1854), p. 117.

<sup>65</sup> *Land Owners in Ireland*.

overlooked parkland, gardens, tree plantations, an artificial lake and the ruins of Kilcooly Cistercian Abbey (section 4.3). The demesne contained a Church of Ireland parish church to the west of the estate house, and to the east, a stables courtyard. As a landscape, it appeared fully formed, old, and natural. It was, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the product of gradual accretion and careful planning and improvement.

When Jerome Alexander's grandson, William Barker [b.1677],<sup>66</sup> came to Kilcooly he would have found the ruins of the Cistercian abbey surrounded by the remains of the medieval Cistercian manor. In 1736 Sir William (he had inherited his father's title in 1719) wrote of his plans to build in Kilcooly

*... as fine and elegant a private gentleman's seat as any in Europe, as pretty an inland market as ye country could afford, instead of botching in now about an old Abbey walls not proper or adapted to be anything to be justly called polite.*<sup>67</sup>

However, it would appear that for most of his time in Ireland he lived elsewhere. The Kilcooly estate, corresponding with the portion of Kilcooly parish around the Abbey, appears not to have been well enclosed, leading to a dispute in the 1720s. William Barker impounded the cattle of a neighbour, Phanniel Cook, for grazing on what he considered part of his estate. Cook was leasing the neighbouring property, the manor of Clonamicklon, from the estate of Lord Ikerrin. The disputed ground constituted portions of land named *Gorteenreny*, *Monevarrone* and *Glanmacshamus* (Fig. 5.12).<sup>68</sup> A legal case ensued which eventually wound up in the Irish House of Lords. Sir William Barker gave evidence that he mostly lived in Meath and, as the Kilcooly estate was leased out, the meares and bounds were not maintained. Barker argued that, according to the Down and Civil Survey, the river *Glangale* formed the boundary of the manors and lands grazed by Ikerrin and Cook. This river forked into a number of passages at this point in the parish boundary, and the exact boundary between the parishes was unclear, despite the descriptions of both the 17<sup>th</sup>-century surveys (Fig. 4.9). The House of Lords found in favour of Ikerrin and Cook. Barker had lost an expensive case, and the boundary between the two properties, and between Buolick and Kilcooly parish, was permanently fixed. It was apparent that the Kilcooly estate lacked defined, irrefutable boundaries. Once Sir William and his son, also William, established Kilcooly as a residence

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<sup>66</sup>Neely, *Kilcooley*, p. 45. Also, p.43 for the Barker - Ponsonby family tree

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>68</sup>Barker (Sir William) appellant versus Somerset Lord Viscount Ikerrin and Phanniel Cook in a title suit re boundaries of lands in the parish of Kilcooly in counties Tipperary and Kilkenny. Irish Chancery appeal. A. c. r. c. Feb., 1731.' in *House of Lords Appeals*, Volume 10 (1731), pp 351–354.

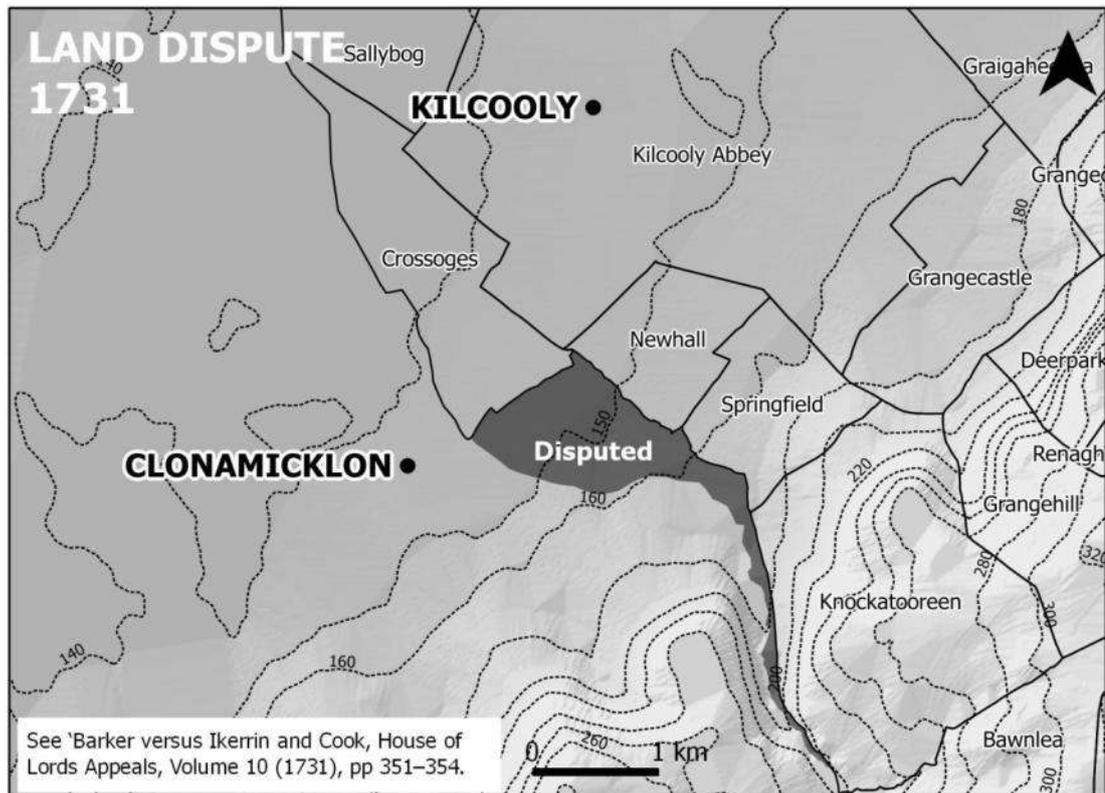


Figure 5.12 Disputed property between William Barker and the manor of Clonamicklon in 1731.

they set about fixing these issues and created a country seat for themselves. Improvement would be the key to securing their estate.

### ***Kilcooly Abbey remodelled***

If Sir William Barker found that Kilcooly Abbey was ill-suited to be the home of a country gentleman, his son set about changing this. The younger William Barker came to Kilcooly in 1735 and set about improving the estate. He started by adapting as a residence the abbey's south and east ranges. The upper floors of the crossing towers were adapted as a residence, as evidenced by brick walls and re-worked windows in this part of the abbey. The remains of the abbey cloister were enclosed to the west and a carriage gate was made in the cloister on the south wall, whilst a free-standing hall to the immediate south-east of the abbey was roofed and made into a stables,<sup>69</sup> depicted by Grose in 1791 (Fig. 5.13).<sup>70</sup>

As well as remodelling the Cistercian abbey, Barker laid out new gardens to the east and south, as well as a series of fishponds, and carefully retained some of the earlier features like the medieval dovecot and regular garden features. The Barkers designed their garden with

<sup>69</sup>Clutterbuck, 'Settlement and Architecture of Slieveradagh', pp 57–58, vol.2.

<sup>70</sup>Francis Grose and Edward Ledwich, *The Antiquities of Ireland* (II vols, 1791), p. 70.



Figure 5.13 Kilcooley Abbey as depicted in Grose's Antiquities of Ireland, 1791.

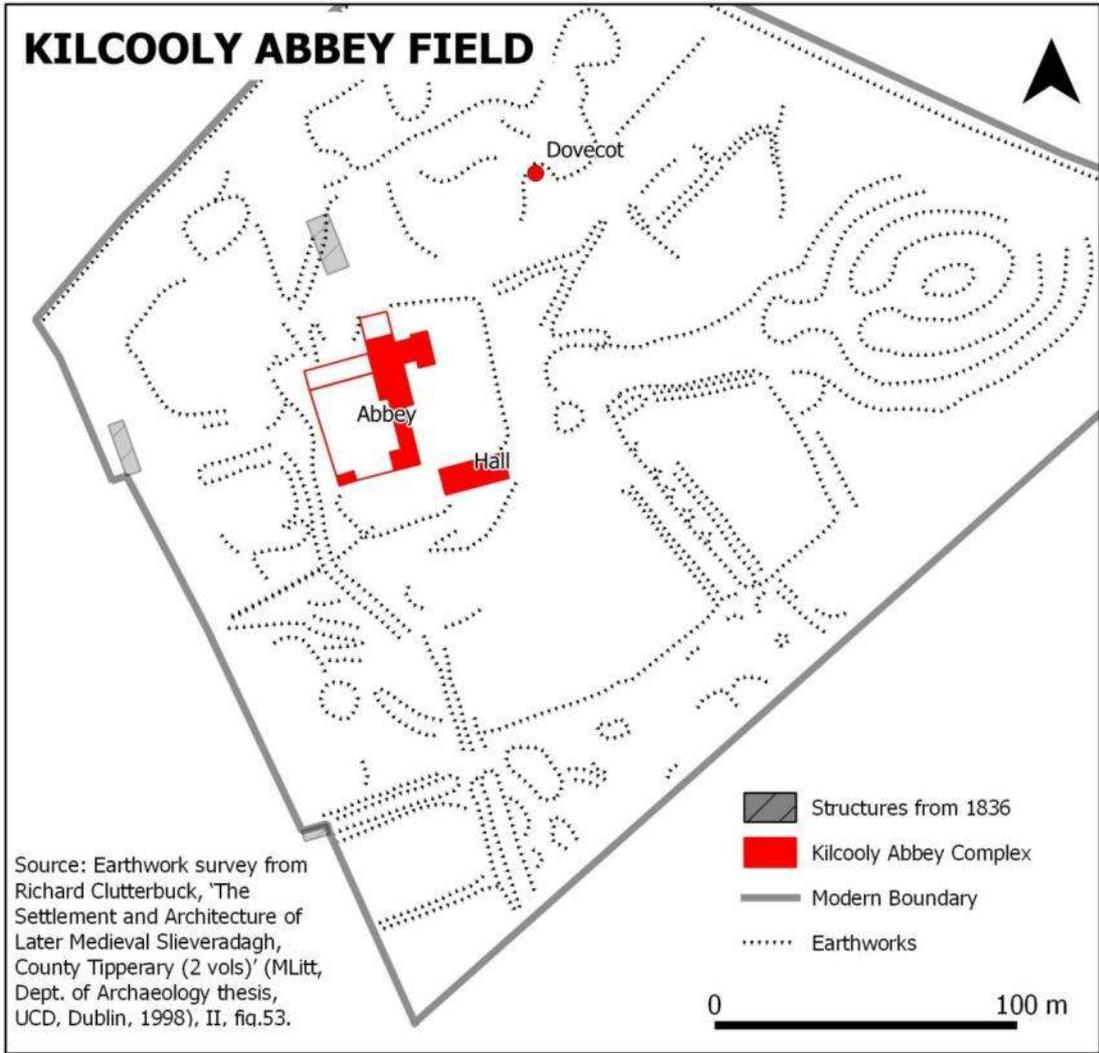


Figure 5.14 Plan of Kilcooley Abbey and its surrounding earthworks.



Figure 5.15 Abbey and gardens, probably made some time in the 1740s, depicted on a map of Kilcooly demesne in 1749, and surviving as faint earthworks.

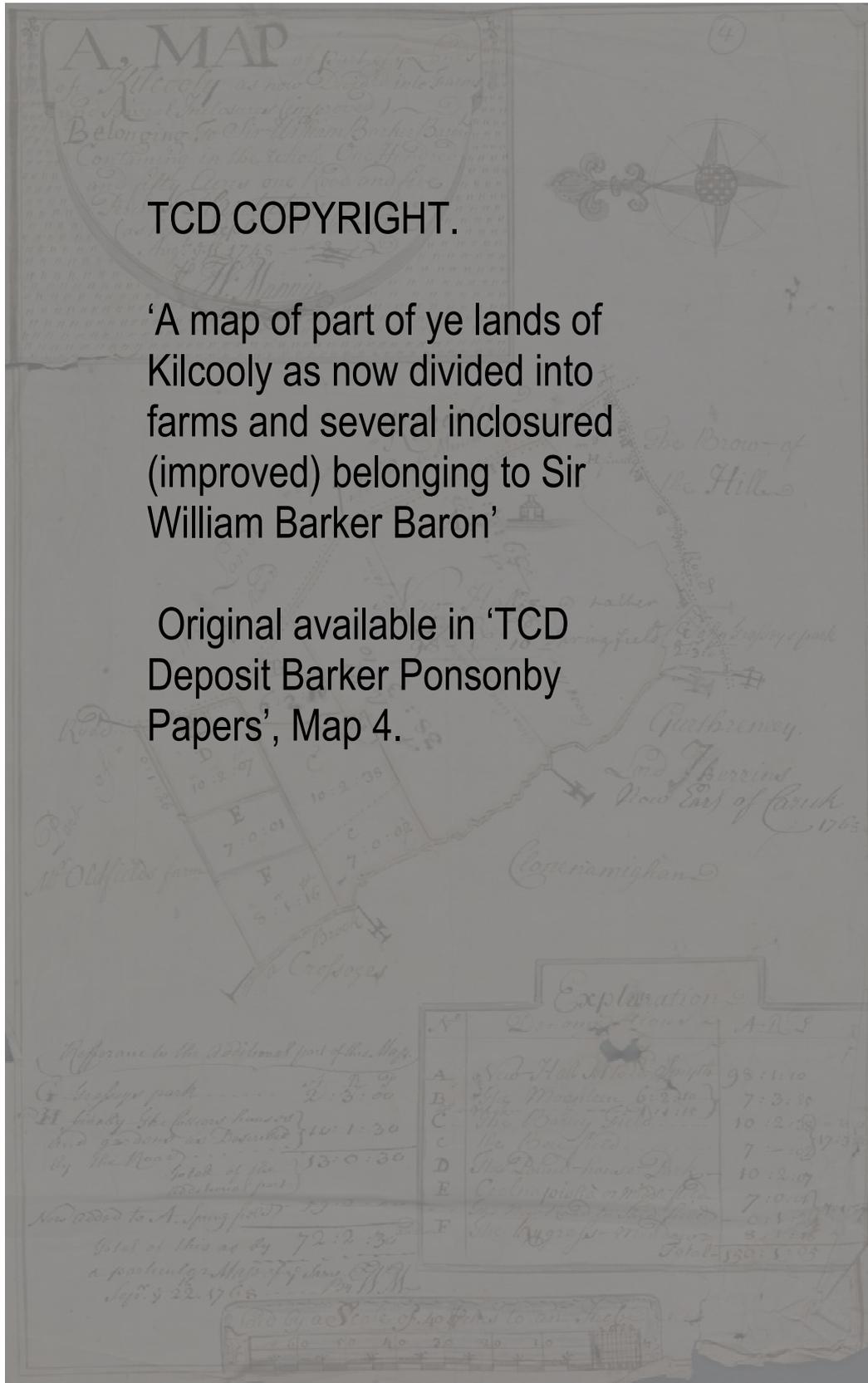


Figure 5.16 Mannin's 1748 map of Newhall townland in Kilcooly. Reproduced by permission of the Board of Trinity College Dublin.

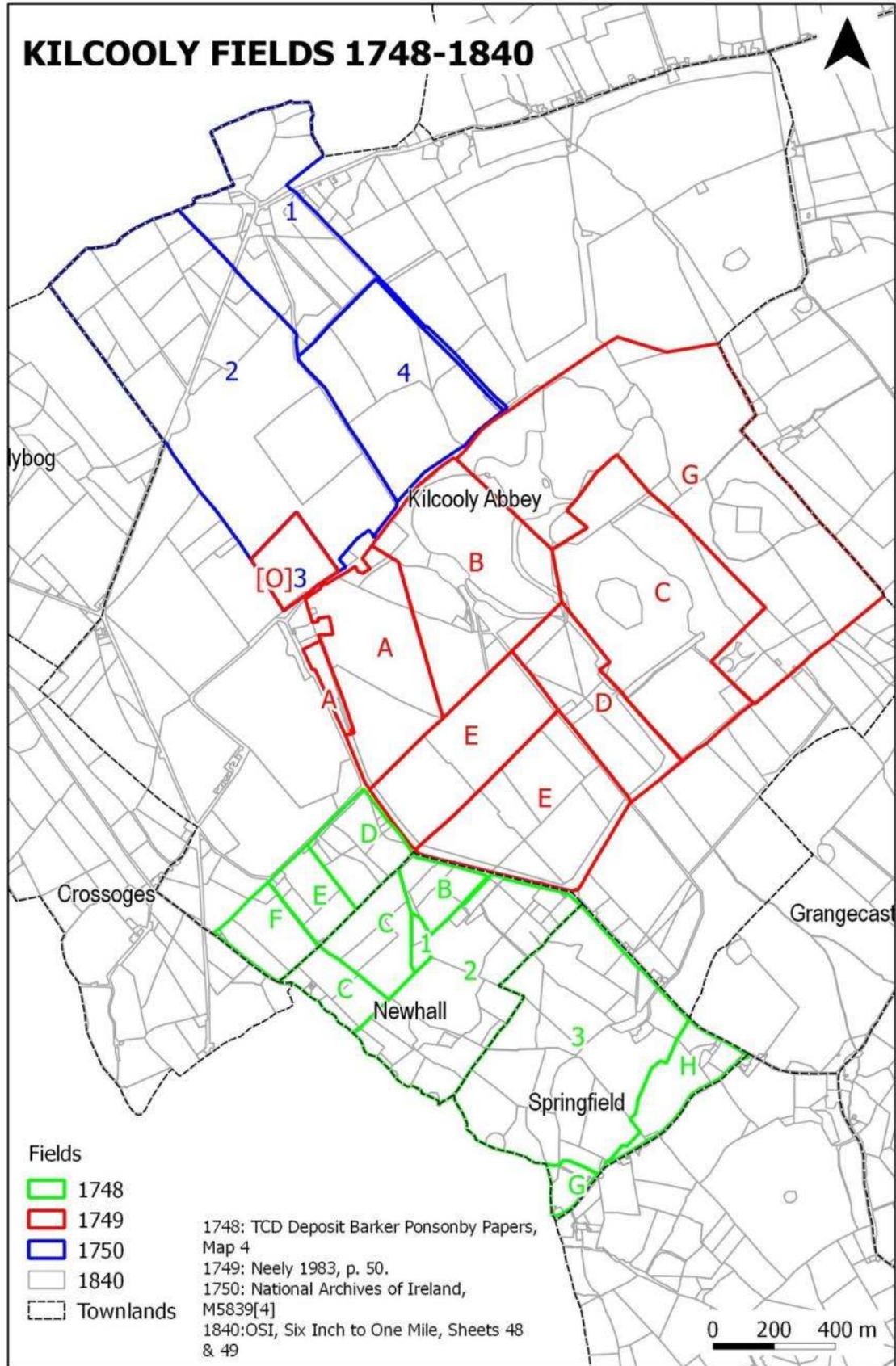


Figure 5.17 The designed landscape of enclosed fields around Kilcooly Abbey c.1750.

features like an oval parterre (110m by 75m) to the east of the abbey buildings (Fig. 5.14). The parterre was in place by 1749 (Fig. 5.15), and survives as a series of concentric oval earthworks.

Enclosure and partition was a vital part of improving the Kilcooly estate. Sir William Barker and his son discussed this in an undated letter, probably from the 1730s:

*Can only make a rough estimate of the value of the Kilcooly estate for want of maps, but reckons 1,000a to be worth 8/- an acre "after all my improvem<sup>t</sup>", and the other 1000 to be worth 2/6 and acre "... Graighisy I should think it should be at a moderate rent about 100 or 150 acres ... as it will give you by splitting the fine moor between it & Newtown just in the middle up as far as the dried ploughed bow laid out fields of dry ground near the great fort to square through those fields up somewhere near the old church of Tinraheen so as to run across the heads of those ditches north & south in a straight line to be carried on thereafter to the foot of the grange hills at the head of the moor, but the southern of these 2 ditches through said fields be Sam's or any other man's bounds of Graighissy & the ground between them to be just 40 perches broad on the same degrees of the compass to be ranged with the great eastern avenue to Ardcloign hill as the Allecks part ...<sup>71</sup>*

Not only were the two Barkers intimately familiar with the Kilcooly landscape, even without maps, but both had clear ideas about how this landscape was to be organised: 'by the compass'. William Mannin's maps from 1748-1750 showed the results of these efforts, with large enclosed fields set out with straight lines (Figs 5.16 & 5.17).<sup>72</sup> Fields named like 'The Bere Field' and 'Ryegrass field' speak of the improved crops grown in these fields, the 'Old' and 'New' Deerparcs to the east of the Abbey, speak of the elite landscapes of demesne. Irish fieldnames like 'The Moonleen' (little meadow) or 'Coolnapisha' (Corner of the peas, or pea field), survived and, what is more, were recorded and incorporated into this improved landscape, although Coolnapisha's alternate name, the 'Middle Field', suggests these old names were being replaced as part of the reorganisation associated with enclosure. (Table 5.2).

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<sup>71</sup>NLI, 'Ponsonby Papers: Correspondence of members of the Barker and Ponsonby families on estate, domestic and private affairs. c. 200 letters, 1697, 1707-1838. (In the possession of Maj. C. T. Ponsonby.)', p. 3131.

<sup>72</sup>William Mannin, 'A map of part of ye lands of Kilcooly as now divided into farms and several inclosed (improved) belonging to Sir William Barker Baron', Map (Trinity College Dublin, 1748) (TCD Deposit Barker Ponsonby Papers, Map 4). This image may not be further reproduced from software. For reproduction application must be made to the Head of Digital Resources and Imaging Services, by post to Trinity College Library Dublin, College Street, Dublin 2, Ireland; or by email at [digitalresources@tcd.ie](mailto:digitalresources@tcd.ie).

## Chapter 5 Demesnes of Improvement

Tenants' holdings, with long-term leases, appear to have been carefully arranged surrounding the Barker demesne. These included the farm of Rev. Walsh, and his family who, over three generations, were to provide the rectors of Kilcooly Church of Ireland parish. Their house, the rectory and farm, was located immediately opposite a simple stone-and-brick church (Fig. 5.18). When it was built, this church was located on the edge of the demesne, possibly corresponding with the boundary of the Cistercian precinct, with access by public road which skirted the edge of the demesne. William Barker's brother Samuel Barker, had a farm at 'Tinraheen', Mr. Oldfield in Sallybog townland, Edward Smith in Springfield townland, and Mr. Boyle Minchin in Grangecastle townland.

<b>1748</b>	<b>Divided into Farms<sup>73</sup></b>
1	[no name]
2	'New line of division of this farm'
3	[1748?] 'New Hall let to Ed. Smyth' Springfield [1768?]
B	The Moonleen
C	The Bere Field
D	The Pound - Horse Park
E	Coolnapisha or Middle Field
F	The Ryegrass Meadow
G	Grassey's Park
H	'and H finally the cottiers houses and gardens as described by the road.'
<b>1749</b>	<b>Kilcooly Demesne<sup>74</sup></b>
A	[gardens]
B	Deerpark
C	Ardstoye [?]
D	The Old Deerpark
E	The Horse Park
E	The Horse Park
G	Lambert's former farm
[O]	The New Orchard
<b>1750</b>	<b>Rev. Walsh's farm<sup>75</sup></b>
1	[no name]
2	Meadow Improved
3	The New Orchard
4	The Walled Park

Table 5.2 Field names in William Mannin's maps (Fig. 5.17).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Neely, *Kilcooley*, p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> William Mannin, 'A map of part of the lands of Kilcooly farmed by rev. Mr. John Walsh from Sir William Barker Baron', Manuscript map, 1750 (National Library of Ireland, M5839(4)).



*Figure 5.18 Kilcooly Church of Ireland, built in around 1740, replaced in 1829 with a new church. The pyramid is a Barker Ponsonby mausoleum.*



*Figure 5.19 Kilcooly House, built c.1770 by the fourth Sir William Barker, and remodelled after a fire in 1839.*

## Chapter 5 Demesnes of Improvement

The fourth William Barker remodelled his demesne once more from the 1760s onwards. He had built a large country house c.1770 (Fig. 5.19).<sup>76</sup> The house is seven bays long, a two-storey-over-basement with service wings on either side in the Palladian style. Barker also had built new stable yards and farm offices 100m southeast of the house. Having created his improved home farm, Barker sought, in 1783, a 'complete land steward, who perfectly understands all the different branches of husbandry, and the superintendence of a large family and demesne'.<sup>77</sup>

Between 1749 and 1840 Kilcooly demesne more than doubled in size, from 208 ha to 500 ha (Fig. 5.20). As Sir William Barker expanded his demesne, he filled it with new features. Perhaps mindful of the lack of a significant water feature, Barker constructed c.1789 a 4.4 ha lake with boat-house built in the gothic style at a cost of £442 (Figs. 5.21 & 5.22).<sup>78</sup> This lake was fed by one of a number of streams from the Slieveardagh Hills, and maintained by dams. A decoy lake was also built in the demesne, whilst an ice-house was built outside the demesne in Deerpark, in the cold north face of the Slieveardagh hills. Sir William Barker had a monumental tower built in 1817 at a prominent location on the edge of the Slieveardagh hills to commemorate Wellington's victory at the Battle of Waterloo (Fig 5.23).<sup>79</sup> The deerpark itself, which had once been located within the demesne, appears to have been moved outside the demesne, perhaps to make way for the more intense agricultural use of land within the demesne by the home farm. Its new location, the slopes of the Slieveardagh Hills, were less suitable for agriculture.

The Barker's demesne landscape featured in two portraits of Sir William Barker and his wife Lady Elizabeth, painted c.1790 by Gilbert Stuart (Fig. 5.24). Sir William is painted sitting at his desk with an architectural plan of a complex house, presumably his relatively new residence, whilst his old home, Kilcooly Abbey, can be seen through a window in the background. His wife Elizabeth is also seated, in a lady-like pose, stitching in hand, with the new lake and gothic boat-house visible through a window. Both paintings were set in the new Georgian-style country house, although in different sides and wings of the building. Both incorporate aspects

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<sup>76</sup> NIAH, 'Kilcooly Abbey House, Tipperary South, No. 22204309' (<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=TS&regno=22204309>) (5 Sept. 2014).

<sup>77</sup> William Barker, 'Wanted, Land Steward' in *Finn's Leinster Journal* (Kilkenny, 10 Aug. 1783), Volume XVII, No. 1191, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Neely, *Kilcooley*, p. 81; NIAH, 'Kilcooly Abbey Boat House, Tipperary South, No. 22204313' (<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=TS&regno=22204313>) (5 Sept. 2014).

<sup>79</sup> NIAH, 'Wellington Monument, Deerpark, Tipperary South, No 22204311' (<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=TS&regno=22204311>) (5 Sept. 2014).

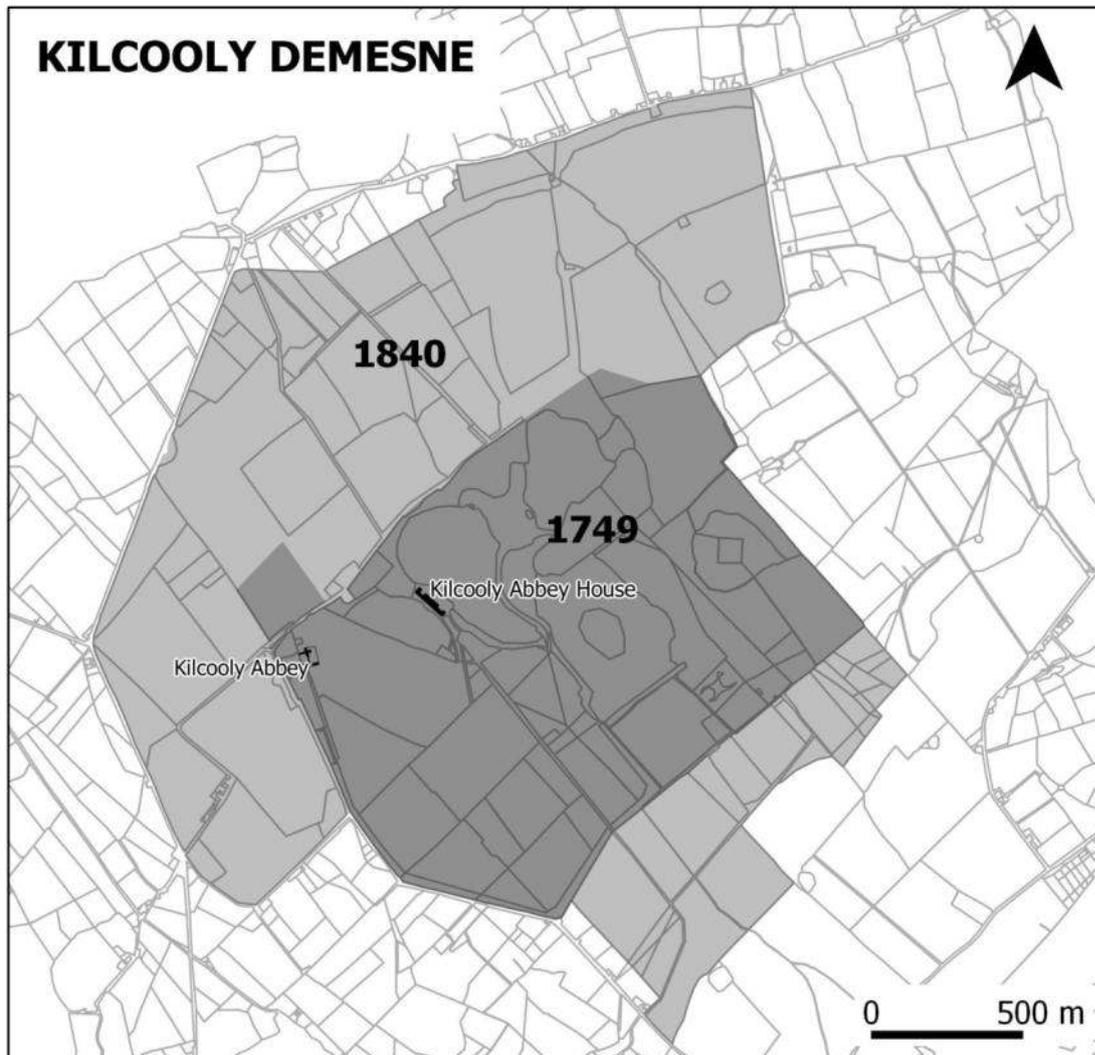


Figure 5.20 The expansion of Kilcooly demesne, 1749-1840.

of the new (the country house within which the subjects are seated), the old (Kilcooly Abbey) and the designed (the lake and gothic boat-house) landscape.

One of the most fundamental changes to the landscape arising from the expansion of Kilcooly's demesne was the changes to routes in and around the elite landscape. At its full extent in 1840 the demesne was enclosed for nearly its whole 10.5km circuit by a 3.25m high and c.0.6m wide wall. This meant that former public roads, most likely medieval in origin, which had skirted the old demesne past the abbey and the Church of Ireland parish church, had to be diverted (Fig 5.25). Part of this road had already been made private after 1799 when Samuel Barker's farm in Tinraheen was incorporated into the demesne, facilitating a new formal entrance from the north. The expansion of the demesne after 1830 enveloped the remaining length of public road and the parish church. As a result, a new road was built around the periphery of the demesne in straight lines cutting across former fields (Fig. 5.26).

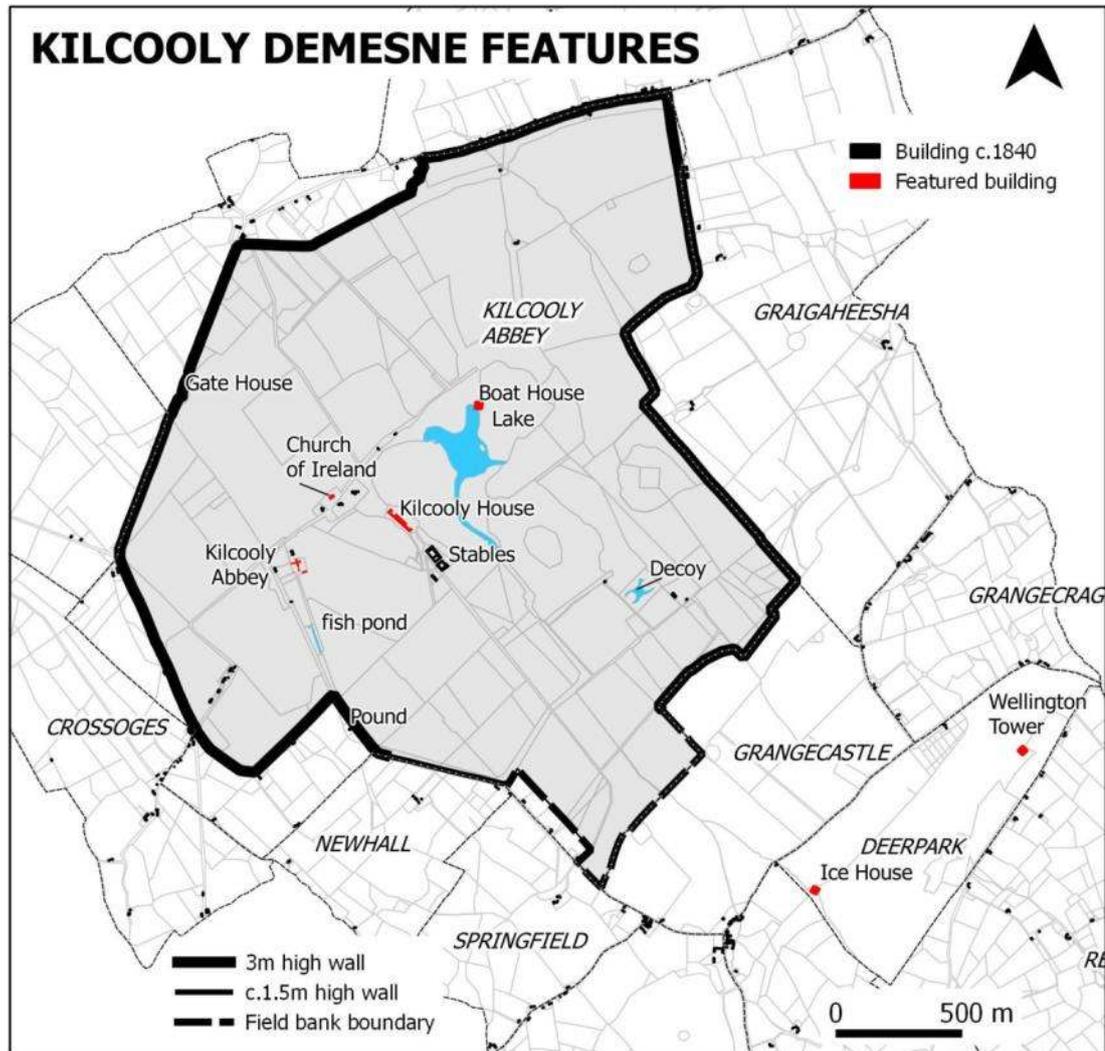


Figure 5.21 Kilcooly demesne features in c.1840.

The former public road became private, with its northern section being transformed in part into a new formal entrance into the demesne. Access from the east towards the parish church was through a new gated entrance, called the 'Dead Gate', a reference to its use as an entrance for funerals to the parish church. Another new entrance, with an impressive set of gates and gate house, accessed the demesne from the west. In all up to 21km of paths were contained within the demesne, including roads to and from fields, new entrance avenues, former public roads, and pleasure paths through the woods planted in the demesne.

After the Walsh family lease expired, a new parish church was built 1829-1830, funded by the Barker estate and the Board of First Fruits (Fig. 5.27).<sup>80</sup> This replaced the old, smaller church. This building is notable for a number of reasons, not least of which is the use of a classically

<sup>80</sup>Neely, *Kilcooley*, pp 82–83, 94.

styled church building which was becoming common throughout the countryside at this time. The Barkers appear to have chosen specifically to demolish and remove the older building formerly used as a residence by the Walsh family, erasing the evidence for tenants in their demesne. They also chose to keep the partial remains of the older church, within which they built a family mausoleum. The former parish church was recreated as a monument.



*Figure 5.22 Kilcooly artificial lake and boat house, built c.1770.*

Trees were a significant landscape feature in Kilcooly demesne. Sir William received a premium from the Dublin Society for planting trees,<sup>81</sup> most of which he appears to have planted around the new expanded demesne (Fig. 5.28). Up to 83 ha of tree plantations, mixed deciduous and coniferous, were planted in the demesne by 1840. These plantations encompassed whole fields, or belts of plantations surrounding fields. Field boundaries were also heavily planted in the demesne, primarily with deciduous trees like beech and lime trees (Fig. 5.29). Much of this planting was used to direct and control views, framing the new house, the remains of the Abbey, and hiding the stables and parish church. Shelter belts also hid the view of the inside of Kilcooly's massive demesne wall. In addition, up to 209 ha of Kilcooly

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<sup>81</sup> RDS Past Members Database, 'William Barker' ([http://www.rds.ie/cat\\_historic\\_member\\_detail.jsp?itemID=1101474&item\\_name=William%20Barker](http://www.rds.ie/cat_historic_member_detail.jsp?itemID=1101474&item_name=William%20Barker)) (7 Aug. 2014).

## Chapter 5 Demesnes of Improvement

demesne were planted with random free-standing trees. Much of this had been former tenant's fields which had been incorporated into the demesne, like Samuel Barker's leasehold in the north of the demesne. The former formal gardens around Kilcooly Abbey were also planted with trees.



*Figure 5.23 The Wellington monument in Deerpark, built in 1817.*

### **5.5 Summary**

Demesne landscapes made up a relatively small area of Ireland, just 6%. However, they were a significant part of the Irish rural landscape in the later historic period, primarily because they were the focus of much of the landowning elite's efforts at Improvement. In some respects the elite landscapes of demesnes were test-beds for ideas in landscape change and Improvement. However, demesnes and gardens were also extensions of the ideas expressed in the architectural styles of the houses located at their core. Designed park landscapes

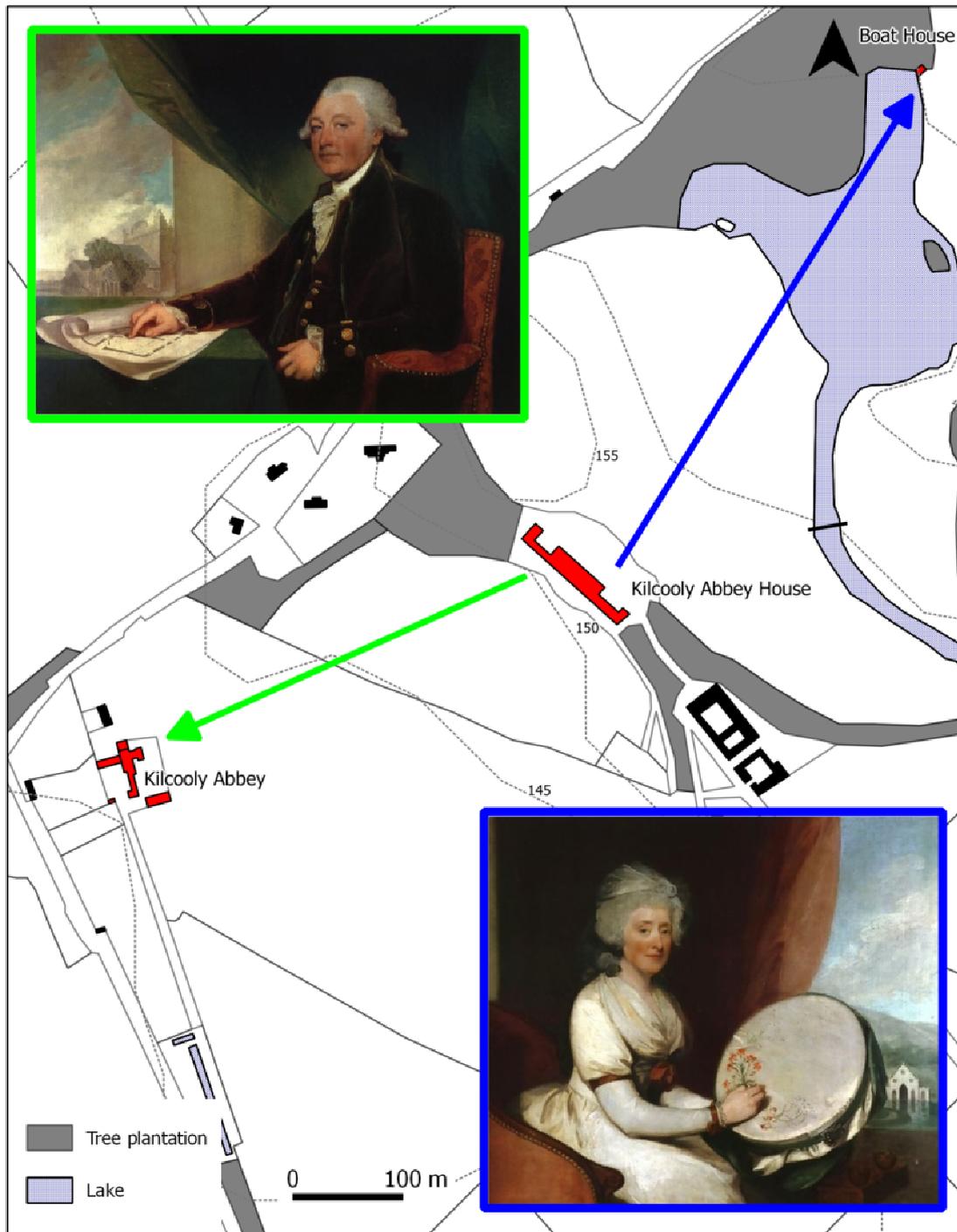


Figure 5.24 Sir William and Lady Barker were painted by Gilbert Stuart in around 1790, revealing within both the position of the new country house as a seat of perspective upon old Abbey and new lake and boat house.

expressed the political and ideological aspirations of the landowning elite, like the Graham family in Platin, expressing their natural title to their estates, their modernity and engagement with the ideals of the Enlightenment, their patriotism, and their loyalty to the Crown and to their own class. Demesnes were also designed to convey a sense of the legitimacy and precedent, utilising the older landscape features and generally the cores of the former elite. Most of the

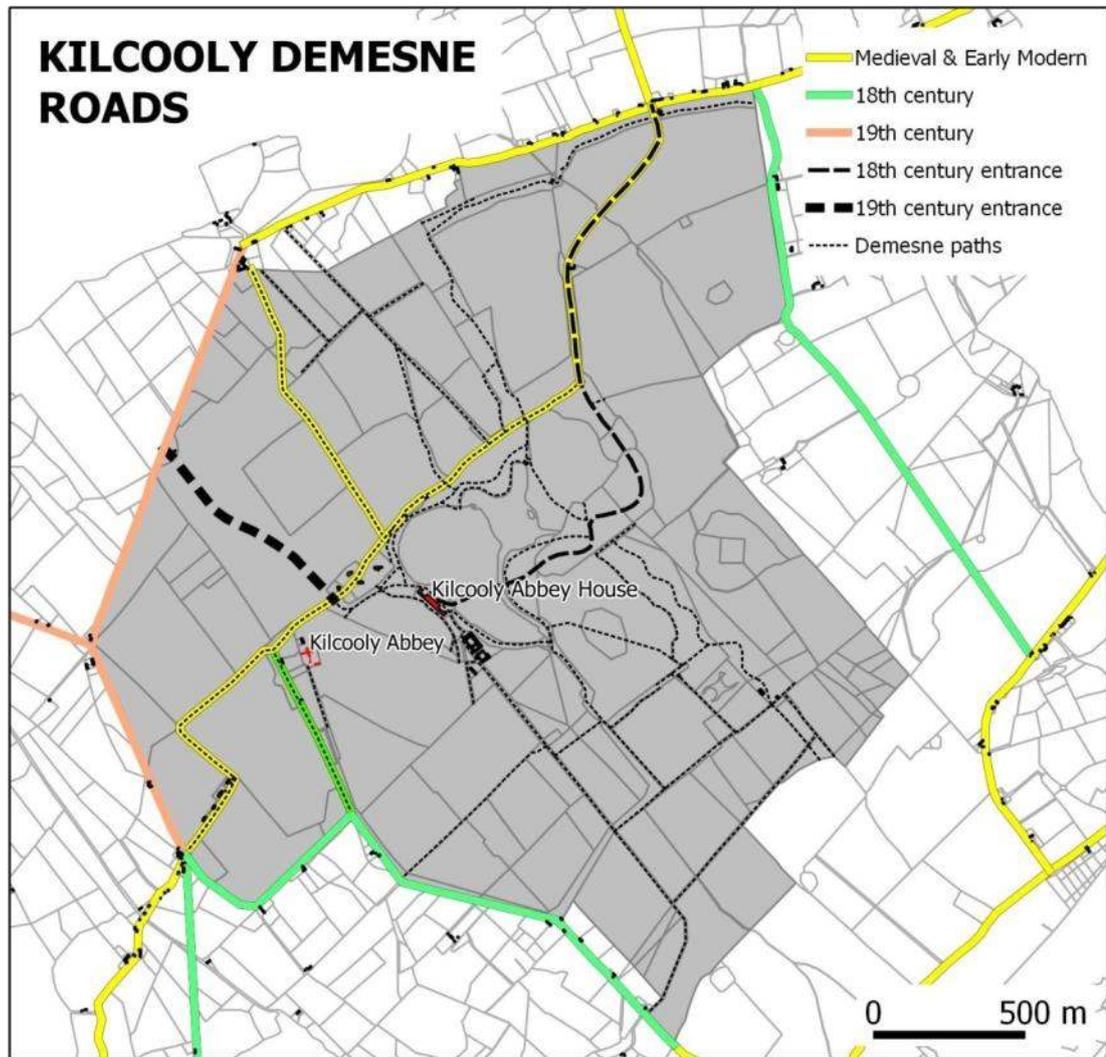


Figure 5.25 Roads, routes and paths around Kilcooly demesne.

later historic landed elite in Ireland had acquired their estates in the 17<sup>th</sup> century following massive land transfers. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the estate houses and their surrounding gardens and demesnes became important tools for expressing the new Ascendancy's rights to their estates. The Bellews in Co. Meath, part of the former elite, were unable to emulate these new practices and landscape designs, and may have destroyed themselves trying. Like the Grahams in Platin, the Barkers in Kilcooly acquired a medieval manor core. However, the Barker's estate was not secure primarily because of uncertainties about the extent of their property. Improvement, in the form of regular geometric garden design, appears to have been an important strategy for avoiding these uncertainties. As well as creating a demesne landscape – most likely incorporating the former precinct of the Cistercian abbey – the Barkers surrounded their estate core with a number of long-term leaseholds, with reliable tenants like the Walshe family. However, demesne landscapes were not static and, over a period of less



*Figure 5.26 The straight road and demesne wall built c.1840 around Kilcooly demesne.*



*Figure 5.27 Kilcooly Church of Ireland, built 1829 in a style typical of the Board of First Fruits churches.*

than 50 years, the focus of the Barkers had shifted from designing an artificial rational landscape to creating a pseudo-ancient landscape and expanding their demesne significantly, with substantial enclosing features. This acted to separate the Barker family estate from the surrounding landscape and tenants, creating a sequestered, private core space. Although demesne landscapes were themselves extraordinary places, the impact of Improvement, in terms of its influence on Irish society in general, happened beyond the demesne.

