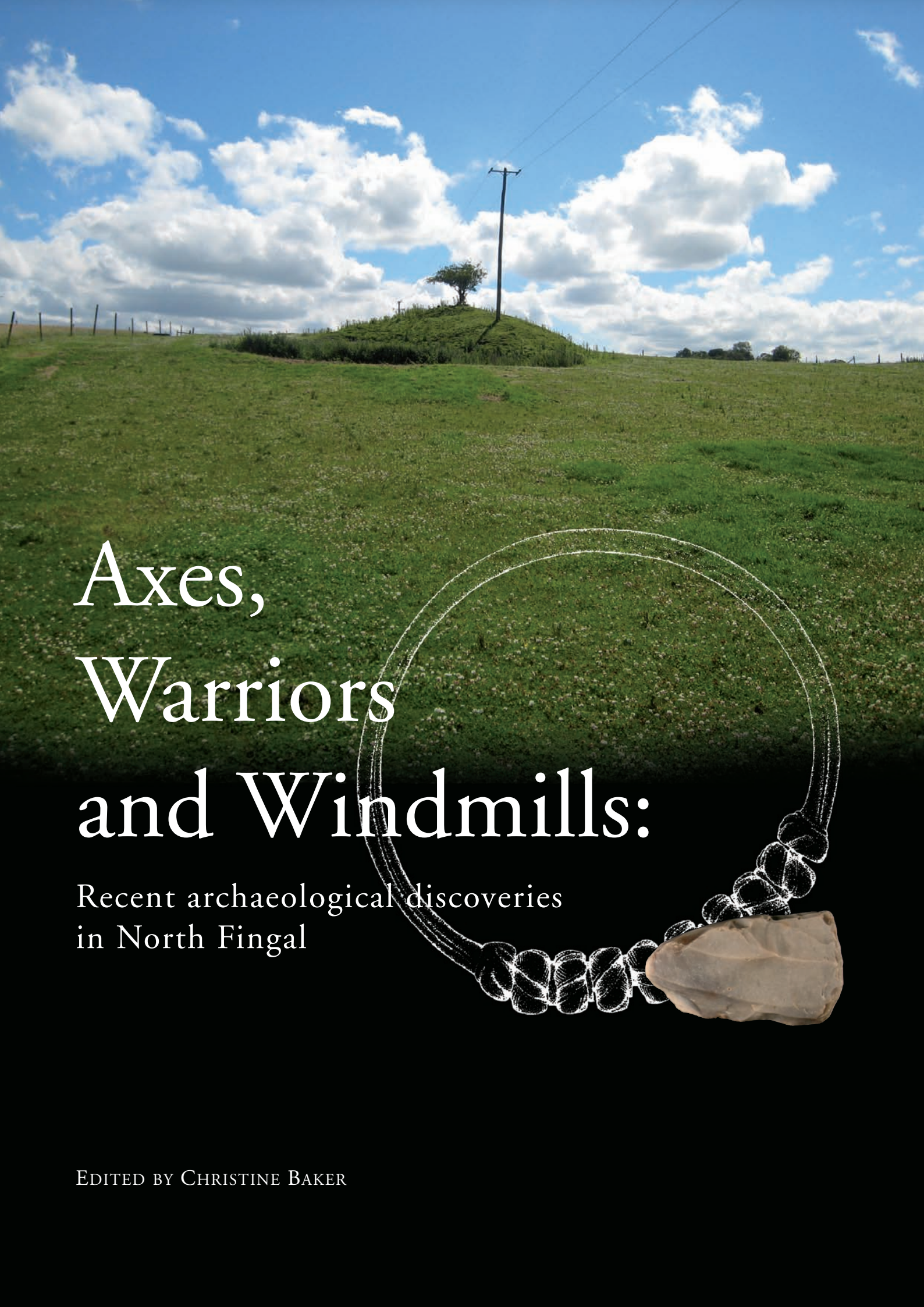

Axes, Warriors and Windmills:

Recent archaeological discoveries in North Fingal

Edited by Christine Baker

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Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall
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FOREWORD

Amid the hustle and bustle of modern life we rarely stop to think and wonder about the past and the people who have gone before us. Even if we're interested in our own family history we can only get information for the last few hundred years at best. Yet the Fingal we see every day, the landscape of city, town, village, coast and countryside, is the result of a very long history of settlement. Countless generations have lived their lives before us in Fingal. They have hunted and fished, worked the land, built our towns and villages, brought industry and commerce, lived and died just as we do today. In doing so they have shaped the landscape we see today. People have been living in Fingal since the end of the last ice age, 10,000 years ago. Yet we know very little about the many societies and cultures which have shaped Fingal for most of this 10,000 year period. We only have written records spanning the last 1500 years. Our only way of finding out about this distant past is by examining the landscape, with its many historic sites and features, which we have inherited. This is what archaeology is all about.

In recent years, a large number of archaeological investigations have been undertaken in Fingal, as a result of the rapid growth and development of the County. These archaeological surveys and excavations are required by law to ensure that we gather valuable information about past societies and cultures as we go about the important task of providing for the needs of society today. In this way we are building a much more complete picture of life in Fingal in the distant past.

This publication aims to bring the results of this work to as wide an audience as possible. The book builds on the successful seminar held in Balbriggan in October 2007, which underlined the high level of public interest in the results of recent archaeological investigations in Fingal. The work presented here highlights a number of exciting investigations which have taken place recently in the north of the county, including work from Lusk, Balbriggan, Lambay Island and Swords. It provides a fascinating insight into our distant past and the lives of the many peoples who have lived in this place before us. Finally it underlines the importance of archaeology and our knowledge of the past for local identity and challenges us to care for our rich archaeological heritage into the future.

Gerry Clabby, Heritage Officer,
Fingal County Council

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Axes, Warriors and Windmills seminar grew from collaboration between Fingal County Council and the Fingal Heritage Network, an umbrella group for Fingal's local historical societies. The result was a very well-attended seminar day held in Balbriggan Town Hall in October 2007. Such has been the interest, both at the time and since, that it was decided to publish the papers for dissemination to a much wider audience.

Unfortunately, a number of the original speakers were unable to participate in the publication. Ian Elliot gave an illuminating talk on the geophysical surveys he had undertaken on Lambay Island. Stephen Johnston had presented the results of several excavations and archaeological investigations in Lusk that his company, Arch-Tech Ltd, had undertaken over the past decade. Finally, Tom Condit gave an overview of Fingal's past and the impact of future developments.

In their stead, a number of individuals have given up their time and shared their expertise; Professor Gabriel Cooney has taken up the theme of the axes and Lambay Island; Aidan O'Connell shares the results of an excavation at Lusk where two 'warriors' appear to have come to an untimely end, while Finola O'Carroll reveals the unexpected knowledge that can be uncovered in a field beside Bremore Castle. The publication is rounded off with an overview of Fingal's heritage, its survival and its future.

It is hoped that this publication will disseminate this interesting and informative subject matter to a wide-ranging audience, beyond those who could attend on the day. Furthermore, it is hoped that it will engender a greater interest in the importance of the archaeology of Fingal, and in doing so foster an awareness of the need for its ongoing protection.

Many thanks are due to the Fingal Heritage Network, Ian Doyle of The Heritage Council and Fingal County Council for facilitating and supporting the original seminar day. Also to my colleagues, Gerry Clabby and Sean O'Faircheallaigh, for their support in bringing this volume to publication. Thanks are due to the original speakers, Mr. Ian Elliot of IGAS Ltd; Teresa Bolger, Eoin Corcoran, Stephen Johnston of Arch-Tech Ltd; Edmond O'Donovan of Margaret Gowen Ltd; and Tom Condit of the National Monuments Service, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, both for their contribution in making the seminar day a success and for contributing to this volume. Special thanks to Professor Gabriel Cooney of UCD, Aidan O'Connell of ACS Ltd and Finola O'Carroll of CRDS Ltd for stepping into the breach and supplying such interesting papers at short notice. Thank you to Katie O'Mahony of ADS Ltd, Lisa Courtney of Margaret Gowen Ltd and Fintan Walsh of IAC Ltd who generously supplied images. Also to Claire McIntyre, Noel Mullen, Larry Ryan, Ciaran Corrigan and Rory O'Byrne of Fingal County Council for their assistance. Finally, thank you to Katrina Bouchier at Environmental Publications for working so fast to pull this volume together.

Christine Baker, Field Monument Advisor,
Fingal County Council

Figure 1: View of Lambay from the east (Photo: Rob Sands)

THE PREHISTORY OF LAMBAY, A LONG VIEW

GABRIEL COONEY

INTRODUCTION

I wanted to take the opportunity of making a contribution to this volume to provide an overview of how recent archaeological fieldwork provides a new view of the prehistory of Lambay (Figure 1), and also to reflect critically on how the different techniques that we have used provide us with complementary types of archaeological information.

I have been directing a programme of archaeological research on Lambay for well over a decade, with the help and input of a number of colleagues. The primary focus of this research was the excavation of a stone axe quarry site, with a range of associated activity. After small-scale testing excavation, the main phase of excavation took place between 1996 and 2001. This work, in itself, has had a major impact on our understanding of activity on the island between 4000–2500 BC, what archaeologists usually call the Neolithic period. That excavation provided the stimulus to take a wider view of the long-term history of human settlement on the island. In doing so, we carried out a couple of other, much smaller excavations and also began to use a range of archaeological techniques; monument survey and recording, field walking focused on the recovery of lithic artifacts and geophysical survey to recover other kinds of information. The latter has become the focus of work over the last few years as we have sought to get a better understanding of activity across the island landscape.

SETTING THE SCENE: THE ISLAND LANDSCAPE

Lambay forms part of what can be described as a dispersed group of islands off the Dublin coast (Figure 2). From north to south, this group consists of the the four small islands off-shore from

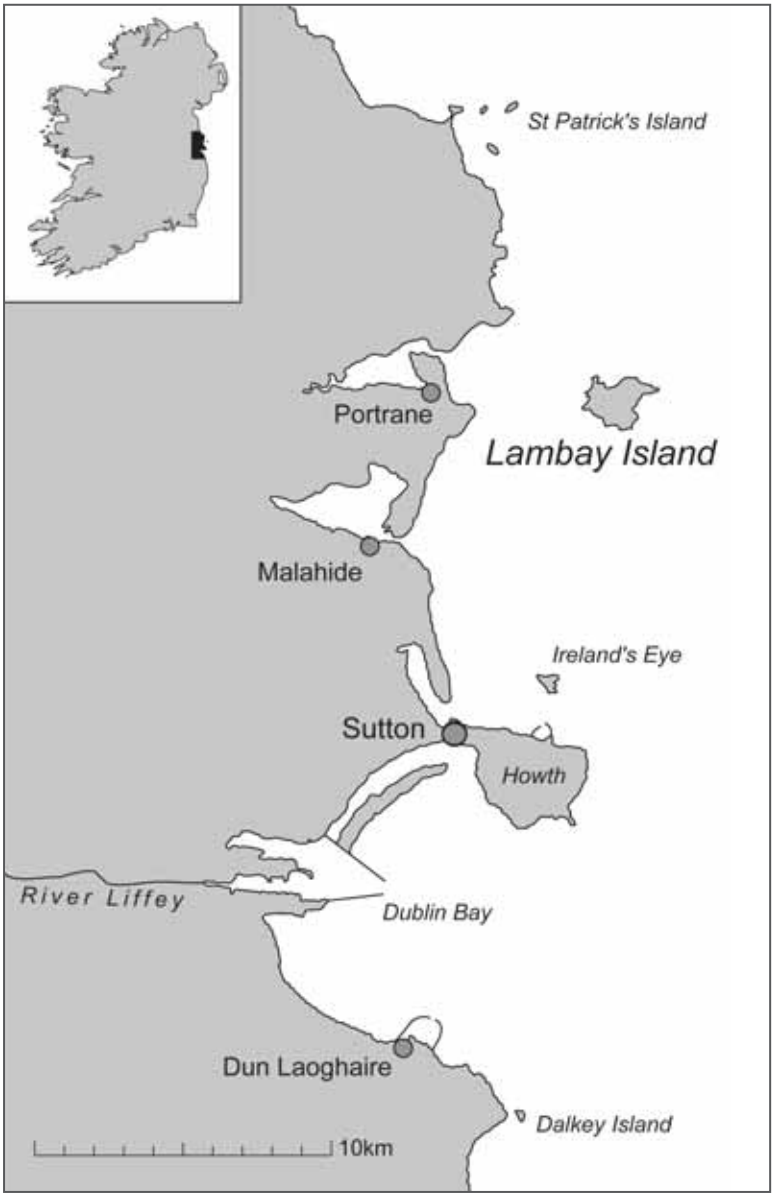

Figure 2: Location of Lambay in relation to the other Dublin islands

Figure 3: The western shore of Lambay Island where the beaches accessible from the sea are located

Skerries (Colt Island, Saint Patrick's Island, Shenick Island close to the shore, and Rockabill further out), Lambay, Ireland's Eye, Howth (today a peninsula but an island in earlier prehistory) and Dalkey Island. It is probably fair to comment that Lambay is both very prominent in peoples' perception of the Dublin coastline, but also relatively lesser known than the other islands. Lying about 11km north of Howth and 8km from the nearest part of the Dublin coastline, Lambay has a dramatic skyline, a consequence of its largely volcanic origins which it shares with the rocky shore of Portrane. Looking out to Lambay from the coast, Knockbane, a prehistoric hilltop cairn forming the highest part of the island (just over 120m OD), is very prominent. Knockbane is also a very good point to provide an overview of the island (1.8km north to south and 2.7km south-west to north-east) and its wider coastal setting.

Westwards from Knockbane, the land slopes down to the coast. Here is the best quality land for farming on the island because of the deeper cover of locally derived glacial till. It is on the western shore of the island that the beaches accessible from the sea are located (Figure 3). East from Knockbane, the eastern two-thirds of the island has a much more rugged, upland character. Here rock outcrop and distinct hills dominate with thinner soil cover. The coast also reflects this with a steep, rocky appearance rising in places to form cliffs. Looking out from Knockbane, it becomes easier to appreciate the commanding location the island has in terms of the wider coastal landscape. Visible across the sea and beyond the Skerries islands to the north, and on a clear day towering on the distant horizon, are the distinctive peak of Slieve Gullion and, to the east, the Carlingford and Mourne Mountains. To the south is Ireland's Eye and Howth, with the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains rising behind. Along the Irish coast you can see as far south as Wicklow Head.

THE EARLIEST HUMAN PRESENCE ON THE ISLAND

Given this prominent location, the first question that arises is when did people first visit and live on Lambay? Before our work on the island, the earliest indication seemed to be a flint artifact that functioned as a projectile or knife blade that is characteristic of the period between about 6000–4000 BC (Late Mesolithic) when hunter-

gatherer communities in Ireland had established a distinctive lifestyle and stone technology. The earliest people to definitely settle in Ireland had come probably across the Irish Sea from adjacent areas of western Britain around 8000 BC. We recognise this earliest phase of settlement (Early Mesolithic) from the distinctive small flint tools or microliths that, when used set into bone and wooden handles, provide a range of artifacts. This microlithic technology was a widely used, long-lived tradition in many parts of western Europe.

The probable Late Mesolithic tool from Lambay came from what is known as the Keillor-Knowles collection of stone artifacts, amassed by the antiquarian William J. Knowles in the late 19th century. Knowles collected material in an unsystematic way. It has been recognised that systematic collection of artifacts, typically from the surface of ploughed fields, allows us to look at the distribution, density and type of earlier prehistoric activity across a landscape. Conor Brady, for example, has used this approach to transform our understanding of the wider landscape context of the construction and use of passage tombs in the Boyne Valley during the Neolithic. On Lambay there is currently no ploughed farmland, but the burrowing activity of rabbits, and other disturbance of the ground, does offer the potential to collect material which can then be mapped, analysed and compared. The stone artifacts collected in this way have been studied by Brian Dolan, initially as a Master's thesis. Dolan's work has provided us with new answers to the question of when people first came to Lambay, and indeed to the question of long-term settlement of the island during prehistory.

To produce the microliths that were in use in Ireland from 8000–6000 BC, a distinctive knapping approach was used in which the microliths were flaked off small, cylindrical cores. We have found two of these cores on Lambay (Figure 4). This suggests that people were at least visiting the island from this time. So the human use of Lambay may be as old as human settlement of the nearby larger island! The fact that one of these cores turned up close to a place on the south-west of the island, where we also found a Late Mesolithic artifact, further indicates that this may have been a long-term focus of activity on the island. Indeed, Brian Dolan's work indicates that there were definite 'persistent places' on Lambay from this earliest horizon of activity which, over the next four or five millennia, appear to have been similar foci. Perhaps, not surprisingly, one of these areas is on the west coast, close to the most extensive stretch of sandy beach on Lambay and within easy reach of a stony beach with a good supply of flint nodules.

Figure 4 Early Mesolithic flint core from Lambay

Why would hunter-gatherers want to visit and apparently live on Lambay, at least on a seasonal basis? In terms of wild resources, the rich and varied birdlife that is such a feature of the island today would have offered one attractive resource. As today, in all probability, there would have been a breeding population of seals. Indeed, one of the important things about the Lambay seal population is that both Harbour and Common seals, with different pupping seasons, have breeding areas there. We know very little about the natural vegetation, but it seems likely that there would have been forest cover. Today, in locations protected from grazing animals, trees can thrive. Hence, it seems likely that, prior to clearance, there would have been at least some tree cover and that over the course of the Mesolithic, this would have shifted from a coniferous to a predominantly deciduous woodland. And, of course, there was the simple but deep attraction of travelling to an island. In many societies, islands are regarded in cosmology as special places. After all, they are where the land, sea and sky can be seen to meet.

THE GREENING OF LAMBAY?