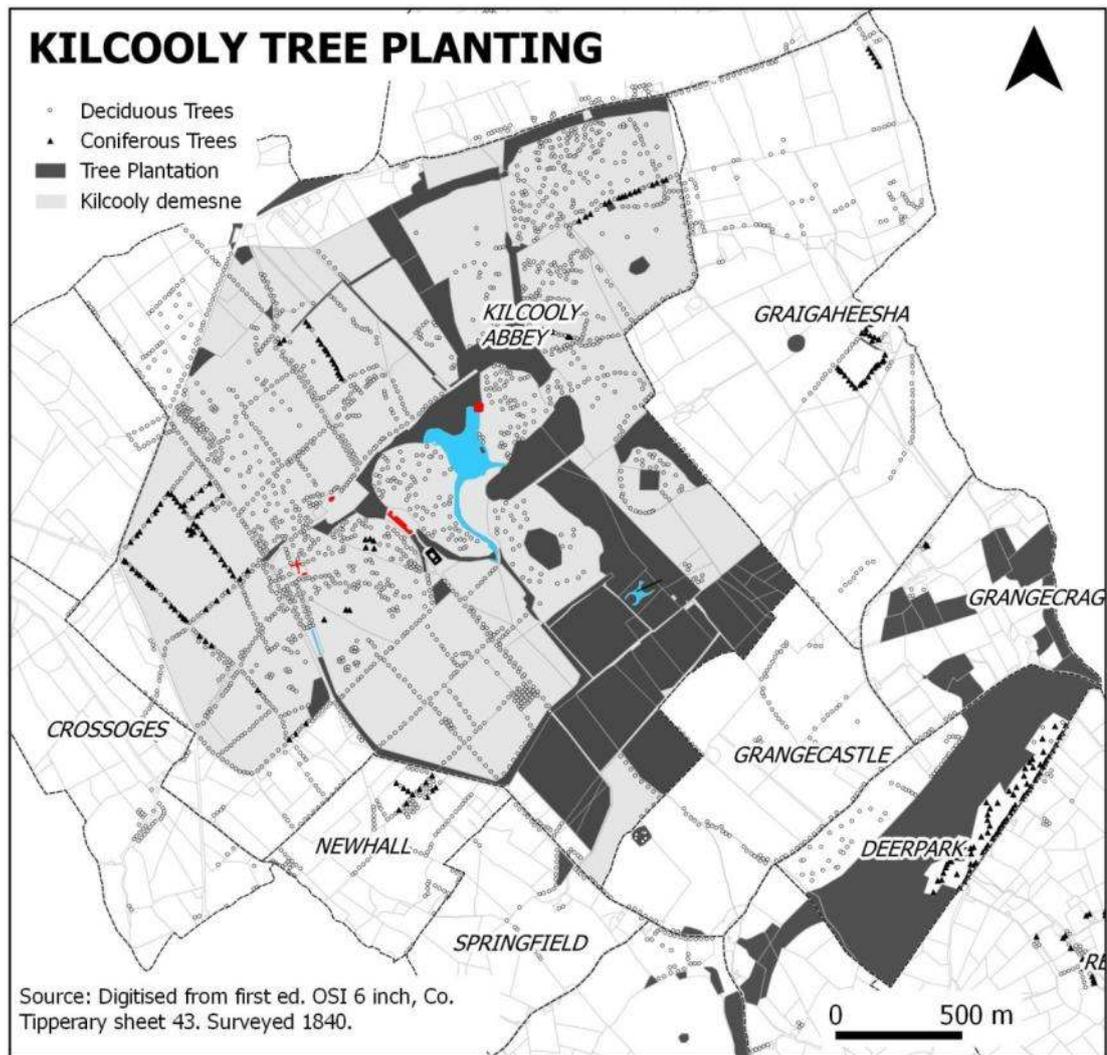


Figure 5.28 Trees and tree plantations in Kilcooly demesne.



Figure 5.29 Lime trees along a former field public road in Kilcooly demesne.



## **6 Improving Tenants' Landscapes**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The concern of this chapter is how later historic landscape change reflected Improvement principles. This is seen in the environment of religious worship, in villages and towns, housing and farmsteads, and, to a lesser degree, in industry. The first concern is the structure of tenant landscapes in later historic Ireland. Although the landlord classes had a significant role to play in shaping landscapes beyond their demesnes, and in particular in promoting Improvement, this was an uneven and sometimes contested role in Ireland. Subletting and middleman landlords were significant phenomenon of land ownership and organisation in later historic Ireland (see section 3.5). Religion was another defining feature of the period. This chapter will examine the significance religion and denominational structures played in shaping the later historic landscape, and how principles of Improvement influenced these structures, particularly in respect of the role of Catholicism in the landscape. Quite often, towns and villages were the focus of these religious structures, as well as being showcases for Improvement themselves. Two planned villages, Kilrea in Derry and New Birmingham in Kilcooly parishes, are examined here to demonstrate the significant impact Improvement had on their design and fabric. Perhaps the most profound impact of Improvement was altering tenant homes. Focusing particularly on the records for housing in the Barker estate in Kilcooly, I will look at how one particular community of tenants, the Palatines, incorporated Improvement principles into their buildings. Enclosure and fields were the most extensive improvement in the later historic landscape. They were dynamic, changing with new owners and tenants, but also quite often incorporating much older features in the landscape, particularly in areas of commonage. Patterns of enclosure in each of the four case study areas will be compared to examine how they were influenced by the principles of Improvement. Pattern unites all of these particular avenues of enquiry, in particular the juxtaposition of regularity and irregularity. Improvement also had a profound impact on practice, and how people lived their daily lives.

## 6.2 Tenant Society in Later Historic Ireland

Landlords have been identified as the primary agents of Improvement in later historic Ireland.<sup>1</sup> This was indeed the case in the immediate vicinity of Kilcooly Abbey in Tipperary (section 5.4). Anglo-Irish landowners were also the primary law-makers in later historic Ireland (section 3.4). Although the landlord classes had a significant role to play in the landscapes beyond their demesnes, and in particular in promoting Improvement, this was an uneven and sometimes contested role.

The 'Census of 1659', poll tax from 1660,<sup>2</sup> returned 841 heads of household in Duleek.<sup>3</sup> This is an approximate population of 2,523 if a multiplier of 3 is used.<sup>4</sup> The average population amongst the 34 townlands (excluding Duleek town) returned by the Census was 19. The townlands with the highest populations: other than Duleek town (population 195), were Platin (91) and Bellewstown (47), two of the largest townlands in the parish and the centres of the estates of the Darcy and Bellew families, and Athcarne (32), the centre of the Bath estate. The remaining townland returns were between 4 (Longford and Rahill) and 18 people and were outlying parts of larger estates. Up to 80% of the population in Duleek in 1660 were 'Irish', a short-hand for Catholic, both Gaelic or Anglo-Irish. The remaining 20% were 'English', new settlers or Protestant.

In Kilcooly the 1659 'Census' recorded a population of 135, most of whom lived in Kilcooly 'towne', the lowland portion of the parish surrounding the abbey.<sup>5</sup> The principal tenants were listed as Nicholas Bond in Glengoole and Nicholas Ragett 'gent' in Graigaheesha, both of whom appear to have been English. The majority of the population (130) were Irish, with just five English in the parish, all presumably members of Bond and Ragett's families.

Kilfenora returned a population of 229 in 1660, only five of whom were 'English'.<sup>6</sup> The largest population was in Ballyshanny, where a William Rumsey and his son and namesake were recorded as tituladoes. The Rumseys were presumably the chief tenants of the Earl of

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<sup>1</sup> Barnard, *Improving Ireland?*, p. 11; Forsythe, 'The Measures and Materiality of Improvement in Ireland', pp 75–76.

<sup>2</sup>Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory*, pp 198–221.

<sup>3</sup>Smyth & Pender (eds), *Census of Ireland, c.1659*, p. 479.

<sup>4</sup> Smyth cautions that this multiplier is generally only useful for inter-baronial population comparisons rather than as an absolute measure of population. Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory*, pp 198–221. Henceforth the figures quoted for the 1659 Census are the published figures without a multiplier.

<sup>5</sup>Smyth & Pender (eds), *Census of Ireland, c.1659*, p. 295.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Inchiquin, and were resident in O'Shanny's towerhouse (section 4.5). In fact nearly all of the main title holders in Kilfenora were tenants. Daneill McDonogh, gentleman, presumably resident in the cruciform stone house in Ballykeel South, and tenant of his relatives, Timothy and Cornelius McDonnogh. Boetius Clanchy, gentleman, living in Caherminaun, tenant of Walter Wall and Patrick Stafford.<sup>7</sup> Where Clancy had formerly been a land owner, now he appears to have been a principal tenant. Daniell Ó Leary, gentleman, and Dermott McDaniell of Bally McDonellane (modern Ballybaun) were principal tenants on land divided between Lord Kingston<sup>8</sup> and Donnogh O Bryan.

Kilrea had, in 1660, a population of 121.<sup>9</sup> Kilrea townland had the largest population (40) in the parish, presumably because of the town. Lislea had the next highest with just 17. Just over half of Kilrea's population were returned as English or Scottish Protestants, mostly living in Kilrea, Lislea, Moynock and Claragh townlands. This population of English and Scottish residents strongly reflected the role of the Company of Mercers in attracting new Protestant tenants to their estate (section 4.4). In contrast, Movanager townland, where the Company of Mercers had their initial primary settlement in Derry until it was destroyed in 1641, had a population of just 7, all of whom were Irish. The primary settlement in the parish was Kilrea town.

In 1841 there were some 21.75 million statute acres of farmed land in Ireland divided amongst 685,000 farms, with most small holdings concentrated in the west (Fig. 3.17).<sup>10</sup> The degree of subletting within this tenure framework is apparent in the Primary Valuation for each case study area, published between 1850 and 1858. Analysing the structure of these lists shows for each study area the numbers of fee holders, primary tenants who leased land directly from fee holders, freeholders and land held on commonage, and those that appeared to be subletting (Fig. 6.1). Significant differences appear between the four case study areas. Kilrea, not surprisingly, had the least number of fee holders and the largest number of primary tenants, as most people rented their farm directly from the Company of Mercers. Kilcooly also

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<sup>7</sup>RMP CL009-090002.

<sup>8</sup> Sir John King of Boyle, whose land lay mainly in counties Roscommon and Cork. See Edward Kimber and John Almon, *The Peerage of Ireland* (London, 1768), pp 122–123; Landed Estates Database, 'Estate Record: King (Kingston/Lorton)' in *Landed Estates Database*, 2011 (<http://www.landedestates.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=238>) (3 Oct. 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Smyth & Pender (eds), *Census of Ireland, c.1659*, p. 133.

<sup>10</sup> *Census of Ireland 1841*, p. 455.

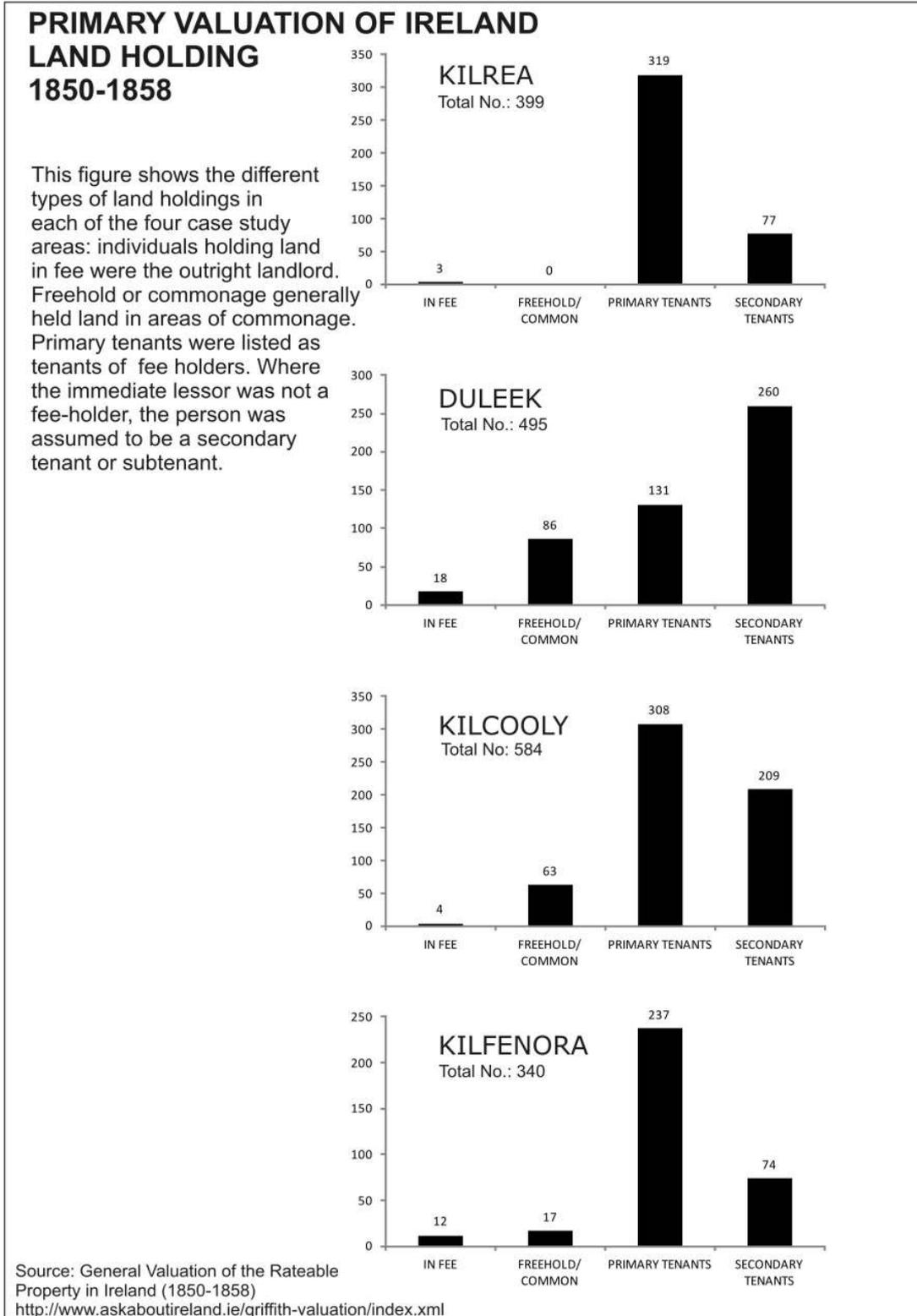


Figure 6.1 Subletting in the case study areas, c.1850.

had a large number of primary tenants relevant to fee holders. Kilfenora had a larger number of fee holders but also a large proportion of primary tenants. Only in Duleek did there appear to be a larger number of sub-tenants rather than primary tenants. Duleek also had a larger population of freeholders, including those living on commonage, a form of landholding less frequent in the other study areas and entirely absent in Kilrea.

### **6.3 The Landscape of Religion and Improvement**

Religion was, for much of the later historic period, the defining aspect of people's identity in Ireland. Catholics and dissenters were excluded from the structures of power enjoyed by members of the established Church of Ireland (section 3.4). Both Catholics and Protestant Church of Ireland had a parish structure throughout the country. For both the landscape was a container for confessional practice. For the Church of Ireland most of this practice took place within the parish church, whilst for Catholics the landscape acted as a theatre of religious practice, encompassing both the parish church, as a central place of worship, but also extending to the use of stations and masses in private homes and in the open, pilgrimage to significant church sites and holy wells, and the cult of the saints.<sup>11</sup> Presbyterians and Methodists identified with their respective church buildings and congregations rather than a particular geographical space like a parish. The church was the central point of each parish, the node of the religious community. Within the Anglican community these were most often the remnants of medieval churches like in Kilfenora, Duleek and Kilrea. The condition of these parish churches in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century was frequently very poor. A visitation by the Anglican Bishop of Meath, Dopping, in 1693 recorded that 24 of 25 churches and chancels in the deanery of Duleek were out of repair.<sup>12</sup> In fact up to 92% of churches in the diocese of Meath were ruined in 1693.<sup>13</sup> Duleek parish church, which had contained an organ until the reign of James I, was in an acceptable state of repair although its fabric was decayed.<sup>14</sup> The Board of First Fruits was established in 1711 specifically to build Church of Ireland churches, buy glebes and build rectories.<sup>15</sup> In the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Board of

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<sup>11</sup> Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*.

<sup>12</sup> Philippe Loupès, 'Bishop Dopping's Visitation of the Diocese of Meath 1693' in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 24 (1988), p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Nigel Yates, *The Religious Condition of Ireland, 1770-1850* (Oxford; New York, 2006), p. 34.

First Fruits are estimated to have built 474 new churches out of a total of 1100, at a cost of £445,180, of which £165,700 constituted grants and £279,480 were loans.<sup>16</sup> The Act of Union in 1800 provided a massive boost to building in Ireland with the expenditure of money paid as compensation for loss of political patronage when the Irish parliament was dissolved. This was expressed in new residences and distinctive, uniform new churches. Rowan describes these Board of First Fruits churches as 'plain boxy halls with dinky three-storey towers set at one end, and perhaps a series of stepped buttresses to decorate the sides and gable end'.<sup>17</sup> Kilcooly parish church is a good example of a typical Board of First Fruits church. Built in 1829 and part funded by the Barker estate, Kilcooly's new church replaced the old, small church. The former farm of the Church of Ireland rectors, the Walshe family, was taken at the fall of the lease, the house and offices were demolished to make way for new church and graveyard (Figs 5.27 & 6.2),<sup>18</sup> whilst the rest of the Walshe farm was subsumed into the expanding demesne (section 5.4). In contrast the medieval church in Kilfenora, although significantly altered, retained its status as a Cathedral and remained the primary focus of the tiny Church of Ireland community in the diocese (Fig. 4.18).

Compared to the Church of Ireland, the Catholic church was in a significantly different position. By the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the structure of the Catholic church had been destroyed, and it had to rebuild its parish organisation. A survey of the 'State of Popery' by the Irish Parliament in 1731 reported this organisation in progress.<sup>19</sup> The Anglican Archbishop of Cashel reported that there were 40 Catholic mass houses and 62 priests and 'itinerant [sic] assistants at festivals' in his diocese.<sup>20</sup> The Bishop of Derry reported 'only nine Mass-house, Mass being said in most places sub dio, or under some sort of shed, built up occasionally to shelter ye Priests from ye weather'.<sup>21</sup> Kevin Whelan charted the evolution of Catholic church or chapelbuilding into the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reflection of the growth of the Catholic church and the importance of the relatively wealthy, most frequently urban, centres in the resurgence of the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>17</sup> Alistair John Rowan, 'Irish Victorian churches: denominational differences' in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P Kennedy (eds), *Ireland: Art into History* (Dublin, 1994), p. 211.

<sup>18</sup> Neely, *Kilcooley*, pp 82–83, 94.

<sup>19</sup> 'Report on the State of Popery, Ireland, 1731' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, i (1912), pp 10–27; 'Report on the State of Popery in Ireland, 1731: Diocese of Tuam' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, iii (1914), pp 124–159; 'Report on the State of Popery in Ireland, 1731: Diocese of Dublin' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, iv (1915), pp 131–177; Emmet J Larkin, *The Pastoral Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1750-1850* (Dublin, 2006), pp 26–27, 137–141.

<sup>20</sup> 'Report on the State of Popery in Ireland, 1731', p. 175.

<sup>21</sup> 'Report on the State of Popery, Ireland, 1731', p. 17.



*Figure 6.2 Kilcooly Church of Ireland parish church, built in 1829, showing an annex built for the exclusive use of the Barker family.*

Catholic church.<sup>22</sup> He identifies three phases of church building type. The first, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, were mass houses, heavily influenced by vernacular styles and in their construction, with whitewashed stone walls, and thatched roofs, and often used as public buildings for schools. Although mostly small, some Catholic churches could be quite substantial, like the Catholic chapel in Tipperary town, described in 1731 by the Anglican Archbishop of Cashel as a new building measuring 92 feet (28m) by 72 feet (22m).<sup>23</sup> The second phase consisted of the more substantial mass-houses, built towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the Catholic middle class and commercial class and strong farmers began to assert themselves, most often again in the towns. The third phase of Catholic church building, from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, consisted of large, neo-gothic-

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<sup>22</sup>Kevin Whelan, 'The Catholic Church in County Tipperary 1700 1900' in William Nolan and Thomas G. McGrath (eds), *Tipperary: History and Society* (Dubin, 1985), pp 225–242.

<sup>23</sup> 'Report on the State of Popery in Ireland, 1731', p. 175.

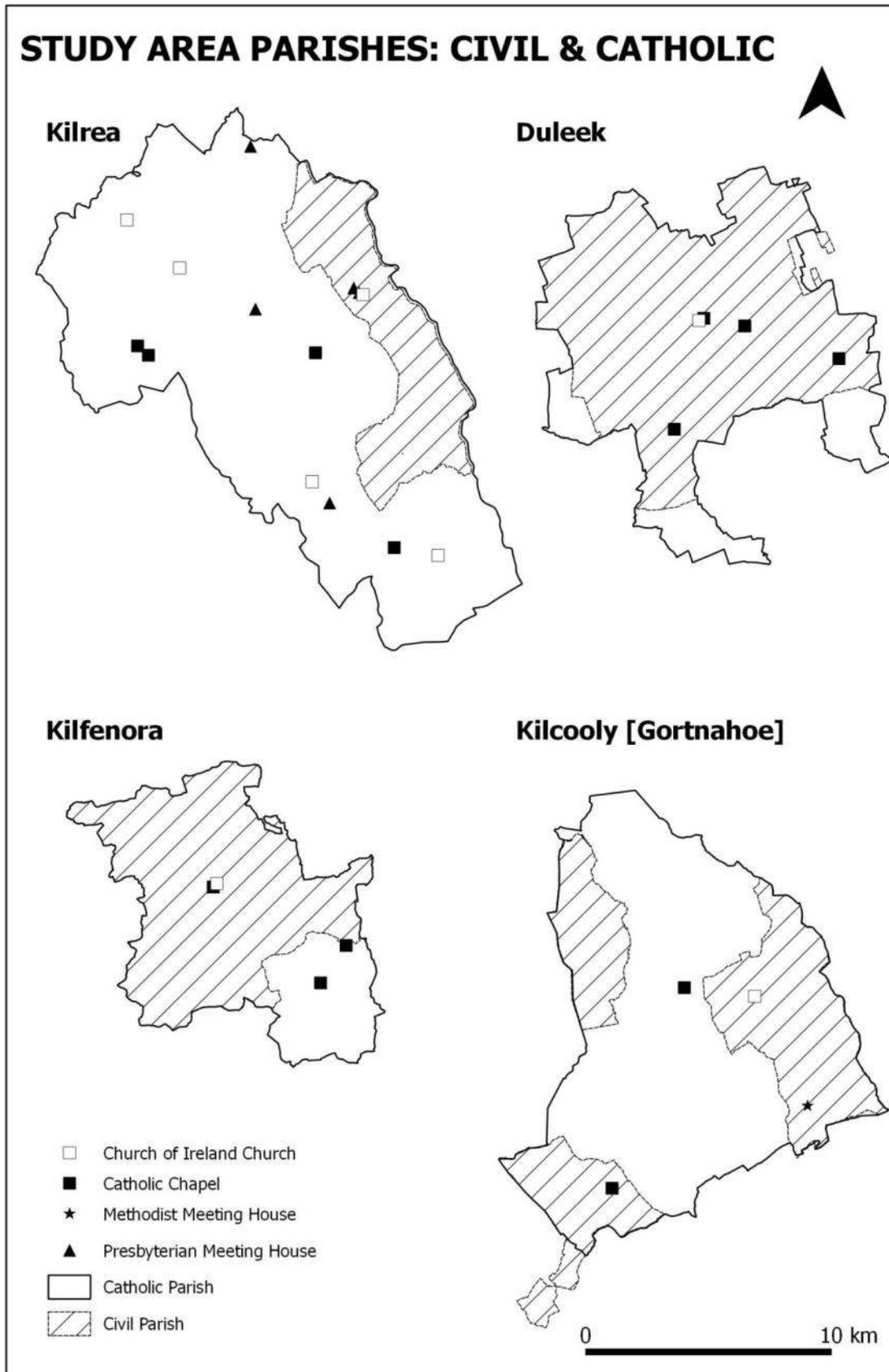


Figure 6.3 Study area parishes, comparing the Civil Parishes and their corresponding larger Catholic parishes.



*Figure 6.4 Duleek Catholic parish church in Duleek village.*



*Figure 6.5 Collierstown Catholic church. The tower is a later addition.*

style structures, some designed and built by architects like Pugin and J.J. McCarthy,<sup>24</sup> and promoted by the Irish Ecclesiological Society.<sup>25</sup>

Catholic parishes tended to be substantially larger than their Church of Ireland equivalent, primarily because the large congregations were served by a relatively small population of priests, dependent on dues from parishioners instead of the tithes, which were directed instead to the established Church of Ireland. The Catholic parish of Duleek, Co. Meath was 17% larger than the Civil parish of Duleek. The Catholic parish of Gortnahoe incorporated the adjacent civil parishes of Buolick, Fennor and Kilcooly. Kilrea Catholic parish in Derry consisted of the civil parishes of Kilrea, Tamlaght O'Crilly and Desertoghill (Fig. 6.3).

Duleek Catholic parish contained up to four chapels, the largest of which was built c.1812 in the village of Duleek and served as the parish church (Fig 6.4).<sup>26</sup> This large building was built without a steeple. Catholic churches could not have a steeple until Catholic Emancipation in 1829,<sup>27</sup> and instead relied on finial crosses, and occasionally detached bell towers, indicating the landscape significance of these steeples. A second, smaller, cruciform chapel in Duleek parish was built in Bellewstown village, in Collierstown townland, on commonage land (Fig 6.5),<sup>28</sup> whilst two field names, Chapel Bank and Chapel Field, suggest the presence of Catholic chapels, in Knockisland townland and in Boolies Great townlands respectively.<sup>29</sup>

The Catholic parish of Kilrea encapsulates the difficulties faced by the Catholic church in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Catholic parish encompassed the civil parishes of Kilrea and Desertoghill. The first Catholic chapel built in the parish in the later historic period was at Craigavole, built in a ringfort or earthen enclosure (Fig. 6.6).<sup>30</sup> Neither this church building, nor the archaeological monument in which it was built, survive. This choice of site may simply have reflected a desire to build their chapel in a sequestered location. The symbolic

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<sup>24</sup> Yates, *Religious Condition of Ireland*, pp 227, 238.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Long, 'McCarthy, James Joseph' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), v, 802–3; James Joseph McCarthy, *Suggestions on the Arrangement and Characteristics of Parish Churches* (Dublin, 1851).

<sup>26</sup>NIAH, 'Saint Cieran's Roman Catholic Church, Main Street, Duleek, County Meath, No. 14321004' in *Buildings of Ireland: National Inventory of Architectural Heritage*, 2012

(<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=ME&regno=14321004>) (30 Apr. 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Brady & Corish, *The Church Under the Penal Code*, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup>NIAH, 'Saint Teresa's Roman Catholic Church, Bellewstown, County Meath, No. 14320002' in *Buildings of Ireland: National Inventory of Architectural Heritage*, 2012

(<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/niah/search.jsp?type=record&county=ME&regno=14320002>) (30 Apr. 2012).

<sup>29</sup>Joan Mullen (ed.), *Meath Field Names Project* (Navan, 2012); Colin Byrne pers com.

<sup>30</sup> Angélique Day and Patrick McWilliams, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Parishes of Co. Londonderry VIII, 1830, 1833-7, 1839, Volume 27 East Londonderry* (Belfast, 1994), p. 15.

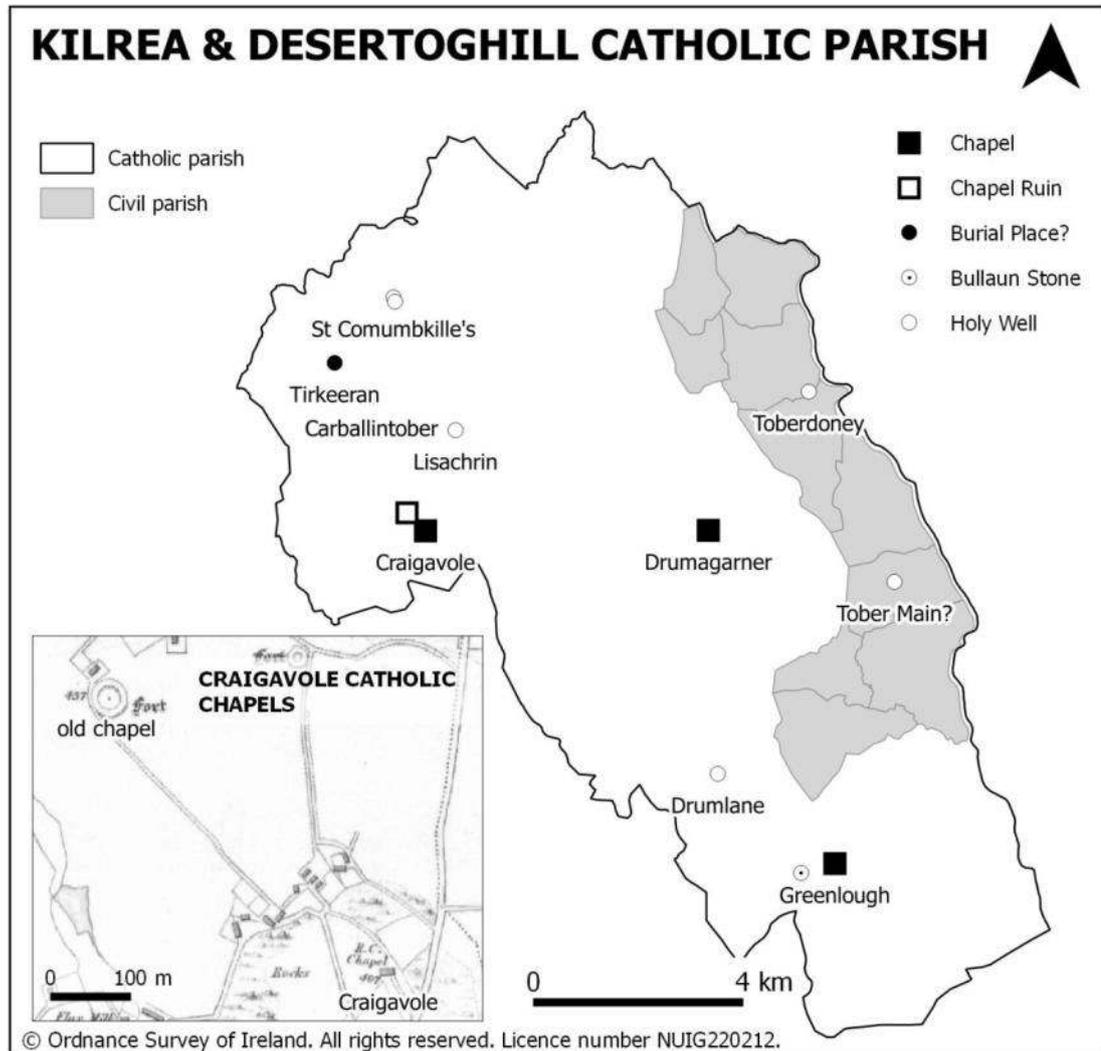


Figure 6.6 Map of Kilrea Catholic parish c.1840.

significance of locating their chapel in an earthen archaeological monument may not have been lost on the community, where permanence and rootedness were, under the Penal Laws, contested; this choice may have provided a significant connection with the past. In c.1730, this was replaced by a more substantial structure chapel some 850m to the south-east, although still built of stone and sod gables, but located in a more open place. This new chapel was itself rebuilt twice more in the 1770s and in 1821,<sup>31</sup> marking the growing confidence of the Catholic community. By 1831 there were three Catholic chapels in the parish, at Craigavole, Drumagarnner and Greenlough. After the Mercers took their estate back in hand they contributed funds for the construction of these chapels. However, no Catholic chapels were built in the town of Kilrea itself.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Holy sites, like wells and places along pilgrimage routes in medieval Ireland, offered an alternative, even competing infrastructure for devotion to the parish churches and cathedrals of the Universal church, and could be rival foci for medieval congregations.<sup>32</sup> Pilgrimage and open-air worship in the later medieval period became associated not so much with a holy journey but as social occasions, where important transactions were made, with recreation, and curiosity, and as such became the focus of some religious distrust.<sup>33</sup> In the later historic period in Ireland, and particularly after the Penal laws were passed, these sites in the landscape took on an even greater significance. From the perspective of the Protestant Ascendancy, these sites were symbols of the atavism and superstition of the unreformed Catholics. John Richardson's *Great Folly* written in 1727, expressed the view that Catholic pilgrimage to holy sites and in particular holy wells were a form of superstition and idolatry and a 'needless expense of time and money' for people.<sup>34</sup> Richardson described the devotions at St John's Well in Meath. After the pilgrim came in sight of the well, they walked to it in bare feet, drink the water 'which is purging, and impregnated with some Mineral'. Kneeling in each corner they said five *paters*, five *aves*, and one *credo*, each circuit making one station. After four stations the pilgrims knelt in the water to pray, conclude with a prayer to John the Baptist.<sup>35</sup> The Council of Trent, in 1563, upheld the legitimacy of pilgrimage in the Catholic faith, and as part of the Counter-Reformation strategy, although some of the less savoury aspects of pilgrimage were to be removed and a greater control placed on the creation of holy places. The Catholic Church sought to promote places of genuine healing like holy wells but discouraged places where drinking, piping, dancing and moral abuse took place.<sup>36</sup> Within Ireland holy wells were primarily associated with the vernacular Catholic religious practice which developed during the period of the Penal Laws. With over 3,000 recorded examples, holy wells were perhaps the most numerous religious features in the Irish landscape.<sup>37</sup> These were widely distributed around the country, although in less dense concentrations in Ulster. As features associated with Penal era Catholic worship they were not necessarily always isolated features. The holy well of Toberfaughna in Kilfenora lay within view of the Church of Ireland cathedral (section 4.5). St Caimin's well at Caherminaun, also in Kilfenora parish, was sited next to an early

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<sup>32</sup> Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 65.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 72–79.

<sup>34</sup> John Richardson, *The Great Folly, Superstition, and Idolatry, of Pilgrimages in Ireland* (Dublin, 1727), p. x.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 64–65.

<sup>36</sup> Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, pp 214–215.

<sup>37</sup> In total 3150 holy wells are listed in the RMPs for Ireland; National Monuments Service, 'Sites and Monuments Database'; Northern Ireland Environmental Agency, 'Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record'.

## Chapter 6 Improving Tenants' Landscapes

medieval church site and remained in use throughout the later historic period.<sup>38</sup> The church site itself was used as a burial place into the later historic period. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century stations at St Caimin's well consisted of five rounds of the well and mass was also occasionally said on the patron's day.<sup>39</sup>

Holy wells in Kilrea included Tober Downey, in Kilrea townland, which had fallen out of use by the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had been used as a main source of water for the town until the Company of Mercers built a well in the town Diamond c.1831. Other holy wells in the parish included Dumlane where, according to the Ordnance Survey memoirs, sickly children and adults had once been brought for relief.<sup>40</sup> The tradition of visiting holy wells in Kilrea diminished in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the case of Lisachrin holy well because the population became predominantly Protestant.<sup>41</sup>

Whelan identified a deep class dichotomy in religious belief and practice in pre-famine Ireland, with the labourer and cottier class remaining outside the reach of the formal Catholic Church.<sup>42</sup> The activities of the Whiteboys in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century, associated with the interests of these lower classes - sometimes directly challenged the Catholic Church. Communities were also attached to individual priests as personalities rather than to the church as an institution. Whereas at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Catholic upper class had been involved in popular Catholic culture with no apparent loss of social position, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century they were distancing themselves from the practices of their coreligionists. Traditional practices like wakes and patterns were discouraged by the formal Tridentine Catholic Church, particularly by orders like the Jesuits.<sup>43</sup> Whereas the vernacular Catholic church had found strength in the localised nature of its traditions, of domestic rituals of birth, marriage and death, much of which used the landscape as a theatre for confessional beliefs, the Catholic hierarchy were increasingly concerned, in the later historic period, with moving their congregation to a more structured form of worship primarily focused on the parish church. Patron days, holy wells,

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<sup>38</sup> Caherminaun holy well: SMR CL009-059010-

<sup>39</sup> Irish Folklore Commission, 'Schools' Manuscript Collection: Kilfenora Parish, Co. Clare. Volume 619' (Irish Folklore Commission Archives, UCD., 1938), pp 80–81 (Volume 619); Irish Folklore Commission, 'Schools' Manuscript Collection: Kilfenora Parish, Co. Clare. Volume 620' (Irish Folklore Commission Archives, UCD., 1938), p. 121 (Volume 620).

<sup>40</sup> Day & McWilliams, *OS Memoirs Vol. 18, Maghera and Tamlaght O'Crilly*, p. 135.

<sup>41</sup> Day & McWilliams, *OS Memoirs Vol. 27, East Londonderry*, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> Whelan, 'The Catholic Church in County Tipperary 1700 1900', p. 242.

<sup>43</sup> Whelan, 'An underground gentry?', pp 33, 35–36; Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, pp 154–155.

pilgrimage all helped to maintain the religions place in Irish life, even if the Catholic church had to re-educate its population in the new Tridentine principles of the Counter-Reformation.<sup>44</sup>

#### **6.4 Improvement through villages**

Towns and villages were important landscape features in later historic rural Ireland, both as places, nodes and landmarks in the landscape. Towns were frequently centrepieces of Improvement estate landscapes, sharing some characteristics, like formal geometric design and architectural features, which were also employed in demesne landscapes. It is curious then that towns and villages hardly merited a mention in Young's *Tour in Ireland*, compared to his description of the countryside. Yet the towns were vitally important, not just as a focus and distribution point, a market nexus for goods and produce, but also as exemplars of Improvement in terms of building and design. Planned towns of Anglo-Norman origin in Ireland were significant designed landscapes in themselves, with patterns of plan and size, legal status and prescribed functions and practices, building types and arrangements, common to towns and villages across northern Europe.<sup>45</sup> These medieval antecedents formed the core of many of the later historic improved towns and villages in Ireland, constituting one of, what the historical geographer Jones Hughes called the 'three pillars' of the landlord landscape: demesne, big house and landlord village.<sup>46</sup> Improved and modernised towns were designed to Renaissance principles of order, uniformity and spaciousness, mirroring the practice of demesne landscape improvement. However, Graham and Proudfoot argue that the development of towns and villages was not necessarily a landlord phenomenon, but that landlords delegated a great deal of this responsibility to a middle class who would eventually supplant the landlords,<sup>47</sup> mirroring in some ways what was going on in the countryside beyond the landlord's demesne. And yet, as places, towns and villages were powerful indicators of the condition of the estate and surrounding countryside. Towns and villages also hosted markets and fairs, acting as nodes for sale of produce and goods (Figs. 1.8 & 1.9). They were, within the Anglican communion, most often the node of religious practice, and the place where land agents dealt with their tenants. Although towns and villages were predominantly the locus of trade activity in the district, agriculture was still a significant employer of their inhabitants. In

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<sup>44</sup> Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory*, pp 365–367.

<sup>45</sup> O'Keeffe, 'Were there Designed Landscapes in Medieval Ireland?', p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Jones Hughes, 'The estate system of landholding in nineteenth-century Ireland' in William Nolan (ed.), *Shaping of Ireland: The Geographical Perspective* (illustrated edition, Dublin, 1986).

<sup>47</sup> Graham & Proudfoot, *Urban Improvement in Provincial Ireland 1700-1840*, p. 59.

1841, 48% of families in New Birmingham,<sup>48</sup> 46% in Duleek,<sup>49</sup> and 45% in Kilfenora were chiefly employed in agriculture.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, the figure was just 23% of families in Kilrea town,<sup>51</sup> a relatively small proportion, reflecting its greater importance as a centre of linen manufacturing and trading, and as a service centre for the Company of Mercers' estate in Derry. Other types of villages, clachans, were predominantly agricultural settlements (section 3.4).

Towns and villages represented their locality. So, for example, when in 1846 the Parliamentary Gazette described Duleek village as 'a very poor place, [with] a slender prospect of improvement',<sup>52</sup> this was, in some senses, a statement about the parish in general, where large areas of commonage with attendant irregular squatter settlements (section 6.6) created an impression, for the writers of the Gazette, of disorder and decay. Kilfenora was characterised in even more stark terms as 'a shrunk and ghastly caricature upon the practical notion of a "city" and nothing but its Episcopal name and historical associations prevent it from being regarded as a mean and shabby hamlet'.<sup>53</sup> In both cases the fabric of the village was substantially shaped by its medieval origins. Duleek was a significant medieval ecclesiastical and monastic centres; Kilfenora village was a Gaelic Cathedral-centred settlement in origin (section 1.4; Fig. 6.7).<sup>54</sup> It would appear that the measure of Improvement for the compilers of the Gazetteer lay in the uniformity of buildings and street pattern. These attributes were apparent in the designs of Kilrea and New Birmingham.

### ***Kilrea town and the Stewart estate***

The Crown was, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, anxious that properties in the Ulster plantations be leased to English and Scottish Protestant settlers, but there was also concerned that certain forms of house and enclosure were used (section 4.5). Failure to implement this led, in large part, to the Crown's confiscation of the Company of Mercers' estates in 1639. Kilrea was established as a plantation town in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Its exact foundation date is unknown as Kilrea did not receive a charter, but the town is thought to have been created c.1650.

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<sup>48</sup> *Census of Ireland 1841*, pp 234–235.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 92–93.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 158–159.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 336–337.

<sup>52</sup> *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland Volume 1: A-C* (Dublin, 1846), p. 137.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>54</sup> Kenneth W. Nicholls, 'Gaelic society and economy' in Art Cosgrove and William Edward Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland: Medieval Ireland, 1169-1534* (Oxford, 1987), p. 399.

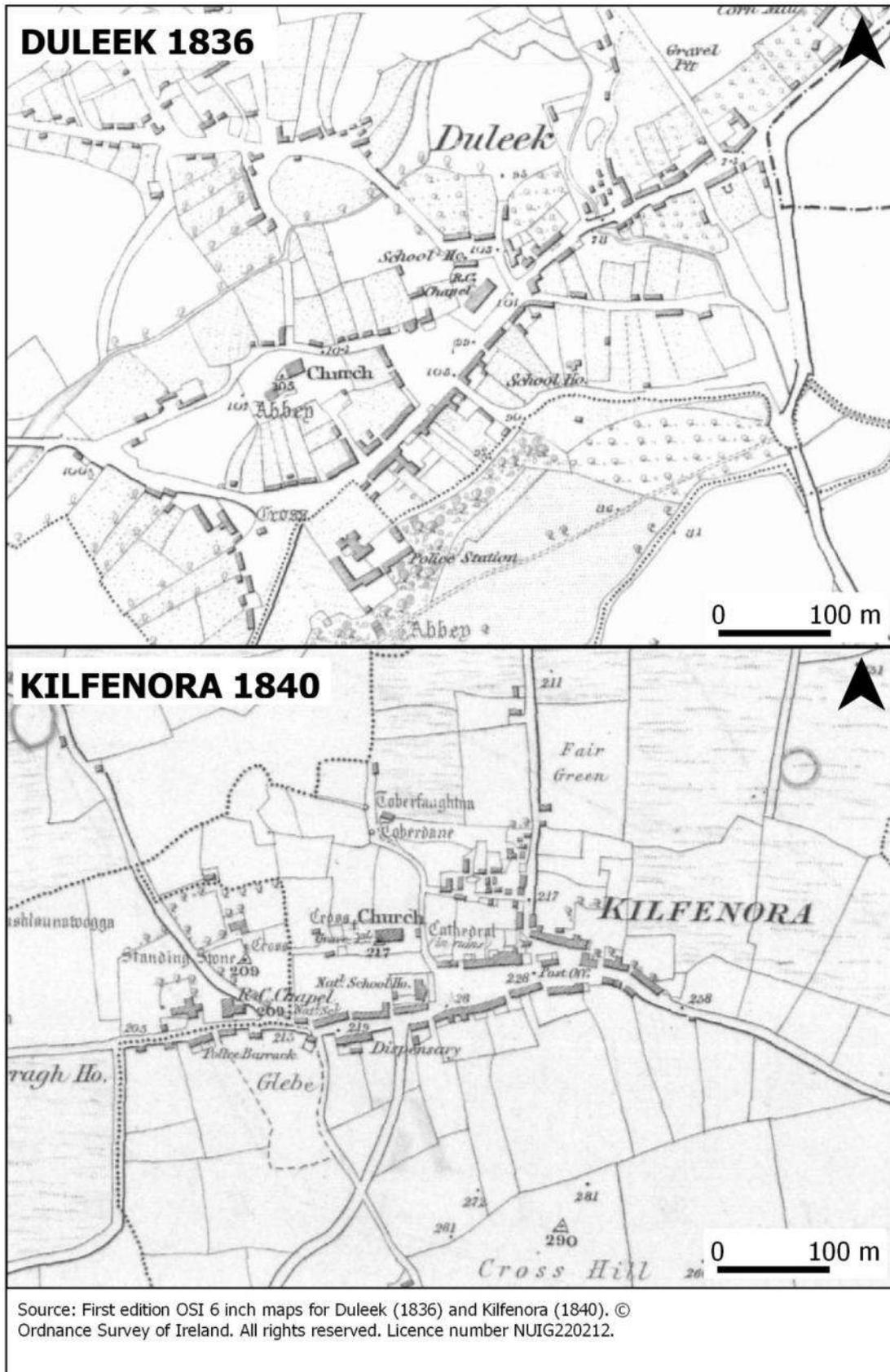


Figure 6.7 Maps of Duleek and Kilfenora villages c.1840.

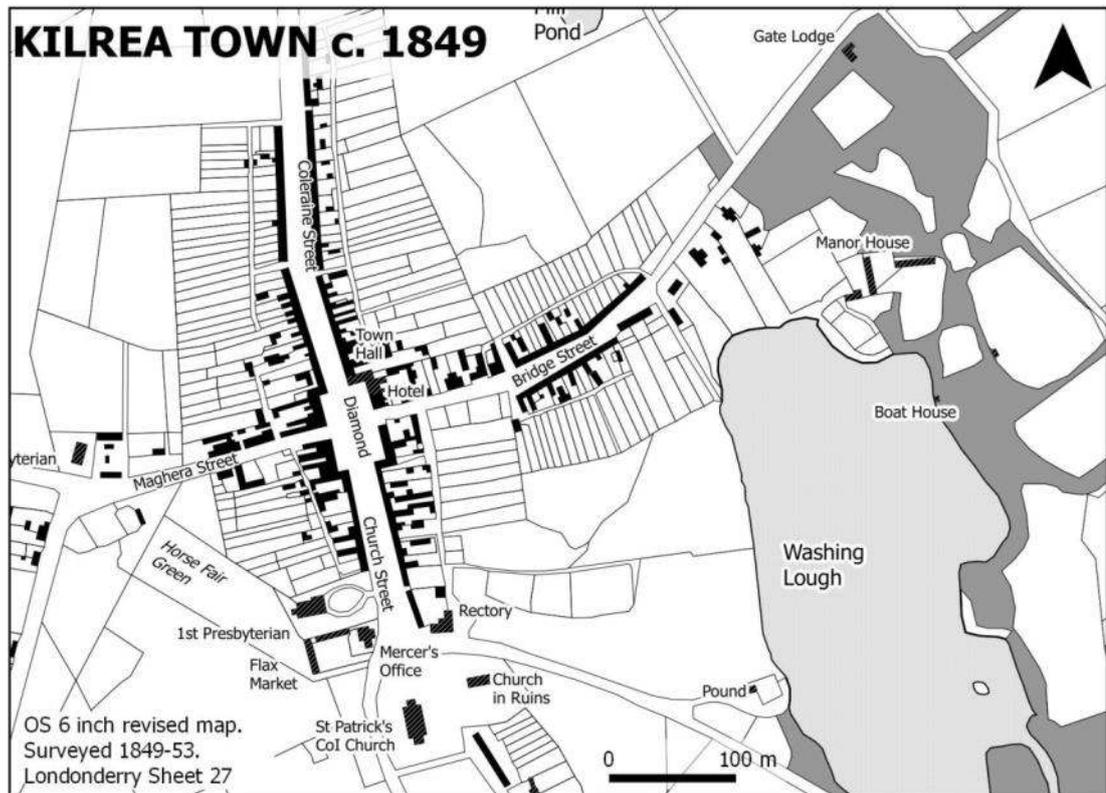


Figure 6.8 Map of Kilrea town, c.1849.

However, the town buildings, and the central open space, the Diamond, appear primarily to date to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>55</sup>

Having recovered their estates, and following the Restoration, the Company of Mercers, rather than take a direct hand in the management of their estates, rented their whole concern to middlemen. From 1663 to 1713 the estate was leased to the Jacksons for £300 annually, then to John McMullan for £420 annually. From 1751, Alexander Stewart leased the Mercers' estate for 61 years or three lives with a massive entry fine of £16,500 for each life.<sup>56</sup> Alexander Stewart was a member of the Irish parliament for Co. Down, a linen merchant and a substantial landowning family whose seat was at Mountstewart, Co. Down.<sup>57</sup> The Stewart stake in the Mercers' estate was a key resource in financing and maintaining their position of power, helping them to enter and rise through the peerage, and become barons, earls and marquess of Londonderry.<sup>58</sup> Alexander Stewart was succeeded by his son Robert, Viscount

<sup>55</sup> Although it is possible earlier phases of construction from the 17<sup>th</sup> century survive beneath these later buildings.

<sup>56</sup> Kernohan, *The parishes of Kilrea and Tamlaght O'Crilly*, p. 19; 'Copy of the lease of the Manor of Mercers', Lease, 1757 (PRONI, D4108/1/16M).

<sup>57</sup> The house and gardens, Mountstewart, are now a National Trust property. Location, ITM: 755115, 869678.

<sup>58</sup> John Burke, *A General and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire* (London, 1833), pp 98–99.

Castlereagh, a prominent politician who would, in time, become the Chief Secretary of Ireland during the 1798 Rebellion, the principal champion of the Act of Union in the Irish parliament, and the British Foreign Secretary during the Napoleonic War and subsequent peace negotiations.<sup>59</sup>

The Company of Mercers were aware, in 1751, of the failings of their previous chief tenants and sought out a new chief tenant who would introduce Improvements on their estate. It would appear that the Stewarts focused their Improvements primarily on the town of Kilrea. Alexander Stewart built the diamond (an open square or plaza) in the centre of Kilrea town in 1760.<sup>60</sup> This was a period when Improvement principles were shaping a number of towns around Ulster, including Lisburn and, most notably, Armagh.<sup>61</sup> The Stewarts also redeveloped Newtownards with a central square and market house.<sup>62</sup> The appearance of the town in his newly rented estate was an important reflection on Stewart, the politician. 'An orderly look to a town was thought to denote regularity in its government and the worth of leading inhabitants. Conversely, the run-down and the chaotic connoted human failings.'<sup>63</sup>

In 1802 Kilrea town was recognised as being of some importance, with significant 'public edifices', but situated within, and curtailed by, its surrounding country.<sup>64</sup> When the Mercers took their estate back in hand in 1831 they commenced investing in substantial improvements. Much of this investment on Improvement was initially directed at Kilrea town itself. In 1846 the *Parliamentary Gazette* noted the Mercers' intention to 'carry out extensive improvement in the town, and in the large tract of dreary, wild, and uncultivated country around it. From what has already been done, much may be expected.'<sup>65</sup>

Kilrea's design incorporates Renaissance principles of uniformity in pattern and is comparable to, if not a direct copy of, the city of Londonderry (Fig. 6.8).<sup>66</sup> Like Derry, Kilrea has a central

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<sup>59</sup> Patrick M Geoghegan, 'Stewart, Robert Viscount Castlereagh 2nd marquess of Londonderry' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ix, 79–90.

<sup>60</sup> Day & McWilliams, *OS Memoirs Vol. 27, East Londonderry*, p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> Gilbert Camblin, *The Town in Ulster* (Belfast, 1951), pp 92–93; Catherine McCullough and W. H Crawford, *Armagh Town Atlas* (Dublin, 2007), p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland*, p. 202, fig. 160.

<sup>63</sup> Toby Barnard, 'The cultures of eighteenth-century Irish towns' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, cviii (2002), p. 196.

<sup>64</sup> George Vaughan Sampson, *Statistical Survey of the County of Londonderry: with Observations on the Means of Improvement* (Dublin, 1802), p. 288.

<sup>65</sup> *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland*, pp 529–530.

<sup>66</sup> Theodore William Moody, *The Londonderry Plantation, 1609-41: the City of London and the Plantation in Ulster* (1939), pp 257–269; R. J. Hunter, 'Towns in the Ulster Plantation' in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 11 (1971), pp



Figure 6.9 The Diamond in Kilrea town, showing the Mercer's Arms Hotel and the Kilrea Town Hall, the former site of Kilrea's market house.

square or diamond (c.65m by 37m) from which four main streets project. The town streets were, in 1831, approximately 627m north-south by 522m east-west.<sup>67</sup> Despite the regular pattern of the town, the building qualities varied. In 1837 most of the 237 houses in the town were thatched, with just 11 roofed in slate.<sup>68</sup> Fifty-one of Kilrea's houses were two and three stories high, built in terraces facing the streets, with the rest single storey.<sup>69</sup> A series of back streets separated the houses from long back gardens. In comparison the walled city of Derry has a central diamond measuring c. 60m by 60m, and extends 480m east/west by 250m north/south.

The Mercers financed new landmark buildings in the town: a new market house, and a new hotel on the diamond (Fig. 6.9), a new manor house residence for their resident agent, along with a landscaped park sweeping down to Washing Lough (Fig. 6.7). Most significant though,

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40–79; Brooke S. Blades, 'English villages in the Londonderry plantation' in *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, xx, no. 1 (1986), pp 257–269.

<sup>67</sup> Day & McWilliams, *OS Memoirs Vol. 27, East Londonderry*, p. 108.

<sup>68</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (2 vols, London, 1837), p. 201.

<sup>69</sup> Day & McWilliams, *OS Memoirs Vol. 27, East Londonderry*, p. 109.



*Figure 6.10 Kilrea Church of Ireland parish church, built c.1841.*

was the new Church of Ireland parish church, St Patrick's. Where the old parish church was housed in the late medieval structure, small, discrete and intimate, with a simple bell tower, the new parish church was large, robust and confident. Designed in the neo-Romanesque style by George Smith,<sup>70</sup> Kilrea parish church was built in 1841. The new church design incorporated a massive spire, and the church itself was positioned at the end of Church Street, creating a vista, a physical landmark of the Mercers' Improvements in the previous decade (Fig. 6.10). The Mercers also financially assisted the building on their estate of Presbyterian churches, both in Kilrea town and in the countryside, and Catholic chapels, all in the countryside. Religious building would also become a significant element of the planned town of New Birmingham in Tipperary.

### ***New Birmingham***

New Birmingham town in rural Tipperary, as the name would suggest, was conceived by an ambitious landlord, Vere Hunt, as an industrial and commercial centre. It was also inspired by improved principles of design and uniformity, although executed with considerably less

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<sup>70</sup> 'Dictionary of Irish Architects - George Smith, 1783-1869' ([http://www.dia.ie/architects/view/5011/Smith-George%5B2%5D%23#tab\\_works](http://www.dia.ie/architects/view/5011/Smith-George%5B2%5D%23#tab_works)) (24 June 2014).

success than Kilrea. New Birmingham was located in the Glengoole portion of Kilcooly parish, on the Vere Hunt estate, and was not necessarily as eccentric a location for this enterprise as it first appears. Coal, more specifically high-quality anthracite, had been mined on a small scale in the Slieveardagh hills from the later medieval period. Its impact was apparent in local place names: Glengoole, Gleann an Ghuail, or 'Glen of the Coal',<sup>71</sup> and Blackcommon, referring to the coal which outcropped in these townlands (section 6.7). Contemporary reports in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were optimistic about the mineral wealth and coal in Slieveardagh,<sup>72</sup> prompting Vere Hunt to found his town c.1802. William Nolan has described the history and geography of New Birmingham and the role of the Hunt estate in the creation of the town.<sup>73</sup> It is a key example of a landlord's aspiration to design Improvement through building and manipulating the landscape. New Birmingham was centred on a cross-roads, with Main Street and two parallel lanes called Bank Street and Pound Street (Fig. 6.11). The layout of the town also suggests that a market square or diamond was intended for the cross-roads, but this was never developed and remained a green field, or was partly built over in the 1840s. Nolan describes in detail the efforts of the landlord, Sir Vere Hunt, to develop his town as an industrial base. Vere Hunt purchased a patent for a fair and sought to promote his new town by encouraging the creation of a barracks, prison, hotel, shops, a merchant supplier, a post-office, an Erasmus Smith school, and a school for ladies. There was even a plan to extend a canal to New Birmingham,<sup>74</sup> and to divert the main Dublin-Cork road through the town.

Although New Birmingham survived as a village, it failed to live up to the aspirations of its creator. The quality of the houses in the town was higher than the parish average, even if these houses were poorly maintained (section 6.4). Sir Vere Hunt developed a close working relationship with the Catholic parish priest, Father Meighan of Gortnahoe, with whom he collaborated in the construction of the Catholic chapel, designed by Vere Hunt's architect, Neville, at a cost of £1,300 and which was completed in 1818 through parish subscriptions. Built on the outskirts of the town, away from the cross-roads which was to have formed the

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<sup>71</sup> Fiontar, 'logainm.ie - Bunachar Logainmneacha na hÉireann - Placenames Database of Ireland' (<http://www.logainm.ie/>) (11 Feb. 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Arnold Horner, 'Patrick Leahy's maps of the Barony of Slieveardagh 1818 and of the Killenaule Coal District 1824' in *Tipperary Historical Journal*, mmviii (2008), pp 51–75.

<sup>73</sup> Nolan, 'A public benefit', p. 422.

<sup>74</sup> Patrick Leahy, 'A map of the coal district of Killenaule, Co. Tipperary ... also the Grand Canal Extension ... executed for the Grand Jury by Patrick Leahy. Large sheet, coloured, with 4 pages of descriptive text, May, 1824.' (NLI, 1824) (NLI 16 I. 17(1-2)); Horner, 'Patrick Leahy's maps of the Barony of Slieveardagh 1818 and of the Killenaule Coal District 1824'.

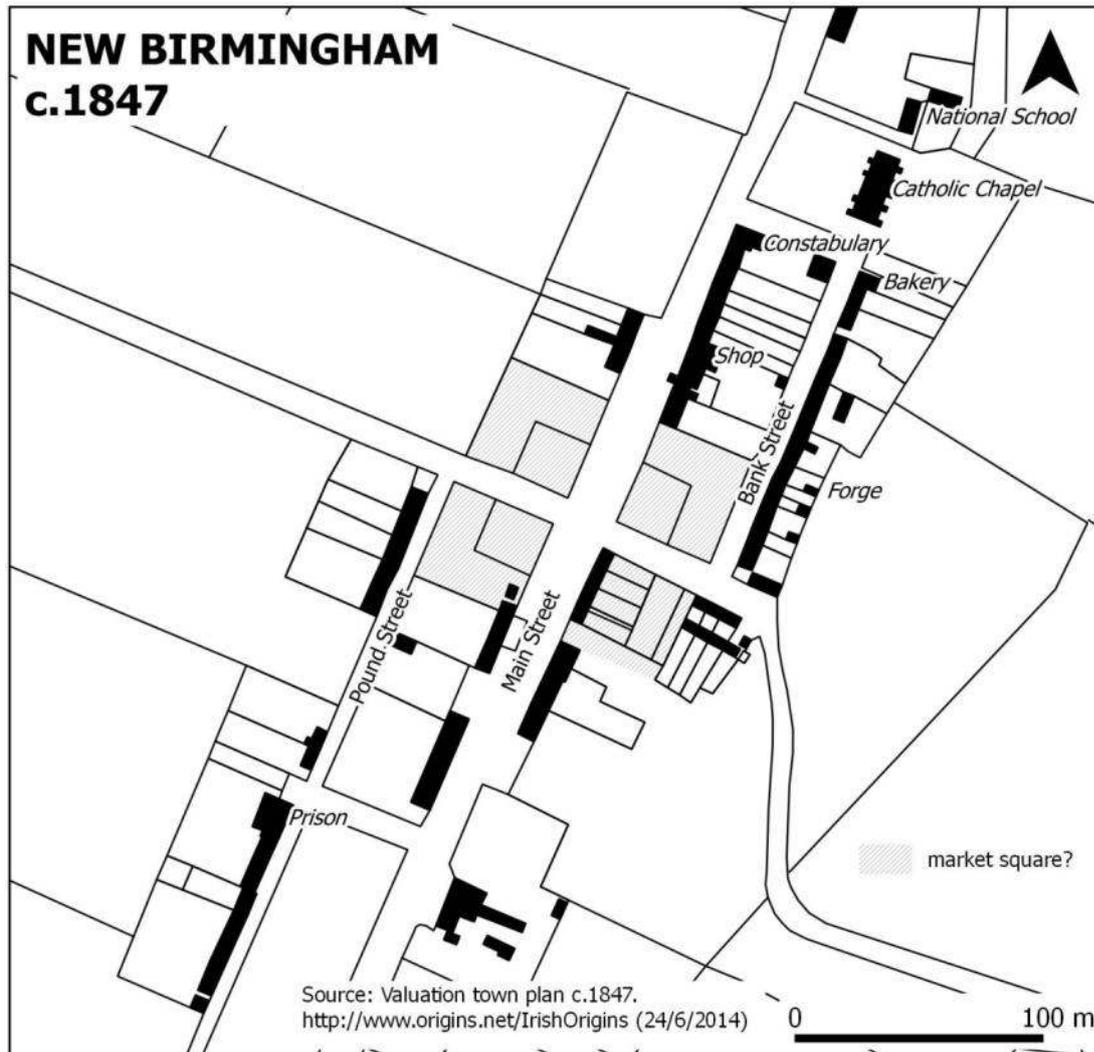


Figure 6.11 Map of New Birmingham village c. 1840.

town's centre, it would appear that most of the occupied buildings actually concentrated towards the area of the church, mirroring the development of Catholic chapel villages like the nearby Gortnahoe village. Perhaps the most telling rebuke to the landlord's aspiration is that the village generally came to be known by its Irish townland name of Glengoole. In 1813 Vere Hunt wrote in his diary that his town was 'filthy, the dung heaps in every quarter and turf ricks made in the street'.<sup>75</sup> In 1814 Vere Hunt discovered that, in his absence, the kitchen of his residence in Glengoole, Sherbourne House, was occupied by Mrs Purcell and a large pig, and the drawing room was used as a potato store.<sup>76</sup> Vere Hunt's own house, which should have been an example of improved architecture, was being used as a vernacular dwelling.

<sup>75</sup> William Nolan, 'Literary sources' in William Nolan and Anngret Simms (eds), *Irish Towns: a Guide to Sources* (Dublin, 1998), p. 164.

<sup>76</sup> Nolan, 'A public benefit', p. 436.

## 6.5 Improvement and housing

Dwelling houses could be viewed as the landscape in microcosm, in particular representing changes in social relations and Improvement.<sup>77</sup> Individual buildings embody how social relations were created, structured and maintained and how social practices – the interaction of people in different contexts such as around the farm or in ritualised spaces – were organised and changed. Similarly, changes in the form of groups of buildings provide clues to changing social relations and social organisation. Dalglish, for example, interpreted the movement from clusters of buildings to dispersed settlements or isolated farmsteads as a reflection of the penetration of ideas of Improvement into Highland Scotland.<sup>78</sup>

The sort of descriptions of houses of the Irish rural poor from English observers were remarkably consistent from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with accounts of single-celled cabin structures (without chimneys) shared with animals.<sup>79</sup> Many of these descriptions were recycled from the accounts of early 17<sup>th</sup>-century travel writers like Fynes Moryson and Luke Gernon, which were instruments of the English colonial project in 17<sup>th</sup> century Ireland.<sup>80</sup> Moryson described a house of the 'mere' Irish in 1604:

[the Irish] *sleep under the canopy of heaven, or in a poor house of clay, or in a cabin made of the boughs of trees, and covered with turf, for such are the dwellings of the very lords among them. And in such places they make a fire in the midst of the room, and round about it they sleep upon the ground, without straw or other thing under them, lying all in a circle about the fire with their feet towards it.*<sup>81</sup>

Unfortunately, little or nothing survives of the houses of the poorer classes from the 17<sup>th</sup> century in each of the study areas, as is generally the case for the rest of the country. Audrey Horning has excavated the remains of houses at Movanager in Kilrea, depicted in Raven's map from 1622 (Fig. 4.10).<sup>82</sup> Most evidence for these buildings in the Plantation period comes

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<sup>77</sup>Matthew Johnson, *Housing Culture: Tradition Architecture in an English Landscape* (London, 1993); Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 145–47.

<sup>78</sup>Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 103–114.

<sup>79</sup>Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 'Some Primitive Structures Used as Dwellings' in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, lxxv, no. 4 (1945), pp 204–212.

<sup>80</sup>James P. Myres (ed.), *Elizabethan Ireland: Selection of Writings on Ireland by Elizabethans* (Hamden, 1983), pp 191, 248.

<sup>81</sup>Foynes Moryson, 'The Description of Ireland', Corpus of Electronic Texts Edition in [www.ucc.ie/celt/online](http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online), 1904, pp 231–232 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T100071.html>) (8 Feb. 2014).

<sup>82</sup>Audrey Horning, "Dwelling houses in the old Irish barbarous manner". Archaeological evidence for Gaelic architecture in an Ulster Plantation village' in Patrick J Duffy, David Edwards and Elizabeth FitzPatrick (eds), *Gaelic Ireland, c.1250-c.1650: Land, Lordship, and Settlement* (Dublin, 2001), pp 375–396; Audrey Horning, 'On

from maps. Remains of the English-style timber-framed house at Movanager survived as a concentration of material – fragments of brick, glass, slate and artefacts – in the ploughzone.<sup>83</sup> The Gaelic-style house in the same settlement were found to be a post-and-wattle structure measuring 4m by 7.5m, with a central hearth.<sup>84</sup>

No upstanding remains survive of the structures indicated around the houses and castles of the elite on the Down Survey maps in Duleek or Kilfenora. The thatched house on the lands of Edward Dowdall in Riverstown, the farm house on Stephen Dowdall's lands in Gaulstown, and the stone house of Bartholomew Moore, all recorded in Duleek in the Civil Survey, may have been significant or even substantial buildings, but these no longer survive, although a farmstead in Gaulstown may be on the site of Stephen Dowdall's farm house. While the *Down Survey* depicted a house with a hipped roof in Roughgrange, Duleek, it is impossible to be sure that this, and indeed the other buildings depicted on the Down Survey, are accurate representations or a generic symbol used by the survey's draftsman (Fig. 6.12). The townland or 'town' of Kilcooly Abbey was inhabited with many cabins, according to the *Civil Survey*,<sup>85</sup> leading William Smyth to describe this as a village,<sup>86</sup> although the exact location of these cabins and their form – whether they were dispersed around the townland or clustered around the abbey as suggested in the Down Survey parish map – remains unclear (Fig. 4.9). Grange tower-house in Kilcooly parish stood 'with some cabbins';<sup>87</sup> the tower-house today is located in a cluster of houses, all of which appear to be 18<sup>th</sup> or, more likely, 19<sup>th</sup> century in date.

Over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was in Ireland an explosion of house building, the majority of which appeared to be small, tenant and sub-tenant houses, reflecting significant population growth. Over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the number of taxable hearths nearly doubled from c.300,000 in 1706 to 560,000 in 1791, only to double again, by 1821, to 1.14 million (Fig. 3.17).<sup>88</sup> These tenant buildings, mostly built in the vernacular style of single-storey, thatch, and one room deep, were treated by the structural authorities as the personification of Irish tenant society.

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the banks of the Bann: The riverine economy of an Ulster plantation village' in *Historical Archaeology* (2007), pp 94–114.

<sup>83</sup> Horning, "'Dwelling houses in the old Irish barbarous manner". Archaeological evidence for Gaelic architecture in an Ulster Plantation village', p. 385.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 385–394.

<sup>85</sup> Simington, *South and East Tipperary Civil Survey*, p. 132.

<sup>86</sup> Smyth, 'Property, patronage and population reconstructing the human geography of mid-seventeenth century County Tipperary', p. 123.

<sup>87</sup> Simington, *South and East Tipperary Civil Survey*, p. 133.

<sup>88</sup> Dickson et al., 'Hearth tax, household size and Irish population change 1672-1821'.

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MAP OF DULEEK BARONY AVAILABLE AT

<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php#bm=Duleek&c=Meath&indexOfObjectValue=-1&indexOfObjectValueSubstring=-1>  
(Accessed: 30/1/2015)

*Figure 6.12 Map of Duleek parish c.1655.*

The Ordnance Survey Memoirs for Kilrea described the houses of the tenants in the parish:

*The general style of the cottages in this parish [Kilrea] is very inferior. Some are of mud and most of them are in bad repair as to the thatch. They are of 1 storey with 2 rooms. As to comfort or cleanliness, there is not much anywhere. However, they are rapidly improving: an increased attention is now paid by the people to the interior arrangements of their dwellings, and clocks are multiplying. The increased attention to the interior arrangement appears from the many little "outshots" or new bedrooms now building. This movement began before the company succeeded to their estate and has received an additional improvement from that circumstance.<sup>89</sup>*

The surveyors who made these observations were obviously conscious of the significance of changing design, cleanliness, and in particular the addition of internal partitions, to vernacular houses. The presence of clocks was particularly noteworthy as evidence of work discipline, a phenomenon Thompson has linked with Improvement ideology.<sup>90</sup> Quantifying and qualifying these changes described in essentially anecdotal descriptions of Kilrea is difficult. However, an opportunity arises by comparing the two 6-inch maps of Kilrea, one surveyed in 1831, without field boundaries, the other a revised edition in 1849, with boundaries (Fig. 6.13). Excluding Kilrea town the Ordnance Survey depicted 495 structures on the 1831 map of the parish. This number increased to 572 in 1849, although 72 houses also disappeared and 185 new structures were built during this period. Relying on cartographic evidence little can be said about the architecture of these buildings other than to comment on their general plan. The 1849 OSI maps show 40 buildings which appear to have no roof. The average size of the buildings was quite small, c.14m by 6m. However, 264 of these buildings were longer than the average size, with one example in Moyknock being c.47m by 5m.<sup>91</sup> These would appear to be examples of what Kevin Danaher called 'extended farmyards', where the outbuildings were contained in a single, long range common in the north of Ireland and the Scottish highlands.<sup>92</sup> The homes and offices in Kilcooly were significantly different.

### ***Farm Houses and Offices***

Of the four case study areas Kilrea had the highest number of tenements with houses, offices and land in the Primary Valuation, at 29%, whilst in Kilcooly just 3% of tenements had this combination, despite the presence of Palatines (Fig. 6.14). The most common form of farm

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<sup>89</sup> Day & McWilliams, *OS Memoirs Vol. 27, East Londonderry*, p. 117.

<sup>90</sup> Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism', p. 78.

<sup>91</sup> These measurements are taken from historic OSI maps and are indicative.

<sup>92</sup> Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 'Farmyard forms and their distribution in Ireland' in *Ulster Folklife*, xxvii (1981), pp 65–66; Dalgligh, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, p. 218.

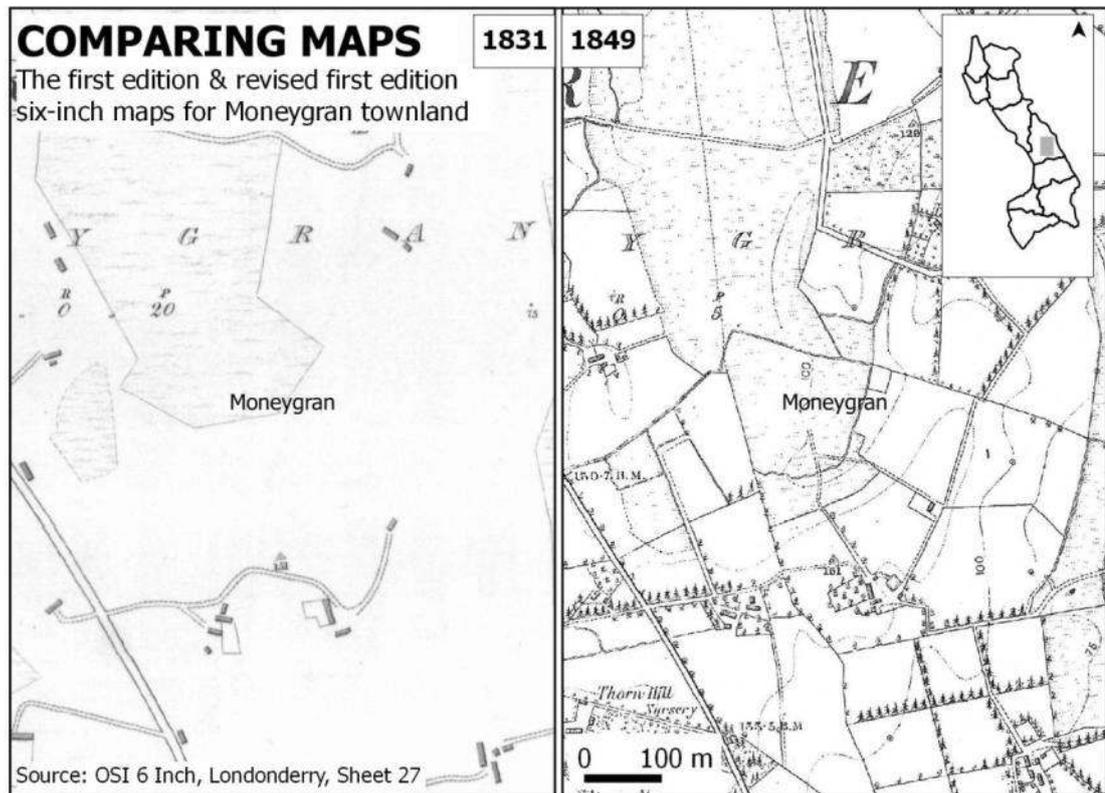


Figure 6.13 The Ordnance Survey of Ireland's first edition map for Moneygran in Kilrea, Co. Derry, surveyed in 1831, was revised in c.1849 to include field boundaries.

buildings in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century study areas were what Ó Danachair called the extended type, consisting of a single range of buildings extending from the farm house.<sup>93</sup> In contrast courtyard farmyards appear relatively infrequently, although by the later 20<sup>th</sup> century they were the most common form of farm yard in Ireland. Examples like the enclosed courtyard stables of Kilcooly were built as an addition to, and embellishment of, the elite demesne landscape. In the majority of cases in all four study areas the farms appeared to consist of just one or two buildings, albeit much more densely concentrated in Kilrea (Fig. 6.15).

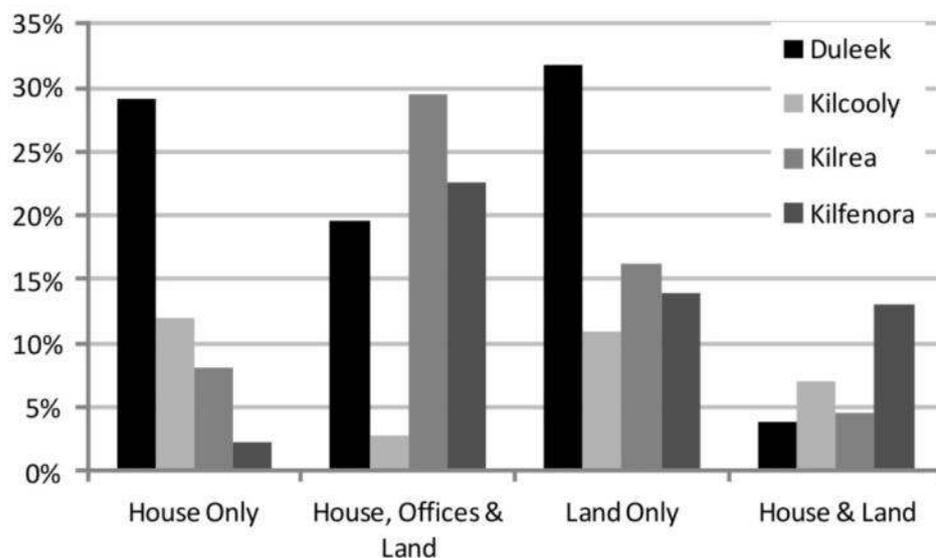
The Barker estate in Kilcooly sought to attract tenants and advertised extensively in papers like *Finn's Leinster Journal* and offered to support the construction of a farm house on the leasehold.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps the Barker's most successful endeavour in this regard was to attract a community of Protestant families descended from German immigrants, the Palatines, religious refugees from the middle reaches of the River Rhine.<sup>95</sup> Their largest settlement was on the

<sup>93</sup> Ó Danachair, 'Farmyard forms and their distribution in Ireland'.

<sup>94</sup> 'To be let, Kilcooley Demesne' in *Finn's Leinster Journal* (Kilkenny, 2 Mar. 1774), Volume VIII, No. 20, p. 3; James Donnelly, 'The Whiteboy Movement, 1761-5' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxi, no. 81 (1978), p. 32.

<sup>95</sup> Patrick J. O'Connor, *People Make Places: The Story of the Irish Palatines* (Newcastle West, 1989), pp 1-3.

### TENEMENTS RETURNED IN THE PRIMARY VALUATION c.1850-1858



Case Study Area	Total Rural Tenements	House Only	House, Offices & Land	Land Only	Houses & Land
Duleek	779	227	153	248	30
Kilcooly	376	93	22	85	54
Kilrea	501	63	229	126	35
Kilfenora	428	17	176	108	102

Source: Griffith, Richard, 'General Valuation of the Rateable Property in Ireland', Kilcooly (1850), Duleek (1850 & 1854), Kilfenora (1854), and Kilrea (1858).

Farm office in Knockisland, Duleek, whose lower courses were built with stone and its walls in cob.



Figure 6.14 Types of tenements returned in the Primary Valuation of Ireland, 1850-58, for the four case study areas.

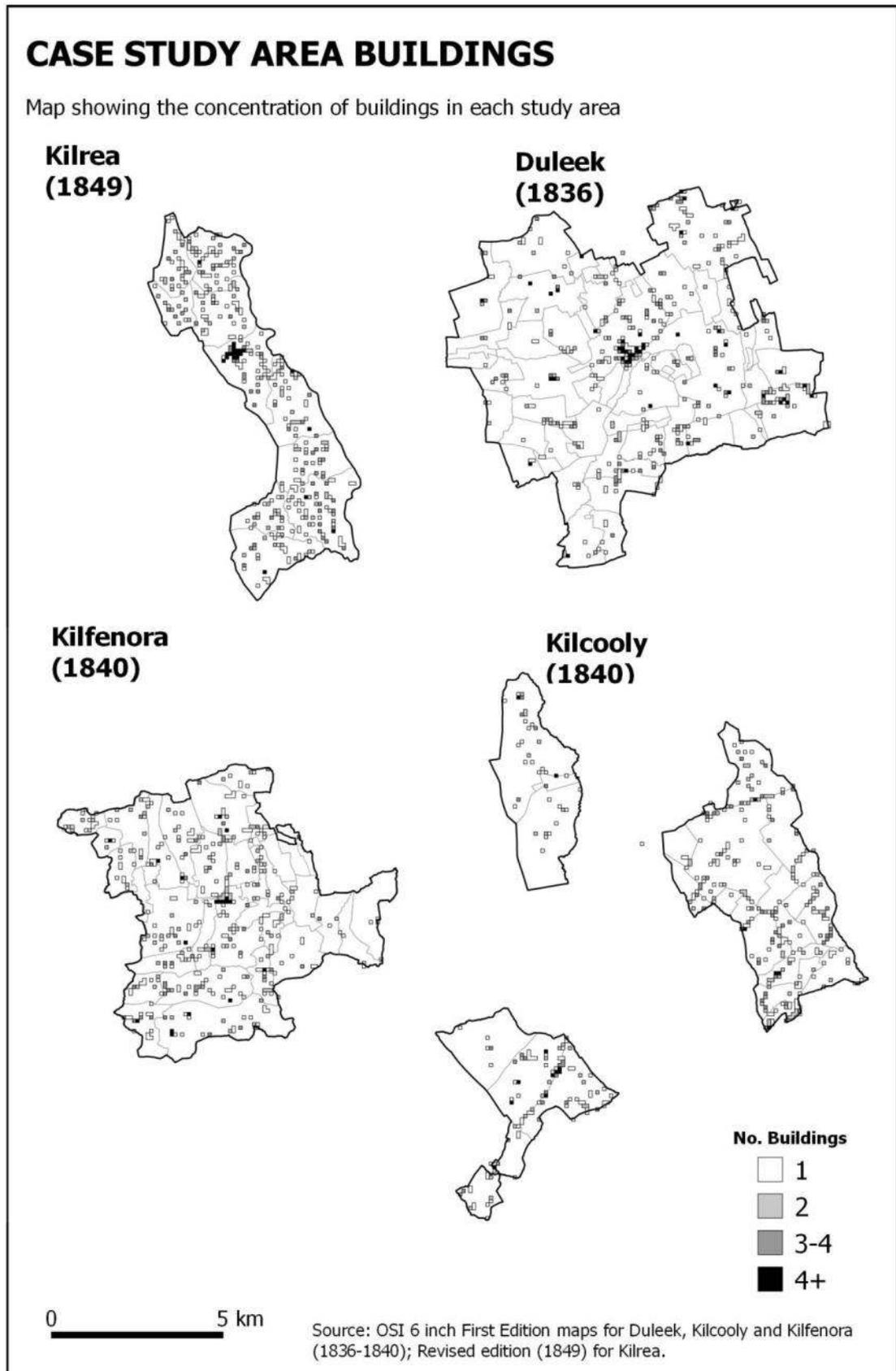


Figure 6.15 Map of the distribution of buildings depicted on the first edition OSI maps (1831-49) in the case study areas.

## Chapter 6 Improving Tenants' Landscapes

Purpose: To establish a Protestant colony.

Initial Terms: Five shillings sterling for one year.

Area: Grange, Kilcooly, called Newpark. Surveyed by William Hunt as 186 acres, 3 roods and 18 perches of arable pasture and mountains. Located in the Barony of Slieveardagh, Co. Tipperary. Included passages, commons and appurtenances in use by the group.

Rights Reserved: The Barker estate reserved to itself all coal mines and quarries with the right to search for and work the mines in any way, without recompense for any damage to soil or grass.

They maintained the right to cut turf (peat) for their own use. Sir William's family and servants had the right to hunt game, wild birds and to fish.

Housing: Leases were given for two years from May 1, 1774 to build five houses suitable for dwelling with stone, lime and sand, for five separate Protestant families.

Reclamation: They were required to reclaim at least 2 ½ acres of barren and unprofitable land a year and to maintain it in the improved condition.

Papist Restrictions: They were forbidden to sell any part of the premises to a Papist, permit it to be occupied by a Papist or let a Papist graze his stock on the land.

Penalties: If they permitted a Papist to do any of these things, the rent would be raised an additional fifty pounds above the annual rent.

Life of the Lease: The right to hold these premises was granted to the five principles, their heirs and assigns for the natural lives of the sons named. The lease ran until the death of the last of three lives.

Annual rent: One peppercorn for two years from May 1, 1773 (token rent to allow construction of houses). Following this, a yearly rent of 29 pounds, 11 shillings, in two equal payments, Nov. 1 and May 1, above any other taxes and charges that might be levied by Parliament, Crown taxes excepted.

Repairs: They were required to keep in repair all houses and buildings on the premises, or improvements made in the future and to deliver the premises in good order "peacable and quietly" at the expiration of the lease.

Repossession: If rents were in arrears, or unpaid after 21 days, Sir William and his heirs were entitled, according to law, to impound and dispose of personal property to satisfy the rent and costs of the proceedings.