Around 4000 BC, in Ireland and Britain significant social and cultural changes occur. Archaeologically we describe this as the beginning of the Neolithic period. This is often referred to as the time when farming was established, but other significant changes occur as well. Over the last decade, the foundations of a large number of rectangular timber houses belonging to this period has been discovered. The earliest megalithic monuments also

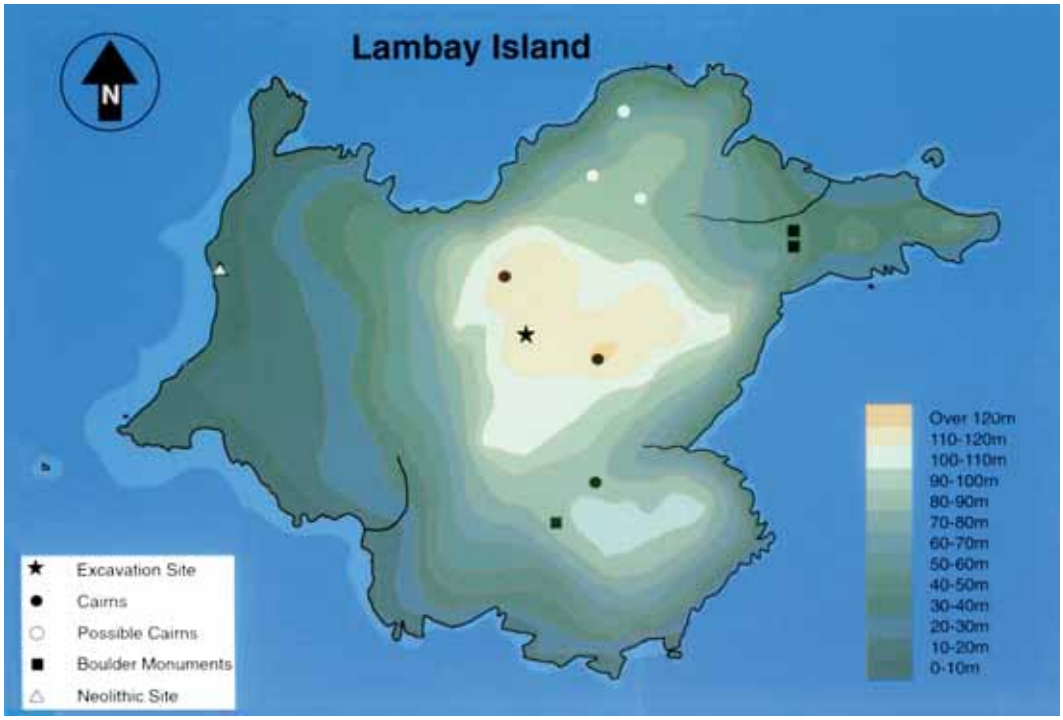

Figure 5: Earlier prehistoric sites on Lambay

date to this period, and we see some radical changes in portable material culture, such as the first use of pottery and all the ramifications this has, for example in the area of food preparation, presentation and storage. Another aspect of material culture that has been the subject of discussion, as part of these social changes, is the stone axe. Stone axes were in use in Ireland from the early Mesolithic. But across western Europe, the stone axe seems to have been both a functional tool and an emblematic material symbol for early farming communities. Functionally, it is associated with clearing the land and working wood. Axes can be made from a variety of rock types. Depending on the lithology, the preform or roughout of the axe can be made by flaking, or, in other cases, by hammering and pecking. The more labour that is expended on grinding and polishing the preform, the smoother and glossier the final axe will look. So, axes are objects which can be used to transform time and labour into something that can be passed from one person to another as a gift, or, indeed, that can pass from one generation to the next, carrying with it the history of those who used it. In Brittany, one of the motifs used to decorate the walls of passage tombs is the axe, and similar forms of actual axes are found in the same tombs.

Figure 6: Porphyry raw material and axe (Photo: Jimmy Mulroy)

Coming back to Lambay, this axe phenomenon is what lies at the heart of my engagement with the island. Since the early 1990s, I have been working on a project – the Irish Stone Axe Project – with a

number of colleagues to compile a database of stone axes from Ireland. We now know of over 20,000 stone axes. We were also interested in sourcing the axes. My colleague, Dr Stephen Mandal, a geologist, has identified most of these axes with hand examination and has undertaken a programme of microscopic petrological identification and geochemical analysis. In the 1920s, a number of stone axes were discovered during work at the harbour on Lambay. It was thought that these were made from a distinctive source on the island, porphyry or porphyritic andesite, which is one of the suite of rocks formed in the volcanic build-up of the island. This is a very distinctive medium- to coarse-grained rock with a green (more unusually a purple) matrix in which there are large white/yellow feldspar crystals. It is identical in composition to the porphyry of Egyptian origin, used, for example, as a decorative stone in buildings in ancient Rome. Indeed, Lambay porphyry has been used in recent times for a similar decorative purpose. In looking through the collections of the National Museum of Ireland, we came across other axeheads made of porphyry, so it seemed worth assessing the possibility that we might be able to identify, on Lambay, the quarry where at least some of these axes might have come from.

We examined all the porphyry outcrops on Lambay, looking for signs of ancient quarrying, and other indicators, such as flint artifacts, of prehistoric activity. This led us to an area known as the Eagle's Nest to the south-east of and across a valley from Knockbane (Figure 5). Excavation here demonstrated that outcrops of porphyry had been quarried to provide suitable blocks that could be roughed out as axes by hammering and pecking, and then ground and polished to a finished form (Figure 6). We could follow the sequence from the shape and size of the waste produced at different stages in this process. Indeed, as the material built up close to quarried rock faces in places, it was possible to see the initial impacts where large pieces had been taken off the face, followed by episodes of working the stone to make rough-outs (Figure 7). So, all stages of axe production took place on the site. The associated tools were also present:

Figure 7: One of the Neolithic quarry areas excavated at the Eagle's Nest

large cobbles of conglomerate and granite to break blocks off the outcrop, granite, quartzite and other lithologies used as hammerstones in roughing out the axes, and sandstone grinding slabs of different degrees of coarseness that were used in grinding and polishing the axeheads. What is interesting in a wider context is that our standard picture of axe quarrying in the Neolithic is based on the use of sources that were fine-grained and were worked by flaking. These produced a distinctive sequence of waste flakes, and roughouts taken from the quarry sites were ground and polished elsewhere. A good example are the two known sources for porcellanite axes in County Antrim: at Tievebulliagh near Cushendall and Brockley on Rathlin Island. The Eagle's Nest is the first quarry site recognised in Ireland or Britain where hammering and pecking was the primary technology, and where all stages of axe production were represented.

The radiocarbon dates from the Eagle's Nest indicate that quarrying there started in the early fourth millennium BC, around 3800 BC, and there is evidence that the site was in use well into the later part of that millennium. Why did people come to Lambay to quarry porphyry? On functional grounds, the use of this rock would seem counter-

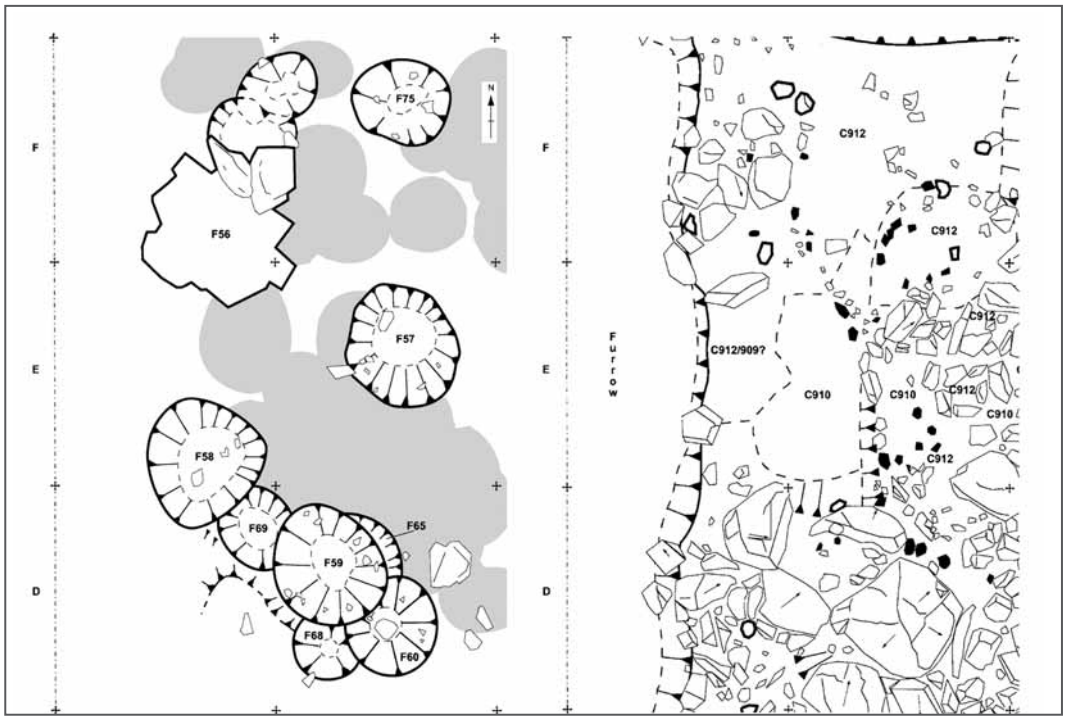

Figure 8: Pit complex at Eagle's Nest with overlying stone deposits

Figure 9: Jasper pendant from the excavation at the Eagle's Nest

intuitive as it fractures very easily, part of the reason for the very large build-up of waste on the site. On the other hand, it has a striking appearance when polished. This process emphasises the distinctive contrast between the white/yellow of the feldspar crystals and the green background. This would have been appreciated when seen in the form of beach pebbles. In this context, it is interesting that we found clear evidence that when people came to the Eagle's Nest source, the original outcrop surfaces would have appeared to them to be polished, as a result of glacial scouring. Is it possible that working porphyry was about transforming and giving a cultural sheen or polish to this powerful, unusual stone. It is striking that many of the sources that were used to make stone axeheads in the early Neolithic were made from visually distinctive sources, often from special places. The most dramatic example of this are the small number of jadeite axes that we know of from Ireland that came, ultimately, from Alpine sources. Is it possible that we are seeing, in the use of these sources and the distribution of axes made from them, the active way in which this highly symbolic object was both emblematic of new ways of life bound up in farming and part and parcel of how they were brought about?

At the Eagle's Nest, there is certainly strong evidence suggesting that the quarrying activity was seen as a special activity, both in the quarry areas and on the floor of a small valley between them. On the valley floor, there is a sequence of features that begins with pits, some of which are deliberately cut into by later pits. Then there is a switch to the placing stone, dominated by porphyry waste and other material on the ground, over the pits, forming distinct features (Figure 8). Some of these are reminiscent of the settings found outside passage tombs. A range of objects was deposited, including complete and broken porphyry, a couple of hoards of large numbers of flint flakes, and one that included a pestle macehead and a porphyry roughout and polished porphyry axe. A notable feature was the deposition of jasper, a red, silica-rich stone that outcrops as veins on the island and that can also be found as pebbles on the beaches. As well as broken and tested pebbles, there were a small number of jasper beads and pendants (Figure 9). It would seem that the jasper was being worked either on the site or elsewhere on the island. Deposits of beach gravel are another indicator of the deliberate placement of material brought up from the coast. Ultimately, this build-up of material resulted in the creation of a low monument, a

Figure 10: Knockbane, the prehistoric hilltop cairn which forms the highest part of the island

cairn about 10m across. Porphyry was worked and deposited, and other material was brought and deposited at this special place. This action would have created connections between people and the materials that they were working and using. The placement of material on or under the ground may be seen as complementing the quarrying of the rock, giving material back to the earth and making linkages to the realm of the supernatural. In the deposition of porphyry roughouts and axes, we see the beginning and end of the 'life' of objects as they are deliberately brought together. The significance of this special activity was eventually marked by a monument.

LANDMARKS AND IDENTITY

How does the quarrying and depositional activity at the Eagle's Nest fit with what we know of the human use of the island during the Neolithic? The evidence from our lithic collection suggests that there was widespread activity across the island at this time. Some of this could be the result of short-term or single episodes of use, but in several places there are very significant amounts of material known indicating that there was longer-term activity. The largest assemblage comes from east of Knockbane, as the land slopes down to the east, with views across the eastern part of the island and the distinctive easternmost peninsula, known as the Nose. The site is on a terrace, with land rising to the west behind and dropping to the east below the site. It would seem to be a good occupation or settlement site. This was backed up by the geophysical survey carried out here by Ian Elliott. Geophysical survey, particularly resistivity or magnetometry, is based on identifying patterns of anomalies that stand out from the natural variation in response. In the case of Lambay, the pilot survey indicated that, despite the volcanic geology which often masks humanly-produced patterns of anomaly, magnetometry provided good results. In the case of the terrace, this indicated the presence of an elongated oval, or sub-rectangular structure with a strong area of burning. Without excavation it is, of course, impossible to definitely say that this structure is of the same date as the large lithic assemblage, but it provides us with an important research question to address.

Knockbane itself, the prominent cairn on the highest point of the island (Figure 10), contains

Figure 11: The cairn on top of Tinian Hill, from the south, with Knockbane in the background to the right

quarried porphyry in its buildup and it is the most notable landmark on the island. The practice of placing cairns on hilltops is a feature of both the Neolithic and later periods. It is clear that the cairn was deliberately sited and that it was placed to be seen both on Lambay and particularly as one looks at the island from the sea and from the Irish coast. When viewed from the west it resembles the shape of the most striking of the peaks in the Wicklow mountains, the Sugarloaf, as seen from Lambay. From the island, the Sugarloaf seems to emerge from the top of Howth. This interplay between setting and monument is reminiscent of what we see in the passage tomb tradition. The most likely explanation for Knockbane is that it fits into this tradition. It should be noted, however, that there is no visible stone kerb or revetment around the base of the cairn, a feature typical of passage tombs. A transect of geophysical survey across the cairn did not reveal any internal structures which we would expect. On the other hand, there are issues here that need further work and it does seem likely that the cairn belongs to this tradition, echoing some of the activities we saw at the Eagle's Nest. From Knockbane, the remains of the small passage tomb known as Knocklea on a promontory about a kilometre north of Rush which was investigated in the 19th century, are visible. Away to the north, Slieve Gullion can be seen on the horizon with a passage tomb on its summit and, in the Mourne Mountains, Slieve Donard with the highest hilltop passage tomb in Ireland.

Clearly then, Neolithic activity on Lambay cannot be seen in isolation. The passage tomb tradition provides a wider cultural setting for this activity for the later part of the Neolithic, from around 3500 BC on. In the archaeological literature, attention has been drawn to the web of connections between centres of this tradition in the Boyne Valley and Orkney and these connections were made via the Irish Sea. Specific evidence that Lambay was drawn into this network are the pestle-type maceheads from the Eagle's Nest that can be compared with those found in settlement and monumental contexts in Orkney. The only other example found in a secure archaeological context in Ireland came from the passage of the western tomb under the main mound at Knowth. Less well-dated, but fitting into the same sense of connectivity, was the find of a flake of pitchstone from the island of Arran in the Clyde estuary on Lambay, close to the harbour. It would appear that this regional symbolic heritage was used at a local

level on the island to give a sense of identity. The particular contribution that Lambay may have made to this wider world is the small number of porphyry axes from Lambay that we have recognised on the mainland of Ireland. The importance of that link was demonstrated by the discovery in the 1920s of an assemblage of Neolithic material at the harbour. This is always likely to have been the safest means of access to the island for small craft. Intriguingly, the axeheads from this assemblage that had led to our initial focus on Lambay as a source for porphyry axes proved, on geochemical examination, to have their closest match with sources in south-west Wales!

MONUMENTS IN AN ISLAND LANDSCAPE

One of the continuing questions that our work has brought up is whether or not this Neolithic activity was seasonal or if people might have lived on the island all year round. The availability of fresh water might have been one constraint, although there are a number of springs and two surface streams, one in the north-east and one in the south-west of the island. Charcoal from the Eagle's Nest excavation indicates some presence of woodland with oak and hazel. There are also indications of thorn-dominated, woodland-edge vegetation. Taking a sideways look at this question, it is interesting that, apart from Knockbane, there are at least a couple of other cairns on Lambay (see Figure 5). However, these appear to have been primarily important in the context of the island landscape itself, and certainly would not have been seen from off the island. About 400m southeast of Knockbane, and visible from it, is the only other point on the island above the 120m contour. Here, on the top of Tinian Hill, is what seems to be a two-phase monument (Figure 11). There is a small round cairn of stone about 5m across, placed at the western end of a low, long mound of earth about 20m in length. The monument is of an unusual form, and like Knockbane, it is set so that it is most prominent when seen from the west. As one moves to the south from Tinian Hill it is still visible on the skyline, while Knockbane, in places, is hidden from view.

This sense of a monument that has a local significance for people on the island itself certainly applies to the other definite cairn we have identified. This is located about 400m south of Tinian Hill,

Figure 12: Cairn in the valley to the south of Tinian Hill, looking east

Figure 13: Possible 'boulder burial', overlooking Thorn Chase valley, from the south

on a distinct spur or platform on the southern side of a valley, overlooking it as it opens to the east, and ends above Seal Hole on the coast (Figure 12). The cairn is rectangular, 15m in length with the addition of modern field clearance on the lower, eastern end. From its surface form, it is possible that it covers a small megalithic tomb. Its dimensions are comparable to the cairn of the wedge tomb at Laughanstown in south County Dublin. The ground rises to the south to Heath Hill, and to the north the cairn on Tinian Hill dominates the skyline. So it would seem that the people who constructed these monuments, in all probability to commemorate the dead and to form a continuing link with the past that they represented, were thinking in terms of island life and landscape.

If, and it is a big 'if', given our current state of knowledge, this cairn located in the valley to the south of Tinian Hill turns out to be covering a wedge tomb, then it would date to the middle or later part of the third millennium BC (2500–2000 BC). The very ambiguous phrasing of that last sentence can be applied even more relevantly to what happened on the island after that date. Our sense of life and society on Lambay from about 2500 BC to the first century AD (covering all of the Bronze Age and the early part of the Iron Age) is very scant. In reality, I think this is because the nature of the archaeological evidence changes and is less immediately visible than that for earlier periods, rather than because there was a major diminution in the significance of the island.