Table 6.1 Terms of the lease between Sir William Barker and the Palatines, 1773.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup>Marjorie R. Smeltzer and Marjorie Smeltzer-Stevenot, *The Smeltzers of Kilcooly and Their Irish-Palatine Kissing Cousins* (Baltimore, 1981), p. 29.

estates of Southwell in Rathkeale, Co. Limerick and Able Ram, Co. Wexford.<sup>97</sup> In 1773 Sir William Barker signed a lease with five Palatine heads of households from the Southwell estate: Paul Smelser, Adam Baker, Daniel Ruckle, John Switzer, and Sebastian Lawrence.<sup>98</sup> Twenty families followed soon after.<sup>99</sup> The land was held under a communal lease between the families, making the community responsible for each other's adherence to the conditions. The families were so-called "freeholders" for three lives. The land was described as bush, wild, uncultivated and stoney. This most likely served as upland commonage grazing for the grange farm of the Cistercians in the medieval period, and may well also have served as hunting grounds for the surrounding estates. To retain the lease, the Palatines were required to improve the land stipulated in a number of improvement clauses (summarised in Table 6.1).<sup>100</sup>

The Palatine community were brought in to improve this upland portion of the Kilcooly estate which appears to have been used primarily for grazing up to this point. As the conditions of the lease show, the Palatine families were to enclose and improve land. As well as religion and ethnicity, the Palatines' buildings set them apart from their neighbours. The community initially established a settlement along a road in Bawnlea and Newpark townlands called 'Palatine Street', surrounding a Methodist chapel (Fig. 6.16). At the time of the first edition six-inch map in 1840 this chapel was at the centre of a green with several houses around it and a stream running through it,<sup>101</sup> in much the same style as the original Palatine settlement at Courtmatrix, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick (Fig. 6.17).<sup>102</sup> The Palatine community were also noted for building a distinctive style of house, generally two storey, three bay, with symmetrical windows and slated roof, and frequently with an attached cow-house or barn (Figs. 6.18 & 6.19).

The Valuation house books from 1846 for Kilcooly provide an invaluable insight into the built landscape of the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century parish,<sup>103</sup> detailing the occupier, type and use, dimensions,

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<sup>97</sup>Vivien Hick, 'Images of Palatines from Folk Tradition, Novels and Travellers' Accounts' in *Béaloideas*, 64/65 (1996), p. 1.

<sup>98</sup>O'Connor, *People Make Places*, pp 29–32.

<sup>99</sup>Smeltzer & Smeltzer-Stevenot, *The Smeltzers of Kilcooly*, p. 29.

<sup>100</sup> An original copy of this lease remains in the possession of the Switzer family in Newpark townland.

<sup>101</sup>Ordnance Survey of Ireland, *Six Inch to One Mile: Tipperary Sheet 49 [1:10560]; Surveyed 1840; Engraved 1843, 1840.*

<sup>102</sup>Courtmatrix, Co. Limerick: ITM 534952, 639596

<sup>103</sup> Valuation Office, 'House Books: County of Tipperary, Barony of Slieveardagh, Parish of Kilcooly', Microfilm (National Archives of Ireland, 1846) (National Archives of Ireland, Microfilm, OL 5.1886/91; OL 5.1889)



Figure 6.16 The Methodist chapel in Bawnlea, Kilcooly, now used as a milking parlour.

materials, age and condition of all types of buildings.<sup>104</sup> These records are also a means of comparing the buildings in the Palatines' leaseholds with those in the rest of the parish (Fig. 6.20). In general, houses in the three townlands predominantly occupied by Palatines, Bawnlea, Newpark and Renaghmore, stood out from the parish average. For example, the average size house in Kilcooly parish, excluding the Palladian estate house in Kilcooly Abbey, was 107m<sup>3</sup>. Palatine houses were larger than the parish average at 147m<sup>3</sup>, although houses in Renaghmore were substantially under the average (Table 6.2). Certain architectural attributes might be considered indicative of Improvement, like the provision of a separate privy or outside toilet, a second floor and the use of slate rather than thatch to roof the house.

Privies were, in general, very rare in Kilcooly – just 18 were listed for the whole parish – and the Palatines were no exception in this regard as just two were to be found in Bawnlea townland: one on Peter Miller's property, a Palatine tenant of William Barker. The other privy

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Unfortunately, due to the original valuation maps being inaccessible at the time of research it was impossible to locate individual buildings described in the valuation.

<sup>104</sup> *Instructions by Sir R. Griffith, 1853, to Valuers and Surveyors in Tenement Valuation of Ireland*, by HMSO, LV.835 (144), House of Commons Papers (London, 1882), pp 30–36; Reilly, *Richard Griffith and his Valuations of Ireland*, pp 16–18.

## Chapter 6 Improving Tenants' Landscapes

Townland	Houses	Pivys	Average Size (m3)	% Slate Roof	% Two Storey	% In repair
Ballinunty	30	4	130	43%	47%	60%
Bawnlea	33	2	121	45%	58%	64%
Blackcommon	79		64	5%	9%	35%
Crossoges	21		104	29%	33%	48%
Deerpark	1		121	100%	100%	0%
Derryvella	3		84	0%	33%	33%
Garransilly	18		85	22%	28%	44%
Glengoole North	35	1	120	9%	26%	40%
Glengoole South	67	2	96	16%	30%	37%
Village of New Birmingham	58	3	152	78%	86%	28%
Graigheesha	14		141	21%	36%	71%
Grangecastle	5		129	100%	60%	80%
Grangecrag	26		71	0%	12%	31%
Grangehill	21	2	135	0%	43%	62%
Kilbrannel	15		152	13%	33%	73%
Kilcooly Abbey	43	2	163	86%	79%	74%
Knockatooreen	38	3	108	18%	45%	53%
Lisduff	47		79	4%	21%	51%
Newhall	4		137	50%	50%	75%
Newpark	17		161	35%	35%	53%
Renaghmore	43		96	16%	28%	47%
Sallybog	3		37	0%	0%	33%
Springfield	14		85	7%	36%	43%
Totals	635	19	107* <sup>105</sup>	27%	38%	48%

Table 6.2 An analysis of Kilcooly dwelling houses from the 1846 Valuation House Books.<sup>106</sup> Highlighted townlands were leased by Palatine families.

<sup>105</sup> This average does not include the Barker estate house in Kilcooly Abbey or annexes to houses.

<sup>106</sup> Valuation Office, 'House Books: County of Tipperary, Barony of Slieveardagh, Parish of Kilcooly'.

## Chapter 6 Improving Tenants' Landscapes

Townland	Offices	% Offices: Stables	% Offices: Piggery	% Offices: Cow House	% Offices: Barn
Ballinunty	19	63%	21%	11%	0%
Bawnlea	42	17%	31%	31%	2%
Blackcommon	23	35%	35%	13%	4%
Crossoges	19	32%	11%	26%	16%
Deerpark	2	0%	0%	100%	0%
Derryvella	4	25%	0%	25%	25%
Garransilly	17	12%	29%	47%	12%
Glengoole North	57	23%	33%	0%	25%
Glengoole South	52	25%	29%	12%	19%
Village of New Birmingham	38	37%	21%	32%	8%
Graigheesha	24	25%	17%	13%	29%
Grangecastle	6	33%	0%	33%	0%
Grangecrag	14	7%	14%	43%	29%
Grangehill	30	10%	7%	47%	13%
Kilbrannel	23	48%	30%	9%	9%
Kilcooly Abbey	93	19%	22%	37%	5%
Knockatooreen	70	20%	26%	36%	13%
Lisduff	57	25%	32%	18%	12%
Newhall	8	13%	38%	25%	13%
Newpark	23	13%	22%	35%	17%
Renaghmore	58	21%	21%	29%	7%
Sallybog	3	0%	67%	33%	0%
Springfield	18	22%	33%	33%	6%
Totals	700	24%	25%	26%	12%

Table 6.3 An analysis of Kilcooly farm offices from the 1846 Valuation House Books.<sup>107</sup>  
Highlighted townlands were leased by Palatine families.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

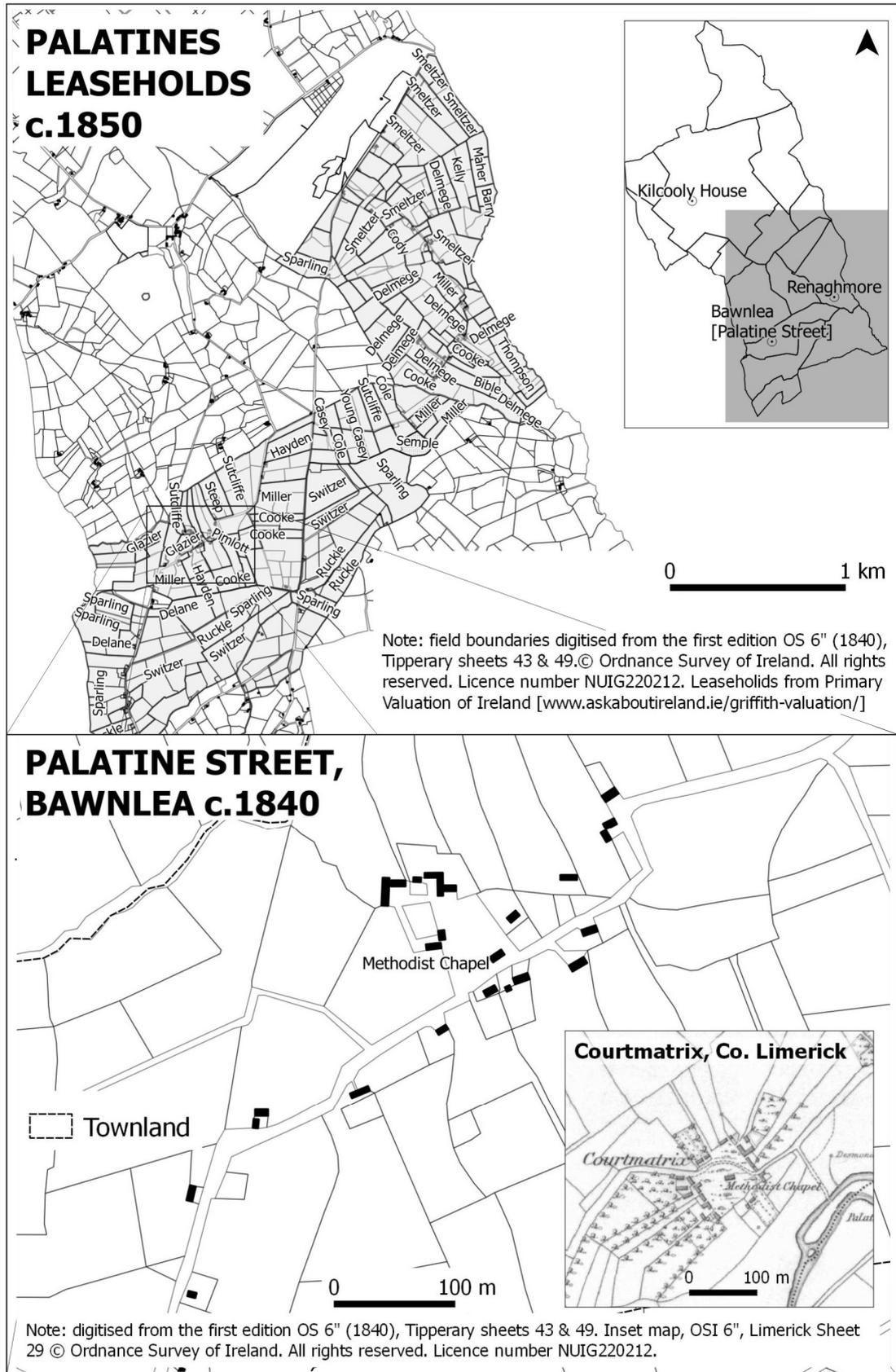


Figure 6.17 Maps of the Palatine leaseholds in Kilcooly c.1840.



Figure 6.18 Palatine house at Renaghmore, the former home of the Delmege family.



Figure 6.19 Palatine-type house at Bawnlea, the former home of the Cooke family.

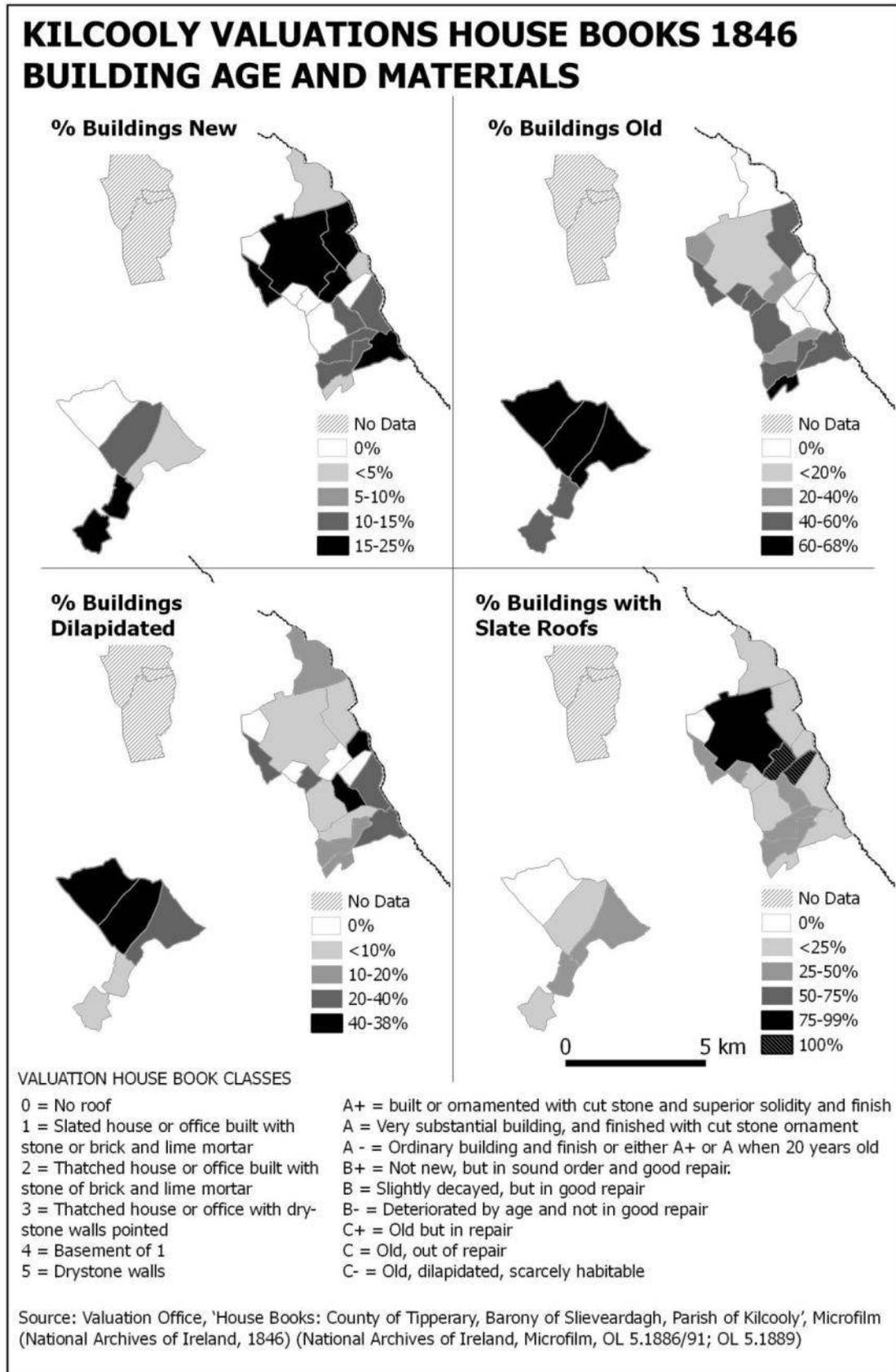


Figure 6.20 Valuation House Books details for residential houses in Kilcooly parish c. 1846.



Figure 6.21 Valuation House Books details for farm offices in Kilcooly parish c.1846.

in Bawnlea was on the tenement of William Hayden, a subtenant of Thomas Magee. Privies were relatively small structures (on average 2.7m by 2.3m by 1.8m tall). All but one were slated and built from stone or brick and lime mortar. Privies were attached to institutional buildings like the prison and constabulary barracks in New Birmingham and the Erasmus Smith school house in Knockatooreen, and to the homes of landowners like William Barker in Kilcooly Abbey and those of his primary tenants like Robert Mason of Grange. However, most people in Kilcooly must have relied upon chamber pots, or outside informal privies, for disposing waste.

Most houses recorded in the Valuation were single storey, with just 38% in the parish being tall enough to accommodate a second.<sup>108</sup> Of the 34 houses occupied by Palatine families, just 55% were tall enough to accommodate a second storey. That is not to say these houses did not make use of as much of their internal space as possible: 96% of all dwellings in Kilcooly were lofted. Most (73%) houses in Kilcooly were also thatched, although in this regard the townlands leased by the Palatines were different in that Bawnlea and Newpark townlands had above average use of slate, whilst roofs in Renaghmore were predominantly thatch. Some 44% of the houses occupied by Palatine families were roofed in slate. Tellingly, considering the improving aspirations of the town's founder, New Birmingham village was predominantly (78%) roofed in slate. Houses in the townlands forming the core of the Barker estate, Kilcooly Abbey (86%), Grangecastle and Deerpark (both 100%) were also predominantly roofed in slate. The degree to which tenants were willing to maintain their house also emerges from these records. On average just 48% of the houses in Kilcooly parish were considered to be 'in repair' in 1846. Both Bawnlea and Newpark were over this average, at 64% and 53% respectively. Again, Renaghmore fell beneath the average, with just 47% of its houses in repair. Looking at the specific houses belonging to Palatines, 71% were considered to be in repair, well above the average. In general, most houses in the Barker estate were kept in repair, but the story was different for the de Vere estate in Glengoole, where up to 78% of dwellings in New Birmingham were out of repair. Up to 37 houses in Kilcooly parish were allowed deductions in their valuation, either because of poor finish or not being completed. For example, George Ashby, William Barker's agent, was allowed a deduction of 1s 6d for poor quality slates whilst Thomas Smeltzer in Renaghmore was allowed a deduction because of the 'inconvenient situation' of his house.

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<sup>108</sup> In this analysis buildings greater than 2m high – measurements were taken to the height of the side wall rather than the gables – could potentially have accommodated a second storey.

The 700 farm offices in Kilcooly present another useful window onto agricultural practices in Kilcooly (Fig. 6.21). The most numerous of farm offices were cow houses, piggeries, stables and barns, which between them made up 86% of the farm buildings in the parish (Table 6.3). The Palatines were noted for their improved agriculture. As discussed above, this is apparent in terms of the arrangement of offices attached to their own houses, as in Renaghmore and Bawnlea. The House Book figures do show that townlands associated with the Palatines have above average numbers of cow houses, but the provision of other offices was by no means exceptional. Farms in Bawnlea had less than the average number of stables, and only 2% of its offices were barns. In fact only Newpark had more barns than the average in the parish, although it is likely that lofts in other offices, particularly cow houses and stables, may have served as barns for storage. Both Newpark and Renaghmore farms had below the average number of stables and piggeries for the parish, suggesting that horses and pigs were less important for farming households living in these townlands, although it may also have been a consequence of there being fewer sub-tenants living in these townlands.

### **6.6 Improvement and enclosure**

Enclosure was a key component of the Improved landscape (section 3.3). The significance of enclosure was apparent in a series of acts passed by the Irish Parliament after the final substantial confiscations of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1697 bounds between properties – mostly encompassing whole townlands – were to be made following the perambulation and agreement of the proprietors and landlord; the bounds were to consist of good ditches and two rows of quickset, or with 'such fences as the soil will permit'.<sup>109</sup> In 1722 a further act was passed to oblige proprietors and tenants of neighbouring lands to fence their respective properties.<sup>110</sup> The act, sponsored by Charles Campbell, specified the type and design of the boundaries as a ditch 6 feet wide and five feet deep, planted with quickset whitethorn, crab, or furze, or, alternatively, a dry-stone wall or a clay and mud wall, 5 feet high, 2.5 feet thick at the base and 1.5 feet at the top. If the land was wet, ditches and drains were to be excavated and the bounds planted with sallies, alder or other 'aquatic' trees. These very specific boundary requirements suggest that Campbell, a long-term leaseholder on the Moore estate of

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<sup>109</sup> 9 Will. III. c.12: *For the more easy obtaining partition of lands in coparcenary, joint tenancy, tenancy in common, and bounding and mearing of lands.* 1697

([http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=advanced\\_search&search=true&bill\\_number=1501](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=advanced_search&search=true&bill_number=1501)).

<sup>110</sup> 8 Geo. 1. c.5: *To oblige proprietors and tenants of neighbouring lands to make fences between their several lands and holdings* 1722 ([http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=advanced\\_search&search=true&bill\\_number=1840](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=advanced_search&search=true&bill_number=1840)).

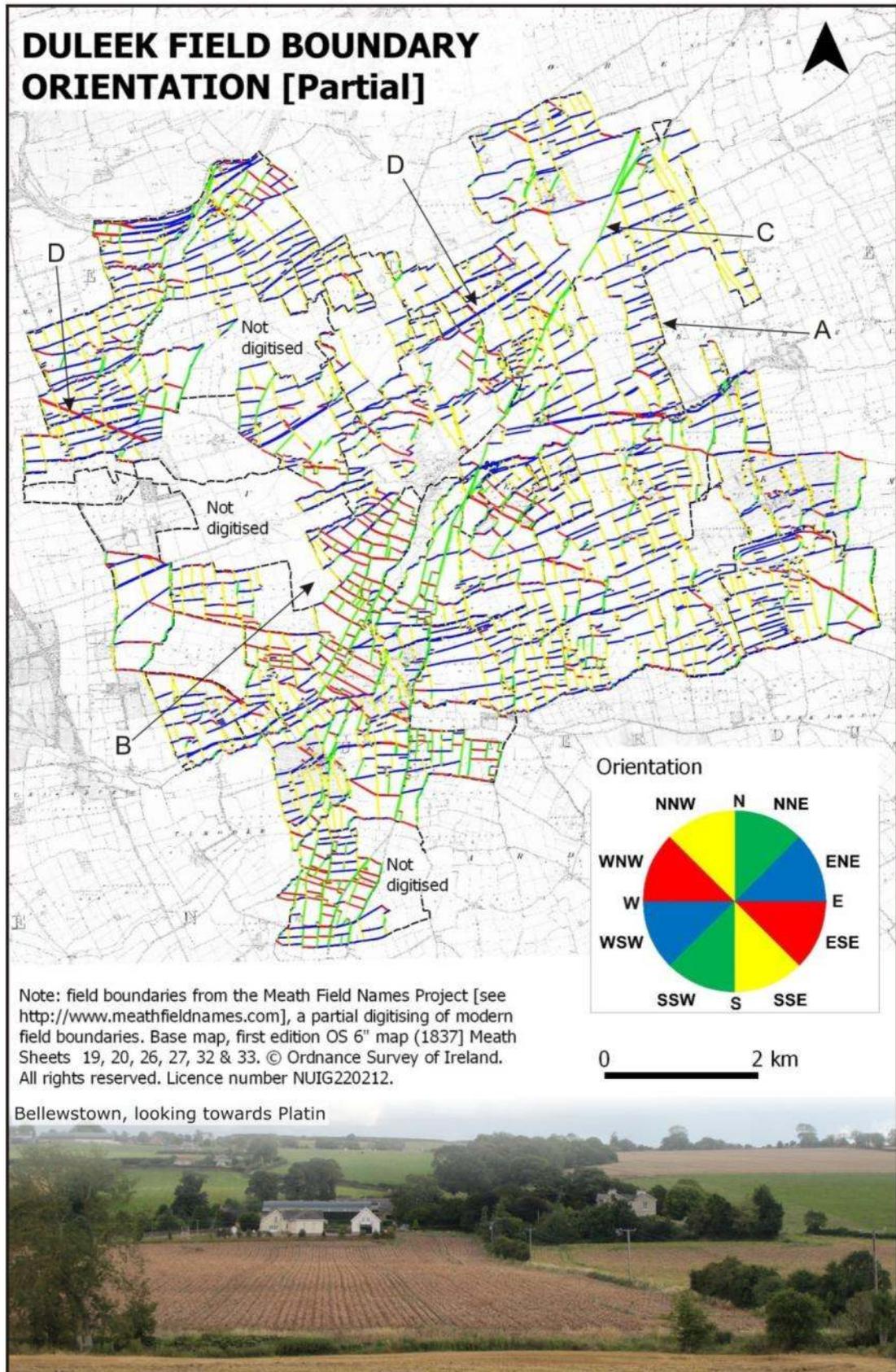


Figure 6.22 Modern field orientations in Duleek.



Figure 6.23 Property valuations around Duleek town in 1854.

Newgrange, Co. Meath,<sup>111</sup> was familiar with the practice and design of enclosures employed at the time. As both a leaseholder and, in his own right, a landlord, Campbell had a keen appreciation of the importance of Improvement and 'proper' bounds for the security of both parties. The Barker estate had learned the cost of uncertain bounds (section 5.4). Legislation enshrined the principle that every landlord's and tenant's land had to be fenced or enclosed.<sup>112</sup> Despite this legal imperative, the use of enclosure and field boundaries in later historic Ireland remained far from uniform or unproblematic, indicating in turn the irregular and piecemeal success of the ideology of Improvement, for which enclosure acted as an index.

***Medieval fields and commonage in Duleek***

Field boundaries in Duleek, Co. Meath, followed the natural topography, so that fields ran perpendicular to the slope of the hills either side of the River Nanny flood plain. The townland boundaries in Duleek, particularly in the east of the parish, consist of field boundaries with a distinctly stepped outline, preserving, I believe, the outline of medieval furlongs (Fig. 6.22, A). As discussed earlier, Duleek was in the heart of the Pale in the later medieval period, and had been an intensively settled and farmed manorial landscape where tillage was particularly important (section 4.2). In another remnant of the medieval landscape, fields also radiated out from Duleek village, particularly to the west (Fig. 6.22, B). Boundaries, contrary to these field trends were apparent, such as the line of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century toll-road which extended from Duleek village north-east towards Drogheda (Fig. 6.22, C). Other later features, like the railroad Oldcastle branch line, which opened in 1850 and also followed the natural topography for much of its length (Fig. 6.22, D).

Property boundaries in Duleek appear to have remained relatively stable from the later medieval period. This is apparent in the unusual arrangement of the two townlands of Blackditch and Knockisland to the south-east of Duleek town. Blackditch consisted of four, and Knockisland three, separate detached portions. In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Blackditch was described as 'a small ffarme' of 36 plantation acres whose proprietor, Mathew Ford, was a Protestant from Dublin. Knockisland was owned by Lord Slane,<sup>113</sup> and was home to just five 'English' people in 1659, presumably a family leasing this farm, whilst Blackditch was uninhabited.<sup>114</sup> The fragmented, intermixed nature of these properties would appear to be a

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<sup>111</sup> Stout, *Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne*, pp 128–129.

<sup>112</sup> Ferguson & Vance, *Tenure and Improvement in Ireland*, p. 144.

<sup>113</sup> Simington, *Meath Civil Survey*, p. 16.

<sup>114</sup> Smyth & Pender (eds), *Census of Ireland, c.1659*, p. 479.

remnant of their medieval origin. Further evidence for the survival of medieval landscape organisation appears in the Primary Valuation from 1854. William Money leased from the Marquis of Landsdowne two long (c.400m), narrow (c.40m), parallel strips of land (Fig. 6.23). Neither fields were recorded on the OSI six-inch maps, but instead appear in a portion of Commons townland with distinctive, long, sinuous field boundaries reminiscent of medieval tillage headlands. These appear to be the working remnants of strip tillage, most likely medieval in origin, which the Ordnance Survey chainmen decided not to include as individual fields on their map, either because the strips were not considered significant, or were not enclosed by permanent boundaries. Similar medieval strips had been mapped by the Ordnance Survey at Newcastle Lyons in Co. Dublin.<sup>115</sup> A profile of four townland boundaries derived from a 2008 LiDAR survey of the Boyne Valley shows that these townland boundaries were not necessarily significantly different from other field boundaries in these townlands. However, the boundaries did remain in use over an extended period of time, showing that they were significant features in the later historic landscape (Fig. 6.24).<sup>116</sup>

Duleek, it would appear, was a place where older forms of agriculture survived. It is, today, remarkable for the survival of its town commons. This consists of an irregular area of ground measuring c. 74 ha to the north of Duleek town, which maintains, more or less, its shape from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Long, narrow extensions to the south link the commons with the main road leading into Duleek, illustrating the importance of maintaining a right-of-way to the commons. The surface of the commons is quite uneven, divided in part by a stream called the Mill Race, leading to Duleek's corn mill, and by long, sinuous, natural channels. This surface contrast with the well-cultivated and drained fields surrounding the commons. It would appear this commonage has never been cultivated. Its survival in the later historic period, when so many other town commons in Ireland were being unofficially and officially alienated and enclosed, might be explained, at least in part, by a curious newspaper report from 1752 which describes Duleek town corporation, the mayor and aldermen, riding its franchise.

*Dublin, June 2. On Thursday last the Franchises of the Corporation of Duleek, near Drogheda, were rode in the following manner, viz. three led horses covered with large straw mats, neatly fringed with green rushes, in imitation of field cloths; the persons who rode as mayor and aldermen, were dressed in women's red petticoats, instead of gowns, large tie-wigs, each knotted with large sea-shells, and large caps made of*

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<sup>115</sup> Newcastle Lyons, OSI 6 inch Dublin Sheet 21 (Dublin, 1843); ITM: 700000, 728500.

<sup>116</sup> LiDAR Survey (2008) kindly provided by the Discovery Programme and Meath County Council.

*platted straw, like bee-hives, with a bunch of wheat at the top of each of them. The rest wore straw hats, with ears of wheat on them in Imitation of feathers; and their waistcoats were laced with small platted straw, resembling gold-lace; the riggles made of green wheat. They rode on straw saddles, and housings and holsters of same, and cabbage-stalks instead of pistols; wooden swords, and boots made of the butts of trees. Their Adam and Eve were dressed in a white horse's skin, and his face blackened with soot. Their venus was a man dressed in white pet-en-l'air, with a long black beard. Their music consisted of three pipers on horseback, and two boys beating on four empty runlets, instead of kettle-drums, and a merry Andrew sounding a large bullock's horn. Their arms, which were a plow and harrow, were carried on men's shoulders on horseback, in the front; and their colours a silk handkerchief tied on a white sallie wig, made up the rear.<sup>117</sup>*

This ceremony appears to have concentrated primarily on the area controlled by Duleek corporation in Commons townland. The practice appears similar to rogantide processions or beating the bounds common in England, where knowledge of parish boundaries helped preserve and maintain the social space of the parish.<sup>118</sup> The practice was more common in Irish towns in the medieval period, like Dublin city,<sup>119</sup> and Kinsale town in Co. Cork,<sup>120</sup> but was not generally practiced around whole parish boundaries. The procession around Duleek's franchise, described above, appears to have been more of a secular spectacle with both the officers of the town corporation and play-actors in outrageous costumes rather than a religious procession, and it was limited to just the area of the town commons. No doubt the sight of the mayor dressed in red petticoats helped implant the corporation's franchise in the public's memory. By defining the commons through entertainment and spectacle this procession defined and helped protect this space from encroachment. However, by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by which time the town corporation – and its procession – had fallen into abeyance, encroachment on the town commons by squatters became a pressing problem. The irregular outline of Duleek's commons and the enclosed fields surrounding it suggest that the commons had been larger. However, Duleek's town commons avoided the fate of its other commons in Gaskinstown, where by 1832 the whole commons, 17 ha, was fully enclosed and divided amongst 27 small houses and their associated fields (Fig. 6.25). The main threat to Duleek's

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<sup>117</sup>Dublin, June 2 - riding the franchise of Duleek' in *General Advertiser* (London, 9 June 1752), Issue 5504, sec. Ireland, p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> Whyte, *Inhabiting the landscape*, pp 58–9.

<sup>119</sup> Lennox Barrow, 'Riding the Franchises' in *Dublin Historical Record*, xxxiii, no. 4 (1980), pp 135–138.

<sup>120</sup> Barnard, 'The cultures of eighteenth-century Irish towns', p. 217.

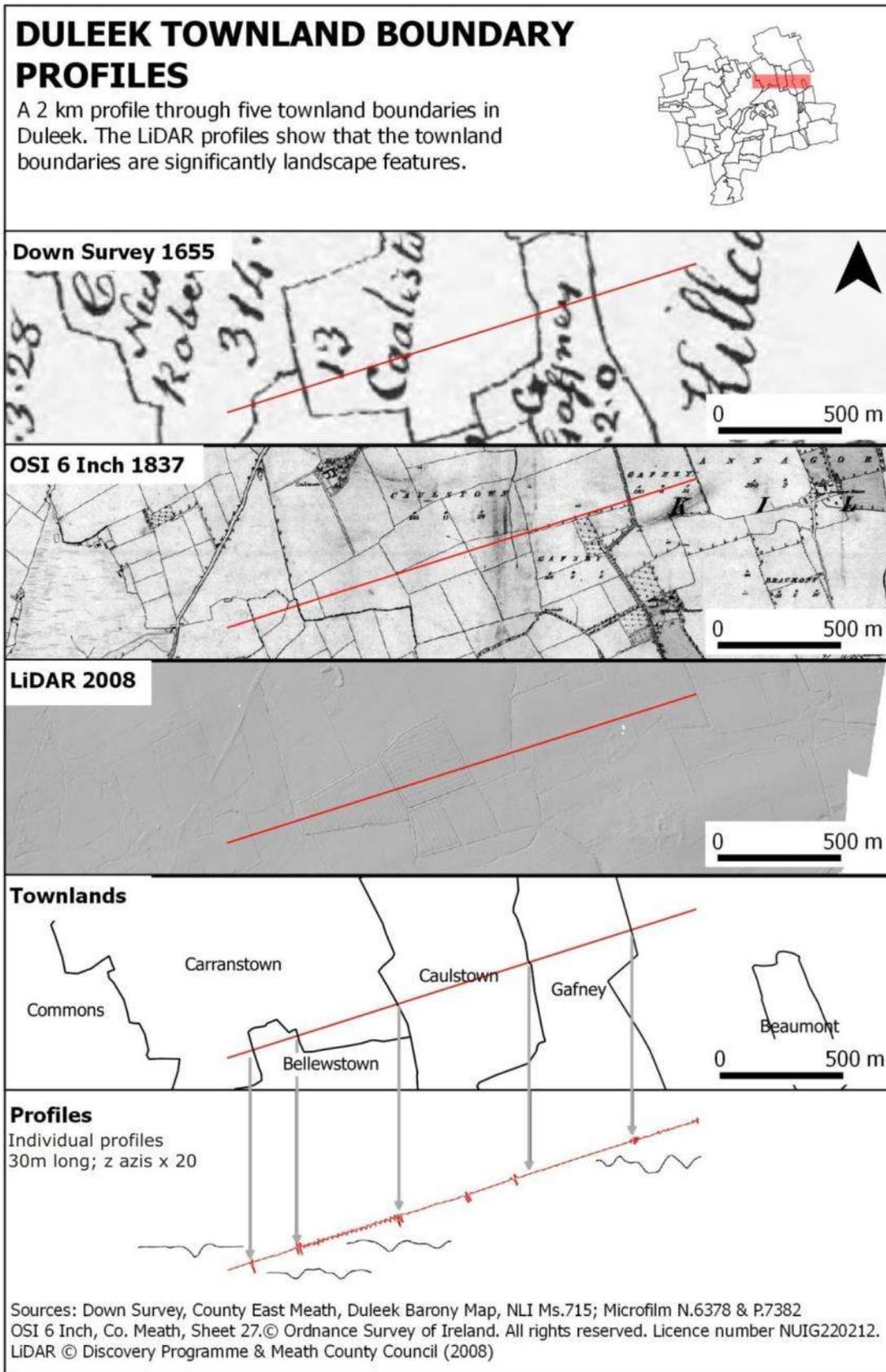


Figure 6.24 The relative size of townland boundaries in Duleek, measured by LiDAR.

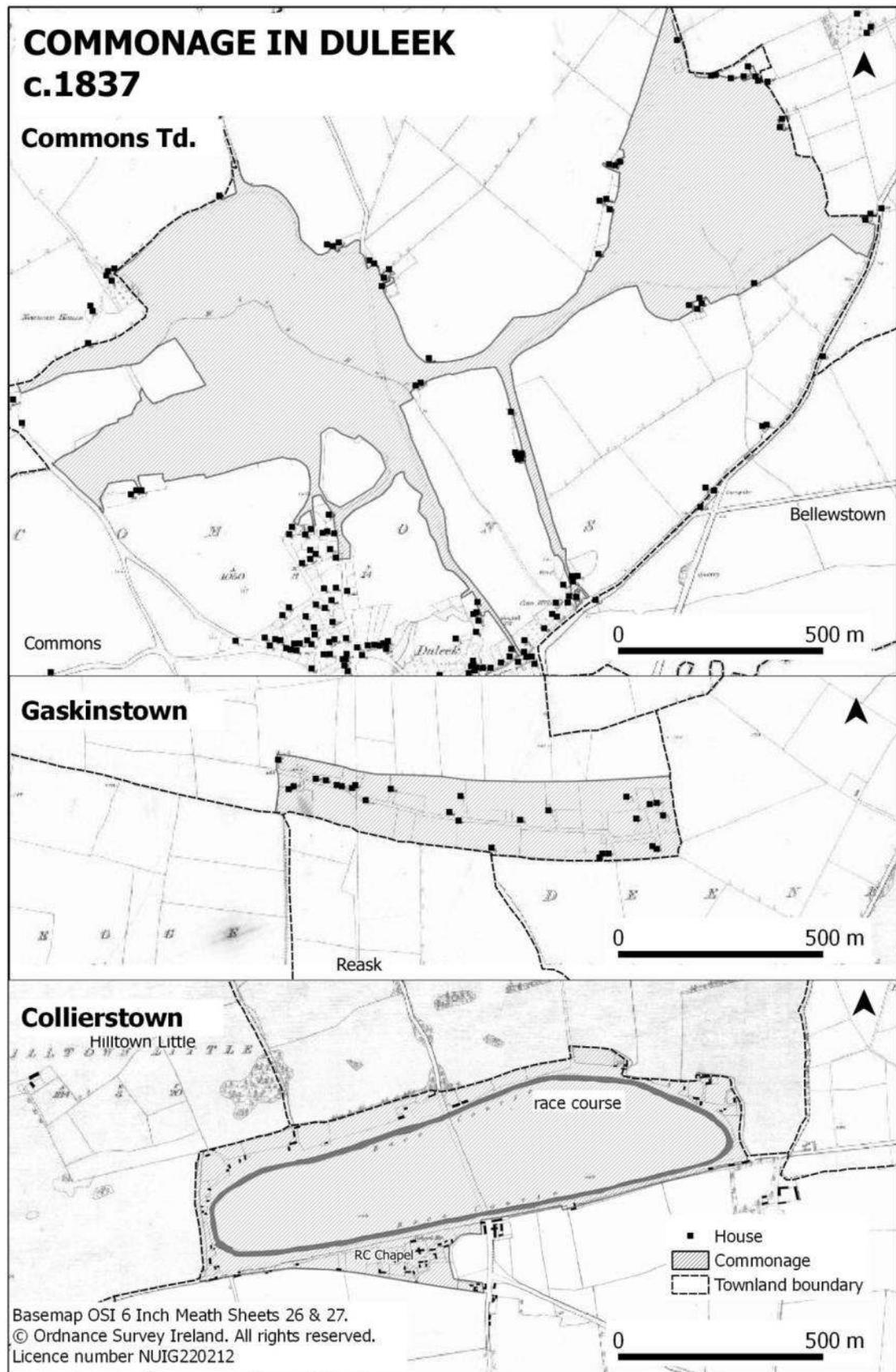


Figure 6.25 Maps of Commonage in Duleek parish c.1840.

town commons came from those hoping to settle and build houses.<sup>121</sup> An irregular suburb of 60 houses, and an additional 48 buildings around the margins, encroached on the commonage of Commons townland in 1837.<sup>122</sup> Whilst the suburb has survived, none of the buildings around the margins of the commons remain today, although the reason for their abandonment, after 1850, is unclear. The Primary Valuation from 1854 recorded that Rev. Edward Batty 'occupied' the whole 75 ha common,<sup>123</sup> although it would appear likely that, as the last vestige of the town's corporation, Batty was held responsible for the area. The Valuation also lists 43 people occupying 'commons', 40 of whom held less than an acre, and live in houses valued at less than £1.5 per annum. Over time, the irregular suburb became freeholds, securing their survival, whilst those in the margins disappeared.<sup>124</sup> The Valuation for Collierstown, another area of commonage in the parish, lists 52 freeholds and 19 occupying commons.<sup>125</sup> Collierstown was a commonage on a hill-top, surrounding a race track (Fig. 6.25). This 46 ha area had 75 houses built around its margin, some concentrated around a Catholic chapel and school, with a racetrack in the centre of the common. In 1854 those living on Collierstown common generally lived on plots of less than an acre (or 0.5 ha) in houses valued at less than £1. Most of these were to disappear over time as the commons was subsumed into adjacent properties later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although the houses surrounding the Catholic chapel and school survived. Collierstown racetrack continues as Bellewstown racecourse.

### **Kilfenora**

Kilfenora had a significantly enclosed landscape from at least the medieval period, with a complex system of Gaelic landholding (sections 3.3 & 4.6). Just over half (58%) of Kilfenora parish was eventually disposed to the Inchiquin O'Brien estate after c.1650,, and the O'Briens remained the parish's most substantial landlords through the later historic period (section 4.6).<sup>126</sup> Notably, where in 1641 the O'Briens had owned all, or a share of 14  $\frac{3}{4}$  'quarters' of land, by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the O'Brien estate was sole proprietor of 1,100 plantation acres (721 ha) in Kilfenora, half of which was judged 'profitable' land. The distinction between

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<sup>121</sup> Andrews, 'The struggle for Ireland's commons', p. 6.

<sup>122</sup> Ordnance Survey of Ireland, *Six Inch to One Mile: Meath Sheet 27 [1:10560]; Surveyed 1837; Engraved 1837, 1836.*

<sup>123</sup> Richard Griffith, 'General Valuation of the Rateable Property in Ireland, Parish of Duleek, Barony of Duleek Lower, Union of Drogheda' in *General Valuation of the Rateable Property in Ireland, Union of Drogheda, Counties of Louth and Meath. Act 15 & 16 Victoria, CAP. 65.* (Dublin, 1854), p. 151.

<sup>124</sup> These houses have now mostly been converted or replaced by modern bungalows.

<sup>125</sup> Griffith, 'Primary Valuation, Duleek Lower', pp 118–120.

<sup>126</sup> Simington, *BSD Clare*, pp 189–194.



Figure 6.26 Examples of Hewett's maps for the Inchiquin O'Brien estate, showing of Clonomra and Clougher in Kilfenora. Map held in the National Library of Ireland.