Currently, the only evidence that might fit into this period are three examples of what appear to be an island-specific type of site with links to a wider Irish Bronze Age tradition. On the island, there are at least three sites where a stone of significant size is supported by small stones so that they sit above ground level (see Figure 5). Two of these occur close together, in the eastern part of the island, on a gentle east-facing slope with the ground rising up to the east, to Pilots Hill. Here, one of the slabs is a conglomerate from Broad Bay on the north-west of the island. The other is a rounded glacial erratic. The other example occurs on a south-facing slope overlooking a valley on the southern side of the island (Figure 13). In the south-west of Ireland, from around 1500–1000 BC, boulder burials occur as part of a wider complex of stone monuments. As the name suggests, boulders on support stones cover and mark deposits of cremated bone which have been placed in a pit. These boulder burials are larger than the Lambay monuments and higher off the ground. However, they offer the closest parallels for

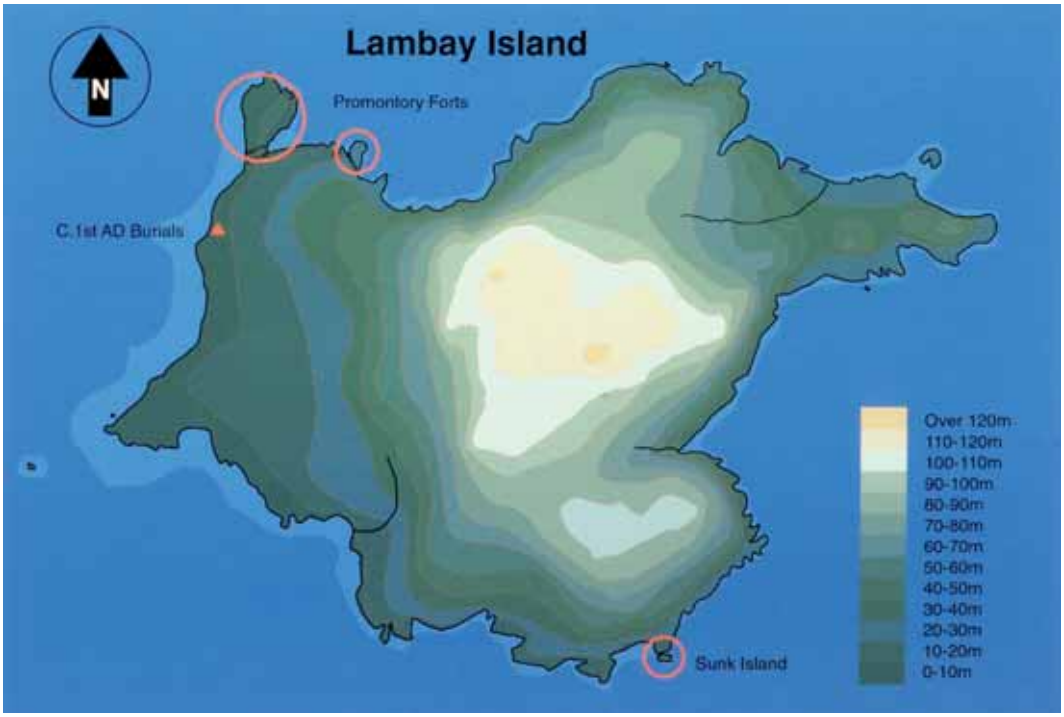

Figure 14: Promontory sites and the location of the first century AD burials on Lambay

this tradition on the island which, in turn, provides us with the little potential evidence we have for activity during the Bronze Age.

ISLAND FRONTIERS

The situation changes quite dramatically in the first century AD (Figure 14), and by way of background we are brought back again to the work at the harbour in the 1920s which was mentioned above. As well as Neolithic material, the workmen found evidence for a number of human burials. Following news of this discovery, the finds were investigated by Professor R.A.S. Macalister. While Macalister never had the opportunity of seeing the evidence in the ground, he was able to deduce that the burials were placed in shallow graves, in clean sand, and that the skeletons had their legs bent or flexed. Later analysis of the finds by Professors Etienne Rynne and Barry Raftery indicated that there were at least two burials, one with weaponry including a sword and shield indicating a male burial. A distinctive ornament that came from one of the graves was a beaded bronze torc or neck ornament (Figure 15). The finds appear to date to the later part of the first century AD and reflect material produced and used in a Romanised world (Figure 16). All the other examples of beaded bronze torcs occur in the northern part of England and the southernmost part of Scotland associated

Figure 15: Bronze beaded torc from Lambay c. 1/2

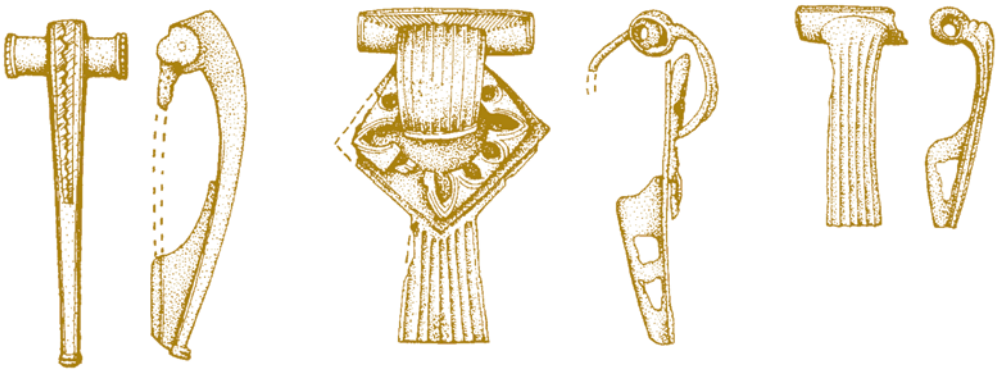

Figure 16: Bronze fibulae of Roman type from Lambay c. 1/2

Figure 17: Fragments of decorated sheet-bronze from Lambay were pieced together to form two discs. c. 2/5. (All bronze objects from the first century AD burials at the harbour, Lambay (after Raftery, B. 1994))

with the Brigantes, one of the most powerful indigenous tribes of Celtic Britain. In the early 70s AD, the Brigantes revolted against Roman power but were defeated in AD 74. One tempting scenario is that this defeat provided the context for a group of Brigantes to come to Lambay. However, examination of the local and wider scene in the first century AD suggests perhaps a more complex world.

Standing at the location of the burials on Lambay at the northern side of the harbour and looking across the sea to the northwest, the promontory of Drumanagh, south of Loughshinny, is clearly visible. This promontory is defended by three closely spaced ramparts of earth with corresponding ditches on the outside of each rampart. There have been significant finds of Roman material from Drumanagh dating to the first and second centuries AD. Barry Raftery has discussed in detail the various explanations for this material on Lambay and Drumanagh; what is clear is that they indicate very strong and continuing links with Roman Britain. What I wanted to add to this picture is some additional evidence from recent work on Lambay.

The small but very impressive promontory fort at Gouge Point, also known as the Garden Fort, (Figure 18) on the north-west coast of Lambay has been known since Thomas Westropp's pioneering work in the early 20th century. This, like Drumanagh has trivallate defences. Its middle, rock-cut ditch is a particularly impressive feature. It is difficult to see how it could have functioned other than as a short-term refuge or as a statement of power. However, following up on an observation made by Professor Frank Mitchell in the 1940s, it is clear that the north-west corner of the island, Scotch Point (Figure 19), is in fact a promontory fort of larger size, defined by a single bank and ditch cutting off the southern approach at the neck of the promontory.

Figure 18: Gouge Point, also known as the Garden Fort (Photo: Christine Baker)

Figure 19: Scotch Point, promontory fort from the east (Photo: Christine Baker)

We carried out geophysical survey on either side of this defensive feature. Interpretation of the magnetic anomalies indicate areas of occupation activity and circular structures within the promontory. There are two ring barrows outside, one of which is visible as a low level surface feature (Fig. 20). These ring barrows represent the dominant burial tradition in later prehistoric Ireland, and, in most cases, cover one or more cremation burials in pits.

So it would seem that the later first century burials on Lambay did not occur in isolation but in the context of considerable activity on the island. Perhaps it might be useful to think of Lambay and Drumanagh as being occupied by communities who had strong links with Roman Britain and its periphery. Material moving in this network would have been prestige objects from the Roman world valued by the social elite in Ireland, and, in the other direction, commodities such as foodstuffs and perhaps slaves. Lambay and Drumanagh were entrepôts, the crucial human interface between two worlds. The composition of the communities living on the island and the nearby mainland may have reflected the tensions and cultural creativity of such situations.

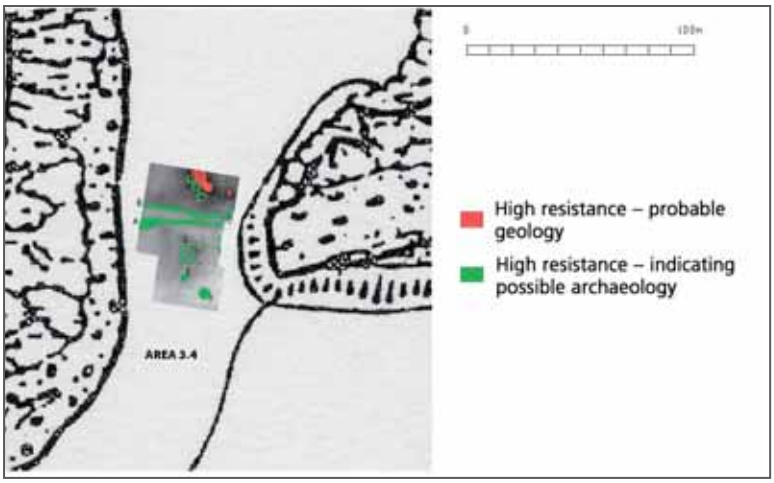

Figure 20: Interpretation of the results of geophysical survey across the bank and ditch of the Scotch Point promontory fort (Ian Eliott)

Ptolemy's second century AD map of Ireland, as part of his eight volume *Geography,* is regarded as having a degree of accuracy in his depiction of the east coast. One translation of Drumanagh is 'the hill of the Menapii', a tribe listed on Ptolemy's map. Out in the Irish Sea on the map are two islands, one called Limnos. While there are conflicting views as to whether Limnos is Lambay, there is a striking general resemblance in the outline of Limnos and Lambay, particularly in the depiction of the promontory facing east into the Irish Sea on Lambay, known as the Nose, which would

have been a very prominent feature for seafarers. Given the character of the archaeological evidence from the island, and its significance in the wider Irish Sea world, it would not be surprising that it was one of the first places to be recorded historically. In this sense, it could be said that with Ptolemy's map, the prehistory of Lambay comes to an end.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ORGANISING THE LANDSCAPE: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT FLEMINGTON, BALBRIGGAN

TERESA BOLGER M.Phil MIAI

Archaeological investigations at Flemington, Balbriggan identified evidence for activity dating from the Neolithic through to the early medieval period. The main focus was an extensive ditch complex located on a ridge of high ground at the western edge of the site. Geophysical survey shows a dense complex of potential archaeological features extending over approximately one hectare within the development site, and possibly extending over a further hectare beyond it. Thirteen phases of activity were identified, primarily dating to the early medieval period. While the main complex is superficially similar in size and scale to other early medieval enclosure complexes, it does not seem to fit as comfortably alongside these sites as it might initially appear. No settlement focus was identified, there was little evidence for habitation or structures and most of the identifiable activities would be classed as ancillary to a settlement or habitation site.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological excavation took place in advance of a new housing development, situated to the north-west of Balbriggan town, within the townland of Flemington, County Dublin (Figure 1: NGR: 31845/26385). The site is located approximately 1.5km inland from the medieval complex at Bremore (DU02:002). A holy well (DU001:004) is located in the fields directly to the north.

The main focus of archaeological activity within the development site (Areas A-E) was located on a ridge of high ground at the western edge of the site (Figure 1). The lower-lying part of the site may originally have been wetland (based on the condition and characteristics of the subsoil). Two small outlining archaeological areas (Areas F and G) were located within this part of the site.

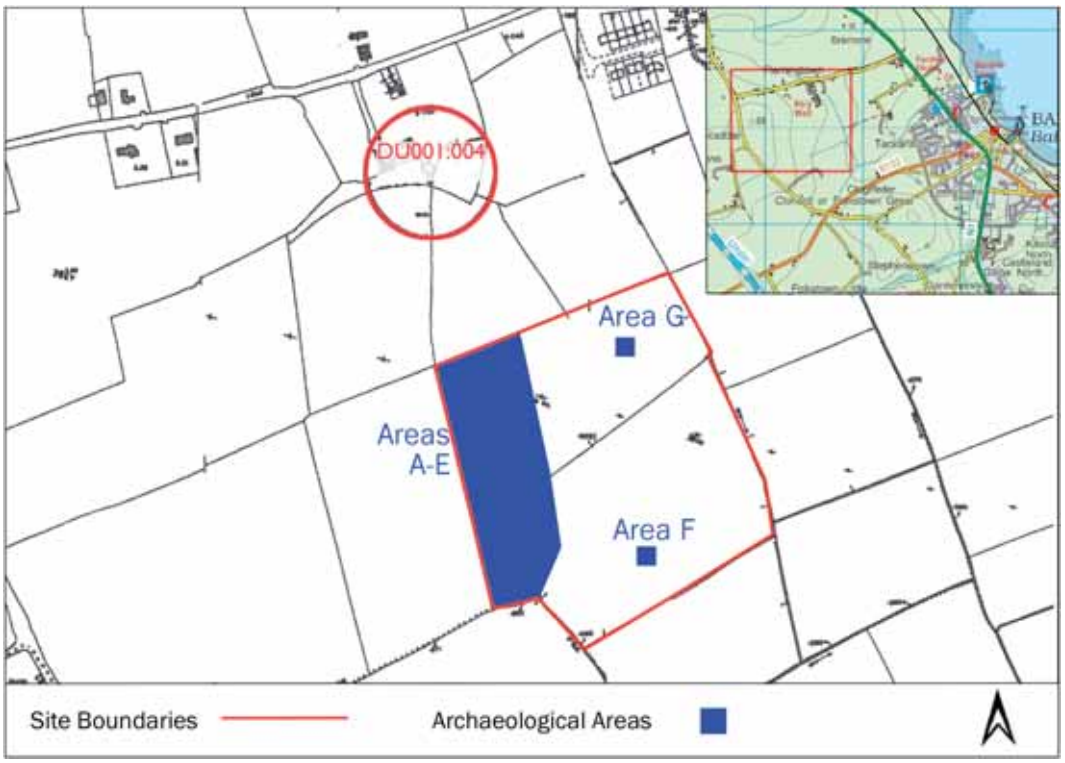

Figure 1: Site location. © Ordnance Survey Ireland. All rights reserved. Licence number 2008/10/CCMA/ Fingal County Council

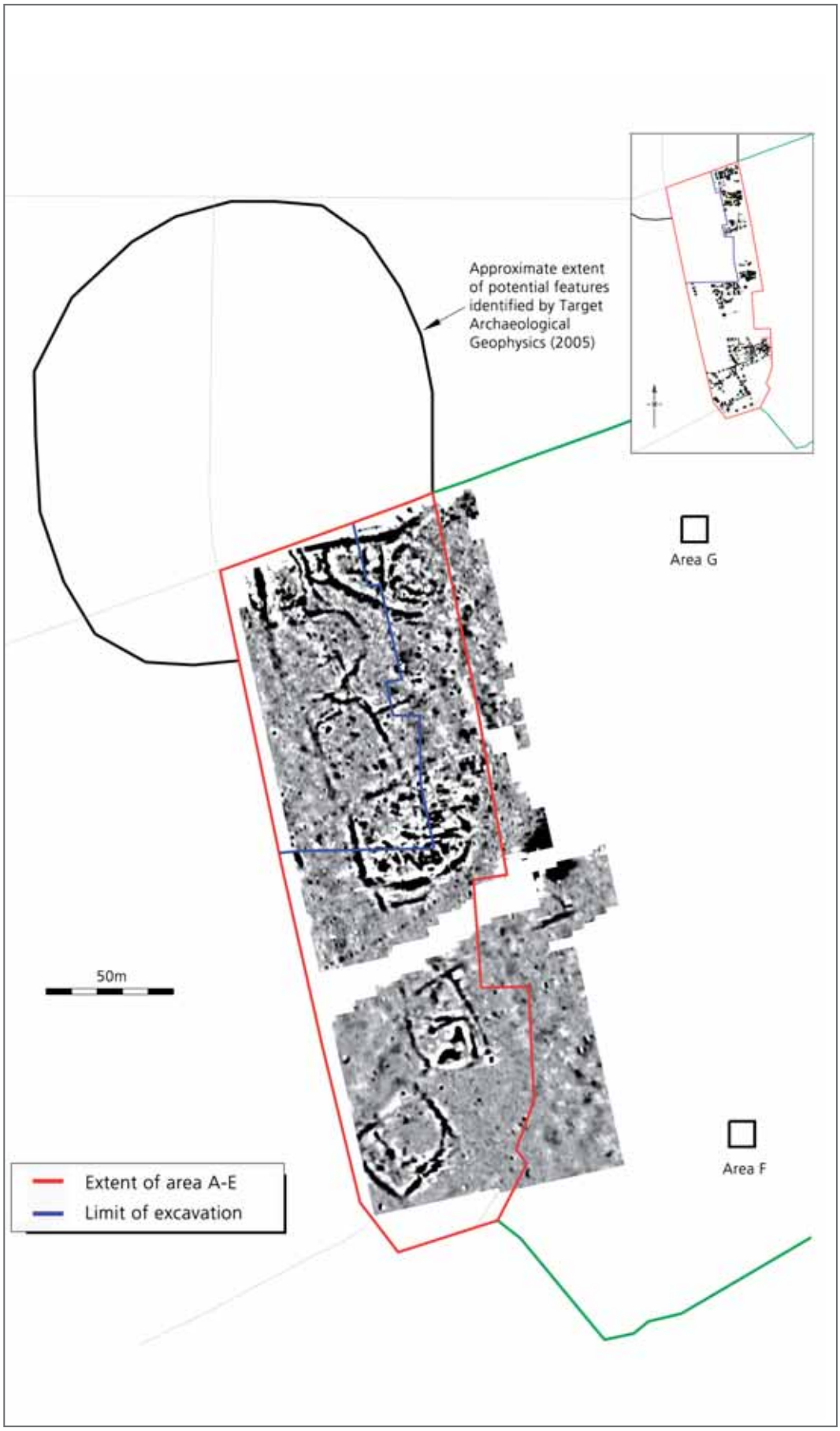

Figure 2: Geophysical survey of main ditch complex (Areas A-E)

Geophysical survey along the ridge of high ground shows a dense complex of potential archaeological features (Areas A-E) extending over approximately one hectare (Figure 2: Leigh 2005). A separate geophysical survey, undertaken in the surrounding fields by Target Archaeological Geophysics on behalf of the Archaeology Company (Nichols & Shiels 2005), suggests that this complex extends into the fields to the north and north-west, in the general direction of the Holy Well, covering approximately another hectare. Additionally, features which were excavated at Area E at the south end of the complex, appear to originate in the field directly to the west. This would indicate that the overall site extends over a minimum of two hectares.