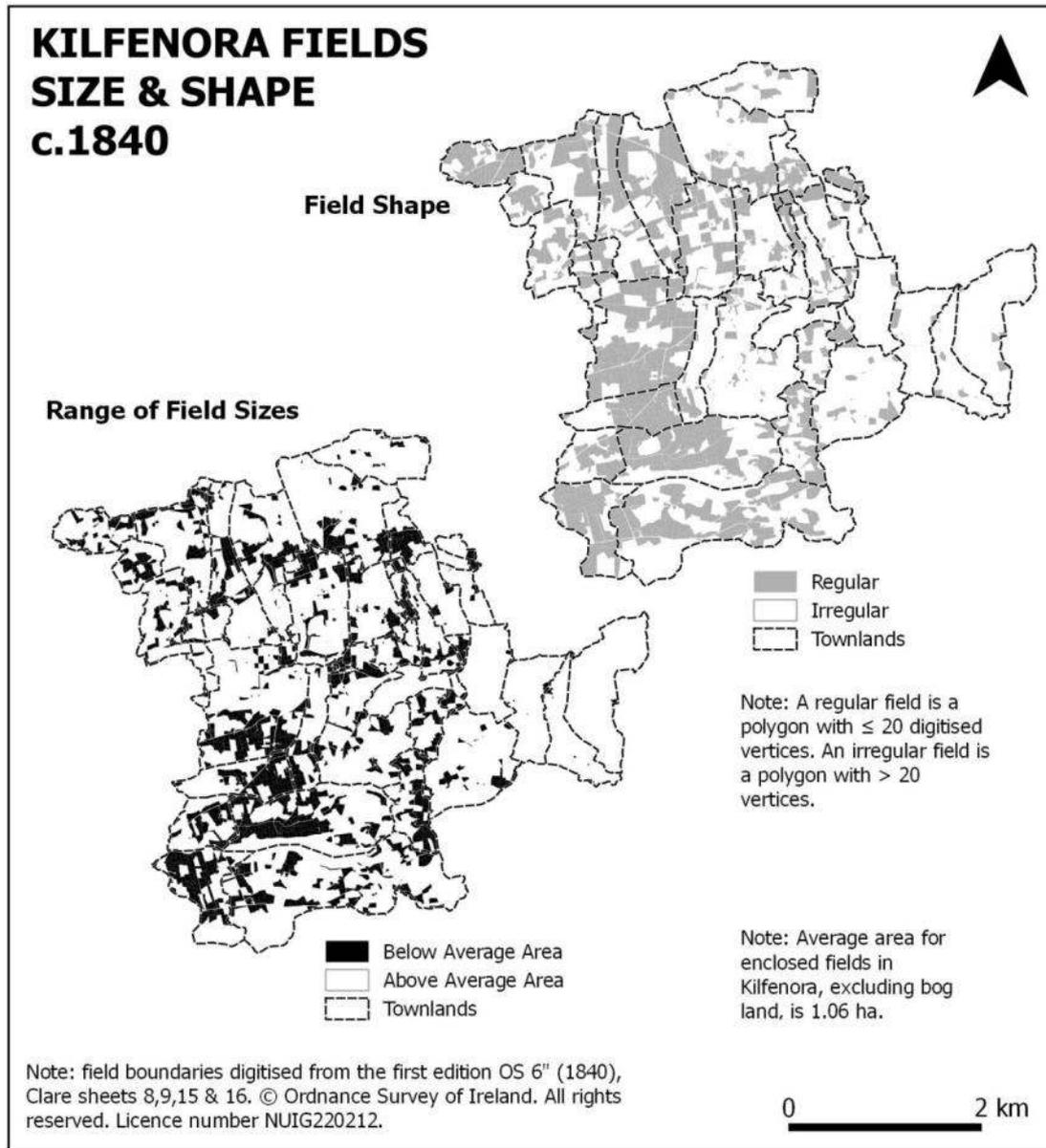


Figure 6.27 Analysis of the size and shape of field enclosures in Kilfenora c.1840.

quarters and acres marked a fundamental change in the way land and property in Kilfenora were perceived by the estate. Where quarters were relative units of land productivity, flexible and capable of encompassing the variables of land quality and partible ownership, acres were absolute units, either profitable or not. Crucially for this study, acres could be mapped. By 1768 the O'Brien estate consisted of a massive 16,882 Irish acres or 11,067 ha.<sup>127</sup> In 1768 O'Brien's estates were mapped by Henry Hewett. These manuscript maps, bound in a leather volume, included nine townlands in Kilfenora parish (Fig. 6.26). As well as being beautifully

<sup>127</sup> National Library of Ireland Collection List No. 143 Inchiquin Papers, p. 15.

executed pieces of work, these maps are notable for depicting the townlands as property units, as mostly unenclosed, or at least irregularly enclosed spaces. Considering the semiotic importance of regular enclosed spaces in places like the estate in Kilcooly (section 5.4), the lack of regularity depicted in those of Kilfenora, in the estate records, is striking. A substantial 40% of the O'Brien estate was sold by Sir Lucius O'Brien in 1768 to settle debts, which may explain why this volume of maps was compiled.<sup>128</sup> O'Brien appears to have focused his main improving efforts on his demesne and home farm at Dromoland and, in fact, O'Brien hosted Arthur Young during his tour in Ireland.<sup>129</sup> The landscape of Kilfenora remained substantially the responsibility of the tenants and people working the land into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The OSI's six-inch survey of Kilfenora in 1840 recorded 4,000 individual fields. The average size of fields in Kilfenora parish in 1840 was 1.06 ha. However, most of the parish area (75%) was enclosed by fields larger than this average (Fig. 6.27). As with the other study areas the natural topography was a key factor in the layout and orientation of fields, but unlike the other study areas it is difficult to pick out overarching patterns of field orientations. The fields in Kilfenora appear to be more random and irregular than the other case study areas. This is particularly so amongst the small irregular fields to the north of Kilfenora village (Fig. 6.28,A). Some regularity is apparent in the south-west of the parish (Fig. 6.28, B). Roads running across, and therefore post-dating field patterns are apparent in the north and south of the parish (Fig. 6.28, C). In addition, up to 63% of the parish was enclosed by irregular fields. The north and east areas of the parish were predominantly enclosed by large irregular fields with zones of small regular fields around their margins.

However, despite this apparent irregularity of enclosure some aspects of Improvement practice appear to have made significant inroads in Kilfenora. The OSI 6-inch map depicts 140 lime kilns in the parish. Most (135) of these kilns were found on the upland, shale bedrock areas, including the peaty former common lands of the north of the parish. Here kilns were frequent, strung out along roads which were made through the uplands (Fig. 6.29). The OSI maps show individual fields striking into the upland areas as enclosure gradually encroached further north. The frequency of kilns suggests that each tenant had his own kiln.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Dromoland castle, Co. Clare. ITM: 538900, 670650. Keith Lamb and Patrick Bowe, *A History of Gardening in Ireland* (Dublin, 1995), p. 29; Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland with General Observations on the Present State of that Kingdom Made in the Years 1776, 1777, 1778 and Brought Down to the Year 1779. Volume I* (London, 1780), pp 352–357.

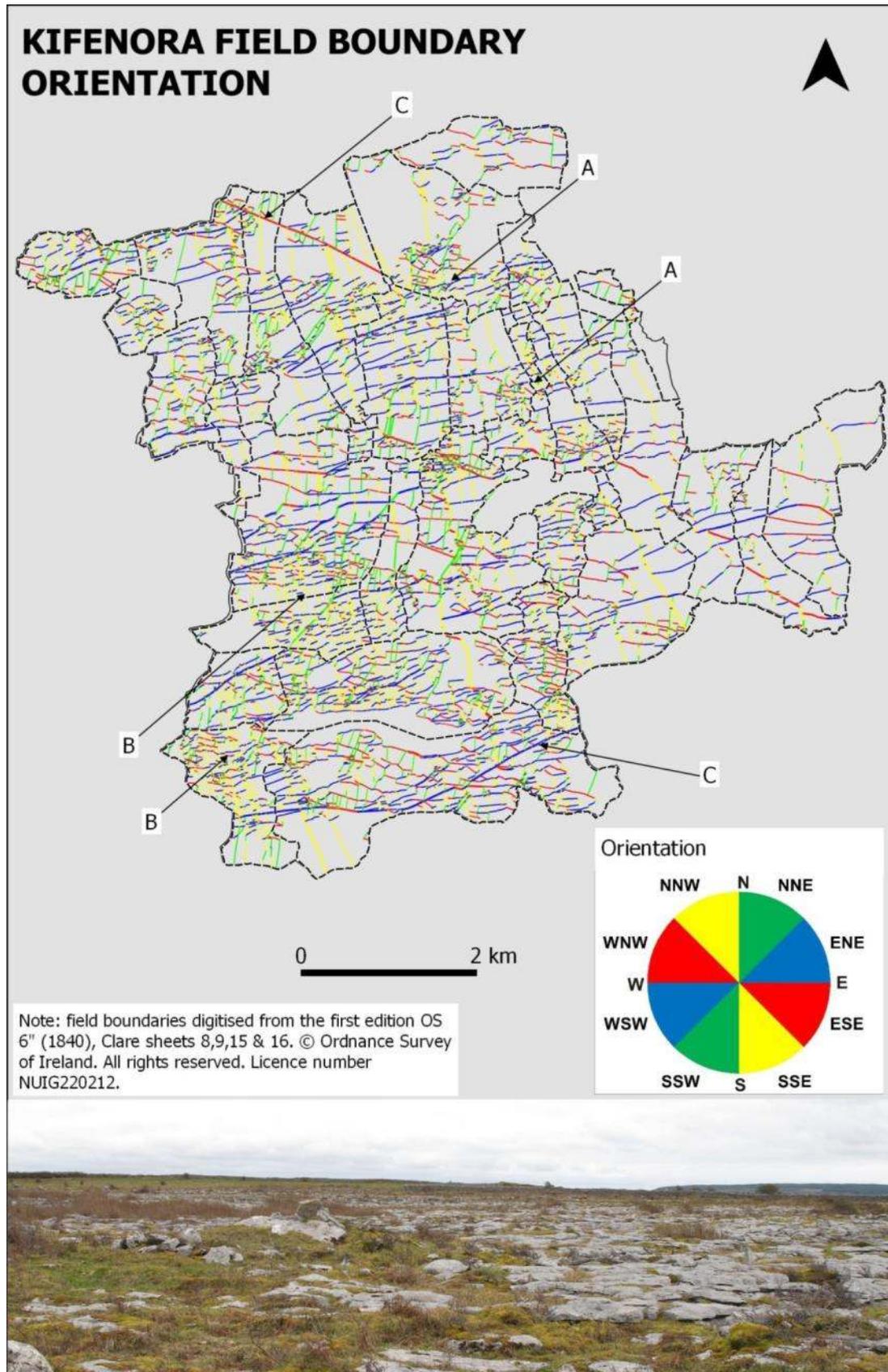


Figure 6.28 The orientation of field boundaries in Kiftenora c.1840.

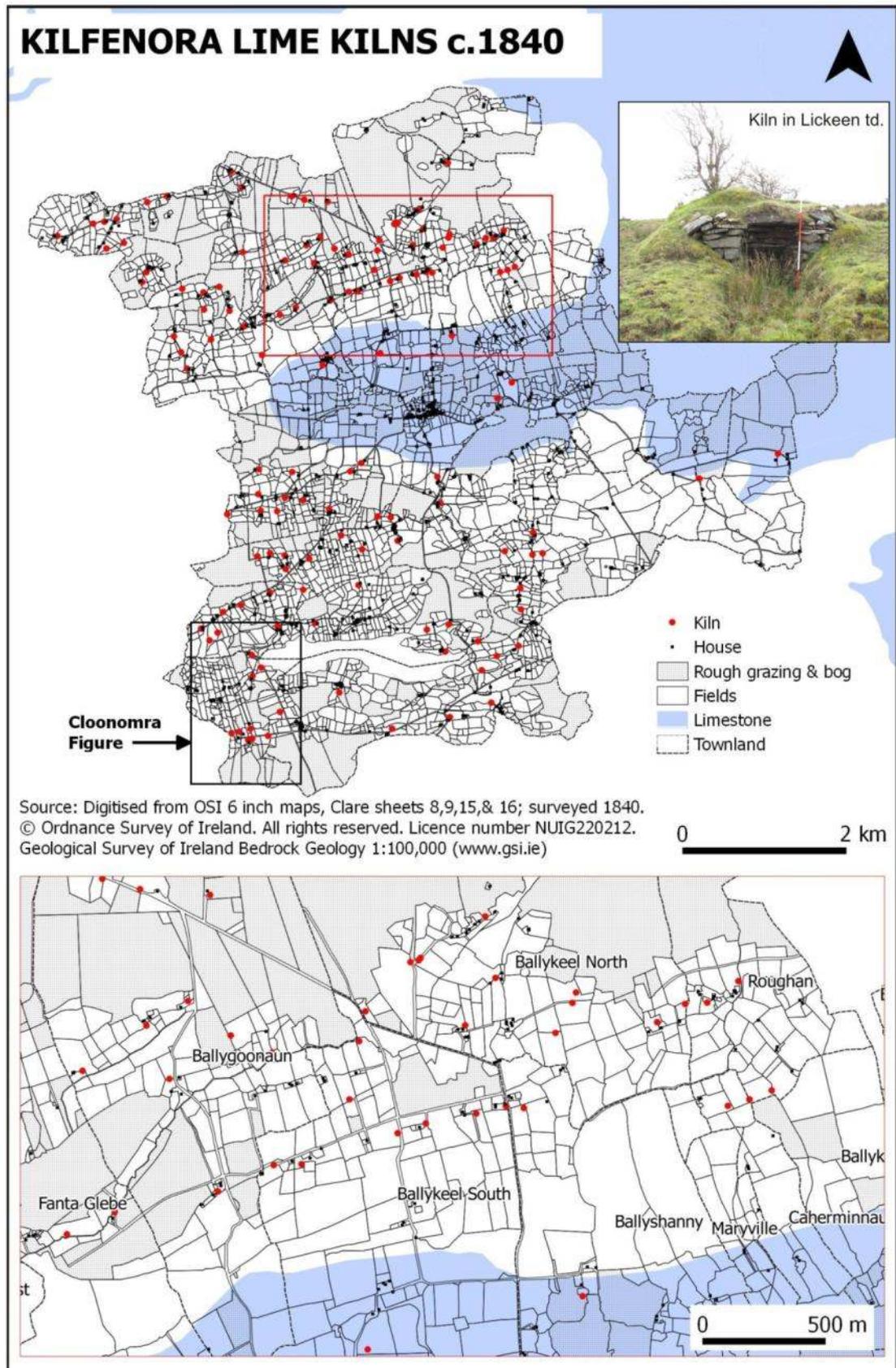


Figure 6.29 The distribution of lime kilns in Kilfenora c.1840.

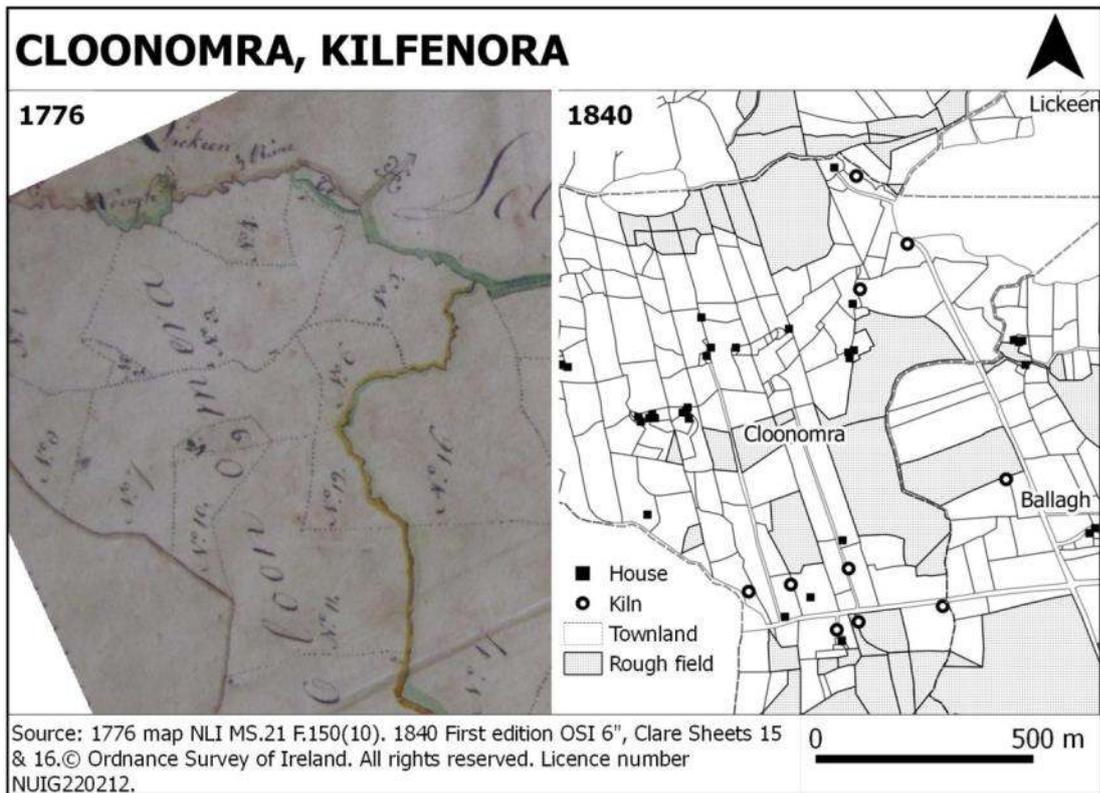


Figure 6.30 The changing patterns of enclosure in Cloonomra as shown on maps from 1768 and 1840.

Whereas enclosure in the peaty north of the parish appears to have been a gradual and piecemeal affair, in Cloonomra townland in the south of Kilfenora the whole former landscape of enclosure was reorganised. Cloonomra was one of the townlands depicted by Hewett in 1768 (Fig. 6.30). Hewett's map shows the townland with a number of large irregular areas or fields. Cloonomra remained in the O'Brien estate and, by 1840, it had been substantially reorganised. The irregular large fields were replaced by strip fields running down slope, with farmsteads in each strip.

Mr John O'Dwyer noted in 1845 that around Kilfenora there was no improvement and no encouragement of drainage. Tillage was in  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre plots; small holders were plentiful, although there were not many joint tenancies. The rent on an acre of good land around Kilfenora was £8; for superior grazing ground, £4; good grazing ground was an acre that could fatten one cow.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Evidence taken before Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland. Part II. [616], H.C. 1845, xx, 1, p. 696.

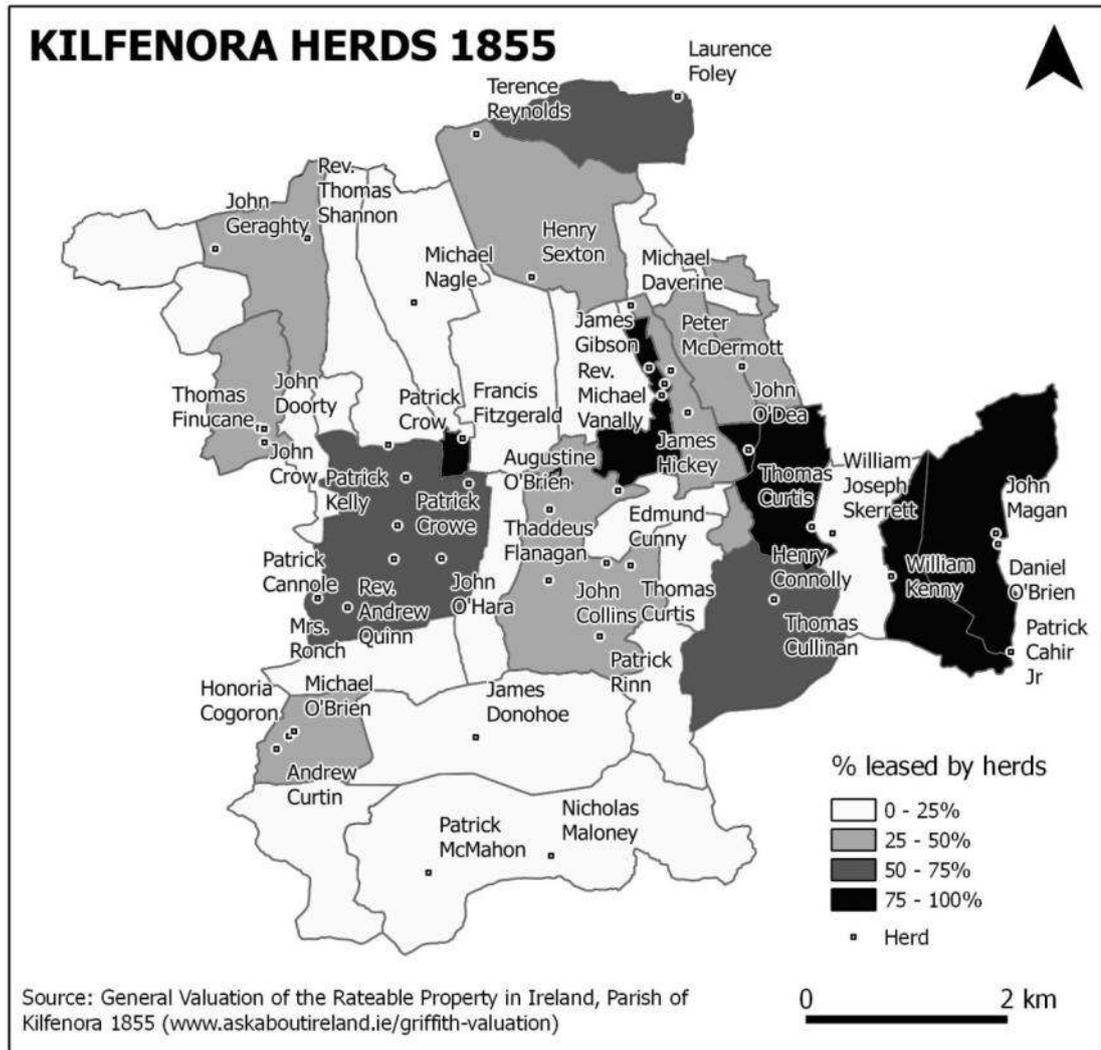


Figure 6.31 Map of herd's properties in Kilfenora c.1855.



Figure 6.32 Herd's wall in Lickeen West townland, Kilfenora.

Herdsmen, or herds as they were described, were a substantial part of the fabric of land tenure in Kilfenora in 1855 as they were in the west of Ireland in general in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>131</sup> In 1855 the General Valuation listed 45 herds in Kilfenora, occupying up to 31% of the parish in 1855. These ranged in size from Thomas Cullinan's 108 hectares, leased from Sir Lucius O'Brien in Clogher townland, to Edmund Cunny's 3 hectares in Kilfenora townland, leased from James O'Brien. Four townlands, Ballyclancahill, Caherminnaun East, Clooneen, and Creggaun, were completely farmed by herds, whilst others contained none (Fig. 6.31). Just two of the 45 herds held their land in fee: William Joseph Skerrett in Ballykinvarga and Laurence Foley in Cohy; all of the other herds' lands were farmed for absentee landlords. The average value of herds' lands was £1.54 per hectare, above the average (£0.97 per hectare) for the parish as a whole. Herdsmen were a particularly skilled class of worker, highly knowledgeable, relatively well paid, and considered themselves socially superior to tenants.<sup>132</sup> Distinctive 'single' walls, made from field stone, one stone thick and sometimes with vertical courses of upper stones, remain in many parts of upland marginal portions of Kilfenora (Fig. 6.32). These can be distinctively straight and overlay the earlier relict enclosures. Other distinctive features include gaps for sheep to walk through and shelter walls or wind breaks – short T-shaped portions of walls specifically designed to provide shelter for cattle from the wind – as well as animal pens built in the corners of fields, sometimes with gates.

### **Kilrea**

The decision to include the field boundaries of Ireland on the first edition six-inch maps was not made until after much of the northern counties of Ireland were surveyed.<sup>133</sup> So, for Kilrea parish, the field boundaries were only included in the revised survey of 1849 (Fig. 6.13). Kilrea had over 3,500 fields.<sup>134</sup> The majority of Kilrea parish (79%) was enclosed with fields larger than the average 0.56 ha, and mostly (74%) of regular plan (Fig. 6.33). Most of these fields boundaries were orientated perpendicular to the River Bann, which could reasonably be described as the most important topographical feature in the parish. Certain areas of the parish did exhibit more irregular field plans (Fig 6.34, A), where boundary orientations were more variable. Other areas, in particular Claragh townland and Kilrea around the town,

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<sup>131</sup>John Cunningham, "A Class Quite Distinct": the western herds and their defence of their working conditions' in Carla King and Conor McNamara (eds), *The West of Ireland: New Perspectives on the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 2011), pp 137–160.

<sup>132</sup> Jones, *Graziers, Land Reform, in Ireland*, pp 11–13.

<sup>133</sup> Andrews, *A Paper Landscape*, pp 103–106.

<sup>134</sup> Field boundaries in the townland of Moyagoney were not included in this analysis.

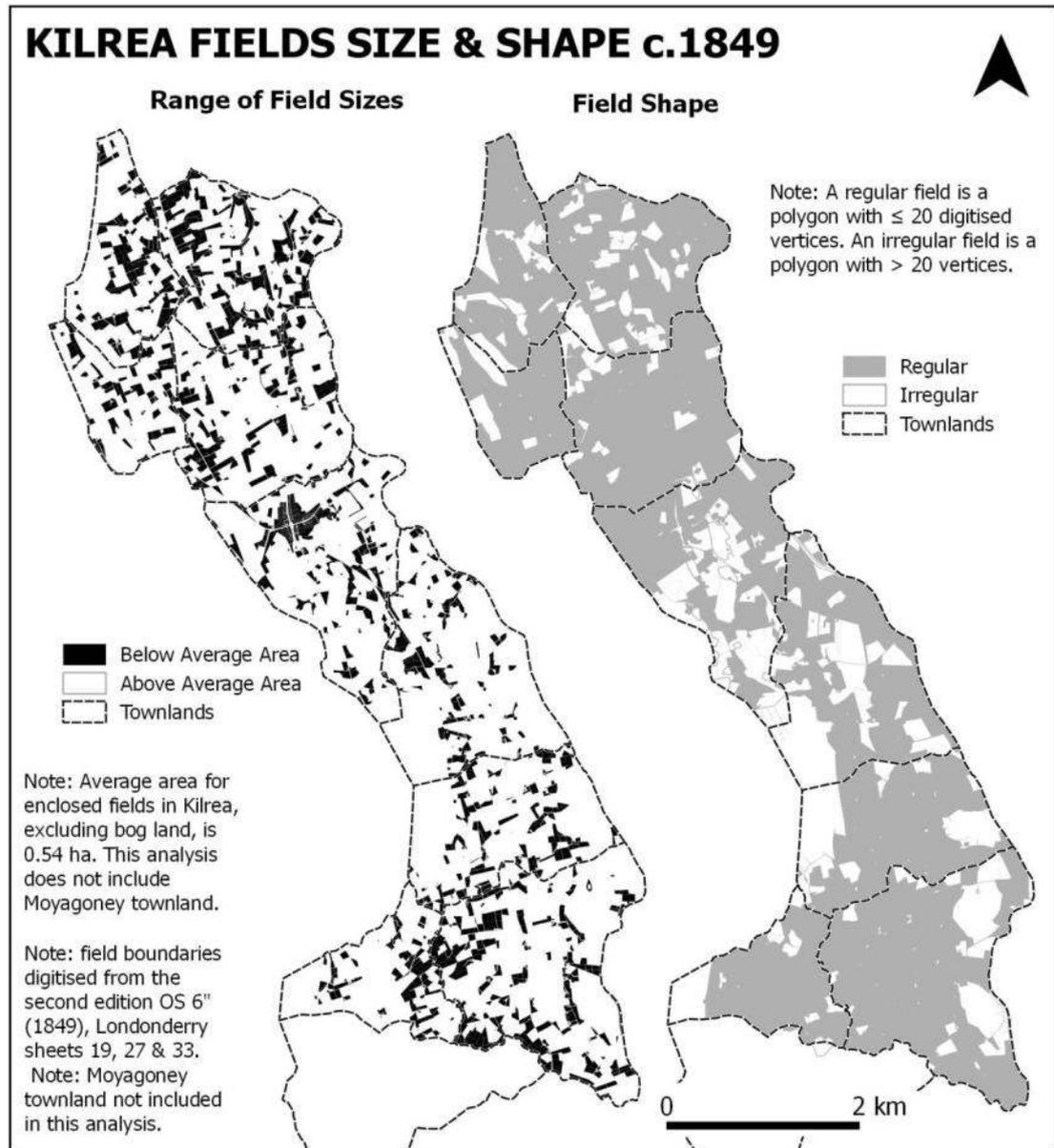


Figure 6.33 Analysis of the size and shape of field enclosures in Kilrea c.1849.

contained a distinctly more uniform pattern of fields (Fig. 6.34, B). North of Kilrea town the field orientations ran perpendicular to the main north-east, south-west road which was parallel to the Bann. Other roads are obviously aligned on a different orientation and would appear to post-date enclosure, such as the road leading north-west from Kilrea towards Garvagh (Fig 6.34, C).

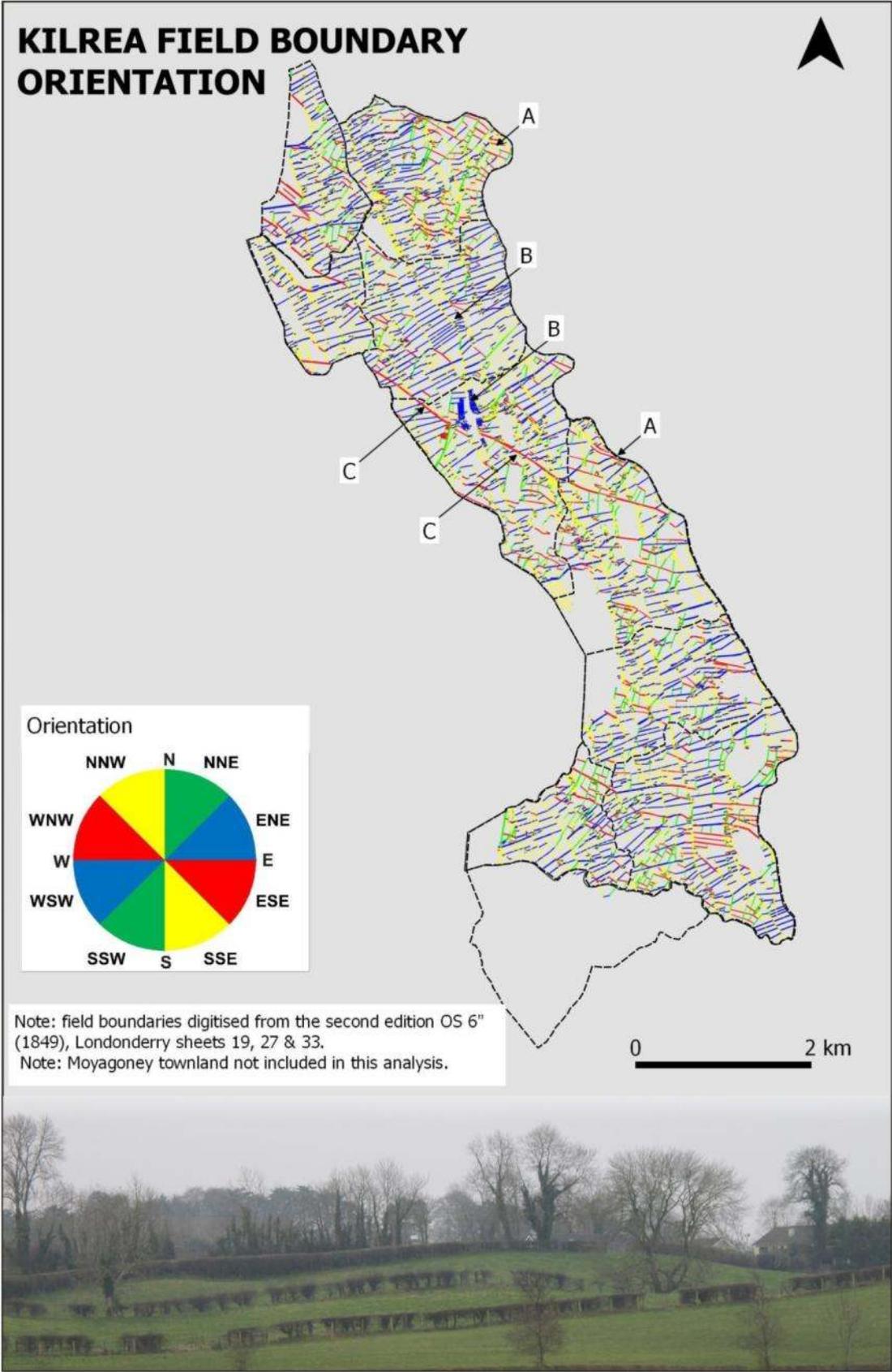


Figure 6.34 The orientation of field boundaries in Kilrea c.1849.

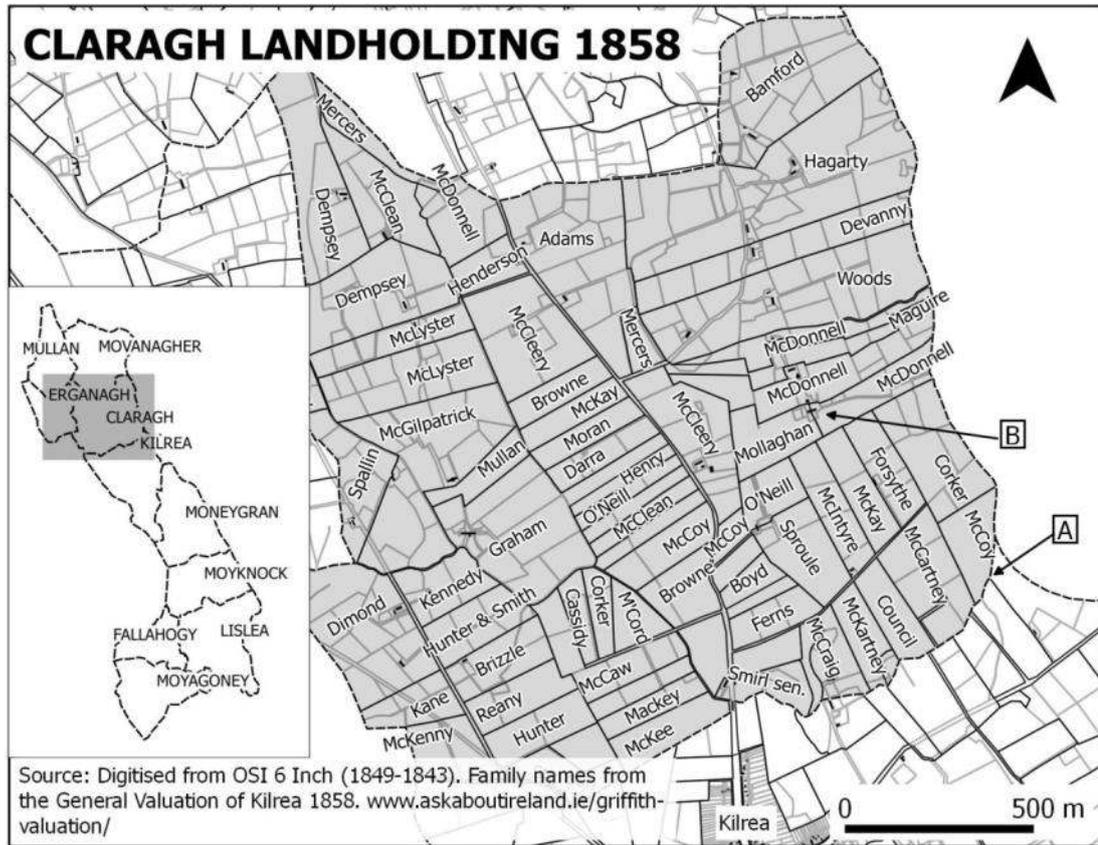


Figure 6.35 Landholding in Claragh in 1858.

Amongst the tenantry in Kilrea, the majority (70%) of the families recorded in the parish in 1858 first appeared in parish records in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>135</sup> whilst 19% were first recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>136</sup> and just 11% first appear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>137</sup> Within Kilrea some families demonstrated a remarkable degree of continuity. The Ó Díomáin family, hereditary erenaghs of the church land of Kilrea in the later medieval period (section 4.5),<sup>138</sup> were still leasing land in nearly all townlands in Kilrea in 1858, including Erganagh townland.

<sup>135</sup> Bill Macafee, '1740 Protestant Householders' Returns: Transcript of PRONI T808/1528 & T716/9' in *billmacafee.com*, 2010 (<http://www.billmacafee.com/18centurydatabases.htm>) (28 Apr. 2014).

<sup>136</sup> Bill Macafee, '1630 Muster Rolls for the County of Londonderry: Transcript of PRONI D/1759/3C' in *billmacafee.com*, 2012 (<http://www.billmacafee.com/17centurydatabases.htm>) (28 Apr. 2014); Bill Macafee, 'Hearth Money Databases for Co. Londonderry 1663: Transcript of PRONI T307' in *billmacafee.com*, 2012 (<http://www.billmacafee.com/17centurydatabases.htm>) (28 Apr. 2014).

<sup>137</sup> National Archives of Ireland, 'National Archives: Census of Ireland 1831 Londonderry', 2014 (<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1831/Londonderry/>) (20 June 2014); Richard Griffith, 'General Valuation of the Rateable Property in Ireland, Parish of Kilrea, Union of Ballymoney, County of Londonderry' in *General Valuation of the Rateable Property in Ireland, Union of Ballymoney, County of Londonderry. Acts 15 & 16 VIC., CAP. 63; 17 VIC., CAP. 8; and 19 & 20 VIC., CAP. 63* (Dublin, 1858), pp 8–10; 30–42.

<sup>138</sup> Airchinneach = stewards of church land and keepers of the church fabric.

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kilrea parish, excluding Kilrea town, contained 540 separate leaseholds, with an average area of 4.6 ha. These ranged in value from less than £1 to over £4 a hectare, with the most valuable properties being in Claragh townland to the north (Fig. 6.35). The 372 houses included in the valuation, again not including Kilrea town, ranged substantially in value also, from less than £1 to over £12, the highest being the new manor house and residence of the Mercers' land agent in Derry, George Bicknell, valued at £55. However, not every house was included in the valuation. There were some 62 more houses listed for the parish in the 1851 census.<sup>139</sup> These, it would appear, were the houses of subtenants.

As discussed above, Movanager, the principal focus of the early Mercers' estate in Derry (section 4.5), contained a relatively large number of field boundaries with irregular orientations. Looking at the townland in more detail, and particularly the evidence for landholding in the townland, the presence of Movanager castle on the Banks of the Bann river is apparent as the centre of a series of fields and leaseholds, two belonging to the Jamesons (Fig. 6.36), which radiate from the former 17<sup>th</sup>-century settlement centre. Irregular sinuous boundaries are apparent in the north of Movanager, as in Robert Stewart's leasehold (Fig. 6.36, A), the property boundaries are predominantly regular. Long-distance common property boundaries, what the historical geographer Currie calls 'trend-lines',<sup>140</sup> are apparent in the townland (Fig. 6.36, B). Some of these trend lines cut across important topographical features like the road to Movanager castle (Fig. 6.36, C), suggesting an earlier landscape organisation. The main road running north-west to south-east through the townland seems to have been used to establish the orientation of regular property and field boundaries along its north-east side, overlaying what appears to be earlier irregular fields. However, despite the local importance of the road as a topographical feature it did not supersede the earlier townland boundary, which continued to follow a sinuous course some one hundred meters or so to the south and west (Fig. 6.36, D). This pattern is repeated elsewhere in Kilrea parish. Looking at the adjacent townland of Claragh, the fields and properties are generally more regularly shaped than those in Movanager, The main road leading north from Kilrea town appears to have formed the major spine from which properties and fields were orientated, creating neat blocks of high-value leaseholds in Claragh townland. However, the older

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<sup>139</sup> *The census of Ireland for the year 1851, part I, showing the area, population, and number of houses, by townlands and electoral divisions, county of Londonderry* [1571], H.C. 1852-3, xcii, 231, pp 232, 241.

<sup>140</sup> E. A. Currie, 'Land tenures, enclosures and field-patterns in Co. Derry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' in *Irish Geography*, ix, no. 1 (1976), pp 52–53.

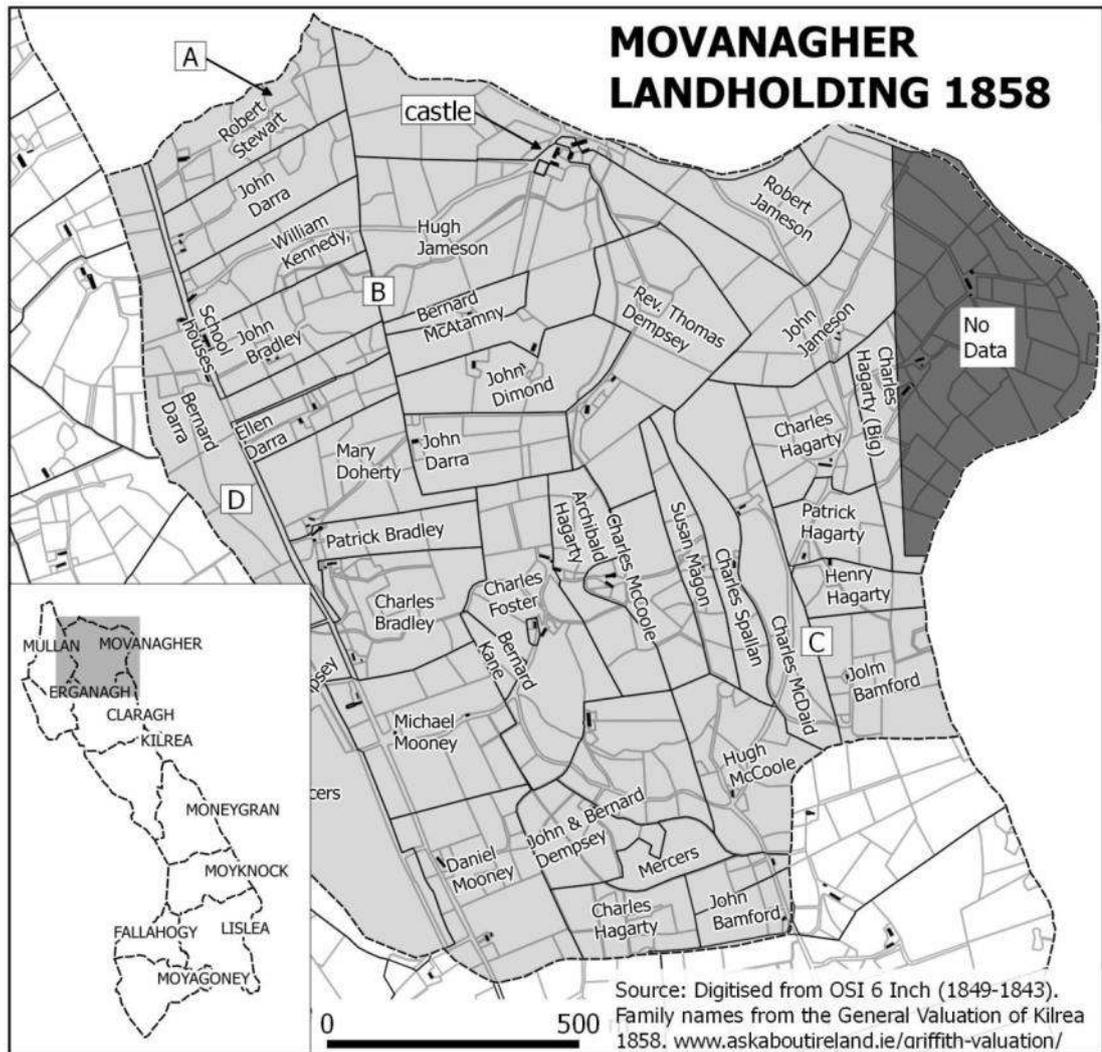


Figure 6.36 Landholding in Movanager in 1858.

townland boundaries still remained as a significant landscape feature, in the south of the townland formed by a natural stream, itself forming the tailrace of Kilrea mill, which is at least 17<sup>th</sup> century in date (Fig.6.35). At face value the similar orientations and regularity of fields in Claragh and Kilrea townlands suggest some degree of overall planning and execution. However, field boundaries south of the millrace in Kilrea townland, while generally on the same alignment as Claragh's field boundaries, are offset, illustrating that enclosure in each townland was carried out separately.

Family groups appear to have formed significant leasehold patterns in 1858. The McDonnell family in Claragh leased 15 hectares of land in five separate leaseholds. Three of these leaseholds were clustered together near the centre of the townland. The farmsteads and offices of James McDonnell and James Mollaghan appear to have been shared, in so far as the boundary between both leaseholds bisected the only buildings in each leasehold (Fig.