Archaeological excavation was undertaken in the western part of Areas A-C, and across the whole of Areas D, E, F and G. The remaining section of Areas A-C was subsequently excavated by the Archaeology Company. Thirteen phases of activity were identified at the site, primarily early medieval in date, though there was evidence for occupation and activity at the site extending back to the Neolithic.

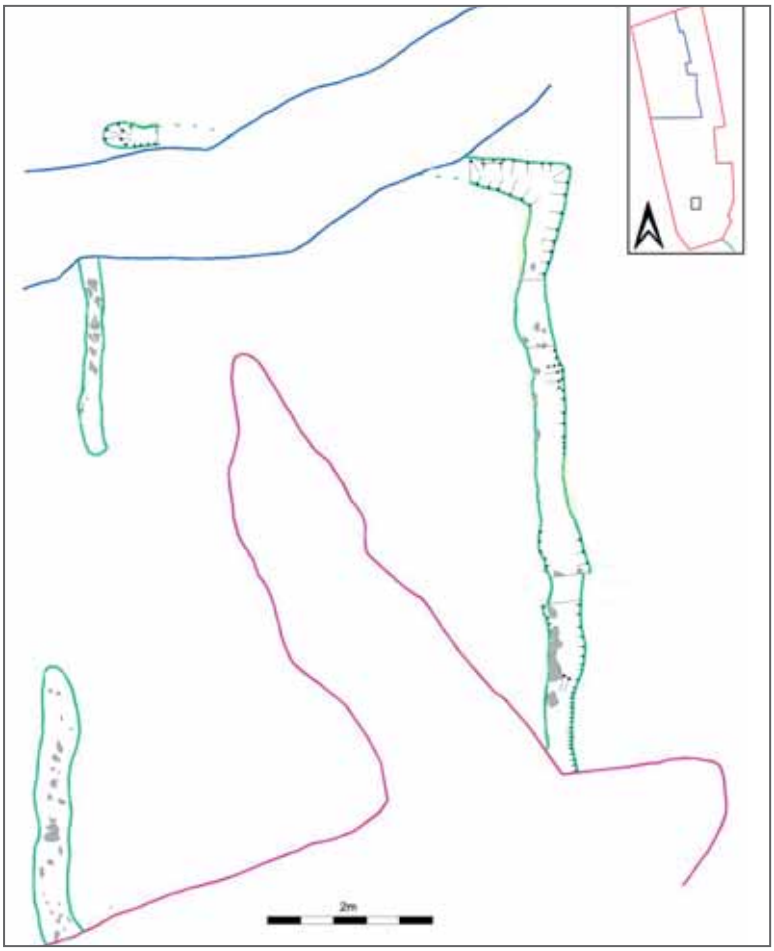

Figure 3: Plan of Neolithic house at Area E

NEOLITHIC – PHASE I

There is already good evidence for Neolithic activity in the general vicinity of Balbriggan, notably the extended passage tomb cemetery stretching along the coast from Gormanston to Bremore (DU02:001-005; approximately 2km to the northeast). Flint scatters, including Neolithic artefacts, are frequently noted during fieldwalking or monitoring of topsoil removal in north County Dublin, for example, during monitoring of a sewerage line along the coast road at Isaacs Bower in Balbriggan town (Shanahan 2003).

The earliest activity at the site, recorded during the excavation, dates from the Neolithic. The main feature associated with this was a house, located in Area E. This is the first example of a Neolithic house in the Balbriggan area, though one has also recently been excavated further to the south at Barnageeragh, near Skerries (Corcoran, this volume).

Neolithic houses are an increasing common discovery during archaeological investigations. The earliest examples identified were mainly single isolated buildings. Increasingly however, examples are being found clustered together, such as at Corbally in County Kildare (Purcell 2002; Tobin 2003), or occasionally in a possible enclosed settlement such as Thornhill, County Derry (Logue 2003).

The Flemington house was oriented roughly north-south and was up to 6m in width (Figure 3). Although only one gable end survived, it is clear that the maximum length of the house was in the region of 10m. There was no evidence for any sub-division of the house or for a gable annexe. This indicates it would belong to Grogan's type B1 classification (Grogan 2004). More recently, Smyth (forthcoming) has noted that, in general, Neolithic house sizes fall into two clusters: the Flemington house would fall into the mid-range for the larger size cluster.

Figure 4: Trough at Area A

The footprint of the building was wholly defined by a slot trench, suggesting that the structure was plank-built. This is a common construction method for Neolithic houses. The interruption in the slot trench along the western side of the building appears to be original and deliberate, indicating that this would have been the doorway.

The absence of any evidence for internal posts or roof supports is unusual. While this absence could occur in small buildings, structures of a similar size to the Flemington house would normally have some internal supports or divisions to support the roof structure. Though there is some disturbance of the internal footprint by the insertion of early medieval ditches, it does not appear sufficient to eliminate all evidence for internal posts or slot trenches.

The surviving evidence points to only a single phase of use. Oxidised material was noted in the fill of the eastern slot trench. However, it was not sufficient to definitively indicate that the structure had been burnt *in situ* at the end of its life cycle.

A substantial assemblage of early Neolithic pottery (over 250 sherds) was retrieved primarily from the slot trenches; preliminary identification (Eoin Grogan pers. comm.) suggests an early Neolithic date. A radiocarbon date of 4778±31BP (UBA-8523, 3642-3518 cal. BC; 3394-3387 cal. BC) was obtained from the western slot trench confirming this. Struck flint and possible flint artefacts were also retrieved from the slot trenches. The most unusual piece was a fine flake tool, made from sedimentary rock. Another significant artefact (though retrieved from an early medieval ditch), was a polished stone axe. The axe is incomplete and may have been deliberately broken before it was discarded. In the case of both the axe and the fine flake tool, it will be important to establish if the stone from which they were made could have been sourced locally or if it came from further afield.

BRONZE AGE – PHASE II

Moving on into the Bronze Age, there is good evidence from recent excavations, in particular those in advance of the gas pipeline to the west (Grogan, O'Donnell and Johnston 2007), for Bronze Age activity in the general area of Balbriggan. A number of Bronze Age sites were excavated in the vicinity of Flemington, generally to the north of this site. A roundhouse was excavated at Clonard/Folkstown Great, dated to the Middle Bronze Age,

and associated with an Early Bronze Age structure, with evidence for activity continuing into the Iron Age (Grogan, O'Donnell and Johnston 2007, 217-8). A section of a ringditch dating from the Late Bronze Age, again with activity continuing into the Iron Age, was excavated at Flemington (Grogan, O'Donnell and Johnston 2007, 219-220). Further to the north at Gormanston a small habitation site dating to the Early Bronze Age was investigated (Grogan, O'Donnell and Johnston 2007, 324).

By contrast, the main Bronze Age activity identified during this investigation was characterised by burnt mound material (primarily composed of burnt or heat-affected stone) and associated features. A spread of burnt mound material was investigated at Area F, in pits filled with burnt mound material at Area G and at a possible trough at Area A (Figure 4). In addition, a shallow pit at Area E produced coarse Bronze Age ceramic.

EARLY MEDIEVAL – PHASES III-XIII

The main archaeological activity investigated during this excavation appears to date to the early medieval period. A small number of diagnostic artefacts were retrieved which support this. The initial series of radiocarbon dates obtained has confirmed this assessment: the earliest date obtained so far (from a ditch in the south of Area E) was 1404±38BP (UBA-8526, 575-672 cal. AD at 2 sigma) and the latest (from a kiln in Area C) was 1074±36BP (UBA-8518, 894-1020 cal. AD). This indicates occupation at the site from at least the late 6th century until the early 11th century. Further radiocarbon dates will be obtained to clarify the phasing and chronology of activity at the site.

Flemington in the early medieval period

The political situation of north County Dublin, during the early medieval period, can appear quite fluid, though it is generally supposed that there was an underlying stable population base. Flemington (and the Balbriggan area generally) was located within the overkingdom of Brega

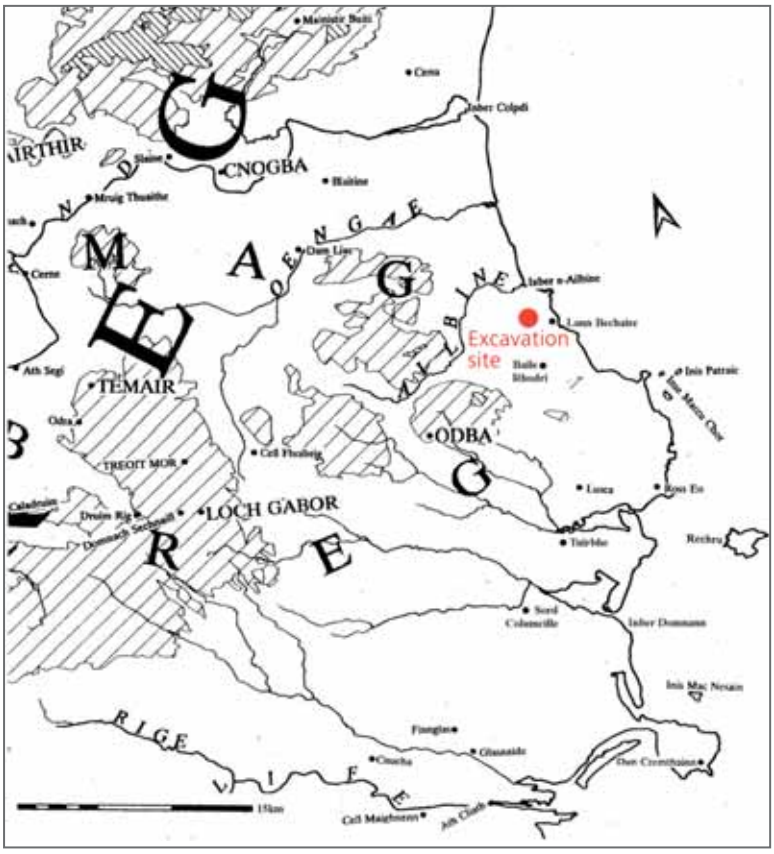

Figure 5: Map of eastern Breaga

(Figure 5), which was mainly controlled by the Síl nÁeda Sláine branch of the Uí Néill for most of the period.

Initially, the coastal zone from the Dee/Glyde confluence south to the river Liffey was controlled by the Ciannachta Breg. Along with the Luigne and Gailenga, they claimed descent from the legendary *Tadc Meic Céin*. All of these population groups were closely linked politically and topographically as well as genealogically. Byrne (2000, 122-3) has suggested that the Ciannachta Breg were originally a confederation based around Duleek, possibly even originally monastic lay tenants. Charles-Edwards (2000, 551-4) suggested that the original kingdom of the Ciannachta comprised three defined territories – the area between the Dee and the Boyne; the area between the Boyne and the Nanny (centred on Duleek); the area between the Nanny and the Liffey. The decline of the secular Ciannachta power base in the 8th century was characterised by the loss of over-lordship of the two southern territories to the interests of Síl nÁeda Sláine. The early years of the 8th century

were marked by dissent and increasing fragmentation among the various branches of the Síl nÁeda Sláine, with the individual branches of the dynasty carving out distinct, locally-based, political identities. The north-western branch styled themselves *rí Fir Chul*, and the southern branch *rex deiceirt Breg* or *rex Locha Gabor*; by 742AD the Uí Chonaing branch of Síl nÁeda Sláine (the northern branch, based at Knowth) were styling themselves *rex ciannachta*. With the decline in their secular power-base, the Ciannachta interest and involvement within the ecclesiastical sphere appears to have increased. In the south, the Ciannachta Mide controlled the abbacy of Lusk: the main ecclesiastical families at Duleek and Monasterboice were Ciannachta Breg.

The main subject peoples associated with the wider Balbriggan area were the rather enigmatic Gailenga Columrach (with the Gailenge Becca further south) and the much better known Saithne. The main sphere of influence of the Gailenga Columrach appears to have been located between the Delvin and Broadmeadow rivers (MacShamhráin 2005; Swift 2004). The so-called Ciannachta Mide, who are associated with Lusk, may in fact have been a 'rebranded' branch of the Gailenga Columrach (Charles-Edwards, 2000, 552n).

While the general area of Balbriggan and its surroundings (including the location of this site) could have fallen at some point within the territory of the Gailenga Columrach and would certainly have been part of the early Ciannachta coastal hegemony, it is most closely associated with the Saithne. They are particularly associated with the barony of Balrothery (Walsh 1940, 519), and also claimed descent from *Tadc Meic Céin*. However, they only emerge to prominence more or less contemporaneous with the extension of Norse hegemony out of Dublin, possibly supplanting or usurping the position of the Gailenga Columrach. Their rise to prominence was further aided by the collapse first of the Ciannachta hegemony and the increasing fragmentation of the Síl nÁeda Sláine. It has been suggested that their lands formed a buffer between the territory controlled by the Norse of Dublin (Fine Gall) and the main sub-kingdoms of Brega (Breathnach 1999, 5-6). The annals indicate a quite variable relationship between the Saithne and the Norse of Dublin with evidence for both alliance and opposition. Regardless, they appear to have profited politically from this ambiguity; by the 11th and 12th centuries the ruling branch, the Ua Cathasaig, were styling themselves kings of Brega.

The best known early medieval site in the area is the site of *Lann Bechaire* directly east of the excavation on the coast at Bremore. The historical information relating to this foundation is very limited. There are indications that the site was associated with two different saints, *Mo-laga* or *Mo-Lucé* and *Mo-Domnóc* (Duffy 1997; MacShamhráin 2004). Though both saints are provided with Irish pedigrees, both are also presented as students of St. David in Wales. Combined with the '*lann*' placename element, this would suggest a British origin. Archaeological investigations in the area have mainly focused on the later medieval manorial complex at Bremore – the tower house and also the associated manorial landscape (Swan 1996; O'Carroll 2003a; 2003b).

Early medieval enclosure complexes have been excavated at Rosepark, Balrothery (Carroll 2003) and Barngeeragh, Skerries (Corcoran, this volume). Both sites indicate a long duration of settlement. Rosepark, in particular, is a typical example of a large multiphase enclosure complex, with a long duration of settlement, where the main phases of activity focused on a central settlement core (generally delineated by a one of more enclosing ditches with ancillary activity radiating out from it). Other examples of the type include Colp (Clarke and Murphy 2003) and Ninch (McConway 2003), County Meath and a number of sites discovered during investigations undertaken on behalf of the NRA such as Raystown, County Meath (Seaver 2006) or Roestown, County Meath (O'Hara 2007).

Overview of the main ditch complex

While the main ditch complex at Flemington is superficially similar in size and scale to early medieval enclosure complexes, it does not seem to fit as comfortably alongside these sites as it might ini-

Figure 6: Aerial view of northern end of Area C; note possible main enclosure ditch (Photo: Peter Barrow)

Figure 7: Palisade at eastern edge of Area D

tially appear. The ditches at the site were many and varied in size and morphology, with no indications of a central enclosure (or enclosures) or any kind of main settlement focus. There was no indication of a habitation area within the excavated portion of the site, and only very limited evidence for structures – occasional post-holes or stake-holes and a couple of shallow slot trenches (mainly in the very north of the site). However, such a settlement focus could be located within the extension of the site in the fields to the north: certainly the best candidate for a main enclosure ditch was the short arc at the very northern end of the site (Figure 6). It curved gently from east to west and was c. 3m wide, up to 2m deep, truncating the terminus of a similar sized ditch also extending from the north. However, a radiocarbon date of 1088 ±25BP (UBA-8520, 894-998 cal. AD; 1002-1013

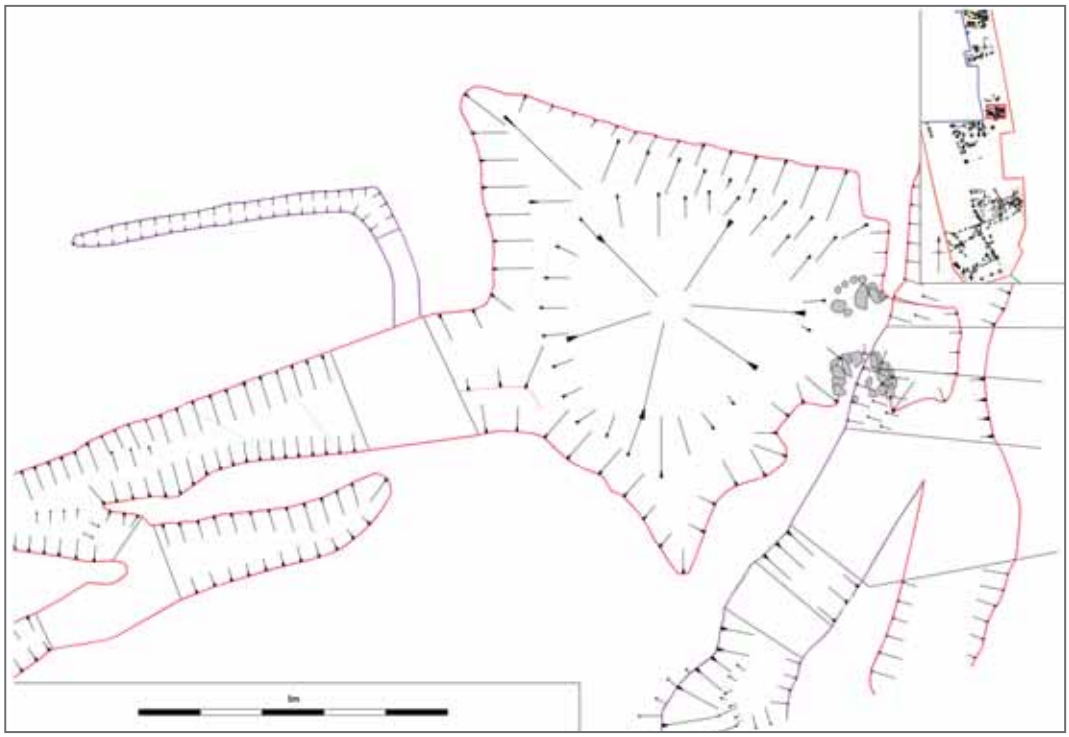

Figure 8: Plan of cistern and associated ditches at Area A

cal. AD at 2 sigma) was obtained from a primary fill, indicating that this feature is relatively late in the sequence of activity at the site.

The site does have some key characteristics. Ditches were reinstated from phase to phase, but often with variation in size and exact layout or orientation. There was definite clustering of activity with open or undisturbed areas intervening: in particular activity was clustered at the interface with the probable wetland. There was also deliberate scarping and digging of ditches along this interface to emphasise it. A particularly striking example of this latter characteristic was a palisade trench associated with Phase X which extended along the interface at Area D (Figure 7).

Function

A key question which arises when assessing the complex relates to the purpose and function of all these ditches: the most obvious rationales are division or drainage.

It is clear from the analysis of the historical sources (e.g., Kelly 1998) that early medieval settlement and agriculture were carried out within an organised landscape. Archaeological studies of early medieval field systems in Ireland are underdeveloped. However, the common model, based on a combination of the historical data, aerial photography, geophysics and limited excavation, would see enclosed fields radiating out from a main settlement enclosure (an area referred to in historical sources as the *airlise*) with open land beyond that.

Some of the ditches investigated during the excavation could have functioned as field boundaries or spatial boundaries. Preliminary assessment of the macro-fossil plant remains from the basal deposits of many of the ditches has identified significant quantities of seeds from hedgerow-type plants (e.g., elder or blackberry). The evidence for the recutting or reinstatement of ditches could also reflect a boundary function. However, other aspects of the morphology of the ditches investigated are not consistent with such an interpretation. There were examples of metalling or cobbling at the bases of sections of several ditches. In other cases, there were substantial and significant changes to the size and morphology of ditches along their length. That being said, dual-functioning should also be considered. Some of the ditches may have acted as spatial boundaries in addition to other more specialised functions.

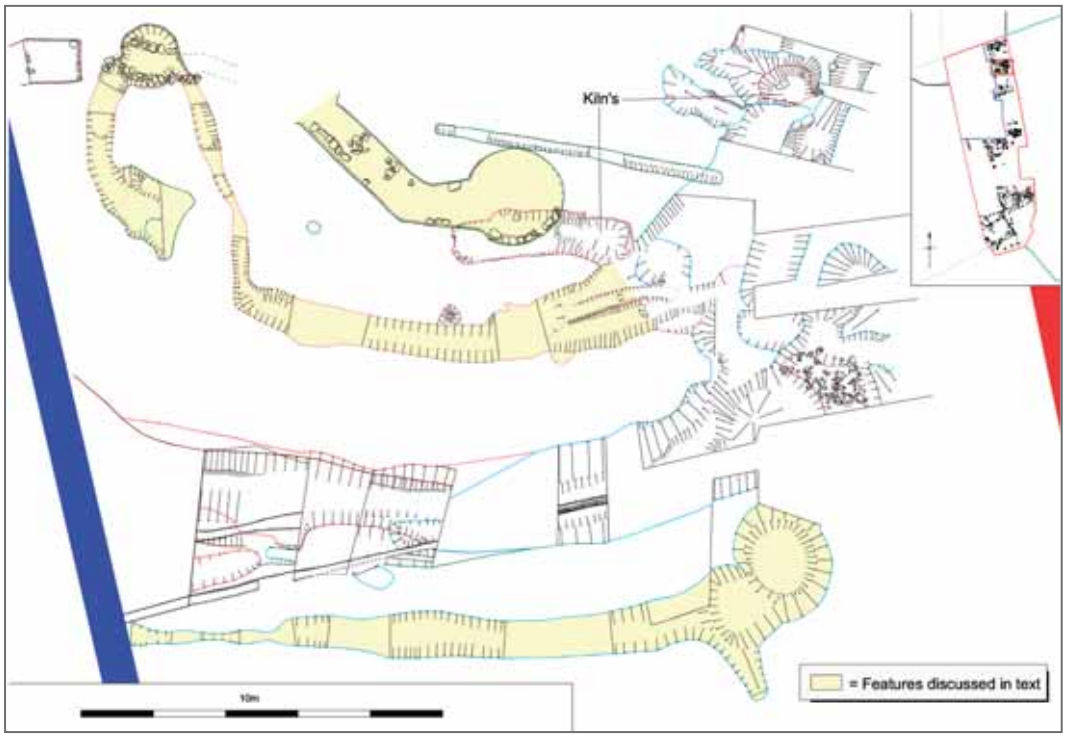

Figure 9: Plan of southern end of Area C (features discussed in text highlighted)

Water management

It is clear that some of the ditches were performing specific functions related to water management. Many of the ditches terminated at the interface to the probable wetland area, opening out and merging into artificial scarps.

However, some showed a more complex design. At Area A, a pair of parallel, interlinked ditches extended east-west: the northernmost opened into a large pit or cistern at the eastern edge of the site (Figure 8). The cistern was sub-triangular in shape, up to 10m wide, with a partial stone lining at the sides and at the intersection with the ditch. A further curvilinear ditch to the east of the cistern may have drained it. However, owing to modern disturbance in this area, the exact relationship between the two features could not be ascertained. A radiocarbon date of 1232±24BP (UBA-8516, 690-750 cal. AD; 762-877 cal. AD at 2 sigma) was obtained from a basal fill.

A similar feature was recorded to the north at Area C. Here a single ditch ran from west to east, opening into a pit or cistern at its eastern end (Figure 9). This cistern was much smaller (approximately 2.50m in diameter). However, the size and morphology of the ditch feeding into it underwent significant changes along its length. At its western extent, it was approximately 0.40m wide and 0.20m deep (little more than a gully). As it continued east, it became substantially wider and deeper, measuring approximately 1.10m in width and 0.85m in depth before opening into the cistern.

Directly to the north, was an even more unusual arrangement incorporating a pit or cistern near the origin (Figure 9). Here, a steep-sided gully (0.80m wide; 0.45m deep) curved and deepened before opening into a sub-circular pit (1.82m in diameter). A second steep-sided gully (0.50m wide and 0.59m deep) exited the pit in a southerly direction before turning sharply east where it became broader (0.90m in width), eventually opening out into a scarp at the interface with the probable wetland area. A localised deposit of stones was positioned in the angle where the ditch turned from a north-south to a east-west orientation. This deposit could have functioned either as a dam or a filter though it is not clear at this point. It should be noted that while the pit/cistern was located up-slope, it tended to fill naturally with groundwater, in contrast to other features nearby.

Figure 10: Furnaces at Area B

Zones of activity: metalworking

Where activities and processes were readily identifiable at the site, they tended to occur in very distinct or limited zones. Evidence for metalworking came solely from Area B, where a series of small bowl furnaces, with associated pits, were investigated (Figure 10). Approximately 30kg of industrial waste material, mainly ferric slag, was recovered. Very little slag was retrieved from other parts of the site.

Bowl furnaces like this are typically associated with iron-working – both the processing of ore and the manufacture of objects. Analysis of the industrial waste material will shed further light on which processes were undertaken at the site.

Zones of activity: cereal processing

Though early medieval agriculture is often viewed as a mainly pastoral undertaking, arable production formed an important part of the economy. A variety of cereal crops were cultivated – wheat, rye, barley and oats. The corn-drying kiln or *áith* is listed in the law tracts as one of the possessions of the *bóaire* and a share in a kiln was accorded to those of lower social status. It also appears that the threshing process was carried out in the vicinity of the kiln (Kelly 1998).

The historical sources indicate that corn-drying kilns would not have been located within the main settlement area (whether secular or ecclesiastical), but rather would have been sited at a slight remove, typically within the *airlise*. This was an area immediately surrounding the *rath* or main settlement enclosure, characterised by various enclosures for grazing and cultivation, including the *lubgort* (garden) and *saball* (barn).

In terms of morphology, the figure of eight shape appears to be the standard form which these kilns took, gradually metamorphosing over time into a keyhole shape through the elongation of the flue (O'Raghallaigh, pers. comm.). However, the dating of this transition is not yet fully understood. Most of the examples from this excavation were quite disturbed, and there were no clear examples of the classic figure of eight shape.

A cluster of kilns was identified at Area C (Figure 11), including one unusual elongated keyhole-shaped feature. The kilns were situated adjacent to the interface with the probable wetland, and were mostly heavily truncated due to the density of activity in this area. One of the latest features was a shallow, partially stone-lined cut. This feature had

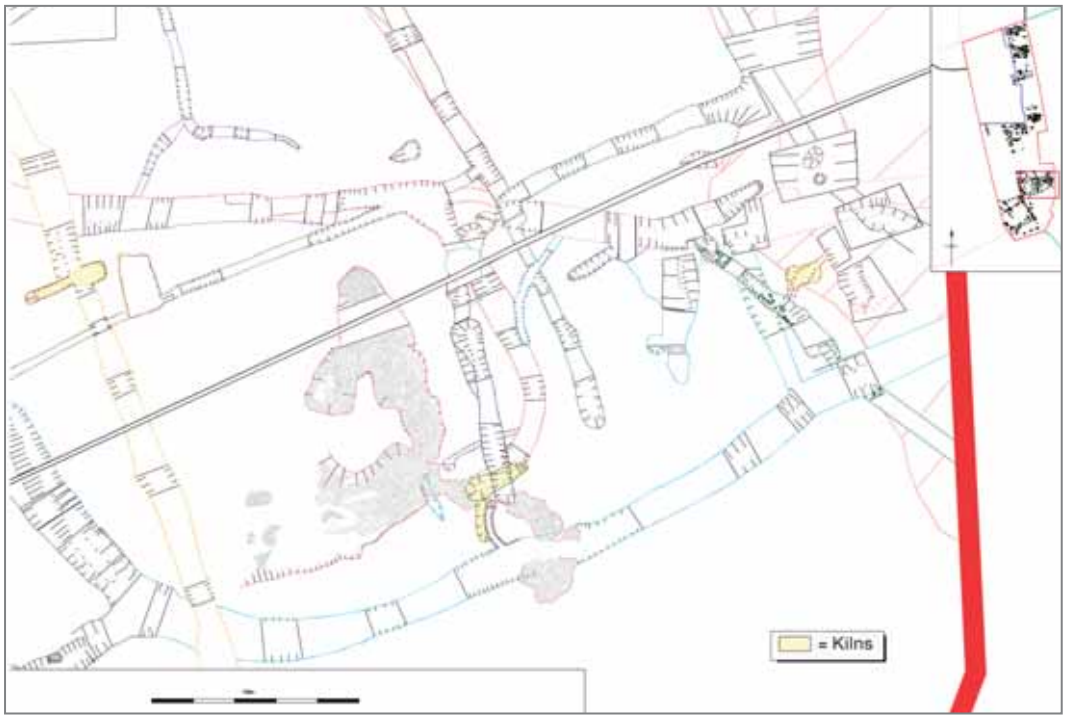

Figure 11: Plan of Area D highlighting corn-drying kilns and possible threshing surface

an elongated keyhole shape with a perfectly circular chamber 2.60m in diameter and varying between 0.05 and 0.24m in depth. A flue/passage exited the chamber on the west continuing for 2m before turning sharply to the north-west for another 3.10m. The passage/flue was 1.15m wide and 0.20m deep. The stone lining was sparsely distributed, perhaps indicating that it had been deliberately dismantled. It survived only on the southern side of the chamber and mainly along the southern side of the passage. There was evidence of collapse of the lining in the chamber, also concentrated on the southern side. The lining in the chamber survived to a maximum of two courses (0.27m) in height and survived to a height of one course (0.20m) in the passage. This feature may be an unusual example of a kiln. However, there was a notable absence of oxidised deposits from the backfill material (in contrast to all of the other kilns at the site). While preliminary assessment of the soil sample from this feature does indicate the presence of macrofossil plant remains, this feature had truncated an earlier kiln, which may account for such material.

Another series of kilns was identified at Area D (Figure 11). There were single examples in the east and north-east of Areas D, and a cluster of inter-cut kilns in the south. An additional and possibly related feature in this area was a large irregular metalled surface located in the centre of Area D, partially truncated by later corn-drying kilns. Before corn can be dried in a kiln, it is necessary for it to be threshed – to detach the grain from the stem. Historical sources describe how the ears of corn were laid on the threshing floor (*ithland*) and the grain detached using a stick (*súst*). Threshing was likely to take place near the drying kiln. Although excavated examples of threshing surfaces are not well attested, it seems a likely explanation for this surface. The upper stone of a rotary quern was uncovered sitting directly on the surface, testament to the final stage of cereal processing – grinding for flour.

Finds

Relatively few artefacts were retrieved, given the scale and complexity of the site but there was a significant number of distinctive objects. Two sherds of E-ware pottery (imported from France in the 6th and 7th centuries) were retrieved from deposits overlying the large cistern at Area A. The wooden hoop of a stave-built vessel was retrieved from the basal deposits of that feature. Iron finds include a number of possible knives (mainly retrieved from features in Area D).

Fig. 12: Selection of finds: Ringed pins from Areas C, E and A; mount from Area A; selection of knives from Area D

A series of ringed pins were retrieved from different features (Figure 12); a shaft from the large ditch adjacent to the northern boundary at Area C; a complete pin from the upper fills of the large cistern at Area A; and another shaft from a ditch in Area E.

The most distinctive object was a triangular mount with traces of wood and leather adhering to the back, perhaps from a wooden box, though it is also very similar to the escutcheons from some early medieval buckets.

CONCLUSIONS

We are very much in the early stages of understanding the site and a lot of work still needs to be done to analyse the results of this excavation. However, the excavations have demonstrated that the features highlighted by geophysical survey represent the remains of a complex and extensive archaeological site, most of which still remains *in situ*.

There is evidence for a long duration and continuity of settlement at the site. Unlike other excavations of early medieval ditch complexes, the investigations at Flemington have primarily highlighted activities ancillary to a main settlement focus rather than the focus itself. These activities were extensive and wide-ranging, demonstrating an evolved and complex system of organising and managing the landscape to facilitate the needs of contemporary agriculture and industry. Even taking the simplest paradigm that there was a main settlement focus located in the fields to the north, we are still looking at an organised landscape extending for at least 200m from any such settlement.

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MULTI-PERIOD EXCAVATIONS AT BARNAGEERAGH, SKERRIES, CO. DUBLIN

EOIN CORCORAN MA

INTRODUCTION

The site is located on the coast, in the townland of Barnageeragh, Skerries, County Dublin, on the Skerries to Balbriggan road. Excavations were conducted by Archaeological Development Services Ltd (ADS) in advance of the development of the site.

The presence of the two recorded monuments (a cairn [RMP: DU005-016] and a mound [DU005 -017-01]) together with artefact scatters (DU005-017-02) indicated the potential for remains of settlement activity from prehistoric to modern times.

As part of the preparation of an Area Action Plan for Barnageeragh, Skerries, County Dublin in advance of development, a number of phases of archaeological assessment and survey were undertaken by ADS. These included an archaeological impact study conducted in January 2000, and fieldwalking surveys conducted in November 2003 and January 2005.

The fieldwalking surveys were conducted on the site in conjunction with a topographical survey. Two concentrations of flint were noted, which were thought to be indicative of potential activity areas (Doyle 2000). A geophysical survey of the

Figure 1: Site location map. © Ordnance Survey Ireland. All rights reserved. Licence number 2008/10/CCMA/ Fingal County Council

site was carried out in 2004, and this revealed a previously unrecorded enclosure as well as other potential archaeological features (PzP 2004). A series of test trenches was then excavated to assess the archaeological potential of the features identified in the surveys (Lynch and Doyle 2005).

Archaeological excavations and topsoil stripping of the site commenced in August 2005 under the direction of Neil Fairburn (Licence 04E1639) for ADS. These excavations took place in the easternmost field of the development and mainly in the northern half of this field. Excavated remains included two possible Neolithic houses, a ringditch and the remains of two stone-walled houses. The excavations were temporarily suspended in December 2005.

This paper details the results of the final phase of archaeological investigations at the site which took place between April and August 2006. The final phase of excavations involved the resolution of all archaeological features on the site, including the completion of some areas and features that were begun in the earlier phase of excavations, and the completion of the topsoil stripping across the whole site under the direction of the author (Licence 06E0477).

To the south of the site, the land consists of a series of ridges and low hills that are currently in pasture. To the north of the site is the Skerries to Balbriggan road and the sea.

Topographically, the site slopes down to the coast from a roughly central high point. A ridge runs eastwards from the high point lessening in height until it becomes relatively flat at the eastern boundary of the site. The southern site boundary is a stream which continues to the west where it divides the site. The land rises up to the north of the stream towards the high point of the site. To the south of the stream, the site rises to form another roughly east to west ridge where the two recorded monuments are located at either end of the high point of this ridge. One of the fields immediately to the south of the stream is flat as the slope has been quarried away.

A post-excavation programme to analyse the remains from the site, as well as submission of samples for radiocarbon dating, is currently in progress. As yet, no radiocarbon dates have been returned for any of the excavated remains on this site.

SITE BACKGROUND

The site lies in a predominantly agricultural landscape to the west of Skerries village on the Skerries to Balbriggan road. The earliest evidence of occupation in north County Dublin comes in the form of flint tools and assemblages dating from the Early Mesolithic period (7000–5500BC). Microliths (small worked flints, often part of composite tools) have been found at Knocklea near Loughshinny and at Paddy's Hill south of the Malahide estuary. Later Mesolithic finds are known from Sutton, Balbriggan, Barnageeragh, Ardla and at two locations in Townparks, Skerries.

The Neolithic period (4500–2500BC) sees the beginnings of more permanent settlement, the domestication of crops and animals and the associated clearing of woodland across north County Dublin. The pattern of settlement in the Neolithic has been identified by the presence of passage tombs, the results of excavations and the collection of artefacts by field collectors. Taking these results together, a pattern of coastal settlement in the lowland plains to the north of the Liffey is distinguishable. There is a focus around the mouth of the River Delvin at Bremore/Gormanston where there is a passage tomb cemetery, and at Knocklea near Rush. The settlement sites tend to be located in good positions to use the resources of both land and sea. Discoveries of Neolithic flint artefacts and stone axes at Balbriggan, Barnageeragh, Skerries, and along the estuaries at Rogerstown and Malahide, provide supporting evidence for this coastal community.