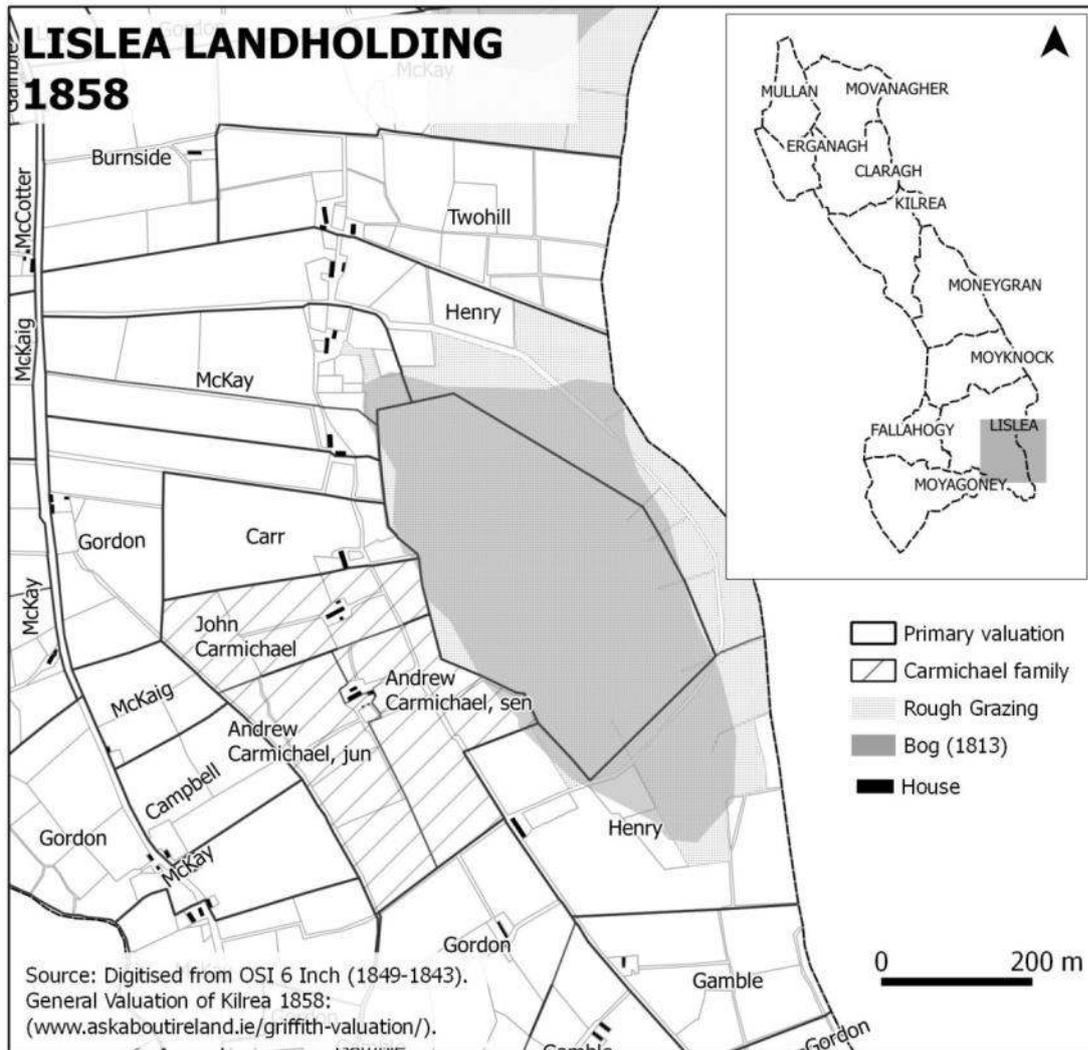


Figure 6.37 Landholding in Lislea in 1858.

6.35, B). Twelve houses were bisected by property boundaries in Kilrea parish, and six of these belonged to tenants with the same last names, suggesting that larger leaseholds were subdivided as families grew. A linear arrangement of farmsteads, some with shared houses is also apparent in Claragh townland, encompassing the leaseholds of McDonnell, Maguire, Woods, Devany and Hegarty families. These linear farmstead arrangements and proximity, as well as the familial relationships between tenants sharing buildings, suggests a greater degree of cooperative farming than the individual leaseholds would imply. A similar arrangement of farmsteads and shared houses are apparent in the southern townland of Lislea (Fig. 6.37). Here, leaseholds consisted of bands of land running from the river Bann west to the main Kilrea road. Farmsteads were positioned in the centre of these leaseholds, strung along a

narrow lane. One family, the Carmichaels, held a block of three leaseholds, two split between Andrew Carmichael senior and junior, presumably father and son.

### ***Kilcooly***

Kilcooly's enclosed landscape in 1840, that portion of the parish encompassing the Barker estate, consisted of 1900 fields. Again, the pattern of field boundaries was heavily influenced by the underlying topography, so that the southern, upland portion of the parish had enclosures which ran predominantly perpendicular to the slope of the hills (Fig. 6.38). This can be seen between Bawnlea and Renaghmore (Fig. 6.38, A). As discussed before (section 5.4) the fields in the low-lying northern part of the parish, around the demesne of Kilcooly Abbey, were laid out 'by the compass' in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Barker family. These regular orientations are visible as long-distance boundary lines and parallel fields in Kilcooly abbey demesne and the surrounding townlands (Fig. 6.38 B). As Kilcooly Abbey demesne expanded, it encompassed many of these former tenants' fields, and resulted in the creation of new demesne boundaries and a new, straight road which transacted the earlier boundaries. New roads were also a feature of the upland landscape, where land which had been, until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, unenclosed commonage land, had been divided into townlands and leased to a community of Palatines. Here, the new townland boundaries followed the line of straight roads, which in turn also influenced the shape and orientation of the fields (Fig. 6.38, C). The majority of Kilcooly (77%) was enclosed with fields larger than the average 1.2 ha. This generally corresponds with the larger fields of the lowlands in and surrounding Kilcooly demesne. In general the smaller fields in Kilcooly were found on the uplands (Fig. 6.39). Most (71%) of Kilcooly was covered by fields of regular shape. Fields with an irregular plan tended to be larger and located on the lowlands around Kilcooly Abbey, where the expansion of the demesne in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century had been accompanied by a remodelling of the formerly more regular enclosed landscape within, with new artificial lakes and sinuous plantations (see section 5.4).

## **6.7 Improvement through Industry: Mining in Slieveardagh**

Although the economy of rural Ireland remained overwhelmingly based on agriculture in the later historic period, the impetus towards Improvement in this era also took the form of the attempt to develop industry. The Kilcooly study area provides an example of this development

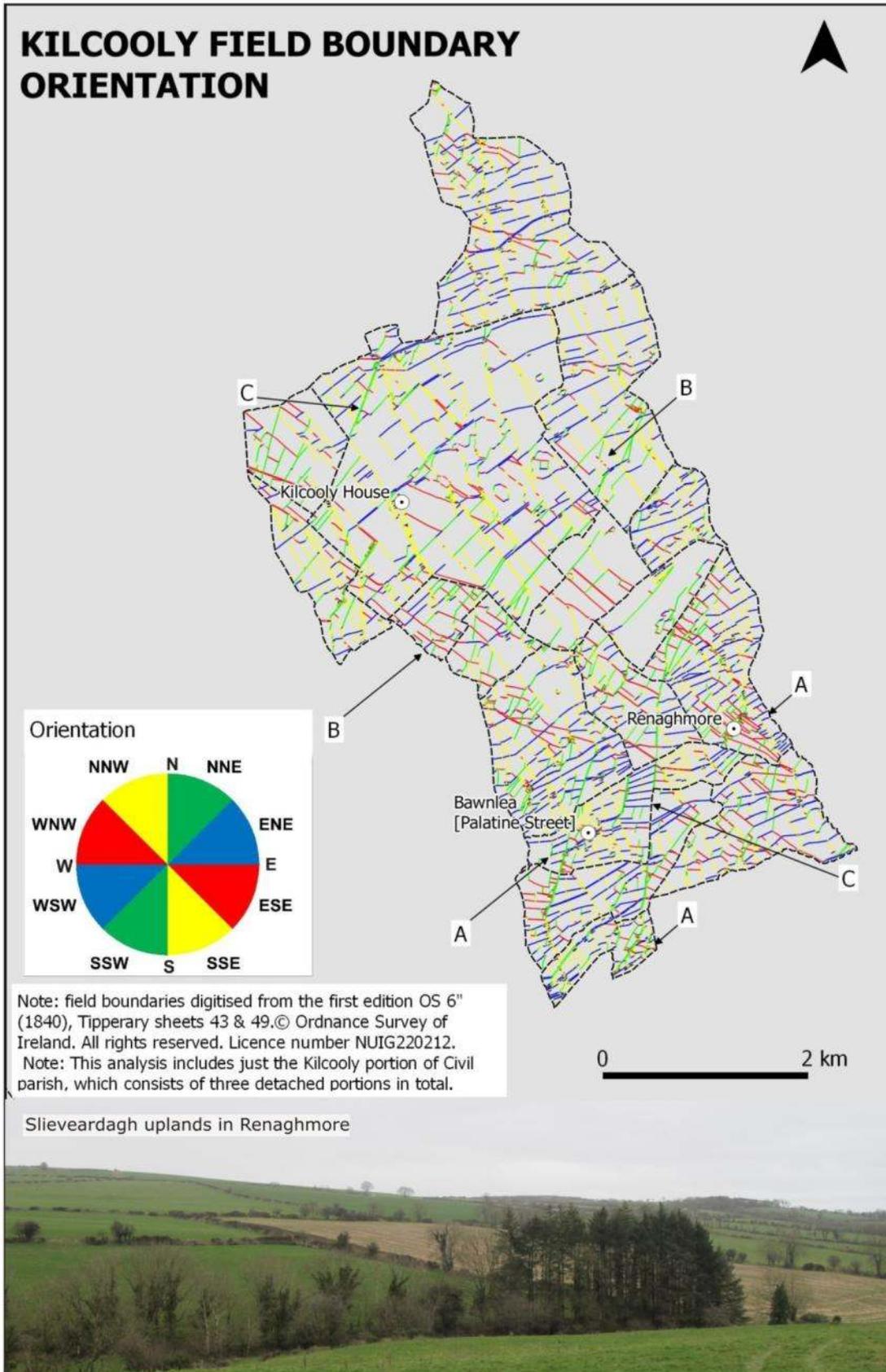


Figure 6.38 The orientation of field boundaries in Kilcooly c.1840.

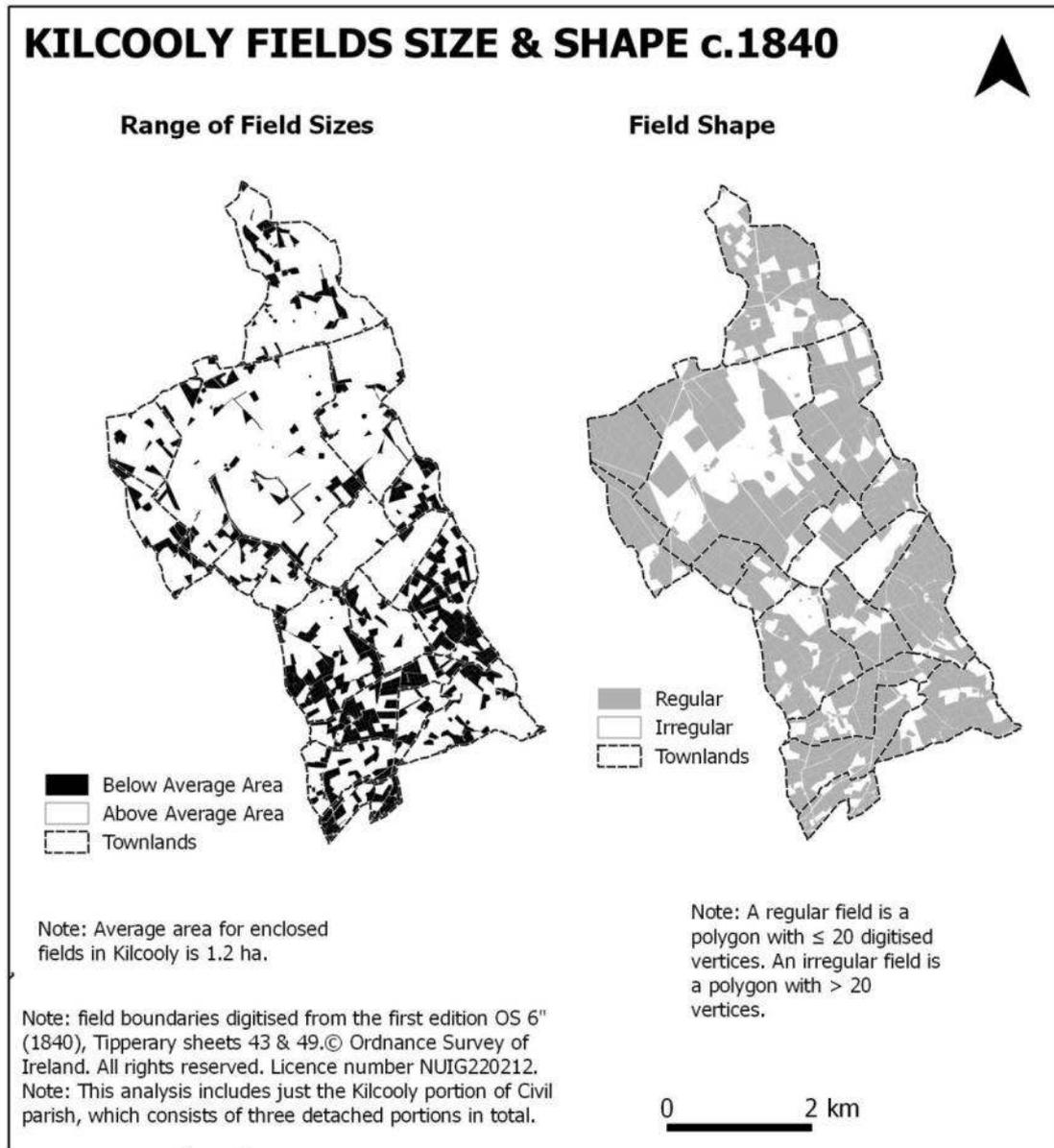


Figure 6.39 Analysis of the size and shape of field enclosures in Kilcooly c.1840.

in the form of the limited success of the mining industry promoted there. Mining in Slieveardagh demonstrates that improvement in the arena of industry in later historic Ireland was conditioned by availability of natural resources, and trade with Britain. Crucially, outside Ulster at least, industry remained subordinate to agriculture in Ireland.

Slieveardagh's coal fields, much like the village of New Birmingham near where they were located, failed to live up to investor expectations. Coal deposits, very high quality but fractured and thin deposits of anthracite, were found through the upland Slieveardagh hills. These were exposed on the surface in a series of river valleys (Fig. 6.40), but were largely unexploited

until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Vere Hunt's estate did not itself include significant coal deposits. It would appear he had intended to profit from the industry and business associated with the coal. The most significant coal deposits were in the adjacent estates of the Langleys and the Goings, and in the Barker estate at Kilcooly. Most of the mining activity in these areas was through 'basset mines', or relatively shallow pits dug to the level of the coal deposit. These were then expanded for as far as possible in a chamber before another pit was sunk, creating lines of pits in pock-marked fields following the coal seams. Most of the coal extracted in this manner was called culm and consisted of coal dust which, when mixed with yellow clay, could be used as fuel. Some of the landowners, like the Langleys of Coalbrook, attempted to develop the mines on a more industrial basis, building engine houses to help drain the mines. However, the expense was too much for them. The Mining Company of Ireland developed the commercial mines in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, leasing property from the landowners and developing mines at Mardyke and Blackcommon. However, the fractured nature and narrow width of the coal seams, as well as competition from British coal imports, meant that mining in Slieveardagh in the 19<sup>th</sup> century substantially always remained relatively small scale.<sup>141</sup>

Most of the mining works in the Barker estate were found in the Newpark and Blackcommon townlands. These also appear to have been mined primarily by 'bassets', approximately 700 coal pits appearing in 1840, of which 200 were located in the Barker estate (Fig. 6.40). Most of these coal pits (c.160) were in Newpark townland, tenanted by Palatines, the rest in Blackcommon townland, part of a commonage which lay between the Barker estate and the adjacent parish of Ballingarry. Just one engine house on the Barker estate, in Newpark townland, appears to have been designed to help lower the water table in the area. This engine house and forge, which no longer survives, was described in 1846 as old, dilapidated, with a slate roof; it was rented from William Barker by William Pimlott and George Ashby, Barker's land agent. In contrast with other estates encompassing the Slieveardagh coal fields and, after 1840, the Mining Company of Ireland, the Barker estate did not invest heavily in mining.<sup>142</sup> Why was this? The Barkers were aware of the potential for mining, starting with Elizabeth Barker in 1670, who encouraged miners to settle on the commonage of Grange, most likely in Newpark and Blackcommon townlands.<sup>143</sup> Clearly by 1840 considerable mining

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<sup>141</sup> Darrell Edmund Figgis, *Commission of Inquiry into the Resources and Industries of Ireland. Memoir on the Coalfields of Ireland, July 1921* (Dublin, 1921), p. 65.

<sup>142</sup> Neely, *Kilcooley*, pp 99–104.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

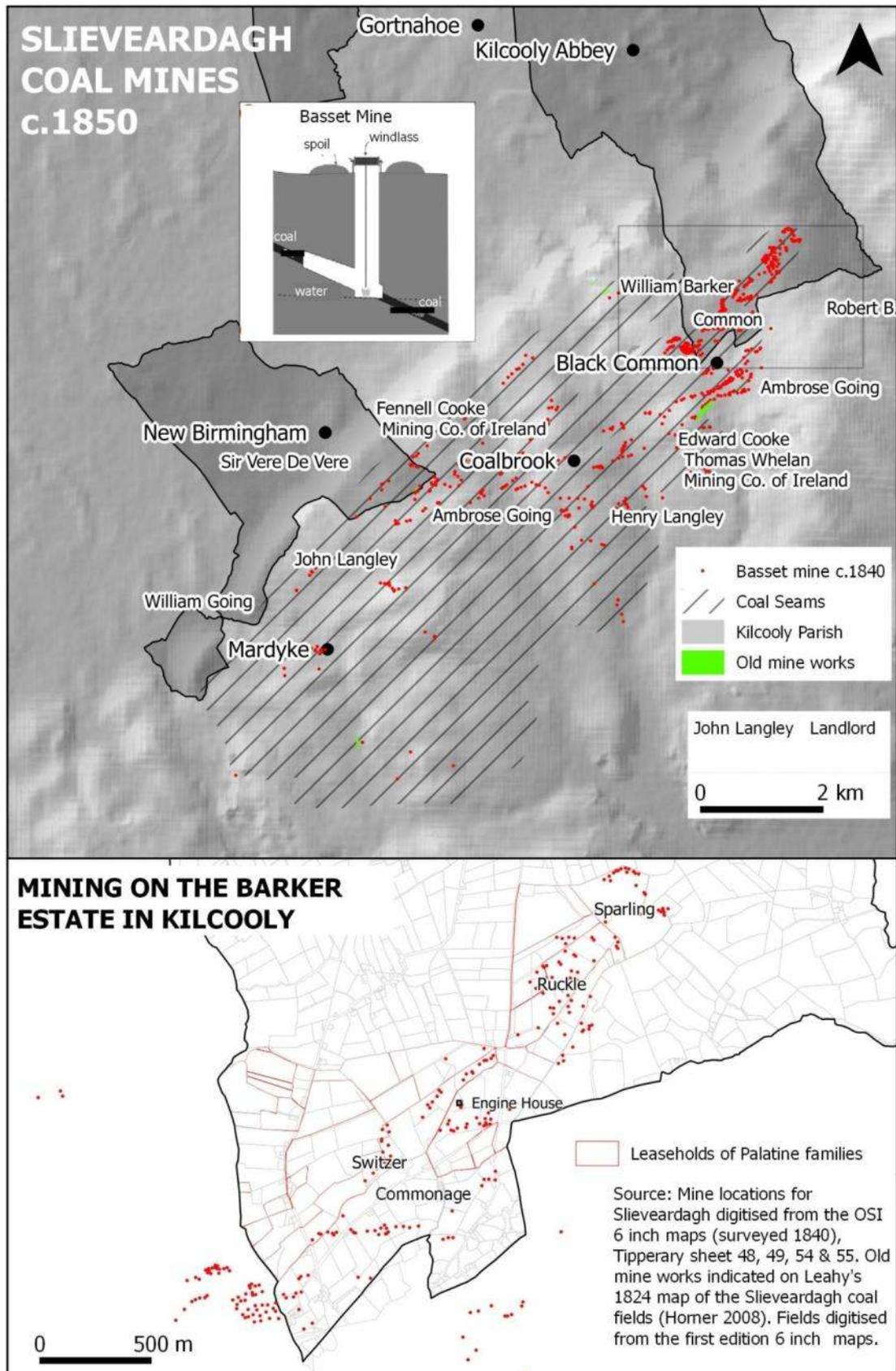


Figure 6.40 Coal mining in Slieveardagh and on the Barker estate.

took place in parts of the Barker estate in Newpark townland, on the leaseholds of the Switzer, Sparling and Ruckle families. However, this was primarily in the form of basset mines, small-scale, shallow pit mining which followed only the most accessible, and shallow, seams of coal. This form of mining appears to have been carried out on an ad-hoc basis by individuals, and was extremely hard to control, as Sir Vere Hunt lamented: 'I am convinced that great frauds are committing on me in these subterraneous regions, but please God I will detect them'.<sup>144</sup> Rather than invest directly in the mines, Barker's neighbour, Edward Cooke, landlord of Bolintlea townland, agreed in 1824 to allow his tenants mine coal in their leaseholds, from which he received a third part.<sup>145</sup> Barker had the right to mine on his estate without compensation to his tenants (Table 6.1), which no doubt facilitated the basset mining in Newpark. Elsewhere in Slieveardagh this was a contentious matter for the local tenant farms.<sup>146</sup> The most likely reason for Barker's lack of investment may simply have been a lack of capital. Slieveardagh coal, although high-quality, is found in narrow, faulted seams in difficult to reach areas that required extensive drainage, and the best deposits lay elsewhere in the coal field. Also, the process of basset mining, in small, dirty pits which were difficult to regulate, was the opposite of the neat, improved landscape which the Barker estate had promoted from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **6.8 Summary**

The later historic Irish rural landscape was significantly reshaped in the later historic period. Although landlords, the owners of land in fee, may have been directly involved in planning these changes in certain areas of the landscape, primarily around the demesne, compared to the role of tenants and sub-tenants, the landlord's role in landscape change was limited. Much of the early improvement efforts in the four case study areas appear to have concentrated on the towns and villages, and in particular on the landmark buildings in these places, like the churches. In Kilrea and New Birmingham the very village design and fabric were influenced by Improvement ideas of regularity and pattern, in stark contrast to other, older towns and villages like Kilfenora and Duleek. Rural tenant houses were perhaps the most commented on, and most obvious, manifestation of Improvement in later historic Ireland. The homes and

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<sup>144</sup> Nolan, 'A public benefit', p. 437.

<sup>145</sup> Horner, 'Patrick Leahy's maps of the Barony of Slieveardagh 1818 and of the Killenaule Coal District 1824', p. 59.

<sup>146</sup> *Evidence taken before Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland, part III* [657], H.C. 1845, xxi, 1, p. 310.

## Chapter 6 Improving Tenants' Landscapes

offices of tenant farmers like the Palatines in Kilcooly incorporated ideas of Improvement from their construction, whereas in Kilrea and Kilfenora these homes were adapted from their earlier vernacular form. Enclosure in Ireland in this period represented the complexities of interaction between Improvement principles of order, regularity, uniformity and productivity, and the vernacular landscapes of practice, where fields and homes continued and adapted what had come before and were most often shaped to fit the local topography. In Kilfenora the enclosed landscape was mostly irregular, but with areas of regularity where former commonage and marginal upland was being enclosed and improved with lime. In Kilcooly William Barker's planned landscape is apparent in the regularity and symmetry of the field boundaries. Even within the upland marginal lands of the parish, in the lands tenanted by Palatine families, the field boundaries were primarily regular. However, it is apparent from Duleek that not all aspects of the later historic enclosed landscape were shaped by Improvement, with the survival of medieval fields and commonage. Even in Kilrea, where the field patterns were most regular, earlier features of the landscape remained, especially townland boundaries and the irregular arrangement of houses and farm offices. Mining in Kilcooly appears not to have had a significant impact on the landscape other than the temporary and seemingly chaotic creation of mine pits across tenants' holdings which were, by themselves, relatively short-lived landscape features. The impact of Improvement in the landscape was to change the way people experienced that landscape, and how they lived their daily lives. This theme will be explored in the next chapter.



## **7 Landscape of Improvement in Ireland: A Discussion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

I set out to find how later historic landscape change in four case study areas, Kilrea, Co. Derry, Duleek, Co. Meath, Kilcooly, Co. Tipperary, and Kilfenora, Co. Clare, and in Ireland in general, reflected the ideology of Improvement (Fig. 7.1). In this discussion chapter I will draw the general themes of Improvement together to look at the meaning of Improvement in later historic Ireland. Improvement was introduced to Ireland by an elite who were part of, or identified with, the English political authority in Ireland. Improvement was a strategy to legitimate the new order of landowners, the new social elite, and the new structures of power in later historic Ireland. This was done by changing the landscape, with the view to changing how people lived, what they thought was the normal way to live, and, ultimately, changing people's identity. There was, however, a significant difference between the ideology of Improvement and the practice of improvement in later historic Ireland, such that the success of the ideology might be questioned.

### **7.2 Making Improvement Landscapes**

Improvement in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was explicitly a colonial ideology. This legacy remained with the ideology of Improvement throughout the later historic period. Improvement was used by the colonial authorities, the British administration, as a justification for the confiscation of property in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the redistribution of this property to those it favoured, the new elite or Protestant Ascendancy (section 3.3). However, these large-scale transformations in Ireland were not just simply a matter of property conveyance. The new order was vulnerable, and the majority of the population hostile. Improvement was a strategy to pacify and civilise the country, first by making the new order appear to be both natural and unassailable, and secondly, by changing the people themselves. Improvement manufactured two apparently contradictory narratives in the landscape: one being novelty, modernity and the legitimacy of a civility superior to the old order; the second narrative was precedence, legacy, and the legitimacy of the establishment. Improvement was a tool of the elite. Improvement was, for the 17<sup>th</sup>-century English colonial writers and administrators, what separated the civility of their

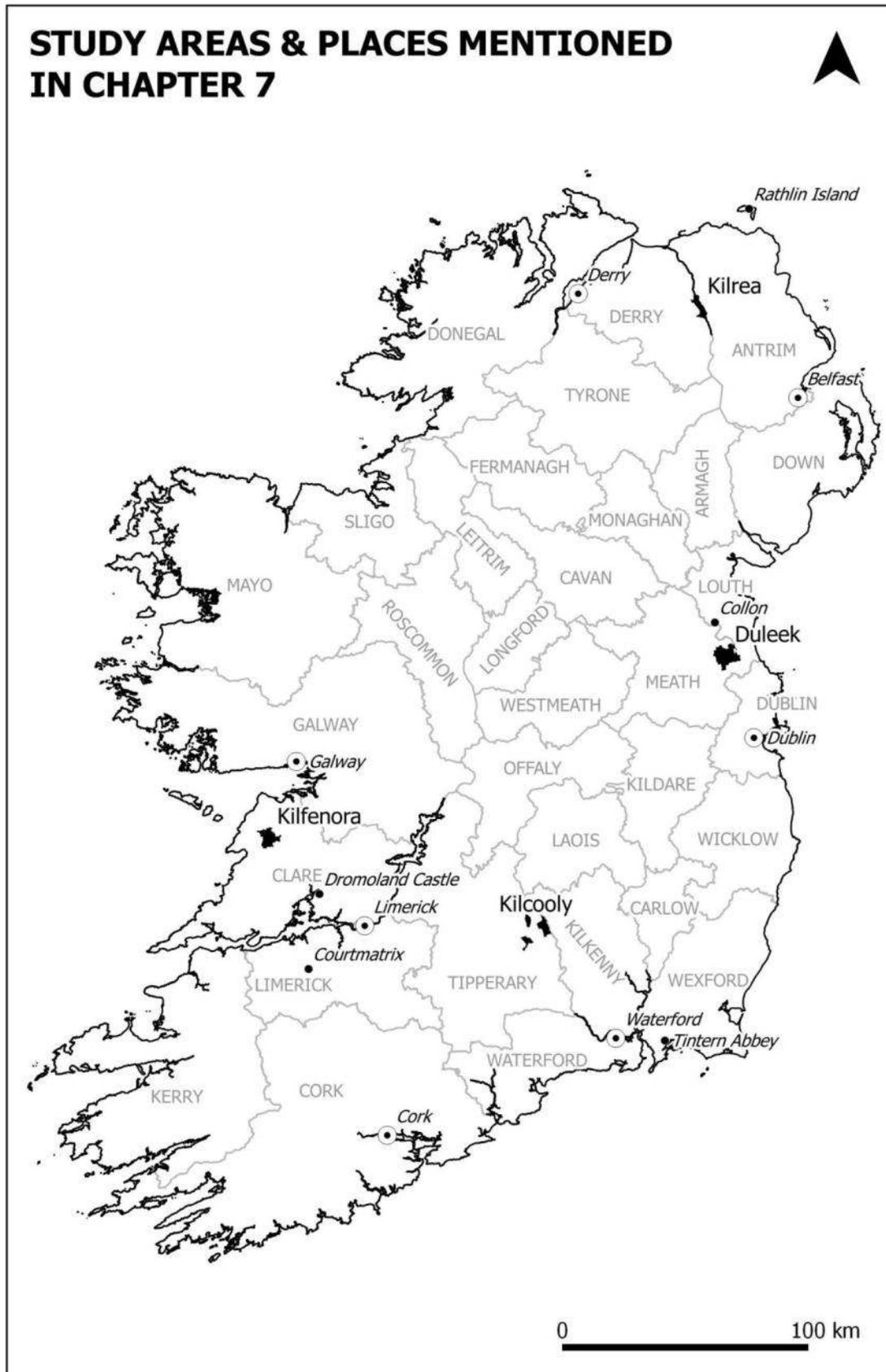


Figure 7.1 Map of the study areas and places mentioned in Chapter 7.

world from the barbarity of the Gaelic and gaelicised world of most of Ireland (section 3.3). Creating a narrative of change, particularly in relation to contested landscapes (sections 3.3 to 3.5), Improvement rhetorically self-justifying. For example, settlements like Movanager in Kilrea, Co. Derry, were destroyed in 1641 because they were landscape features of the plantation and Improvement (section 4.4), prompting writers like the Boate brothers to explain the destruction in these terms:

*... before this last bloody rebellion the whole land, in all parts where the English did dwell, or had any thing to doe, was filled with as goodly beasts, both Cowes and Sheep, as any in England, Holland, or other the best countries of Europe: the greatest part whereof hath been destroyed by those barbarians, the natural inhabitants of Ireland, who not content to have murdered or expelled their English neighbours ... endeavoured quite to extinguish the memory of them, and of all the civility and good things by them introduced amongst that wild Nation. [The Irish ] did not only demolish the houses built by the English, the Gardens and Enclosures made by them, the Orchards and Hedges by them planted, but destroyed whole droves and flocks at once of English Cowes and Sheep, so as they were notable with all their insatiable gluttony to devour the tenth part thereof, but let the rest lye rotting and stinking in the fields. <sup>1</sup>*

From the perspective of the Gaelic Irish, Improvement was part and parcel of an intrusive English culture considered by the Irish in 1641 to be a legitimate target.<sup>2</sup> The contested nature of Improvement as a symbolically and practically powerful ideology influenced both the way the landscape was used and recorded.

### ***Documenting Improvement and the proxy landscape***

Amongst the first actions of colonialism was 'discovery' through recording with maps and ledgers and written accounts (section 3.3). These documents were ideologically charged artefacts. In early modern Ireland contemporary accounts by British writers and administrators generally reflected the colonial context, diminishing the role of the native ('meare') Irish to one of outlaw, rebel, and unimproved. The two great surveys of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the Civil Survey and Down Survey, were instruments of the English administration in Ireland designed to discover the property of the disloyal (generally Catholic) former elite (section 3.3). However, they were also windows into the contemporary perceptions of the landscape. Prior to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century most documentary records, like the *Ormond Deeds*, treated the landscape as a

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<sup>1</sup> Gerard Boate, *Ireland's Natural History* (London, 1652), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory*, pp 142–143.

collection of properties, recorded either as places, buildings or items in inquisitions, with little detail of their distinguishing characteristics other than their names. The lack of landscape detail in these medieval documents reflected their creators' familiarity with the landscape and rights being recorded. These documents were not designed to be used independently of those with detailed local knowledge. They reflect the depth of local knowledge of medieval lands and landscapes and, in particular, the defining attributes of parcels of land being leased. By the later historic period, with the increasing significance of private property, clarity was essential both in the documentary record, and in the material world of the landscape. Documentary records gave power to those recording the landscape. Among the most effective means of recording property and rights was the process of mapping, such as that undertaken by Sir William Petty's Down Survey.

The mammoth logistical task of discovering and recording these 17<sup>th</sup>-century landscapes was itself a highly significant act, demonstrating the power and reach of the state into the most mundane, and previously private, landscapes of rural Ireland. The power of these documentary records was expressed in the actions of planning and creating them, in the documents created, and in their ability to shape and influence both state and local policy. But these documents could not necessarily be considered public. Most were created for the colonial administration, for those who could afford, or were politically acceptable enough, to access them. Documentary records were meant for those with access to the structures of power, in particular the landed elite.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century most maps in Ireland were commissioned by private bodies, especially by the landlords for estate management, and planning Improvement. These maps were created by dedicated land surveyors like Mannin for the Barker estate in Kilcooly (Fig. 5.16) or Hewett for the Inchiquin O'Brien's estate in Kilfenora (Fig. 6.26). Jon Gregory, writing about estate cartography in England, proposes that maps were a symbol of dominance and power.<sup>3</sup> He contrasts the effortless view of landscapes that maps afforded the landowner, with the labour-intensive lives of the tenant farmers whose leaseholds were mapped. Estate maps, Gregory writes, reinforced the abstract nature of landscape improvement over the practical realities of work required on the ground. Mannin's maps greatly aided the practicality of managing the Barker estate in Kilcooly, recording the size and features in each leasehold and field. Although

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<sup>3</sup> Jon Gregory, 'Mapping improvement: reshaping rural landscapes in the eighteenth century' in *Landscapes*, vi (2005), p. 75.

each of the parcels mapped by Mannin were let for long terms, the possession of the maps in the Barker family archive gave them ultimate control over the long-term fate of the property. Ambiguous property boundaries had cost the Barker family dearly (section 5.4). Most significantly for the Barker family, Mannin expressed graphically their ownership of the landscape, as a documentary counterpart of the physical field boundaries they created. Surveys of the O'Brien estate by Henry Hewett in 1768, beautifully drawn and bound,<sup>4</sup> planned each individual townland. However, these maps also recorded an essentially unimproved landscape in Kilfenora, depicting townlands like Cloonomra and Clogher with irregular field boundaries or no internal boundaries at all. Sir Lucius O'Brien, had created a substantial designed landscapes around his demesne in Dromoland, Co. Clare,<sup>5</sup> but was, at the same time, willing to accept less than improved landscapes in his wider estate. The book of maps gave O'Brien the means, the baseline, from which to chart future improvement. If this power to record, discover, and plan Improvement lay in the private hands of the estate owners, the Ordnance Survey's work would make help make these powers more accessible.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century government in Ireland found that it needed more exact general maps for taxation purposes. The subsequent work of the Ordnance Survey in Ireland on the six-inch-to-one-mile series maps (1:10,560) fulfilled this purpose, and in so doing, recorded in great detail particularly of aspects of the Irish landscape. John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry, both learned in the Irish language, recorded the antiquities and original Gaelic place-names of townlands during the course of creating the Ordnance Survey maps in the 1830s. They also, for the first time, recorded on a national basis, the antiquities, and their associated folklore. This was a discovery of the cognitive landscape of Gaelic Ireland, a census of how people lived and perceived their landscape. Had the Ordnance Survey continued with their project to publish full memoirs, this would have constituted, along with a remarkable mapping feat, an extraordinary cultural census of Ireland. As it turned out, the government balked at the cost, although perhaps the cultural significance of the undertaking was not to their taste either. If the nature of the documentary record of the landscape changed over time in later historic Ireland, so did the treatment of the material landscape of Improvement.

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<sup>4</sup> Henry Hewett, 'Maps of the Estate of Sir Lucius O'Brien Baronet', 1768 (National Library of Ireland 21 F 138).

<sup>5</sup> Lamb & Bowe, *A History of Gardening in Ireland*, p. 29.

***The material landscape of Improvement***

The landscape was a material for expressing the ideas associated with Improvement. The first places to be improved in Ireland were the significant landscapes of the dispossessed medieval and early-modern elite: the manor and parish centres (most often the same places), towns and villages. In two of the four case study areas, Kilrea and Kilcooly, the parish centre became the focus of Improvement in their respective localities, with Kilcooly Abbey being transformed into an estate centre (section 5.4), and Kilrea becoming a plantation town next to parish church (section 6.4). Improvement was more dispersed in Duleek and Kilfenora, focused on estate cores like the Darcy's in Platin (section 5.3). Improvement in these core places was expressed through the use of pattern and symmetry.

Pattern, symmetry and predictability were all attributes favoured by later historic Improvers as markers of civility. These were features which might be described as being part of the Georgian Order (section 2.3). The Georgian Order was a system of signs expressed in the symmetrical design of building facades, their building materials, and also their internal organisation, where individual spaces were segregated. Johnson described these material changes in terms of social change driven by the growth of capitalism and the growing significance of the individual in the modern world signified by the 'closure' of space in houses and the landscape by the creation of rooms and enclosed fields.<sup>6</sup> Closure was an attempt to place a heightened sense of order on the landscape and society.<sup>7</sup> The power of pattern and symmetry to convey Improvement lay in their novelty in the landscape, and their striking contrast with those landscape features associated with vernacular and unimproved practices.

Regularity and order in the landscape was not necessarily in itself an Improvement idea. The religious landscapes of the early Church in Ireland like monastic Duleek, with its concentric enclosures (section 4.2), and the designed cloistral space of Kilcooly's Cistercian abbey (section 4.3), were both sophisticated, meaningful manipulations of space. Similarly, medieval feudal ideologies were expressed materially in the architecture of tower houses and their surroundings, like Athcarne castle in Duleek (section 4.2). Indeed landscape features and practices associated with Improvement, such as improving clauses in leases, were used in the early modern period in the Ormond lordship (section 3.3). Improvement was part of a continuation of the use of landscape as a mechanism for communicating ideology and ideas.

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<sup>6</sup> Johnson, *Housing Culture: Tradition Architecture in an English Landscape*, p. 167.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172; Matthew Johnson, *English Houses 1300-1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life* (Harlow, 2010), pp 179–181.

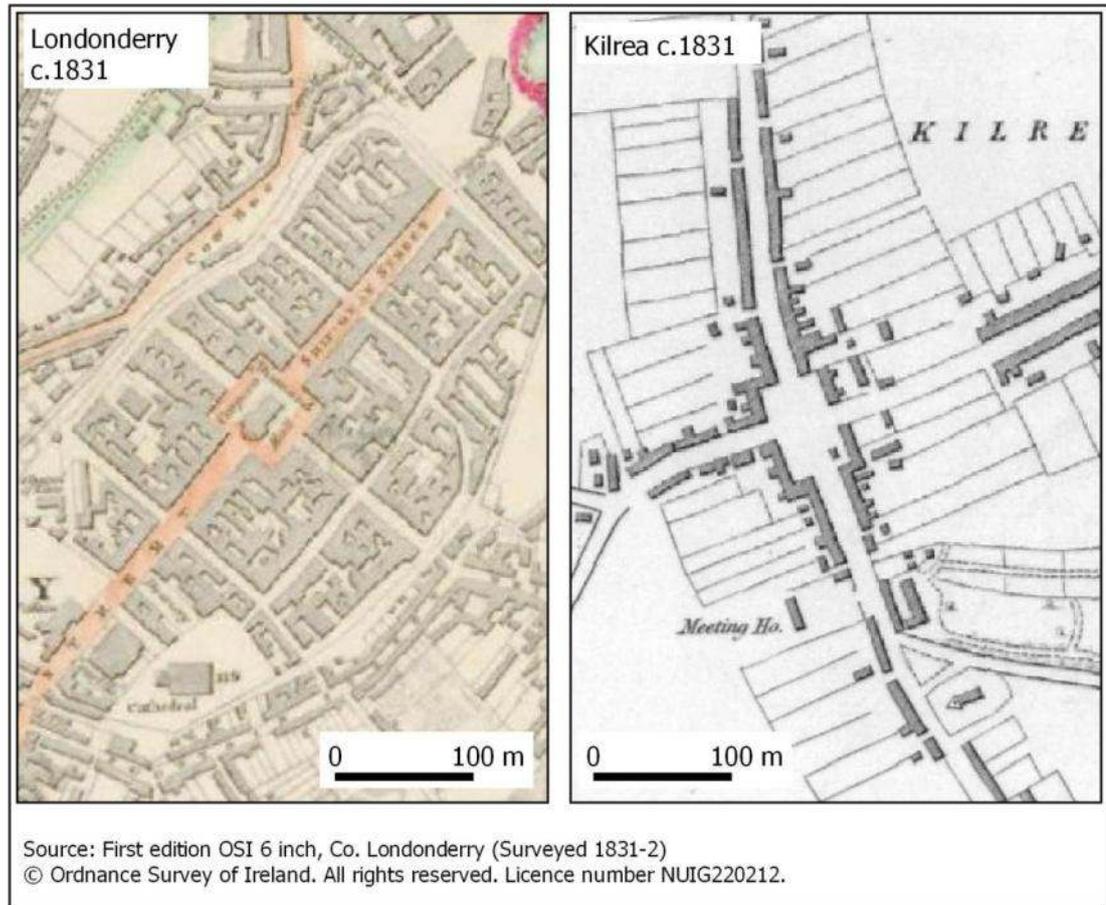


Figure 7.2 Comparing the plan of Derry City centre with Kilrea.

But improved landscapes were also designed to be separate from, and novel to, what had come before. This was immediately apparent in the design of towns and villages.

The most notable characteristic of towns like Kilrea, Co. Derry, and New Birmingham, Co. Tipperary, were their uniformity. The order of the town was, I would argue, an attempt to shape the perception of the townscape to reflect Improvement principles. As Barnard described it, 'Towns had long been treated as seminaries for an English brand of civility.'<sup>8</sup> In this regard, the uniformity and design of the town self-consciously set itself apart from its medieval predecessors. Movanager in Kilrea, despite being a Plantation foundation, was essentially an unstructured settlement focused on the bawn enclosure constructed for the Company of Mercers (section 4.4; Fig. 4.14). Kilrea, in contrast, was a highly structured space with regular street plans, plots and buildings. It became the primary focus of Stewart's efforts

<sup>8</sup> Barnard, 'The cultures of eighteenth-century Irish towns', p. 209.

at Improvement primarily because of this regularity. The Stewart's primary embellishment, the diamond, mirrored the layout of the City of Londonderry's central square (Fig. 7.2).

Improvement landscapes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were primarily associated with the direct actions of the landlord classes. Improvement became a mechanism for consolidating the power and privilege won in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was also a period of self-conscious transition from an old, Catholic order to a new, Protestant ascendancy order. In that context the transition from medieval castle to modern estate house at Platin, Co. Meath, was highly significant (section 5.4). The primary visible change was the shift in optical focus from the verticality of the late medieval tower house, built in stone, with its distinctive machicolations and irregular small windows, to a lower (at least two storeys) block of a building, built in brick, with regular, large windows on the facade. The apparent vernacular styling of the exterior of the tower house belied its complex and meaningful internal arrangement of chambers, halls and passages.<sup>9</sup> However, its facade could hardly contrast more with the symmetry of the Queen Anne style Platin house, the regularity of which penetrated to the very bricks from which it was built. Service spaces were incorporated into the symmetrical building block, or segregated in the courtyard of offices to the rear (Fig. 5.7). In contrast the medieval castles like Athcarne, and presumably Platin, had a series of untidy annexes appended to the tower, which, though picturesque for engravers, was less than ideal for the modern Improving landlord (Fig. 4.3). The symmetry of Platin house, no doubt, reflected the order of the household and family, and the position of the Graham family in the political order. Its presence also, significantly, erased nearly all traces of the previous incumbents, the politically suspect Darcy family, not to mention the ten cabins reported to be in the vicinity of Platin castle in 1700.<sup>10</sup> Platin Hall's design was as much a political statement as an aesthetic one. However, the Grahams retained the chapel at Platin, a single reminder of the medieval past at Platin, in full view of the house, and those approaching the house.