Evidence for the Early Bronze Age in north County Dublin takes the form of cist burials along the coast from Clontarf to the environs of Skerries. Monuments are present at Knocklea, Balleally, Beau, Oldtown, Whitestown and Hollywood. A

recent discovery of burial pits containing Early Bronze Age pottery has been made in Lusk (McCabe 2002). A cist burial is recorded at Baltrasna (DU005-023), and a possible cist site (DU005-032) known as the 'Danes Burial Ground' is recorded in Skerries.

Evidence for the Late Bronze and Iron Age in County Dublin is under-represented. Few sites from these periods have been excavated to date.

During the early medieval period (AD400–1100), the lands around Skerries were under the control of the Southern Uí Neill and were, consequently, part of the Kingdom of Brega. The most common monument of the early medieval period is the ringfort, a circular enclosure constructed of earthen banks and ditches. These were secular sites that acted as family farmsteads, performing the dual functions of defence and cattle enclosure. The ecclesiastical sites of the early medieval period also consisted of earthen enclosures, which surrounded the ecclesiastical buildings. The ecclesiastical sites would have served as markets and centres of industry and education for the wider community. The archaeological record is biased toward these monuments in the lands south of the Liffey with numbers of both site types falling north of the river. However, there were two important ecclesiastical complexes north of the Liffey: one at Lusk and the other at Swords.

The name Skerries itself is indicative of a Viking presence in the area as it may derive from the Norse 'Sceir' meaning reef or sharp sea rocks. This could refer to the area around Red Island. Also the Holm of Holmpatrick may relate to the Norse word for island (Faulkes 2002).

From the Anglo-Norman period (1169 onwards) until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century, the lands around Skerries were under the control of the monks of the Priory of Holmpatrick. Baldungan Castle, to the south of Skerries, was established during this period and controlled by the Knights Templar (D'Alton 1838). The church on St Patrick's Island (DU005-0019) was refounded in 1120 as an Augustinian Abbey (ibid.). The abbey was moved to Holmpatrick (DU005-031) in 1257. By the time of its dissolution in 1537, it was in control of the manor of Holmpatrick, which comprised some 1,000 acres including the villages of Skerries and Milverton, and the surrounding townlands.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries, the lands of the manor of Holmpatrick were leased to John Parker in 1545. Subsequently, the lease was taken over by Thomas Fitzwilliam: the windmill on Channon Hill (DU005-027) was included for the first time (Ní Ghabhlain 1987). The land was then held by the Fitzwilliams until the early 17th century, although Holmpatrick itself had been granted to Donagh O'Brien, Earl of Thomond, in 1604 (ibid.).

The Civil Survey of 1654 describes the manor of Holmpatrick as 1,000 acres, containing a decayed watermill but makes no reference to the windmill (Simington 1945).

THE EXCAVATIONS

Prehistoric remains

Possible house site

This possible house site was located in the east of the site (Figure 2). A group of seven postholes and two stakeholes were concentrated in a confined area, which created a sub-circular or U-shaped arrangement with a central hearth, probably representative of the remains of a structure some 6m in diameter. The postholes varied in size, diameter and depth. Unfortunately, the structure had suffered truncation due to agricultural activity and no floor or occupation deposits survived. Sherds of prehistoric coarseware pottery (possibly Bronze Age) and struck flint were recovered from the postholes indicating probable domestic activity in this area.

Burnt mound remains 1 and ringditches

At the south of the site, near the boundary with the Water Treatment Plant, were the remains of a burnt mound and two ringditches. Burnt mounds, also known as fulachta fiadh, generally consist of a

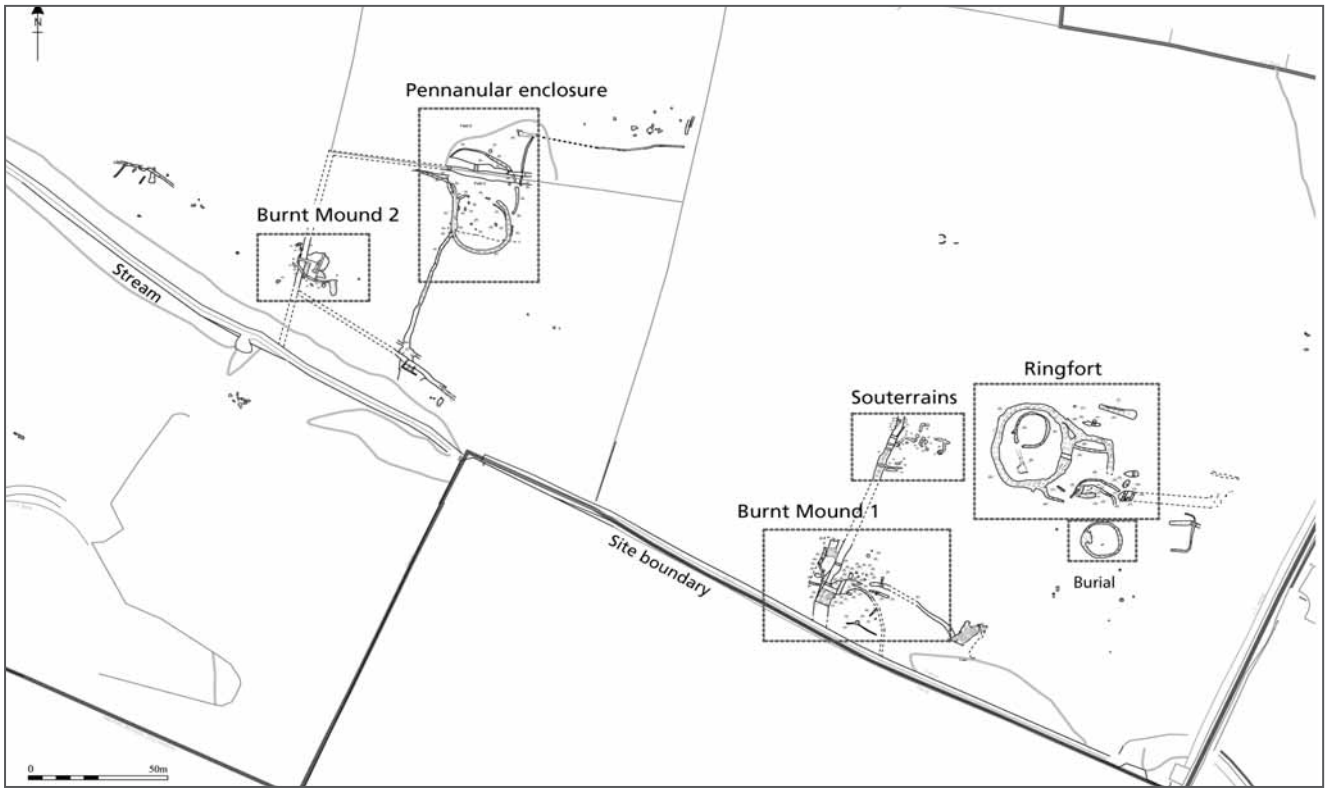

Figure 2: Site excavation plan

horseshoe-shaped mound of burnt stone situated close to a water source. Usually, a rectangular pit or trough is found upon excavation in the open part of the mound. The mound is formed by the waste from the repeated heating of stones to heat water in the trough. It is thought that burnt mounds served a variety of functions such as cooking, bathing and industrial processes. These sites were used from at least the Bronze Age until the historic period.

In this area, there was a large pit which contained burnt mound material: some animal bone, a piece of struck flint and shell were recovered from the fill. As the base of this pit was below the water table, it constantly filled with water and it may have served as a well or a reservoir. Given its size (approximately 5.5m in diameter and 1.5m deep) it is unlikely to have been used for boiling water. This pit was deliberately backfilled with burnt mound material.

Two sub-rectangular pits, associated with the large pit, could have served as troughs. Both had post-holes within their bases which may represent the remains of wooden lining or a superstructure. These two pits were part of a complex of pits and postholes around the large pit. Small pits in the area, some of which were possibly hearths, are likely to be associated with the activity around the troughs and large pit. The postholes do not form any distinct pattern and, as such, are difficult to interpret as a structure but may have formed a windbreak. The presence of animal bone within the backfill of the large pit suggests that this area may have been used for cooking.

Figure 3: Site of burnt mound and ringditches from north-west

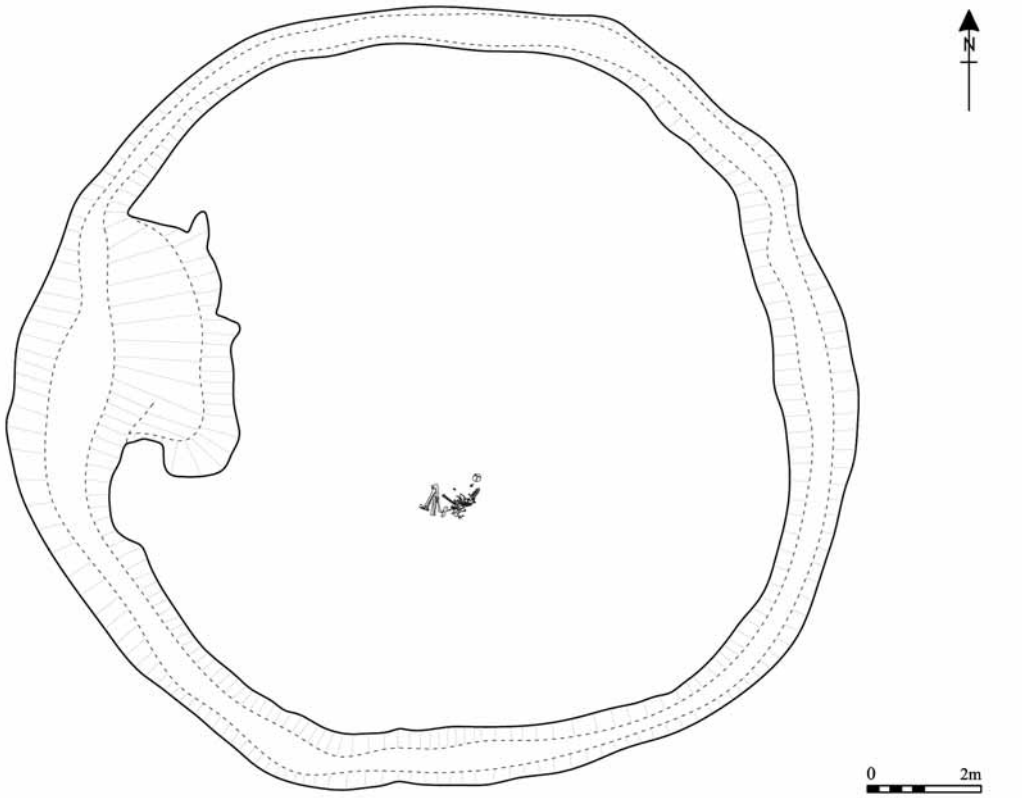

Figure 4: Inhumation and ringditch

Following the backfilling of the large pit and the cessation of activity associated with it, the nature of the activity in this area changed.

This second phase of activity focused on two curved ditches, one within the other. The function of these ditches is unclear as there are no features directly associated with them. Given the lack of internal features within the enclosed area, it may be that they served as an enclosure for livestock.

The outer curved ditch had an entrance gap at the north-north-east. There was a posthole within the gap, which is possibly evidence for an entrance feature. This ditch was exposed for a length of approximately 40m and extended beyond the site boundaries to the south. Struck flint and animal bone were recovered from its fills.

The inner curved ditch was exposed for approximately 36m on site, and also extended beyond the limits of the excavation to the south. This ditch formed a continuous arc, and animal bone, shell and some struck flint were recovered from its fills. The eastern portion of this ditch was located within the outer curvilinear ditch: towards the west it truncated the larger ditch and the large pit then continued on the outside of the larger ditch beyond the southern limit of excavation.

Ringditch and inhumation

In the east of the site, south-west of the possible house site (described above), was a ringditch 13m in diameter with a burial roughly central within it (Figure 4). Some animal bone and a stone with a central depression, possibly a mould, were recovered from the fills of the ditch. The ditch and burial had no other features directly associated with them. The burial was a lightly crouched inhumation burial of a juvenile (L. Buckley pers. comm.) in a sub-rectangular pit. Unusually, the skull had been disturbed and reburied in a small pit, with an animal rib and a human scapula. Ringditches have been found in archaeological contexts dating from the Neolithic to the Early Christian period. More usually they are associated with cremations, but a single central inhumation within a ringditch was found at the Curragh, County Kildare (Buckley 2008).

Figure 5:
Burnt mound 2

A series of features, consisting of mainly pits and postholes which may be of prehistoric date, were located south and east of the ringditch with the crouched burial. Though no connection between the features and the ringditch could be stratigraphically established, the ringditch with the burial was undisturbed by these features. This could be coincidental, but it may also be a sign of contemporary activity, or at least that the ringditch and its probable burial mound were visible at the time the pits were dug. Two of these pits were relatively substantial and contained burnt bone and charcoal. The above features were dug into an area of the site where the subsoil consisted of freely draining gravel, in contrast with the majority of the site where the subsoil consisted of boulder clay.

Burnt mound remains 2

These burnt mound remains were located roughly in the centre of the site, just to the north of the stream (Figure 5). These remains had been truncated by agricultural activity, and a north–south field boundary. Only a thin deposit of the burnt mound survived as an irregular area of dark brown to black sandy silt, with frequent inclusions of charcoal and small stones.

The trough of this burnt mound was a large, irregularly-shaped pit with a slope down into it before a step into the deepest part. The lowest fills of this pit were waterlogged and contained fragments of organic material. Some flint, animal bone and a (possibly) worked stone were also recovered.

A curvilinear gully, orientated north-east to south-west, ran to the east from the deepest part of the trough. It may have served to bring water to the trough. A piece of burnt flint was recovered from the fill of this gully. A number of pits were associated with this burnt mound, one of which contained some burnt flint and a struck flint flake. Some of the other pits may have acted as hearths for heating stone, but no oxidised soil was found. In form, this burnt mound is not dissimilar to the first burnt mound described above. Both are located near the south of the site, and the stream which runs through it. The presence of animal bone at this burnt mound also points towards a possible cooking function. The trough of this burnt mound is less regular in shape than the two sub-rectangular troughs associated with the first burnt mound discussed. This could be an indication that this site is earlier, or that they served

slightly different functions. It is possible that they were both being used at the same time, although given the lack of associated artefacts, it will only be possible to determine this through radiocarbon dating.

Early medieval remains

Ringfort and associated features

A substantial sub-circular enclosure, some 22m in diameter, with no discernible entrance, was located on the south-facing slope of a low hill in the eastern portion of the site (Figure 6). This enclosure has been interpreted as a ringfort. Ringforts are the ubiquitous monuments of the early medieval period (c. 500-1100) in Ireland: they served as defensive enclosures around farmsteads.

This enclosure ditch contained a variety of deposits, some of which were deliberate backfill. Others appeared to be the result of natural silting up, and contained animal bone, shell, flint, metal, bone pins and two possible whetstones. No remains of a bank were found in association with the ditch.

There were two shallow pits within the ringfort, both of which may have served as hearths as each contained charcoal flecking. Some struck flint and animal bone were recovered from one of them, while some shell was recovered from the other.

A penannular enclosure was located within the ringfort, to the north of centre, approximately 10m in diameter with an entrance gap to the south-west. This enclosure is likely to represent the remains of a house within the ringfort (Figure 7). Animal bone and shell, as well as part of a possible stone mould, were recovered from the fills of this ditch. The majority of this feature was excavated in 2005 under licence number 04E1637 (Fairburn 2005). Only a small portion of the fill was excavated by the author.

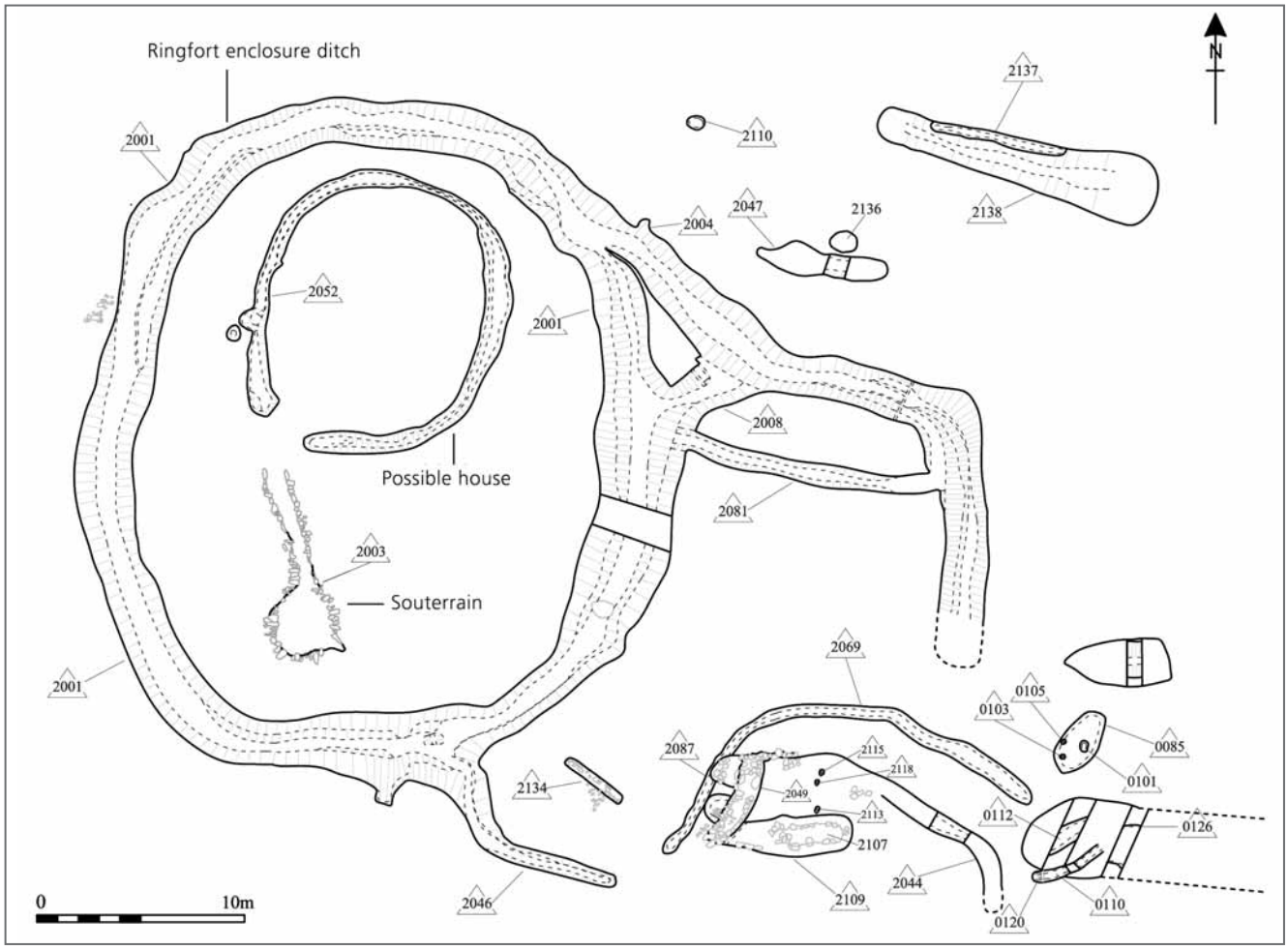

Figure 6: Ringfort and associated features

Figure 7: Possible house within ringfort from south

Within the ringfort, just outside the entrance to the penannular enclosure, was the foundation cut of a single chamber and passage souterrain.

Souterrains are underground passages, often associated with ringforts, which were used for storage or refuge or a combination of both. The souterrain passage was orientated roughly north to south and had a ramped entrance with the roughly circular chamber located at the south end. The drystone walls were built of sub-rounded and sub-angular limestone (Figure 8). Large upright stones were placed at the eastern side, just before the entrance to the chamber whose walls exhibited slight evidence of corbelling. A decorated bone comb, a possible whetstone, a small copper alloy disc and a worked stone were recovered from the fills of the souterrain (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Souterrain from north

Figure 9: Bone comb

Figure 10: Enamelled brooch

To the north and west, the ringfort ditch was cut by a later curved ditch which ran east from the ringfort before turning south. This ditch effectively formed an enclosure to the east of the ringfort, which was open to the south. Animal bones, shells, possible whetstones, bone pins and an enamelled copper alloy brooch (8th to 10th century) were recovered from the fills of this ditch.

Approximately 8m south-east of the ringfort, a gully surrounded the remains of a possible stone structure defined by wall and floor remnants and three postholes. The structure was roughly sub-rectangular and was sealed by a deposit which may be the remains of sod walls and roof. The west wall of the structure was the best preserved, and consisted of a double line of stones with a gap between them, which may have served as a foundation for a wood or sod wall. Some animal bone and two pieces of struck flint were recovered from this fill. To the east of the wall was a possible internal stone platform, the remains of which were scant and may represent collapsed walls. Further to the east again was a line of three postholes which may have represented an internal division in the structure. This structure may be related to the later enclosure following the abandonment of the ringfort.

Souterrains and associated features

Situated on a gentle slope at the bottom of a low hill, which flattened out as it continued south to a stream west of the ringfort and north of the burnt mound and ringditches, there were two souterrains and a number of pits and possible hearths. An old field-boundary ditch was cut by one of the souterrains and defined the western extent of this area.

Slightly further to the west, the remains of two medieval stone houses associated with 12th and 13th century pottery, were excavated in 2005 (Fairburn 2005).

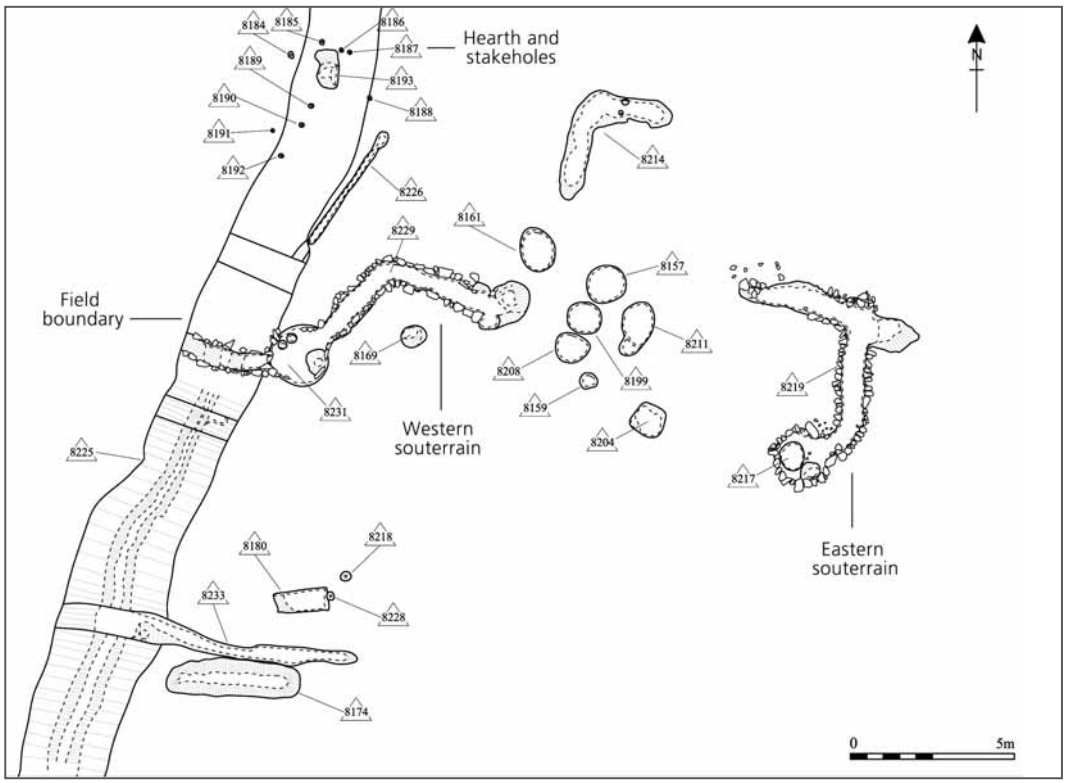

Figure 11: (Right) Souterrains and associated features

Figure 12: (Left) Western souterrain from the east

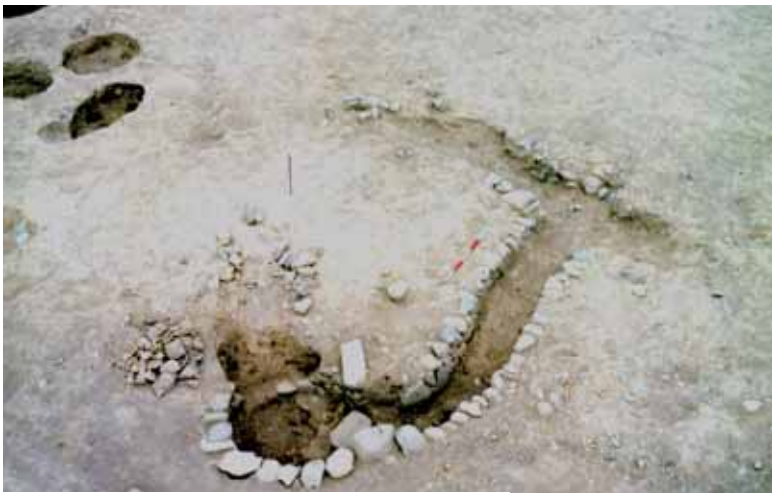

Figure 13: Eastern souterrain from southeast.

Stratigraphically, the earliest feature in this area was a north-to-south-orientated field boundary ditch containing some animal bone and struck flint, which was cut by one of the souterrains. This field boundary predates the souterrain and, therefore, shows evidence for field division and organisation of the landscape.

The entrances of the souterrains opened towards each other, and both structures were drystone built of randomly coursed granite and limestone. There were a number of sub-circular pits, hearths and postholes located in-between, and in the surrounding area. The pit fills contained animal bone and shells indicative of domestic refuse. Medieval pottery sherds were also recovered from some of the pits, as well as from the souterrains themselves.

The western souterrain had a circular chamber, with a small pit cut into the floor, and a main passage that ran north-east from the chamber before turning south-east to the entrance (Figure 12). To the west of the chamber, a small passage began above the chamber floor and ran west, cutting the field boundary ditch.

The eastern souterrain also had a circular chamber, with a sub-circular pit cut into its floor (Figure 13). A metal object, possibly an iron pin, shell and some animal bone were recovered from it. The passage ran north from the chamber then turned west. There was also a ramp to the east which may have formed an alternative entrance.

Animal bone, shells and medieval pottery were recovered from the fills of both souterrains. The pottery was souterrain ware which dates to the second half of the first millennium AD (Clinton 2001).

To the north of the western souterrain was a sub-oval hearth. The fills showed evidence for multiple burning events. There were nine stakeholes around this pit, but no particular pattern was discernible. They may have formed a superstructure for a pot hanger or frame. The pits between the souterrains appear to have been used as refuse pits, but some could have been used for supplementary storage.

Close by, to the south-east of the hearth, was the northern terminus of a gully, which was partially

Figure 14: Penannular enclosure from southeast

cut into the fills of the field-boundary ditch. The gully's southern terminus and the ditch were cut by the souterrain, so it can be dated on this basis to during or before the early medieval period, 500 to 1100. The western souterrain may be associated with the hearth and stakeholes, which were to the north of the chamber.

Enclosure and associated features

Located on a south-facing slope, at the highest point of the site, was a penannular-shaped enclosure some 18m in diameter. The enclosure was defined by a ditch, open to the north, the eastern terminus of which showed evidence of having been deliberately filled, whereas the fills in the rest of the ditch appeared to be the result of natural silting and infilling. Animal bone, shell and flint were recovered from the fills of this ditch (Figure 14).

Just to the north of this penannular enclosure, there was a roughly east-to-west-orientated curved ditch, running for some 47m, the terminals of which were pointed towards the south, 30m apart. A possible whetstone and some animal bone were recovered from the fill of this ditch.

Within the penannular enclosure there were six pits, two of which were possible hearths. Some flint, animal bone, burnt bone and a metal knife blade were recovered from their fills.

A north-to-south-orientated ditch, either for drainage or a field boundary, was partially truncated by the western side of the penannular enclosure, the fill of which was the result of natural silting. This ditch was located roughly 200m to the west of the field boundary discussed with the souterrains above, and both were orientated the same direction.

DISCUSSION

Excavations at Barnageeragh have revealed evidence of an extensive archaeological landscape that was in use over a substantial period of time. Although the site had been subjected to intensive ploughing and agricultural activity, a significant number of archaeological features survived.

The earliest evidence of activity found during this excavation is represented by the finds of prehistoric pottery, and the features associated with it.

In the eastern area of the site, 35 sherds and fragments of prehistoric pottery, possibly Bronze Age, were found in association with the posthole remains of a possible house. The pottery was recovered from one of six postholes that made up a sub-circular or U-shaped structure. Similar structures, dated to the Bronze Age and consisting of a single ring of posts with no footing trench, have been excavated at Cullyhanna Lough, County Armagh and Fota Island, County Cork (Doody 2000). The majority of Bronze Age houses known in Ireland are round in plan, but there is substantial variation in shape. The structure from Barnageeragh falls within the known morphological and size parameters of Bronze Age structures. Given the morphology and composition of this structure, it is likely to date to the Bronze Age, possibly the Late Bronze Age in particular (Doody 2000). Given the relative dearth of Bronze Age, particularly Late Bronze Age, settlement evidence from Dublin, this possible house site is an important addition to the Bronze Age landscape of north County Dublin.

A series of features, mainly consisting of pits and postholes, which may be of prehistoric date, were located south and east of the ringditch with the crouched burial. Though no connection between the features and the ringditch could be stratigraphically established, the ringditch with the burial was undisturbed by these features. The burial at Barnageeragh does not bear the hallmarks of a Christian burial. Generally, Christian burials are orientated from east to west, placed in the grave in an extended supine position and have no enclosing features. The burial at Barnageeragh is enclosed by a ringditch, flexed and on its right-hand side. Enclosed single inhumations have a long tradition in Ireland and occur from the Neolithic to the Viking period, so without grave goods any dating is speculative (Raftery 1994). It is possible that the ringditch and its associated burial would originally have been covered with a mound which was subsequently removed through agricultural activity. Raftery notes a shift from cremation to inhumation burials during the Iron Age, with inhumation becoming the exclusive burial method by the third or fourth millennium AD. He also notes that Iron Age inhumations are often found singly (Raftery 1994). Flexed and crouched inhumations are known from Knowth, County Meath, Lambay Island and other sites dating from the first century BC and later (Waddell 2000, 369). The burial within the ringditch is likely to be of prehistoric or early historic date given its form.

Further prehistoric activity at Barnageeragh was represented by the remains of two burnt mounds/fulachta fiadh.

The first area of burnt mound remains consisted of a large pit full of burnt mound material, a possible trough and some associated pits and postholes, located at the south of the site beside a stream. The large pit had been cut by two later ringditch features. The trough had stakeholes in its base, suggesting a possible superstructure. The large pit filled with water to the height of the current water table, and may have acted as a reservoir while the site was in use. The homogeneity of the fill of the large pit suggests that it was backfilled with the burnt mound material as a single event, presumably at the time of the abandonment of this area. The outer ringditch had an entrance to the north, and its internal diameter was approximately 30m. If it is assumed that the ditch continues to enclose a sub-circular area, it would enclose an area of approximately 707m². The outer ditch cut the inner ringditch which suggests they were associated with two different phases of activity, both postdating the backfilling of the large pit. The inner ringditch was approximately 15m in diameter, and, if fully sub-circular, enclosed an area of approximately 177m².

The second area of burnt mound remains, also located close to the stream, was badly disturbed by agricultural activity with only a thin deposit of the mound remaining. The western part of the mound was truncated by a modern field boundary. There were several pits associated with this burnt mound, which also contained burnt mound material. No finds were recovered from any of the features in this area, so its function remains unclear. The fact that the trough had a slope down into it suggests that its purpose was to access the water that gath-

ered in the deepest part. The channel associated with the trough could not have provided an avenue for run-off as it ran, if anything, slightly uphill from the trough. It may therefore have served to collect water. A deposit to the south of the trough is likely to represent run-off from when the trough overflowed. The function of this burnt mound is unclear at present. A similar oval trough and channel arrangement was excavated in Colp West, County Meath and dated to cal. BP 4420-4060 (Clarke 2001).

The prehistoric remains uncovered in this phase of excavations appear to be mainly representative of Bronze Age activity. There was also a substantial amount of evidence of early medieval and medieval activity on the site at Barnageeragh.

The most obvious indicator of early medieval settlement was the ringfort with its associated house remains and souterrain. This ringfort appears to have been abandoned deliberately, and the ditch filled by a combination of silting and casual and intentional backfilling. The lack of a discernible entrance to the ringfort suggests that the entrance may have been causewayed with wood which was removed when the ringfort was abandoned and the ditch backfilled, or alternatively, that it decayed *in situ*. The souterrain was of simple form with a ramped passage and sub-circular chamber. The chamber would originally have been high enough to comfortably stand up in. It is likely to have been used for storage rather than refuge as it may have been visible above ground as a dome of sod. The souterrain also seems to have been deliberately backfilled on abandonment. The find of a type D decorated bone comb, 5th to 10th century (Dunlevy 1988), in the backfill material of the passage indicates a potential date range of the abandonment of the souterrain.

Following the abandonment of the ringfort, when the ditch had been completely backfilled or silted up, another ditch was dug to the east of it. The function of this ditch is unclear, but it may have been used as a corral for animals. This ditch was subsequently backfilled and an enamelled copper-alloy brooch (possibly 8th to 10th century) from the backfill material dates this event to the early medieval period at the earliest. The brooch was decorated in a fret pattern with three colours of enamel (red, black and yellow) with a central square of black and white millifiori, and was roughly kite-shaped. It was approximately 5cm in length. No pin was found associated with the brooch. A similar fret pattern of ornament can be seen on part of the Prosperous Crozier, from County Kildare, which is dated to the 9th century (Bourke 1987). This ditch may be related to the phase of activity associated with the souterrains and features located to the west of the ringfort.

There seems, following the abandonment of the ringfort, to have been a shift from enclosed settlement to open settlement on the site. The settlement evidence from the area west of the ringfort suggests this. The presence of the souterrains and associated features, as well as the lack of an enclosing element, is suggestive of an open settlement in this area of the site particularly when the possible medieval houses from the previous season's excavations are taken into account (Fairburn 2005). The pottery from this area, Leinster cooking ware and Dublin ware, suggest a 13th century date for this activity. The function of the souterrains in this area is unclear. They could have served both as storage and as refuge if needed, but, given their size and form, are more likely to have served a storage function. Both of these souterrains were much smaller than the one associated with the ringfort and, if contemporary, may have been used in different ways. A site was excavated at Rosepark, Balrothery, County Dublin which consisted of a multi-ditched enclosure complex and souterrains (Carroll 2003). As at Barnageeragh, the souterrains, while more numerous, had circular chambers and narrow passages.

The majority of known souterrains in Ireland are drystone-built structures, like those at Barnageeragh. The souterrains excavated at Barnageeragh are characteristic of the greater Meath type of souterrains, as they are likely to have had beehive chambers (Clinton 2001). Souterrains occur consistently, though not that frequently, in the greater Meath area, including north Dublin

(ibid). The souterrain within the ringfort at Barnageeragh is associated with a circular house. Clinton suggests that souterrains associated with round houses, as at Kimego West and Loher, County Kerry, may be earlier than those associated with rectangular houses (Clinton 2001). The evidence of occupation from the souterrains and ringfort, and other features, at Barnageeragh suggests that there may have been a shift from the enclosed settlement of the ringfort to an open settlement to the west associated with the medieval rectangular stone houses excavated by Fairburn (Fairburn 2005). Other sites, Togherstown, County Westmeath and Knowth, County Meath, have also demonstrated this shift from enclosed to unenclosed settlement (Clinton 2001). At Barnageeragh, there is evidence from the finds that backs up the theory of the earlier association of souterrains and circular houses.