Where the Graham family chose to use the novelty of Improvement at the core of their estate to legitimise their position, the Barkers in Kilcooly Abbey primarily relied on the existing elite buildings, the Cistercian abbey (section 5.4). The Barkers chose to live in what would have been quite small and cramped accommodation. The renovation of a former monastic house

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<sup>9</sup> Rory Sherlock, 'The evolution of the Irish tower-house as a domestic space' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 111C (2011), pp 115–140.

<sup>10</sup> Horner & Loeber, 'Landscape in transition: descriptions of forfeited properties in counties Meath, Louth and Cavan in 1700', pp 81–82.

was not necessarily unusual in Ireland. A number of former Cistercian abbeys were adapted as residences after their dissolution, most notably Tintern Abbey in Wexford, by the Colclough family.<sup>11</sup> In fact up to half of the former Cistercian abbeys in Ireland were located in, or within 1km of, demesne landscapes,<sup>12</sup> with many incorporated as landscape features. This ultimately was the fate of Kilcooly.

When Sir William Barker decided to build his new house at Kilcooly, he was presumably very familiar with the vocabulary of Improvement architecture and the Palladian, as is implied in his portrait by Gilbert Stuart (Fig. 5.24). William Barker is shown resting his hand on an architect's plan of a house, presumably Kilcooly house, with the picturesque remains of Kilcooly Abbey visible through the window. His wife, Elizabeth, sits in a similar pose, stitching in hand, but this time with the gothic boat-house visible through the window, beautifully reflected in the water of the lake, as it still is today (Fig. 5.22). Both portraits are set in the new Palladian house. Both hint at a division of space within the house, with Sir William looking west and Lady Elizabeth east. Kilcooly house, executed in a confident, if modest, form of Georgian Palladian, was interposed between two ostensibly ancient features, in an apparently ancient landscape. Of course, many of these features were modern. The lake had been created at huge expense and much engineering of water courses in the 1770s, with a gothic facade hiding the more modest dimensions of the boat-house from view. The remains of the Cistercian monastery were portrayed as a rustic ruin, but still contained living quarters of the family, including a summer house. Barker had the outer wall of the abbey facing his new Palladian house crenulated, and removed any obviously recent buildings which obscured the remains of the medieval buildings. Kilcooly's medieval crossing tower with its striking cut-stone crenulations, and the intricate flame tracery of the east chancel window drew the observer's eye to these buildings (Fig. 4.8). The Barkers were inserting themselves, through their portraits, into the landscape of Kilcooly.<sup>13</sup>

These elite landscapes were manipulated with buildings and gardens to create improved landscapes that conveyed messages of long, permanent and legitimate occupation. The same messages could also be asserted in more subtle ways. In the gardens of both Kilcooly Abbey,

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<sup>11</sup> Ann Lynch, *Tintern Abbey, Co. Wexford: Cistercians and Colcloughs, Excavations 1982-2007* (Dublin, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> An analysis of the 41 Cistercian houses returned in the RMPs for Ireland found that 21 were within 1km of a designed landscape or garden. National Monuments Service, 'Archaeological Survey of Ireland - National Monuments Service'; Northern Ireland Environmental Agency, 'Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record'.

<sup>13</sup> See Orser, 'Estate landscapes and the cult of the ruin: a lesson in spatial transformation in Rural Ireland' for a similar discussion.

and Platin in Duleek, earthworks from the older designed gardens, features which could easily have been removed, were deliberately retained (Figs 5.8 & 5.14). These low-level, but still easily seen, earthworks helped to create an aged landscape, what Young described as a 'very pleasing inequality of surface',<sup>14</sup> which suggested the antiquity of the improving landlord's demesne for those familiar with designed landscapes. The significance of the past for the fourth Sir William Barker, when he remodelled his demesne, was also apparent in his treatment of the remains of the Abbey, and even the newer feature of the lake. Barker was, it would seem, giving historic depth to his demesne landscape, which therefore, helped to legitimise his family's position through precedence.

Designed landscapes were also a means of connecting with peer groups, a common language in landscape for those who had experienced the Grand Tour, or were familiar with its landscape elements. Designed landscapes in estate demesnes were exclusive, enclosed by boundaries, walls or stands of trees. Their design was not instantly accessible to everybody who visited, just those who were familiar with classical landscapes and Enlightenment ideals. Formal designed landscapes of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century like in Platin and Kilcooly introduced an order into what might have been perceived as a disordered landscape: straight lines, avenues and views, and ordered planting recognisable to those familiar with the Renaissance. In the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century demesne landscape designs changed to a more naturalised, studied disorder, with rustic ruins and pleasantly planted trees and parkland. These designs helped to set the demesne landscape apart from the more ordered, geometric countryside beyond the demesne.

The building of houses, even mundane structures like farm offices, was a significant symbol of permanent and legitimate possession of property.<sup>15</sup> This preoccupation with houses as symbols of legitimacy may explain why early modern cartographers placed such significance on depicting houses and buildings. Audrey Horning's study of plantation-period buildings in Movanager in Kilrea parish, Co. Derry, which involved excavations of buildings depicted on Raven's map of 1622 (Fig. 4.14), explored the significance of the difference between houses built in different styles characterised as English and Irish.<sup>16</sup> Freeholds granted by the Irish Society stipulated the types of houses to be built as substantial, of timber stone or brick, with four to six rooms. Horning sees the presence of Irish style houses on Raven's maps as

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<sup>14</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland I*, p. 375.

<sup>15</sup> Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, pp 227–229.

reflecting a pragmatic relationship between the Irish inhabitants and the Mercers' estate, seemingly at odds with the conditions under which the Company of Mercers held their estate from the Crown (section 4.4).<sup>17</sup> The construction of English-style permanent houses, as mandated in Thomas Church's 1639 lease for Kilrea, was not just a matter of taste, it was a semiotic necessity in order to effectively take possession of the leasehold, and turn 'landscape' into 'property'.

Enclosure served a practical function of dividing properties in a landscape. Its creation was ideologically charged, as an indicator of civility – the planted garden as a metaphor for plenty – ownership, and improvement (section 3.3). Both Johnson in England and Dalglish in Scotland associated closure with the development of capitalism and the ideology of individualism, both significant factors in the creation of modern western culture.<sup>18</sup> Enclosure in Ireland was a novel introduction to certain Irish landscapes, replacing former open spaces like Bawnlea in Kilcooly or Ballykeel North in Kilfenora (section 6.6). Formal, regular enclosure marked an end to the old Gaelic order in west Munster,<sup>19</sup> and clachan farming on Rathlin island.<sup>20</sup> Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the structural powers in Ireland considered there to be no greater impediment to improvement in Ireland than uncertain property boundaries.<sup>21</sup> Enclosure in Ireland was not necessarily a landscape novelty. Arguably, the dense network of townlands formed an overarching matrix of enclosure in the landscape which remained significant as property boundaries from at least the medieval and throughout the later historic periods (section 1.3). Townlands contained and shaped Improvement practices. This is apparent in the pattern of field boundaries which tended not to cut across townland boundaries, even in places of highly structured field patterns like Kilrea (section 6.6, Fig. 6.36).

In Duleek, the medieval structure of property and the landscape persisted to a greater extent than the other three case study areas, even encompassing long, sinuous strip properties in larger fields reminiscent of medieval open-field tillage (section 6.6). The open, unenclosed commonage associated with Duleek town remains perhaps the most significant medieval landscape feature in the Duleek landscape (Fig. 6.25). Few commonages comparable to Duleek survived in later historic Ireland. There were, in 1837, some 44 towns and boroughs with associated commons in Ireland, with most being in Dublin (6), Tipperary (5), Limerick and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp 268–270.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, *Archaeology of Capitalism*, pp 44–69; Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, p. 52.

<sup>19</sup> Breen, *An Archaeology of Southwest Ireland, 1570-1670*, p. 169.

<sup>20</sup> Forsythe & McConkey (eds), *Rathlin Island*.

<sup>21</sup> Ferguson & Vance, *Tenure and Improvement in Ireland*, p. 150.



*Figure 7.3 Cattle grazing the commons in Duleek.*

Kildare (4 each), and Cork and Meath (3 each).<sup>22</sup> Duleek's commons were a key resource for the medieval town and manor (section 4.2). Its significance was demonstrated in the annual ceremony to ride the town's franchise in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (section 6.6). Commons were particularly significant for the town burgesses and poor, as a place for grazing cattle and a source of fuel (Fig. 7.3). Squatters living around the margins of the commonage were a cause of concern for 19<sup>th</sup>-century authorities (section 3.4).<sup>23</sup> This concern was heightened by the unstructured and uncontrolled nature of the occupation of these commons and subsequent creation of freeholds outside the control of the authorities.<sup>24</sup> This disquiet was as much about the practices in these spaces as the actual treatment of the land itself.

The official attitude to commonage appears to have been ambivalent, with the authorities doing little to prevent squatters. Duleek commonage was considered by the magistrate and the neighbouring gentry as 'merely offering a place of settlement to persons of bad

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<sup>22</sup> 'Index to "A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland"' (<http://www.libraryireland.com/topog/placeindex.php>) (9 Oct. 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Andrews, 'The struggle for Ireland's commons', p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Andrews, 'The struggle for Ireland's commons'.

character'.<sup>25</sup> Organised racing at Collierstown commons started in 1805, although it is likely racing had been carried out here long before (Fig. 6.5). Horse racing and hunting has a long traditional association with elite society in Gaelic Ireland,<sup>26</sup> but also amongst the new Ascendency. The most famous races in Ireland were held in the Curragh, a common in Kildare, and were sponsored by the King of England (Fig. 7.4 A). However, horse race meetings also developed a dubious, amoral reputation which did not lend itself to Improvement principles, prompting the new Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Richard Robinson, to stop the local horse races by improving the town common.<sup>27</sup> An act was passed in 1791 outlawing racing near Dublin city for fear of the potentially dangerous gathering of large numbers of people.<sup>28</sup> In this regard there appears to be an association between the commons and unsavoury, unimproved practices, which were remedied by Improvement, by agriculture and husbandry.

Improvement shaped the use of farm offices and separate buildings for animals. In turn these buildings advertised improved agricultural practices. William Barker's Palatine tenants in Kilcooly built in a distinctive style which set them apart from the tenants in neighbouring estates, and even from their neighbours in the Barker estate (section 6.5). When Barker leased to the Palatines, he did not set out an explicit list of design details for the houses as the Crown estate had done in Kilrea in 1639, other than they were to be made of stone, lime and sand. Barker, it would appear, did not need to do this as the Palatines had already demonstrated their distinctive style of building in Courtmatrix, Co. Limerick (Fig. 6.17). However, the expectation of improved buildings for tenantry associated with the Palatines was unusual: the general impression of the role of landlords in improving Ireland in 1845 was pessimistic:

*It is admitted on all hands, that, according to the general practice in Ireland, the landlord builds neither dwelling-house nor farm offices, nor puts fences, gates, & c., into good order, before he lets his land to a tenant. The case in which a landlord does any of these things are the exceptions.*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *The Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland Volume 2: D-M* (Dublin, 1846), p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth FitzPatrick, 'Formaioil na Fiann: hunting preserves and assembly places in Gaelic Ireland' in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, xxxii (2013), pp 95–118; Kelly James, *Sport in Ireland, 1600-1840* (Dublin, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> McCullough & Crawford, *Armagh Town Atlas*, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> 31 George III c.43: *To prohibit horse races in the neighbourhood of the city of Dublin*. 1791 ([http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display\\_bill&id=2335](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display_bill&id=2335)).

<sup>29</sup> *Devon Commission I*, p. 16.

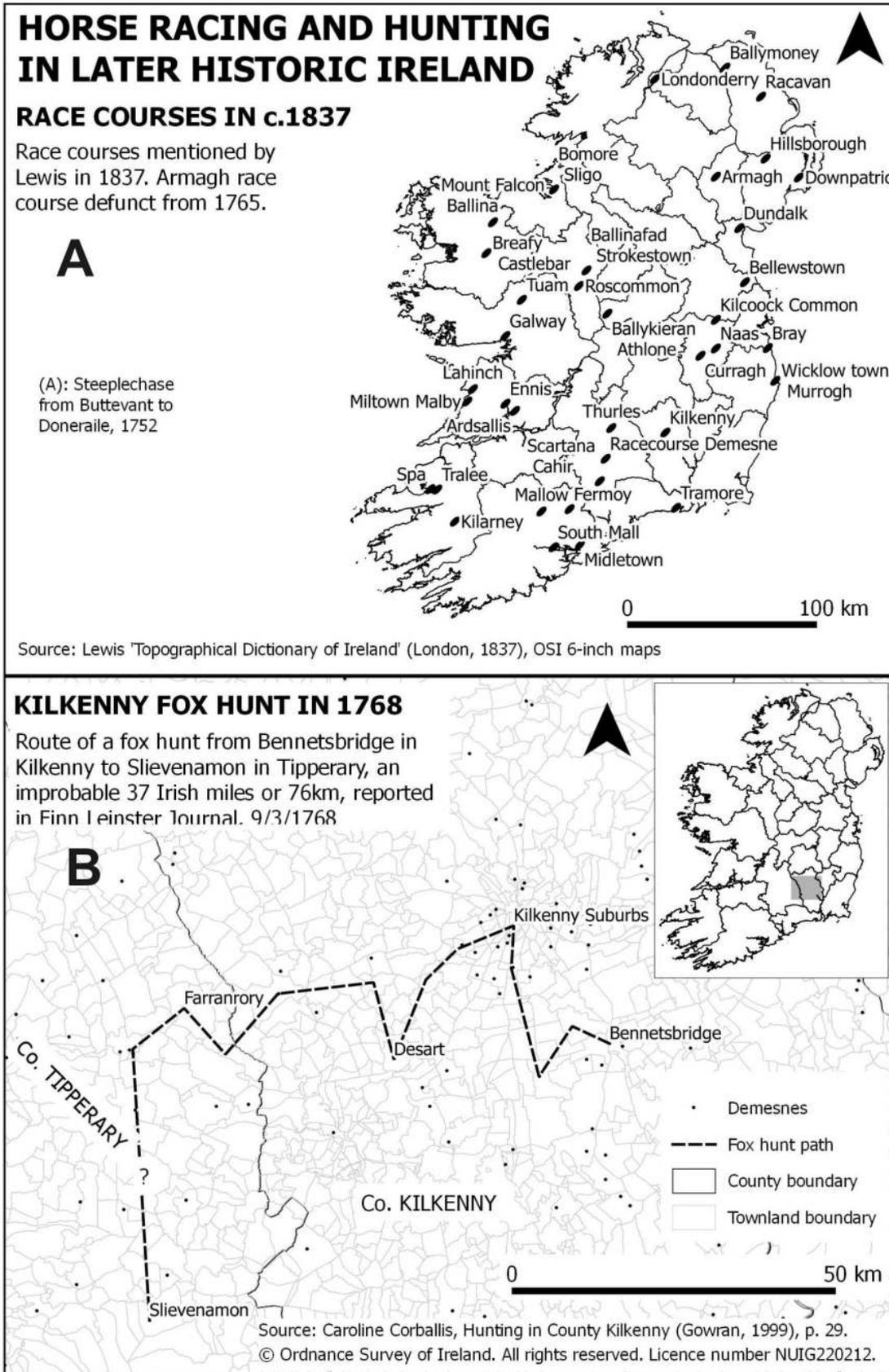


Figure 7.4 Horse racing and fox hunting in Ireland.

The Kilcooly estate may have been exceptional amongst the various landlords in each of the four case study areas, but has clear parallels with the practice of Improvement on other contemporary estates in Ireland like the Foster estate at Collon (section 3.4). When the Barkers enclosed the lowlands of their estate 'by the compass' (section 5.4) they were clearly marking their design, and their ownership, on the landscape. Where before enclosure their property had been contested (and they lost), after the new, geometric, and demonstrably modern and improved fields were created, the Barker property was secure. They also designed a landscape that would, for their tenants, become part of their every-day lives.

### **7.3 The Practice of Improvement**

Improvement changed the way people behaved, by altering their daily routine and practices primarily through modifying their built environment and landscape.<sup>30</sup> Improvement principles impacted a number of areas of daily life and routine in later historic Ireland, including people's religious practices, their agricultural and labour routines, and their interaction with one another in domestic and social settings. The role of Improvement was to change people's daily routines, how they lived their lives, and what they considered to be a normal acceptable way of life. These changes started with the upper strata of society, the elite land owners.

#### ***Elite practices in Improvement***

Chris Dalglish proposes that the ideas of major figures in the Scottish Enlightenment, David Hume and Adam Smith, were a significant factor in the decision of the Duke of Argyll to undertake Improvements.<sup>31</sup> Landlords like Graham in Platin, Barker in Kilcooly and Inchiquin O'Brien in Clare were united in their access to, and presumably knowledge of, the Enlightenment literature of the day, much of which was republished in Dublin (Fig. 3.1). Some, like Sir William Barker and his son, and Sir Lucius O'Brien, were graduates of Trinity College Dublin.<sup>32</sup> Both were also members of the Royal Dublin Society.<sup>33</sup> Leone proposed that the systematic observation of nature made the elite custodians and gate-keepers of what was natural.<sup>34</sup> In an Irish context institutions like the Royal Irish Academy and Dublin Society, later

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<sup>30</sup> Dalglish, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 75–128.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 130–134.

<sup>32</sup> George Dames Burtchaell and Thomas Ulick Sadleir, *Alumni Dublinenses: a Register of the Students, Graduates, Professors and Provosts of Trinity College in the University of Dublin* (Dublin, 1935), pp 39–40, 628.

<sup>33</sup> RDS, 'Past Members Database' ([http://www.rds.ie/cat\\_historic\\_members.jsp](http://www.rds.ie/cat_historic_members.jsp)) (7 Aug. 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Leone, 'Interpreting ideology in historical archaeology: using the rules of perspective in the William Paca Garden in Annapolis, Maryland', pp 27–29.

Royal Dublin Society, promoted the study of the historical and natural environment and of Improvement amongst the landed elite. These were amongst the first of the scholarly institutions in later historic Ireland. Their roles, measuring and cataloguing the natural environment in Ireland, and the historical monumental and documentary past, appropriated the landscape for the benefit of the elite, forming part of the ideological structure of power. The Royal Dublin Society directly rewarded Improvement with money premiums like that won by Sir William Barker for his tree planting (section 5.4). Improvement was, in these terms, an elite practice, albeit, in terms of Barker's tree planting, one confined to his demesne.

Elite practices extending well beyond demesnes included hunting. William Barker inserted a condition to allow hunting across the upland tenant lands leased to the Palatines, allowing him and his social class free access across the private property of his improving tenants (Table 6.1). The landowning classes who hunted across tenants' lands demonstrated that, even though this was enclosed the elite still had rights to enjoy their tenant's property. As Finch described it, 'Fox-hunting was a social practice that demonstrated and displayed the new social and political relationships that created, and were created within, the modern farming landscape.'<sup>35</sup> In Ireland these fox hunts could take place over enormous distances. One account, from 1768, describes the Kilkenny Fox hunt's progress through an improbable 59km of counties Kilkenny and Tipperary, progressing across multiple estates, townlands and tenants properties, and between estate demesnes (Fig. 7.4 B). These hunts were an opportunity for the elite to display and demonstrate, as a group, their particularly privileged position in relation to the lower classes. These hunts also shaped the way the landscape was organised, with sunken ditches and fox-coverts, maintained hedges and banks, dog kennels and horse stables, and social organisations and societies.

Perhaps amongst the most significant expressions of the elite's power was their interactions with the parliament in Dublin (and, after 1800, London), through being elected, sponsoring bills and having acts passed. The actual process of, for example, gaining a patent to hold a market or fair was an important part of the landowner's mechanism for controlling and benefiting from the agrarian economy (section 1.3). The process of acquiring these legal instruments was long and expensive, and consisted of applying to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, appraisal by the

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<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Finch, "Grass, Grass, Grass": Fox-hunting and the Creation of the Modern Landscape' in *Landscapes*, v, no. 2 (2004), p. 50.

Attorney General and then confirmation by the office of the Great Seal.<sup>36</sup> The very act of seeking and acquiring a patent allowed the landed proprietor to engage directly, and overtly with the structures of power, reinforcing the landowner's ties with the establishment, and, where successful, this operated as a legal and administrative monument to their position in the social order. Similarly, creating laws to promote Improvement was an explicit association with the ideology which sanctioned their presence and which was only possible for the landowning elite elected to parliament. That being said, Improvement features relatively infrequently in the legislative record of Irish parliament, with parliamentary enclosure being a rare instrument of landscape change in Ireland compared to Britain (section 3.4 & Fig. 3.7). The Penal Laws, regulating access to property based on religion, explicitly contradicted the principle of Improvement regarding primogeniture by imposing gavelkind or partible inheritance on Catholic landowners, one of the features of Gaelic Irish society specifically condemned by early modern English colonial authorities (section 3.3). The contentious role of religion in later historic Ireland would have serious consequences for the ideology and practice of Improvement.

### ***Religion and Improvement practices***

Religion represents a domain in which ideals of Improvement tended to polarize social, cultural and political life in later historical Ireland. Religion represented an anomaly in the Improved landscape of later historic Ireland. On the one hand, the Enlightenment was an explicitly secular, rational movement. Works like Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*, first published in 1794,<sup>37</sup> set out a Deist model of natural philosophy inspired by the Enlightenment's mode of rational thought and science, and discarded Christian religious beliefs, although this particular thought-stream in the Enlightenment was contested, not least after the French Revolution.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, religion and religious landscape features were significant parts of everyday life in later historic Ireland. Religions defined identity, daily practice, political allegiance, and access to the structures of power during the Penal era. Religious landscape features were often the oldest parts of the landscape and were significant indicators of precedence and legitimacy in the landscape.

Religion was a fundamental criterion for accessing the structures of power in later historic Ireland, it especially facilitating access to land (section 3.4). Religion played a defining role in

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<sup>36</sup> Proudfoot, 'Markets, Fairs and Towns in Ireland, C. 1600-1853', p. 74.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason, Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (Paris, 1794).

<sup>38</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

people's daily lives, not least by marking time – in terms of major events like birth, marriage and death – but also in terms of the organisation of agricultural activities and routine practices (Fig. 2.2). Membership of the Church of Ireland was a means of demonstrating civility and Improvement. Church of Ireland church sites were generally located in the core of the medieval parishes, and in the case of Kilcooly it was also built within the estate house demesne. In Kilrea the Church of Ireland continued to use the old Gaelic medieval parish church into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whilst both Kilfenora's Cathedral and Duleek's parish church were renovated and reused. In each of these cases the older medieval structure of the parish was significant as an indication of continuity. In 1695 the new Williamite Irish parliament attempted to regulate religious practices by defining feast days (Fig. 7.5).<sup>39</sup> For some improvers like Robert Molesworth all holy days, Anglican and Catholic, were excuses for idleness and drunkenness.<sup>40</sup> In later historic Ireland, the attitude of the authorities was predominantly hostile to Catholicism and Catholic practices. Pilgrimage and vernacular Catholic practices were regarded as problematic. Richardson wrote in 1727:

*Their [Catholics] devotion to the Places of imaginary Sanctity is founded upon ridiculous fables and Legends, and made up of many foolish and absurd Rites, which are recommended to the credulous People as effectual means of Salvation, and the whole is very much polluted with Idolatry. The People are thereby put to needless expense of Time and Money, and their Priests make no small Profit of it.*<sup>41</sup>

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Catholic chapels were located in marginal places in the landscape, mirroring the isolated social position of Catholicism. Vernacular practices, in particular the pilgrimage and use of holy wells became important features of Catholic practice, spread throughout the landscape at holy wells like Caherminnaun in Kilfenora (section 4.5) rather than being focused on a parish centre. Catholic chapels in each of the four case study areas were located in isolated locations within the parish (Fig. 6.3). Catholic parishes tended to be larger, encompassing multiple chapel sites and holy wells, and catering for larger populations (section 6.2). However, through the later historic period the position of the Catholic church changed. Divisions grew between the Tridentine church and vernacular Catholic practices, based on class and education.<sup>42</sup> The practice of stations at holy wells was increasingly denounced by the Catholic hierarchy which became more attentive to the need to

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<sup>39</sup> 7 William III c.14: *Declaring which days in the year shall be observed as holy days*. 1695 ([http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display\\_bill&id=571](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ild/?func=display_bill&id=571)).

<sup>40</sup> Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor*, p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> Richardson, *The Great Folly*, p. x.

<sup>42</sup> Whelan, 'An underground gentry?', p. 34.



Figure 7.5 Legislation passed in 1695 regulating feast days in Ireland.

secure its political position. Part of this strategy was to demonstrate principles of reason and order associated with Improvement, particularly in Catholic church architecture. The impact of these principles were such that, in the mid-nineteenth century, Sir William Wilde noted significant changes in Catholic practices:

*The tone of society in Ireland is becoming more and more "Protestant" every year; the literature is a Protestant one, and even the priests are becoming more Protestant in their conversation and manners. They have condemned all the holy wells and resorts of pilgrims, with the single exception of Lough Derg, and of this they are*

*ashamed; for, whenever a Protestant goes upon the island, the ceremonies are stopped.*<sup>43</sup>

Education may well have been the most significant force behind these changes. The national education system came into being after the State took control of education in 1831.<sup>44</sup> Literacy increased significantly amongst the general population in Ireland after 1841 (Fig. 7.6).<sup>45</sup> Catholics, in particular, embraced the new system, with priests acting as the patrons of new primary schools, frequently built in villages (Kilfenora, New Birmingham, Duleek and Kilrea), next to or on the grounds of Catholic chapels (New Birmingham, Duleek and Collierstown) and in the countryside (Knockatooreen in Kilcooly, a school for the Protestant community in Bawnlea). In Kilrea the Company of Mercers took a direct hand in education, funding the construction of two schools, in Movanagher and Lislea. Education was a powerful form of Improvement. Schools became symbols of the real, physical power of the state to touch and transform lives at the local level.<sup>46</sup> Education became a means not just of disseminating learning and ideas of morality and denominational practice, but also of teaching work discipline, particularly for time keeping.

### ***Work and Improvement practices***

Improvement sought to change work practices by altering the idea of acceptable behaviour and the environment where this behaviour was practiced. Improved work practices can be characterised as organised and disciplined. Improved land was held in severalty and required the farmer and his family to act alone whereas land farmed in common or partnership farming was worked in association with family, friends and neighbours. Private property was the reward of personal labour.

Creating an improved enclosed farm was a massive undertaking in the short term to create, and in the long term, to maintain. Making fields meant the construction of banks and ditches, planting hedges and trees, and creating drainage for the new fields. Maintenance of these

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Sean J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (2001), pp 124–125.

<sup>44</sup> Kevin Loughheed, 'National education and empire: Ireland and the geography of the national education system' in David Dickson, Justyna Pyz and Christopher Shepard (eds), *Irish Classrooms and British Empire: Imperial Contexts in the Origins of Modern Education* (Dublin, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Leslie A. Clarkson, L. Kennedy, E.M. Crawford, M.W. Dowling and Queen's University of Belfast. Department of Economic and Social History, *Database of Irish Historical Statistics: Literacy, 1841-1911* (Colchester, Essex, 1997) (<http://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/Catalogue/?sn=3582&type=Data%20catalogue>).

<sup>46</sup> Loughheed, 'National education and empire: Ireland and the geography of the national education system', p. 8.

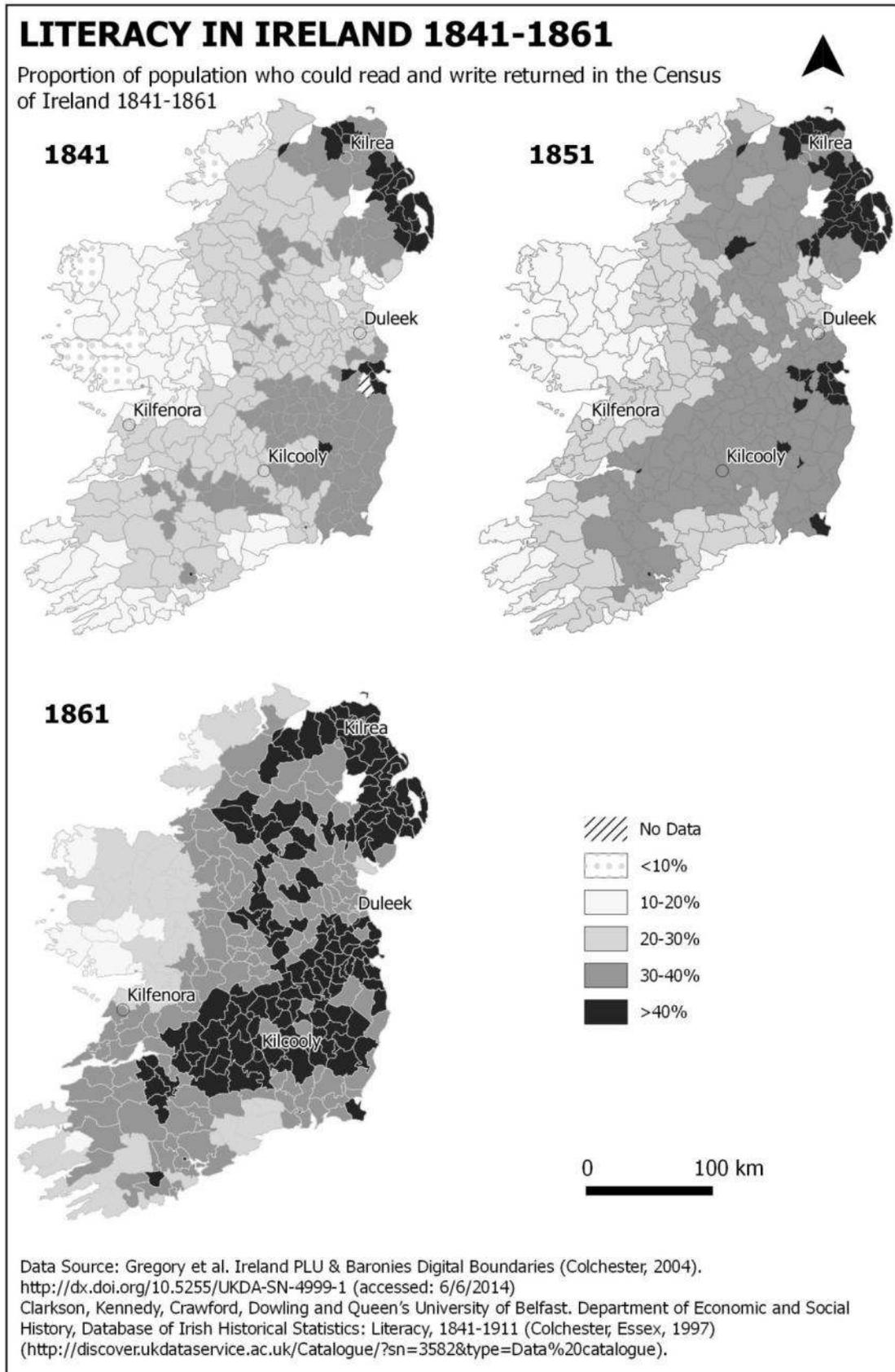


Figure 7.6 Map of the growth in literacy in Ireland between 1841 and 1861.

landscapes meant farmers were required to carry out a number of routine tasks, cleaning and maintaining drains, laying hedges, rebuilding walls, and fertilising fields. Improved farming affected the way land was cultivated, ploughed, and fertilised. Improved farming also implied new types of crops and their management, particularly sowing, weeding, harvest and rotations. Improved farming, with enclosed, regular fields and farmyards, changed the types and breeds of farmyard animals and how they were managed.

Arthur Young felt that the only way to progress or improve Irish agricultural practice was to follow an English model (section 3.5). This is hardly surprising as Young was an evangelical improver with a mission to promote its practice. Whilst Arthur Young was not, in general, impressed with Irish agricultural practice, his data shows that Irish yields were comparable with English and higher than French agricultural productivity.<sup>47</sup> Although Irish agricultural practices were condemned as wasteful and inefficient in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were actually well suited to Irish conditions. Ridge and furrow provided excellent drainage. Irish wooden long beam ploughs were more suited to heavy Irish soils than Scottish ploughs. Burning sod and spreading ash benefited the land's fertility and only exhausted soil if overused, whilst spade cultivation was very effective at turning over the soil. Use of reaping hooks meant, as the corn was grasped by the ears and cut low, less grain was lost than with scythes, and weeds could be left behind. Significantly, labour was cheap and plentiful in later historic Ireland, making some of these practices more cost effective than the improved methods.<sup>48</sup>

Dalglis's study of Improvement in the Scottish highlands notes the significance of increased emphasis on the autonomous individual in routine practice. Pre-improvement routine practice was communal and familial. Settlement and landscape played a part in structuring communal activity. Improvement, Dalglis found, meant the fragmentation of settlement, with people spending less time together as part of daily routine. Improved domestic settings, with greater closure, resulted in the segregation of daily routines. Similarly, Dalglis noted, the adoption of courtyard farms resulted in the segregation of daily tasks which had before been carried out by the community.<sup>49</sup> This intent was clearly visible in Kennedy's proposed tenant farm house

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<sup>47</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Irish agricultural history: recent research' in *The Agricultural History Review*, xxxviii, no. 2 (1990), p. 166.

<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Bell, 'The Improvement of Irish Farming Techniques since 1750: Theory and Practice' in Patrick O'Flanagan, Paul Ferguson and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Rural Ireland 1600–1900: Modernization and Change* (Cork, 1987), pp 24–41.

<sup>49</sup> Dalglis, *Rural Society in the Age of Reason*, pp 124–127.

and farmyard (Fig. 7.7), where access to the farm house and farm yard was strictly controlled by two doors, and with strictly demarcated spaces for different animals, fodder, waste, and even for humans. This segregation of space more closely mirrors contemporary designs for work houses than a working farm, and none of the tenant farmyards in the case study areas followed this model. Rather, farmyards appeared to have formed gradually, with accumulations of buildings. Farmyards in Kilrea consisted in the main of single ranges of farm buildings extending from the family home. In Claragh townland these farms were set out parallel to roads, in alignment with the regular field boundaries (Fig. 6.35). However, in Lislea, farmyards were arranged apparently more irregularly and would appear to be older features in an otherwise regular and seemingly improved landscape. In truth partnership farming continued to be a significant part of rural life in later historic farming, with on average 10% of all land in the country held in partnership leases in 1845, but with areas of the country where the practice was more important, particularly in the west of the country (section 3.4).

Practices on land-holdings varied considerably in terms of the crops grown. In 1852 5.7 million acres of land was being cultivated in Ireland.<sup>50</sup> The largest single category of cultivator were the farms of 15-20 acres, responsible for 1.3 million acres, or 23% of all cultivation in Ireland (Fig. 3.22). Landholding units of 200-500 acres, in contrast, were only responsible for 7% of cultivation, whilst 1-5 acres landholdings produced just 3%. These differences in output of crops between the different categories of tenants would also have manifested themselves in different routine practices. Potatoes made up 50% of the cultivated crops of holdings of less than 1 acre, illustrating their importance as a source of food for the cottier farmers (Fig. 3.23). For the cottiers and those living on the smallest parcels of land, acquiring enough land to plant potatoes, tend these, harvest and store them was vitally important. This class tended to provide the cheap labour used by the other classes of farmers, and lived on sublet land or conacre (section 3.5). However, potato cultivation also tended to be a pioneer crop to break marginal land into cultivation (section 3.4), making these cottiers a key part of the ecosystem of landscape change in the later historic period. In contrast, the class of landholders cultivating the most ground, 15-20 acres, planted just 17% potatoes, and 45% oats, 6% turnips, 15% wheat and 15% clover. Oats and clover are an important source of fodder for animals. Clover in particular becomes proportionally more important as the size of landholding classes increase, so that it makes up some 47% of cultivation on landholdings greater than 500 acres,

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<sup>50</sup> Statistics from Clarkson et al., *Census of Ireland Literacy*.

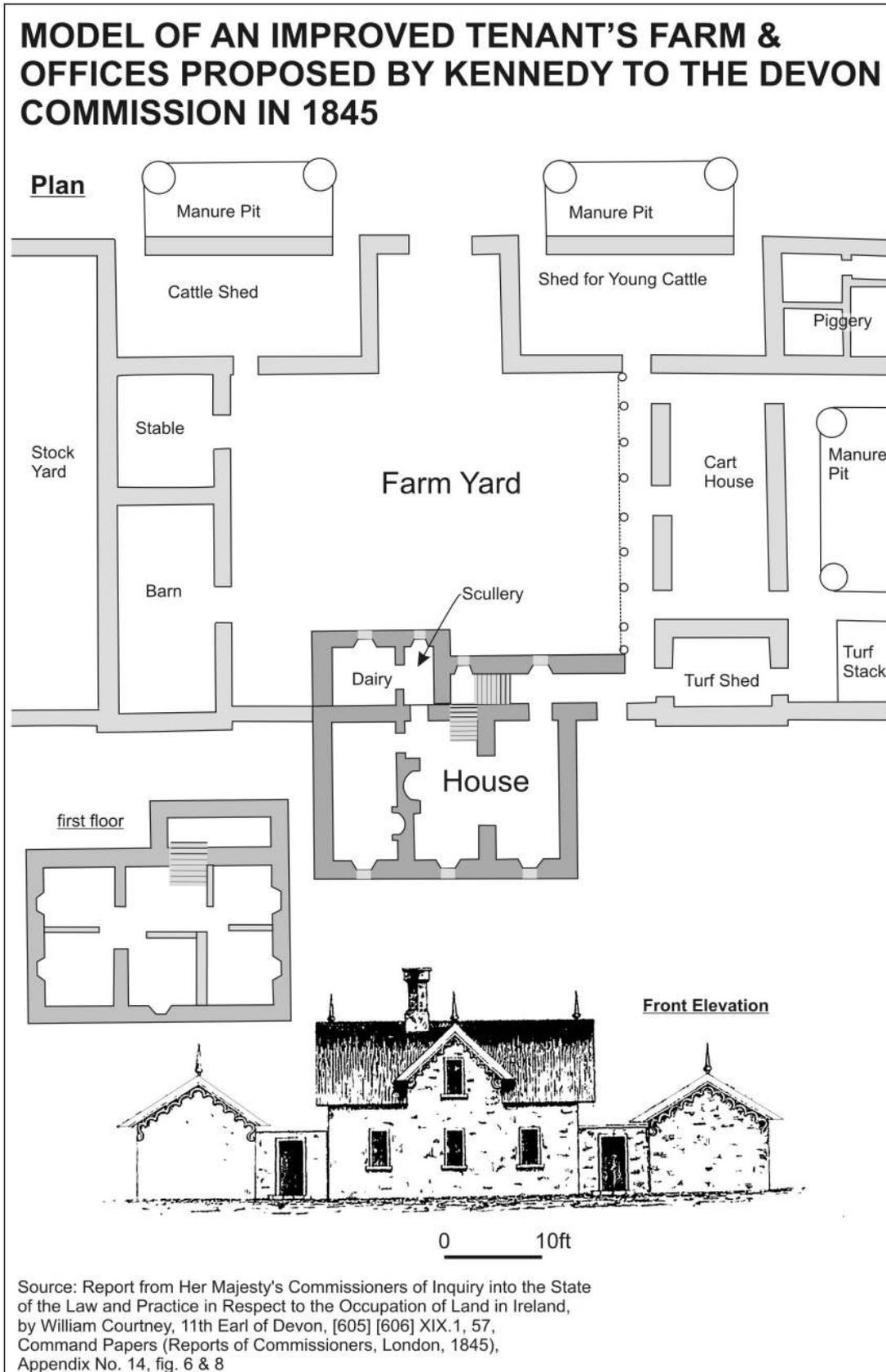


Figure 7.7 Kennedy's proposal for an improved tenant's house and farmyard, 1845.

where providing fodder for cattle was most important, even if the total area of cultivation at these largest landholdings was relatively small. Just 1% of all cultivation in Ireland was carried out on landholdings which were greater than 500 acres, properties like the herds' lands in Kilfenora (section 6.6). The structure of Irish land holding in 1852 reflected the structure of Irish agriculture, with large ranch-type farms in the west supplying cattle for finishing in the smaller farms in the east, before being exported, primarily to Britain. These market forces encouraged the large-scale transformation of former tillage land to grazing and the consolidation of farms.<sup>51</sup> The Irish agricultural sector had, from the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, been gradually readjusting to a primarily pastoral and beef-producing model.<sup>52</sup> This raises the question of whether Improvement in Ireland was the main driving force behind landscape and social change in Ireland? Was Improvement a failure?

#### **7.4 The Failures of Improvement?**

Despite the substantial changes in Irish landscapes and society in the later historic period, there were significant differences between the ideology of Improvement and the practice of improvement. The later historic Irish landscape was frequently described as a personification of this failure, with its bogs, its untidy, dirty towns, treeless countryside and its rural poverty.<sup>53</sup> Irish society, even elite society, was parodied in contemporary novels like Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* and *Castle Rackrent*.<sup>54</sup> Events like the 1798 Rebellion and, in particular, the Great Famine fundamentally undermined the idea that Ireland had improved, thus calling into question the legitimacy of the Ascendency and the British administration.

The Penal Laws introduced a specific clause imposing the practice of gavelling on Catholics in Ireland, specifically with the aim of reducing their estate in land by subdivision and encouraging the remaining Catholic landlords to conform to the Church of Ireland (section 3.4). This clause was a remarkable for enshrining in law a practice specifically condemned by the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century colonial administration (sections 3.3 and 7.3).

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<sup>51</sup> Jones, *Graziers, Land Reform, in Ireland*, pp 35–41; Jones Hughes, *Landholding, Society and Settlement in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Historical Geographer's Perspective*, p. 89; Cunningham, 'A Class Quite Distinct', p. 145.

<sup>52</sup> Liam Kennedy and Peter Michael Solar, *Irish Agriculture: a Price History* (Dublin, 2007), pp 96–105.

<sup>53</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Irish Sketch Book* (London, 1843); Joanna Brück, 'Landscape politics and colonial identities' in *Journal of Social Archaeology*, vii, no. 2 (2007), pp 224 –249.

<sup>54</sup> Maria Edgeworth, *The Absentee*; Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*.

The absence of landlords from their estates and their substitution with middlemen was, perhaps, the greatest example of resistance to the ideals of Improvement amongst the elite (sections 3.4 & 5.2). However, absenteeism was inherently part of the landlord system. The gentry and lords of Ireland who featured prominently on Prior's lists split their time between their estates, meaning their grand houses and demesnes, and their residences in Dublin when the Irish parliament was in session, creating the grand town houses of Georgian Dublin. The estates of families like the Barkers in Kilcooly and the Inchiquin O'Briens in Clare stretched over several counties,<sup>55</sup> often leased to tenants on long terms, who in turn, sublet to others. Sir William Barker divided his time between his town houses in Dublin, his country house in Kilcooly, and Bath in England.<sup>56</sup> The impact of the absentee landlord was to undermine the significance of class structure in rural society. The English writer Slade, inspecting the Company of Mercers' estates in Derry in 1800, then leased to the middleman landlord Lord Londonderry, explained the significant absence of a resident landlord:

*... [tenants] in England are cheered by a hospitable reception in the hall of their landlord when they wait upon him to pay their rent, derive benefit from his expenditure and example, and in case of petty disputes, find an honest magistrate, a kind landlord, and a well-informed neighbour to reconcile their differences and prevent their misunderstandings from growing in rancour and the desire of revenge. This want of example, assistance and consolation from the resident land owners, deprives the inhabitants of all inducement to union, so that each family lives by itself, in a little cabin without a chimney, with a clay floor, and bed of stray or rags.<sup>57</sup>*

Even where landlords maintained a residence, for at least part of the year, the estate house was insulated by its demesne, the tenants removed from its immediate environment and paths diverted around it, as in Kilcooly (section 5.4), creating a gulf between the landed class and their tenants.<sup>58</sup> This gap was only exacerbated by the difference in religion between the land-owning classes and the tenant and subtenant classes.

Absenteeism, and the role of middlemen landlords, was a logical consequence of capitalism, whereby estate in land became a commodity. Selling temporary special possession of land for crops – conacre – constituted a practice of short-term profit maximising (section 3.3). Conacre

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<sup>55</sup> Landed Estates Database, 'Connacht and Munster Landed Estates Database' in *Landed Estates Database*, 2011 (<http://www.landedestates.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/map.jsp>) (11 Feb. 2012).

<sup>56</sup> Neely, *Kilcooley*, p. 68.

<sup>57</sup> *Report from the select committee on Irish Society and London Companies (Irish estates)* H.C. 1890-91 (222) xii, 217, p. v.

<sup>58</sup> Williamson, 'Estate landscapes in England: interpretive archaeologies', pp 28–29.

was possibly in Ireland because of private property, the rights of the individual landholder to profit from this property. Conacre subverted the provisions in leases with covenants restricting subletting because conacre didn't actually convey a form of estate in property.<sup>59</sup> Conacre was a form of speculative capitalism, profitable for those who provided the land, necessary for those who could not afford, or were not eligible, to take leaseholds. Conacre was also incredibly destructive, with no obligation or incentive on either party to improve or even maintain the land. With multiple levels of tenants and subtenants providing cheap labour, people became more profitable than agriculture. Given the enormous population growth from the later 18<sup>th</sup> century to the Great Famine, it is extraordinary that the landscape managed to maintain these numbers. If Irish agricultural practices were considered less than Improved, they were surely proven effective by supporting exponential population growth until the Great Famine.

Perhaps the greatest failure of Improvement was its inability to deal with the Famine. There was nothing inevitable about famine in Ireland. Whilst pre-Famine Ireland was materially amongst the poorest countries in Europe, its population was relatively well-fed and lived relatively long lives.<sup>60</sup> Yet the Famine would precipitate significant social and landscape change in Ireland. It is apparent from the returns for the four study areas that significant changes happened to housing over the period of the Famine, particularly in the quantities of fourth-class houses: the single-roomed dwellings of the very poorest. Kilfenora saw a drop of 73% of Class 4 houses in the decade after 1841, whilst Kilcooly saw a drop of 62%. But by far the largest drop was in Kilrea, Co. Derry, where the stock of Class 4 houses all but disappeared, falling by 97%.<sup>61</sup> Duleek also saw a reduction of some 65% of Class 4 houses, but this was because of a reorganisation of the bounds of Duleek town, for the purpose of the Census, to include the Commons of Duleek.<sup>62</sup> It is also apparent from this graph that the other class of houses were stable (Class 1 in Kilfenora, which remained the same), or increased substantially in the case of Class 1 houses which doubled in Kilcooly and trebled in Kilrea.<sup>63</sup> Only in Kilcooly is there a reduction of some 24% for Class 3 houses, the homes of small

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<sup>59</sup> Wylie, *Irish Land Law*, pp 1032–34.

<sup>60</sup> Ó Gráda, 'Irish agricultural history', p. 167.

<sup>61</sup> Class 4 houses dropped in Kilfenora from 240 in 1841 to 64 houses in 1851; in Kilcooly from 186 in 1841 to 71 in 1851; in Kilrea from 177 to five. See Figure 7.8.

<sup>62</sup> Duleek's population of Class 4 houses for the whole parish – town and country – dropped by 58% from 230 in 1841 to 96 in 1851. See Figure 7.8.

<sup>63</sup> Class 1 houses in Kilfenora remained four between 1841 and 1851; in Kilcooly they increased from three to six; in Kilrea Class 1 houses

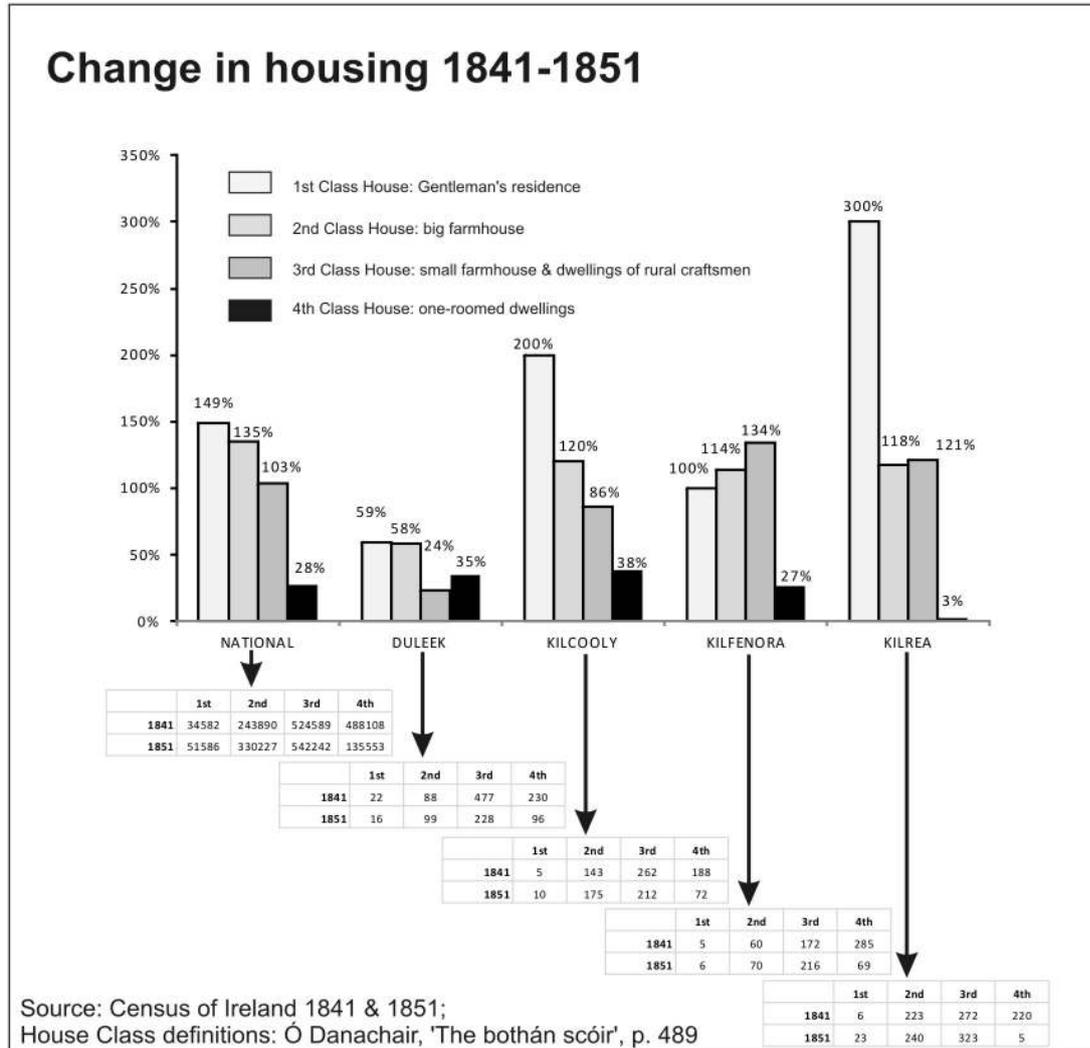


Figure 7.8 Changes in housing in Ireland between 1841 and 1851.

farmers and craftsmen (Fig. 7.8). The impact of this population collapse on the landscape, particular the landscapes of rural Ireland and the west, is almost impossible to fathom. The decline of Irish populations by 2.4 million in less than 20 years after 1841 was a moral, cultural, and landscape catastrophe. Kevin Whelan described this as a 'loss that is beyond redemption, a loss that theory cannot penetrate, that ethics cannot redeem ... [as] landscapes of the disappeared ... negative landscapes, marked by the presence of absence.'<sup>64</sup> If we consider that what Whelan called an 'absence' includes a loss of landscape knowledge, of how people lived their routine lives, of the significance of landscape features, then the Famine

<sup>64</sup> Kevin Whelan, 'Reading the ruins: the presence of absence in the Irish landscape' in Howard B. Clarke, Jacinta Prunty and Mark Hennessy (eds), *Surveying Ireland's Past: Multidisciplinary Essays in Honour of Anngret Simms* (Dublin, 2004), p. 316.

was a landscape disaster which makes archaeological landscape studies of the later historic period all the more important.

Was Improvement in Ireland solely motivated by a desire to control and legitimise, or was there any desire to benefit the country? Was there a philanthropic, altruistic motivation to Improvement? Early modern English commentators and colonial administrators cited the extension of the commonwealth enjoyed by English subjects to the poor Irish (section 3.3).<sup>65</sup> Improvement and private property would, according to Davies, lift the Irish poor out of their medieval relationship to their Gaelic lords. Practice demonstrated that this was not the case. Arthur Young was particularly sympathetic to the rural poor in Ireland, and saw Improvement as a means raising their lot in the world, in particular their living standards and capital (section 3.4). However, this possibility appeared to be primarily in the gift of the landed elite, who were, from Young's account, the main agents of Improvement in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland. Charles Trevelyan, the controversial civil servant and assistant secretary at the Treasury of Ireland during the Famine,<sup>66</sup> calculated that following the Act of Union the British state spent nearly £15 million on 'Improvement' in Ireland,<sup>67</sup> including for poor relief, public works, supporting the Royal Dublin Society, and building work houses. The new United Kingdom had taken on the mantle of agent of Improvement in later historic Ireland, even if the largest portion of this expenditure, nearly 40%, was spent on policing and security. The police's relationship with the local landed gentry was sometimes quite direct: police barracks were located adjacent to demesnes in Kilfenora and Kilcooly,<sup>68</sup> and police barracks were established in the towns of New Birmingham (Fig. 6.11).<sup>69</sup> Whilst policing might be considered part of the creation of an environment where moral, law-abiding subjects could live in security, it also reflected an unwelcome and contentious imposition of the State in Ireland, mediated through the offices of local magistrates (often the local landed gentry) into every-day lives.<sup>70</sup>

Parliamentary commissions of inquiry into, amongst other subjects, the bogs, railroads, tenure and the conditions of the poor, were explicitly designed to facilitate Improvement (section 3.5). Improvement was still a gift of the elite and those with access to the structures of power. For

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<sup>65</sup> Davies, *A Discoverie of the True Causes Why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued*, p. 167.

<sup>66</sup> Robin Haines, 'Trevelyan, Sir Charles Edward' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), ix, 477–9.

<sup>67</sup> Charles E. Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis* (London, 1848), pp 19–20.

<sup>68</sup> Kilfenora, ITM: 517663, 694317; Kilcooly, ITM: 628285, 657793 & 630391, 656391.

<sup>69</sup> New Birmingham, ITM: 624469, 651821.

<sup>70</sup> Oliver MacDonagh, 'Ideas and institutions, 1830–45' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, Volume V: Ireland Under the Union 1801–70* (Oxford, 2010), p. 215.

example, the inquiry into the Conditions of the Poor heard evidence from the local elite, such as Mr. Holmes in Kilrea, the agent of the Company of Mercers,<sup>71</sup> or Rev. Meaghan, the Catholic parish priest and William Ponsonby Barker, the landlord of Kilcooly.<sup>72</sup> The ideal of moral government prompted English philosophers like John Stuart Mills, who strongly believed in the power of personal improvement, to advocate for land reform in Ireland in order to allow the Irish labouring classes to rise from poverty: 'The English must begin treating the Irish people as moral agents, influenced by motives, and who must be acted on by a system of moral government'.<sup>73</sup> Even the possibility of possession of property would promote Improvement among the Irish labouring classes by engendering 'prudence and self-control'.<sup>74</sup> Where these efforts did not produce the desired effect, such as the dung heaps on the street of Vere Hunt's New Birmingham – or the pig in his kitchen – (section 6.4) represented a fundamental difference in the values of every day practice. Dung heaps, as valuable resources for fertilising fields, could be seen as a measure of 'persevering industry' by tenant farmers,<sup>75</sup> or, as proposed by Kennedy, as filthy by-products of farming to be relegated to the rear of decent farm offices (section 7.3; Fig. 7.7). This represented a fundamental difference in values and practices which helped to define how people saw themselves.

## **7.5 Conclusion: Identity and Improvement in Later Historic Ireland.**

Improvement was a means of legitimising the new social order in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and differentiating itself from what had come before. In this sense, Improvement shaped people's identity. Identity in later historic Ireland was a sense of self shaped by a relationship with place, family, class, routine practices, religion, and the past. Whereas prior to the later historic period people's connection to the past was primarily through genealogies and association with the physical landscape and its monuments, in the later historic period the documentary record produced by the English authorities, and by the structural authorities, provided an alternative, often definitive, source of genealogy, and a means by which identity was defined. The major

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<sup>71</sup> *Royal commission into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland: appendix D, containing baronial examinations relative to earnings of labourers, cottier tenants, employment of women and children, expenditure: and supplement containing answers to questions 1 to 12, circulated by the Commissioner* [35] [36] [37] [38] [39] [40] [41] [42], H.C. 1836, xxx, 35, 221, xxxi. 1, xxxii. 1, xxxiii. 1, xxxiv. 1, 427, 643, 657, p. 365.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 250–1.

<sup>73</sup> Mill, quoted in Lynn Zastoupil, 'Moral Government: J. S. Mill on Ireland' in *The Historical Journal*, xxvi, no. 3 (1983), p. 709.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 710–11.

<sup>75</sup> Whelan, 'The modern landscape', p. 87.

surveys of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the *Down Survey*, *Civil Survey* and *Books of Survey and Distribution*, as well as creating a record of discovery for the landscape, record the former property extent and quality of the dispossessed landed elite (section 2.4). Further records like the 1659 *Census of Ireland* recorded the names and places of individuals below the level of the former elite. So, Jerome Alexander and his ancestors could have identified themselves as the proprietors of Kilcooly through these official records, as well as through their private estate records. The Registry of Deeds, created in 1708 to register and give legal weight to private agreements, was a public source record of the identity of the Bellew and Graham families in Duleek (section 5.3). By the 18<sup>th</sup> and, particularly, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, records like parish registries of baptism, marriage and death, were vital instruments in regulating Irish society, and shaping people's identity, primarily with a view to managing their access to property. These records were primarily designed to serve the interests of the property-owning elite by confirming their identity, via genealogy and property. The proxy landscape acted as a mechanism for legitimising the identity of the new Ascendency, and controlling the identities of subordinate classes.

Improvement facilitated the development of a sense of identity with a place by making the improver part of that place, through the documented landscape (described above) and through, in Locke's terms, the mixing of their labour with the land (section 3.2). William Barker and his son could appreciate that the regular fields and gardens surrounding their home in Kilcooly Abbey was, at least partly, their creation. This no doubt contributed to their sense of place and identity over time as the layers of their labour were added to the landscape, creating a genealogy of Improvement in the landscape of their demesne, and by extension, in the broader landscape of their estate. This sense of the Barker's identity with their place was captured in the portraits of Sir William and Elizabeth Barker (Fig. 5.24).

Identity was created through an association with a society of peers. Improvement served as a common link between people from widely different parts of the country. Sir William Barker of Kilcooly, and Sir Lucius O'Brien of Dromoland, may well have known each other as contemporaries and members of the *Dublin Society*. The practice of Improvement was itself a form of identity. Publications like Molesworth's *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture*,<sup>76</sup> or Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland*,<sup>77</sup> and the *County Statistical Surveys*,<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor*.

<sup>77</sup> Young, *Tour in Ireland*.

sponsored by the *Royal Dublin Society*, allowed the upper classes in later historic Ireland to identify themselves as Improvers amongst their peers. The later historic landed elite by and large shared a common ancestry and identity, associated the Whig politics founded on the success of the Glorious Revolution (section 3.3). For families like the Grahams in Platin, their identity was explicitly associated with the politics of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and was expressed in the landscape of their house and demesne (section 5.3).

The Palatine community, settled on the former commonage of the Slieveardagh uplands, also shared an ancestry as German refugee Protestants whose place in Ireland was specifically associated with Improvement (section 6.5). These families' identities were shaped by their ancestry, their religion, their distinctive improved architecture and agricultural practices. These practices set them apart from their Irish neighbours and served to strengthen their identity as a distinct community. Religion played a particularly strong role in this regard, with the Palatines sharing a common, and for the locality, unique, identity as Methodists. However, they also associated with the Church of Ireland religion of their landlords the Barkers, confirming their own identity as reliable and Protestant tenants. Religious identity may not have been straightforward, as demonstrated by Donald MacDonagh's role in building the holy well at Toberfaughtna, beside Kilfenora (section 4.5). The importance of religion in shaping people's identity was demonstrated in Kilrea, where churches of all denominations were amongst the first buildings to be renovated and improved, at the expense of the Company of Mercers, after they took their estate back in hand in 1831 (section 6.3).

The ideology of Improvement was a mechanism by the new landlords gained a symbolic ownership of the landscape to match their legal ownership. Where the former owners were able to identify their lands for generations, the new landlords were able to stamp their ownership on this landscape by improvement. This was particularly important for a landscape which contained multiple features and elements from multiple periods, all of which acted to shape people's daily lives and sense of identity.

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<sup>78</sup> Dutton, *Statistical survey of the County of Clare*.

## **8 Conclusions and Further Research**

### **8.1 Improvement in Later Historic Ireland**

The central research question of this thesis was concerned with how Improvement transformed later historic (1650-1850) rural Irish landscapes and society in Ireland. Improvement, an ideology promoted by the colonial British state and the elite in Irish society, sought to change Irish society by altering, even transforming, the landscape. The purpose of this change was to secure the political, economic, and moral position of the new Anglo-Irish land-owning class as the elite, and to effect change in the daily practices of the general Irish population, which would, eventually, result in a new identity for them.

The later historic period constituted a pivotal two centuries in the creation of modern Ireland. It acted as a bridge between the end of the medieval and modern Ireland. Much of the modern Irish landscape was created, or significantly shaped, in the later historic period: the parishes and places of worship, the demesnes and estate houses, towns and villages, fields and farms, roads and lanes. These landscape features were significantly shaped by Improvement, either by being recreated as improved landscapes, or by being overwritten by improvements.

Landscape was a significant medium for expressing ideas, and Improvement was perhaps the most important of these ideas in the later historic period. Improvement ideas operated in two seemingly contradictory ways: the first, by promoting novelty from what had come before, and the second, by referencing the past as a means of legitimising the improved order. Improvement significantly changed rural Ireland in the later historic period, but not evenly, nor often as intended. Improvement was not a uniform ideology. Rather it was a collection of ideas which changed over time. This is apparent in both the material and documented landscape. The ideas of Improvement influenced land law and property, enclosure, architecture, aesthetics, and religion. Improvement ideas impacted the material landscape of buildings, gardens, fields and farms, towns and villages. These material landscapes were shaped by, and acted to shape, society. The recorded landscape, what I termed the proxy landscape of documents and maps, also had a profound impact on Irish society, as mechanisms for shaping the landscape, defining and organising property, and creating identities.

Improvement rationalised the creation of 'property'. In the old Gaelic order the main benefit of property was the produce of the land measured in terms of its potential (section 3.3) and complex shares in this potential, as demonstrated in Kilfenora (section 4.5). Improved property was measured in terms of the land itself, in absolute measures of acres. Of course this was qualified by the quality of the land, which itself was a measure of how improved it was, how much work had been invested in the land, in enclosure, drainage, fertilising, building. These apparent markers of Improvement became the means for transforming land, and justifying its transfer to those who were willing and able to improve it.

Improvement was frequently expressed in the landscape in patterns, in the forms of buildings, gardens and field boundaries. This is apparent in the landscapes of demesnes like Platin (section 5.3) and Kilcooly (section 5.4). Improvement also significantly shaped practices in daily life, of the elite, in religion, in agriculture and in the daily life of all classes. The success of Improvement as a legitimising ideology of change in later historic Ireland might be questioned, particularly in relation to absenteeism of the landlords, the exclusion of the largest part of Irish society from property rights, and, perhaps most damning, the disaster of the Famine. Nonetheless, Improvement was one of the most significant ideological forces in later historic Ireland, which profoundly changed Ireland and Irish society into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in unintended ways.

### **8.2 Further Research**

I suggest two areas that merit further research, based on two different scales of analysis. The first research question addresses the role of Improvement at a national level in Ireland in the post-Famine period; and the second considers looking at the experience of Improvement in Ireland in an international context.

#### ***What role did Improvement play in changing post-Famine Ireland?***

The period after the Famine saw significant changes in Irish society and landscape structures. The population of Ireland as a whole fell consistently from a high of 8.2 million in 1841 to a low of 4.5 million in 1961, and only began to rise after 1970, reaching a population of 6.4 million in

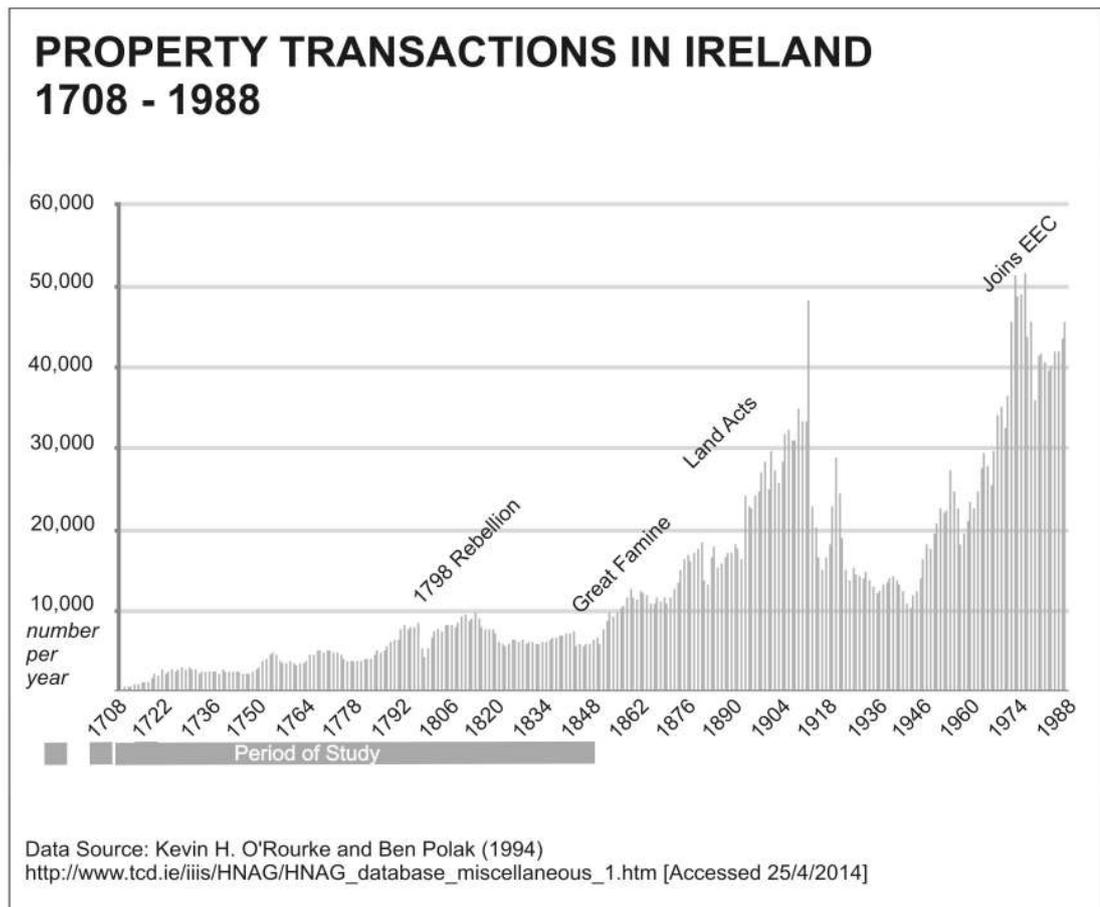


Figure 8.1 Property transactions in Ireland, 1708-1988.

2011.<sup>1</sup> The impact of population collapse, particularly on the landscapes of rural Ireland and on Irish society's relationship with the British state, were profound and long-lasting. What role did Improvement play in the break-up of the large estates? Property, one of the key driving forces in early-modern and later historic Ireland, was one of the most significant factors in social and landscape change after the Famine in Ireland. O'Rourke and Polak tabulated the total number of transactions entered into the Irish registry of deeds from its foundation in 1708 to 1988 (Fig. 8.1).<sup>2</sup> Their research shows that, in the period from 1708 to about 1850, there were generally stable levels of property transactions per year. However, after 1850 the graph shows a massive and volatile increase in the number of mainly property transactions. This

<sup>1</sup> M. Kelly and A. Stewart Fotheringham, 'The online atlas of Irish population change 1841–2002: A new resource for analysing national trends and local variations in Irish population dynamics' in *Irish Geography*, xlv, no. 2-3 (2011), pp 215–244; 'The All Island Atlas | All-Island Research Observatory' (<http://www.airo.ie/external-content/all-island-atlas-0>) (1 Aug. 2014).

<sup>2</sup> *Property transactions in Ireland, 1708-1988: an introduction*, by Kevin H. O'Rourke and Ben Polak, Working Paper (1991) (<http://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/1683>) (25 Apr. 2014).

increase was in part a consequence of the Encumbered Estates courts,<sup>3</sup> the Land Acts, demands for land rights amongst tenant farmers. The Land Commission which gave tenants opportunities to purchase freeholds, facilitating the transfer of ownership of 13,500,000 statute acres from landlord to tenants between 1885 and 1920, with a further 807,000 acres in the Irish Free State/ Republic of Ireland after independence.<sup>4</sup> This was a combined 5.8 million hectares, or up to 69% of Ireland's surface area. The ideas associated with Improvement continued to influence Irish society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. How did Improvement shape the way people treated their property after they bought out their leases, and did Improvement ideals contribute to the political change in Ireland in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and to the destruction of the Ascendency? To what extent did ideas of self-improvement change Irish rural society after the Famine? Education and increased literacy, the fall in the number of Irish-speakers, and the Catholic Church's direct role in providing education through teaching orders like the Christian Brothers, were to become significant parts of Irish life in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. To what extent did they owe their development to ideas of Improvement?

### ***How did Improvement in Ireland compare with Improvement in other countries?***

In this thesis I have drawn comparisons primarily from England and Scotland. The experience of Improvement in Ireland might be further compared to the experience in Europe, particularly in relation to the impact of the Enlightenment on rural landscapes in 17<sup>th</sup>- to 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, or Prussian strategies for incorporating Poland in the later-18<sup>th</sup> century. Ireland's colonial experience would make an interesting comparison with the development of rural landscapes in British colonies. For example, the role of Improvement in shaping the rural agricultural landscapes of the eastern United States in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, or Australia and New Zealand in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in relation to the creation of property, symmetry in the landscape, and the treatment of pre-colonial landscapes.

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<sup>3</sup> W. T. H., *The Encumbered Estates of Ireland* (London, 1850); Mary Cecelia Lyons, *Illustrated Incumbered Estates, Ireland, 1850-1905: Lithographic and Other Illustrative Material in the Incumbered Estates Rentals* (Whitegate, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Patrick John Cosgrove, 'The Wyndham Land Act, 1903: The Final Solution To The Irish Land Question?' (PhD thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2008) (<http://eprints.nuim.ie/5071/>); Fiona Fitzsimons, 'Records of the Irish Land Commission' in *History Ireland*, xxii, no. 1 (2014), p. 49.

### 8.3 Final Thoughts: Implications of Modern Landscape Change

Substantial changes have taken place in the Irish rural landscape during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2011 most of the population in the Republic of Ireland (63%) lived in towns and cities.<sup>5</sup> Whilst agriculture remains a significant part of the Irish economy, employing 14-15% of the workforce in the Republic,<sup>6</sup> it is not the dominant part of Irish life it had been in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1971 and 2011 the number of households headed by a farmer in the Republic fell from 25% to 6%.<sup>7</sup> The traditional family farm established after the Land Acts are in decline, replaced by consolidated, larger farms and part-time farming. With fewer animals grazing uplands in places like the Burren, hazel scrub is encroaching on former farmland and karst.<sup>8</sup> Demand for more cheap food is driving a trend towards intensive tillage in the east of the country requiring larger modern machinery and the removal of hedgerows and field boundaries.<sup>9</sup> Deeper sub-soil ploughing is gradually destroying much of the old field drains inserted in the later historic period, as well as subsurface archaeological deposits formerly preserved beneath the plough zone. Older farm offices and vernacular houses are not suitable for storing machinery or fodder, or for housing the large numbers of animals on modern farms, and are being replaced or abandoned.<sup>10</sup>

Between 2000 and 2006 5,480km<sup>2</sup> or 7% of the surface of Ireland changed land-use (Fig. 8.2).<sup>11</sup> Most change was a result of forestry (46%), mainly consisting of commercial planting and felling, followed by agriculture (33%), reflecting the routine shifts from pasture to arable. Development accounted for 10% of landscape change, including suburban growth, industrial developments, quarries, and road building (Fig. 8.3). However, development has, arguably,

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<sup>5</sup> Central Statistics Office, *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1* (Dublin, 2012), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> *The Importance of Agriculture and the Food Industry to the Irish Economy*, by Jim Phelan and John O'Connell (Dublin, 2011) (<http://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCD%20Project%20JP-JOC.pdf>) (15 Sept. 2014).

<sup>7</sup> 'Teagasc - News - Continuity and Change: The Irish Family Farm' (<http://www.teagasc.ie/news/2014/201405-23.asp>) (30 July 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Burren Life Project, *A Guide to Controlling Scrub on Burren Winterages and Other Areas: Burrenlife Best Practice Guide 5* (Carron, 2010) ([https://www.google.ie/?gws\\_rd=ssl#q=hazel+encroaching+in+Burren](https://www.google.ie/?gws_rd=ssl#q=hazel+encroaching+in+Burren)).

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Whelan, 'The challenge of change' in F.H.A Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (2nd ed., Cork, 2011), p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> O'Reilly & Murray, *Traditional Buildings on Irish Farms*.

<sup>11</sup> This figure was calculated in GIS by comparing the 2000 and 2006 CORINE land use raster data sets and determining where land-use had changed. Data sources: European Environment Agency, 'Corine Land Cover 2000 Raster Data Version 15', 2011 (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/corine-land-cover-2000-raster-1#tab-gis-data>) (31 July 2014); European Environment Agency, 'Corine Land Cover 2006 Raster Data Version 15', 2011 (<http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/corine-land-cover-2006-raster-1#tab-gis-data>) (31 July 2014).

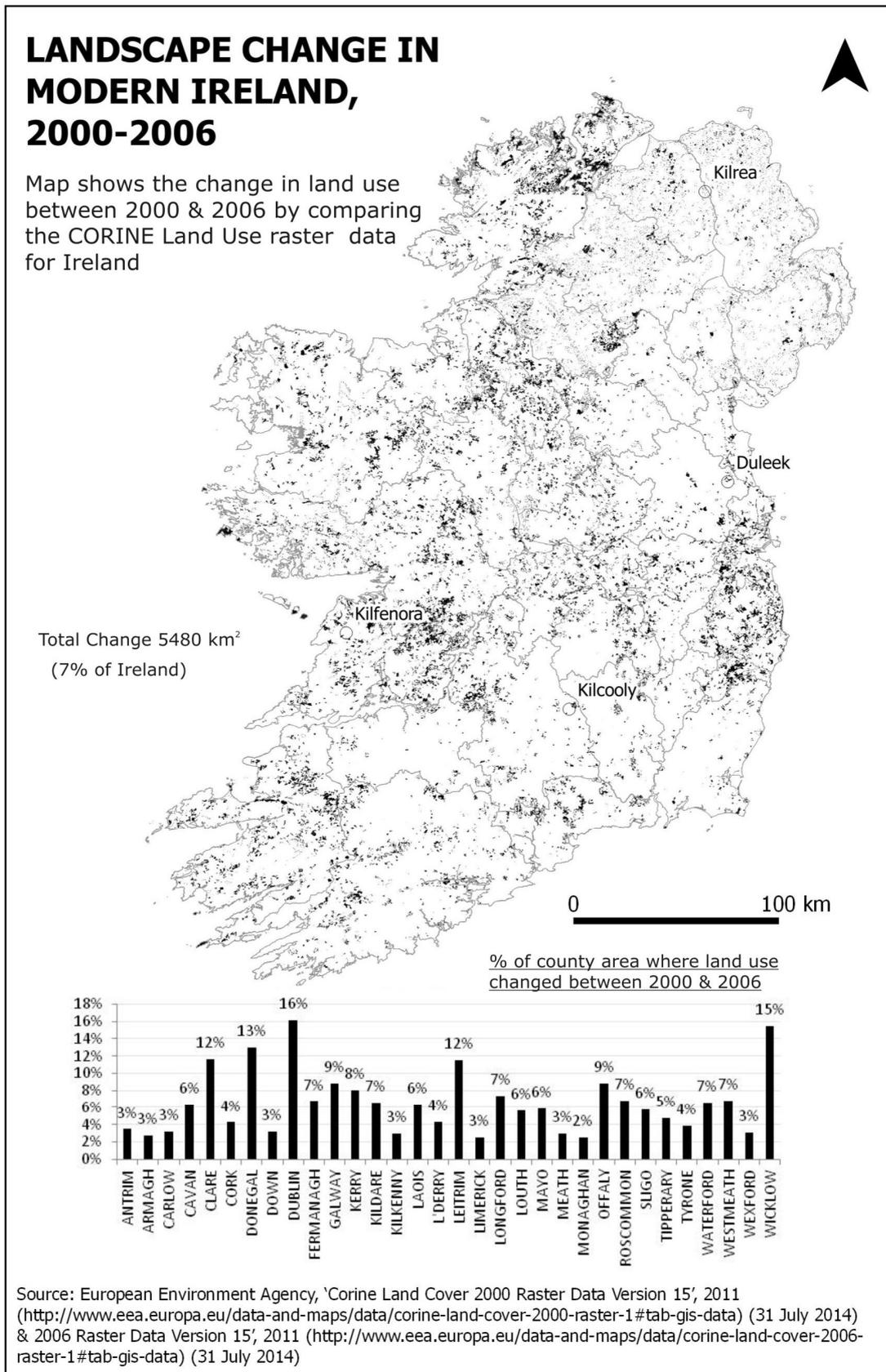


Figure 8.2 A distribution map of land-use change in Ireland between 2000 and 2006.

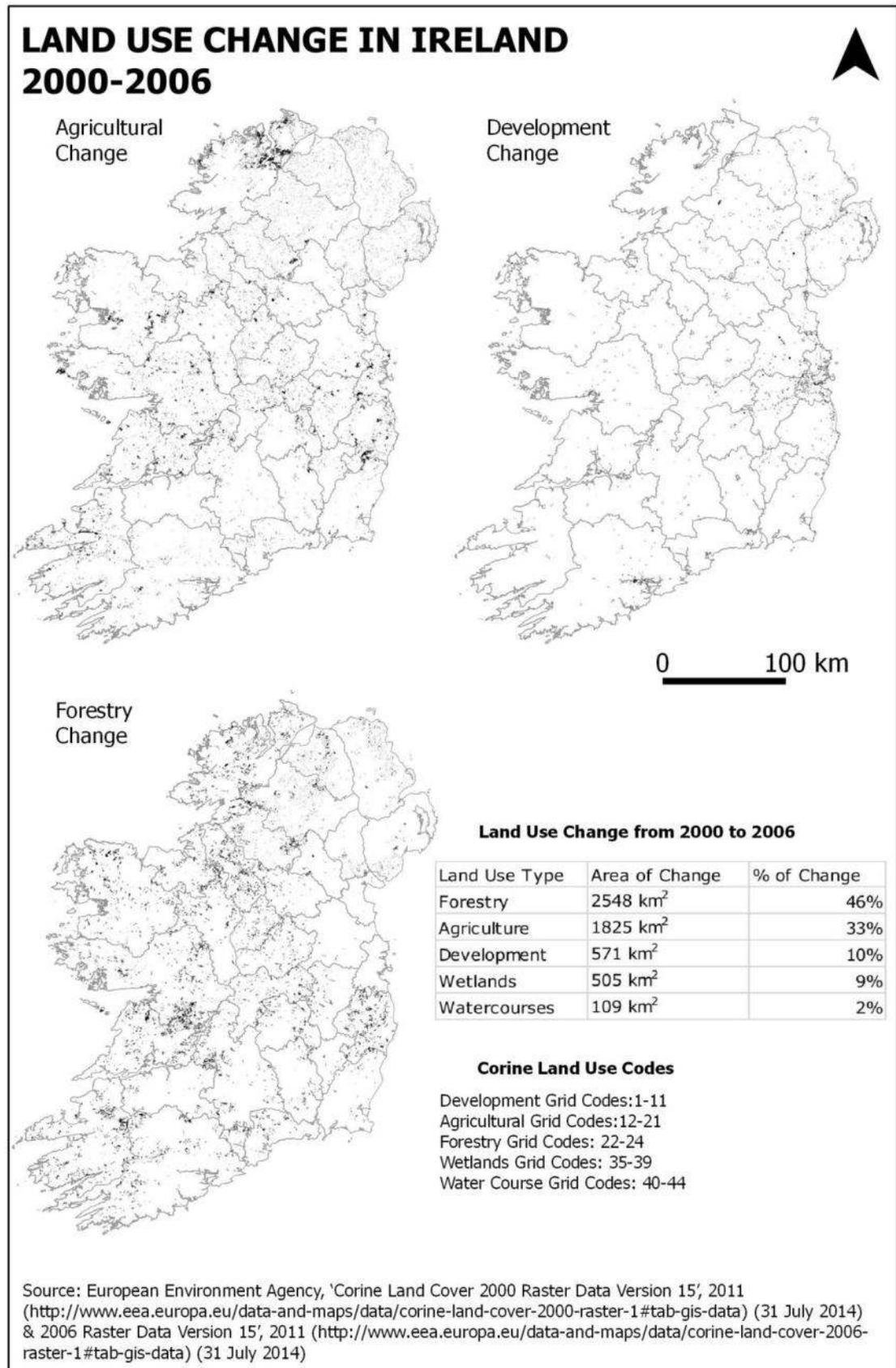


Figure 8.3 Types of land-use change in Ireland from 2000 to 2006.

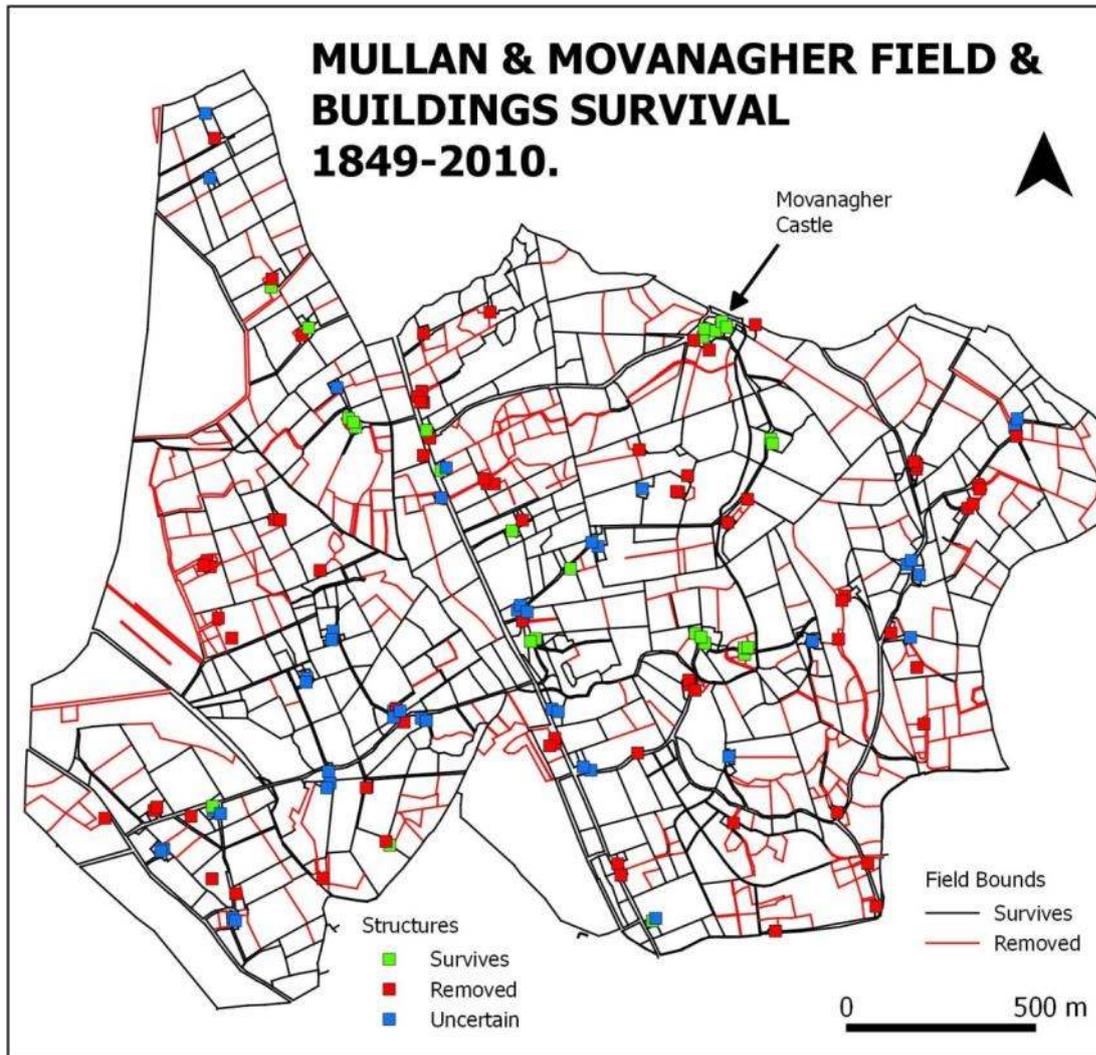


Figure 8.4 Landscape change in Movanager and Mullan townlands, Kilrea, between c.1849 and c.2010.

had the greatest impact on our perception of change in the rural Ireland. This is no doubt a result of the building boom of the last two decades.

Taking one of my case study areas, the townlands of Movanager and Mullan in Kilrea, as an example, in 1849-53 the Ordnance Survey six-inch map recorded 76km of field boundaries in the two townlands. Compared with Bing satellite images from 2010, some 22k or 28% of these boundaries had been removed by enlarging fields or planting forests. In the same two townlands, the 1849-53 map depicted 143 structures, farm houses, cottages and offices. When compared with modern maps,<sup>12</sup> 51% of these structures no longer survive, with a further 19% in uncertain condition, mostly obscured by other modern buildings. In total, 43

<sup>12</sup> OSNI, 'Discoverer Series 1:50,000 Sheet 8 - Ballymoney' (Belfast, 1980).

## Chapter 8 Conclusions & Further Research

structures appear to have survived from the 1849-53 Ordnance Survey map, although a cartographic survey does not necessarily reveal the condition of these surviving structures. Movanager castle and its attached later farm house and offices are amongst the buildings that remain, and which indicate the importance of later historic farmyards and farm buildings as environments for earlier archaeological monuments and built heritage (Fig. 8.4).

The ideological underpinning of Improvement helped to shape Irish society in the later historic period. The historic landscape of demesnes and grand houses, towns and villages, fields and farms, churches and parish, shaped people's sense of place, and their identity. The Irish landscape has been described as a key to our collective past,<sup>13</sup> a part of our identity. If we consider that 'landscapes' are important actors in shaping our daily lives, our sense of identity, our sense of place, even our pleasure in the landscape, then the impact of Improvement has been, indeed continues to be, profoundly significant. Landscapes will continue to be the theatre of massive technological and social change. To effectively plan our landscape's future we must understand our landscape's past.

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<sup>13</sup> Lambrick et al., *Historic Landscape Characterisation in Ireland*, p. 4.



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