The evidence from within the penannular enclosure consisted of six pits, at least two of which exhibited the characteristics of hearths. A metal knife was recovered from one of these pits, and a struck flint flake was recovered from another. There was no evidence for any internal structures. The entrance to the enclosure was quite wide. It opened to the north into the area surrounded by the second ditch, creating a possible annexe to the enclosure. The area within the annexe ditch had been disturbed by a field boundary ditch and field hedge, and no features were exposed in the interior. The function of this enclosure and annexe is unclear. The penannular-shaped enclosure could be the remains of a settlement with an annexe to the north, but it would be unusual for a settlement to have such a wide entrance and to have it facing north towards the coast and the prevailing winds. The annexe ditch showed no signs of having contained a palisade, but its situation could have provided a windbreak for the entrance to the enclosure. This enclosure is not defensive in nature. The large entrance and relatively narrow and shallow ditch would have provided a poor barrier against entry. Although these features appear to be medieval, radiocarbon dates are required to securely date this enclosure and determine the relationship between the enclosure and the annexe ditch. A similar penannular enclosure was excavated by Christine Baker immediately to the south of the site, in the area of the water treatment plant. It was dated to the medieval period (Baker 2006). Two similar enclosures were excavated by Arch Tech Ltd during the Lusk relief road works and also dated to the medieval period (Stephen Johnston pers. comm.).

CONCLUSION

The excavations revealed a landscape that was occupied from the Bronze Age to the medieval period. Although the presence of recorded monuments on the fringes of the site, together with the field-walking and geophysical surveys, showed that the site had potential, it was only when the topsoil was stripped from the fields that the true extent of previously unknown archaeological remains was revealed. From the burnt mounds of the Bronze Age, through to the ringditch and burial and culminating in the souterrains and ringfort, a complex landscape has been discovered at Barnageeragh. The evidence from the Bronze Age of the possible house site and the two fulachta fiadh, supplements the evidence for Bronze Age activity in north County Dublin which is an under-represented period. The ringditch and burial of a possible Iron Age or early medieval date, may help to give us an insight into the changing burial customs within Ireland around the introduction of Christianity. Of particular interest is the early medieval evidence which provides an opportunity to examine the shift from enclosed to unenclosed settlement. The wealth of archaeological evidence on the site provides a valuable resource to significantly increase our knowledge of the settlement of Skerries and the coastal region of Fingal, from prehistory up to the medieval period.

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EXCAVATIONS AT CHURCH ROAD AND THE EARLY MONASTIC FOUNDATION AT LUSK, CO. DUBLIN

AIDAN O'CONNELL BA, MIAI

INTRODUCTION

The village of Lusk is located approximately four miles north of Swords on the Dublin to Skerries road. It is perhaps best known as the site of an early medieval monastic foundation, reputedly founded during the 5th century AD by the saint MacCullinn, whose obit was recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* in AD 496 or 498 (AU 498). A round tower (RMP DU008-1003; Figure 1) marks the location of this monastery, although it was probably built in the 10th-11th century. Despite Lusk's proximity to the capital city, it has long maintained a distinctly rural character, the result of much of its vernacular architecture surviving into the modern period, and the importance of market gardening to the local economy. In recent years, rapid expansion and development of the village and its hinterland has subsumed the area into

Fgure 1: The Round Tower and medieval bell tower at Lusk facing east

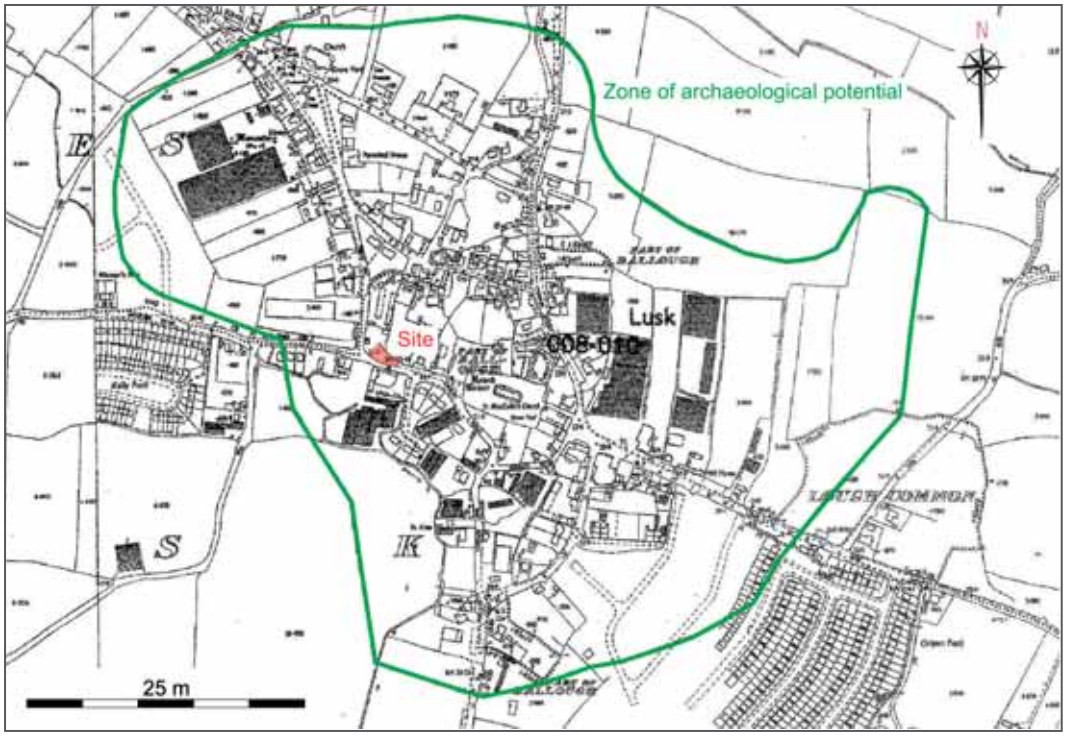


Figure 2: Location of site in relation to the Zone of archaeological potential around Lusk

the greater north Dublin commuter belt. The associated building activity has facilitated an increase in archaeological excavations around the village. This paper describes the results of one such excavation, undertaken by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd, at Church Road in June and July 2005 on behalf of Fingal County Council.

The site was located within previously undeveloped lands between modern residential housing and the junction of Church Road and Treen Lane, approximately 200m west of the round tower (Figure 2). Following the discovery of the site, the previous landowner related a local tradition that the site was a fairy mound (Clarke and O'Hara 2005). The development was quite limited in area, with approximately 3m of land removed from the southern side of the site to facilitate road widening. Before these works proceeded, Fingal County Council obtained ministerial consent to carry out an archaeological excavation in advance of the construction works at the site. The excavation revealed evidence for an early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure ditch, a burial ground and a souterrain.

Figure 3: Early medieval ecclesiastical enclosure ditch facing south

ENCLOSURE DITCH

A 5m long portion of a north–south-aligned ditch was excavated at the eastern side of the site (Figures 3 and 4). It extended beyond the northern and southern site boundaries. Within the excavated area, it had recorded dimensions of 2.5m wide by 1.5m deep. Although only a small portion of the ditch was exposed within the site, a slight curve indicated that the enclosed area lay to the east. The excavated ditch had a broad V-shaped profile with straight, sloping sides and a narrow flat base. The primary fill consisted of yellow redeposited boulder clay. This was located on the base and western

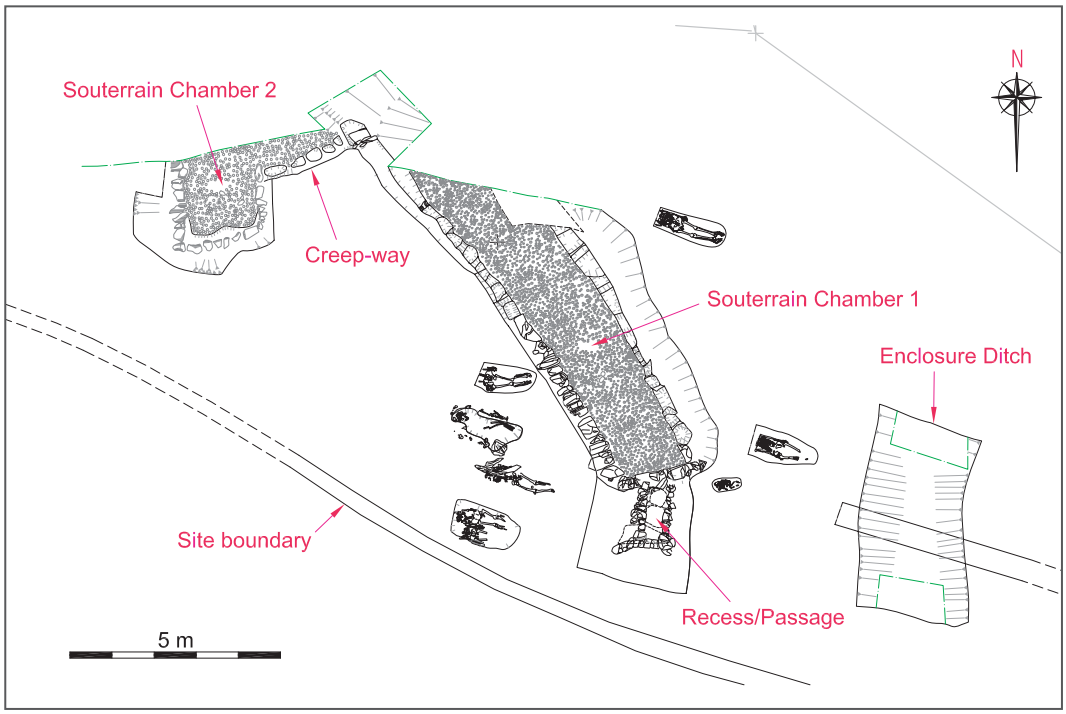


Figure 4: Mid-excavation plan of archaeological site at Church Road, Lusk

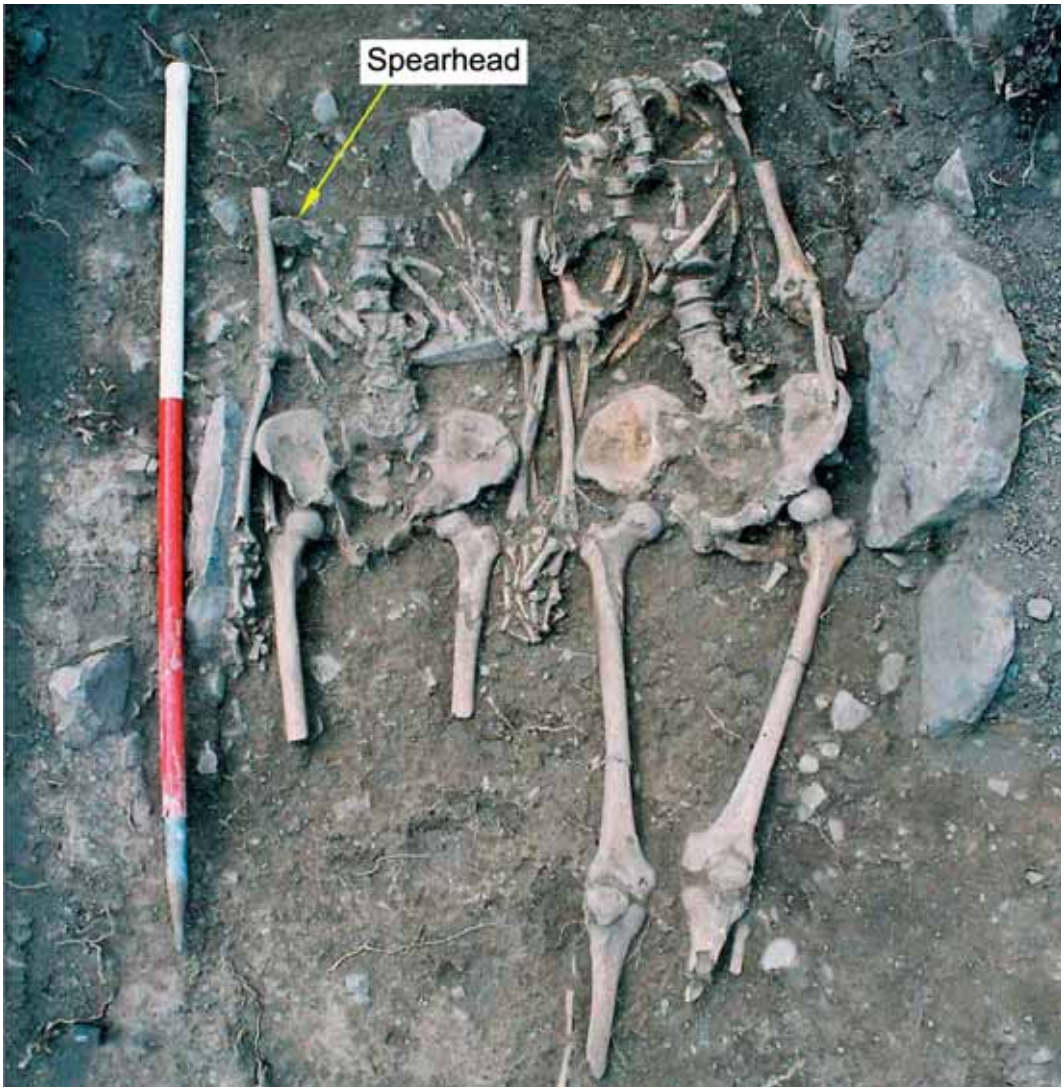


Figure 5: Double burial at Church Road Lusk containing the remains of two beheaded males. An iron projectile point can be seen to the left of frame protruding from the upper torso of the smaller individual

side of the ditch cut, and was probably derived from an associated bank. However, the location of this material along the external side of the ditch indicates that the bank would have been positioned externally to the ditch. The remaining three fills consisted of accumulated deposits of clay and silt. A sample of hazel charcoal (*Corylus avellana*) from the second ditch fill has been dated to AD 420–600 (SUERC 17878). Animal bones were recovered from the three final fills of the enclosure ditch. A minimum number of eleven animals were accounted for with two cattle, four sheep/goats, three pigs, one horse, and one domestic fowl represented. These were the remains of food refuse disposed of into the ditch (Sloane 2008). The only recovered artefacts were an iron nail and a piece of slag collected from the second ditch fill. The discovery of slag within this context is an indication that ironworking was being carried out in the vicinity of the monastic enclosure in the 5th and 6th centuries.

BURIAL GROUND

Eight human burials were recorded in the course of the excavation (Figure 4). They were located between 0.1m and 0.2m below the existing ground surface and found in varying states of preservation. All the burials were supine extended inhumations and orientated west–east (with the head to the west). They were confined to an area beyond the enclosure ditch outlined above. Disarticulated human bone, collected from topsoil and off the surface of the subsoil, suggested that further burials would have been in existence at the site. Of the

eight articulated burials, seven were adults (four male, one female and two unsexed). The remaining burial was of a three- to six-month-old child. Degenerative spinal ailments were recorded on all the adult remains. Perhaps the most striking aspect of these burials was a double burial containing two adult males. Both individuals had been affected by multiple blade injuries around the time of death. Sharp force injuries to the upper neck vertebrae and mandible (Linda Fibiger, pers. comm.) indicated that they had been beheaded prior to burial. An iron spearhead was found protruding from the upper torso of one of these individuals (Figure 5). A similar double burial, with evidence for both weapon trauma and decapitation, has been recorded at a settlement/cemetery site at Augherskea, County Meath (Christine Baker pers. comm.). The Lusk burial has been dated to AD 410–570 (SUERC 16999) suggesting that the ditch to the east was broadly contemporary with the use of the site as a cemetery. As it is suggested that the ditch comprises part of the outer early ecclesiastical enclosure, the burials appear to have been interred outside the monastic precincts.

Despite the low sample of burials present, it may be reasonable to suggest that both males and females, and adults and children were present in this burial ground. Furthermore, the layout of the recorded burials may suggest the deliberate placement of grave plots in apparently evenly-spaced rows.

SOUTERRAIN

The fragmentary remains of a stone-lined souterrain were also recorded at the site. A souterrain is an underground structure composed of various combinations of chambers and passages/creepways. The majority are drystone-built structures. However, both tunnelled and wood-lined structures are also known. This souterrain consisted of two rectangular chambers connected by a creepway. Additionally, a short recess/passage extended from the south-western end of the larger of the two chambers (Figure 4). The souterrain was constructed by excavating a steep, straight-sided cut through the natural glacial deposits on the site. The stone lining of the souterrain structure was built up against the sides of the cut and consolidated externally with redeposited clay. The surviving stone lining was in an incomplete state, the roof capstones and a substantial portion of the walls having been removed in antiquity.

Figure 6: Mid-excavation view of souterrain; Chamber 1

Chamber 1

Chamber 1 was a long rectangular space, with a recorded length of 12m. It extended beyond the north-western site boundary. The internal width was 1.7m and the depth 1.8m. The long axis of this chamber was orientated north-west–south-east. Stone facing was recorded on the western and southern sides of the structure, and consisted of mainly unworked limestone blocks and boulders built to an internal face (Figure 6). Large blocks and boulders were used on the base course. The remaining walls were then built up in irregular courses with smaller blocks and packing stones, to a surviving height of 1.45m. The western facing was c.5m long and abutted the southern facing. Elsewhere at the base of this chamber, two lines of stone sockets were present in place of the stone facing. This suggests the remainder of the walls had been robbed-out. The floor consisted of a well-laid metalled surface.

The chamber was backfilled with two separate layers of clay that contained numerous sherds of 13th-century pottery which included 25 sherds of Dublin-type wares, two sherds of red earthenware and a sherd of North Devon gravel-tempered ware (McCutcheon 2006). A short recess/passage extended at floor level from a 0.4m wide by 0.4m high opening on the southern side of Chamber 1 (Figure 7). It was 1.5m long and aligned north–south. The full stone facing in the portion of the structure survived intact. A rotary quern stone was reused as one of the roof lintels (Figure 8).

Creep-way

The two chambers were linked by a 2.2m long passage, or creep-way, the southern side of which was exposed in the course of the excavations (Figure 9). It was aligned east–west, joining the western side of Chamber 1 to the eastern side of Chamber 2 and sloped downwards from east (Chamber 1) to west. The floor consisted of a metalled surface which was not as well laid as that in Chamber 1. Although no stone lining was recorded in the course of the excavations, the presence of further stone sockets indicated that this portion of the souterrain structure was also stone lined.

Figure 7: (Top) Souterrain, Chamber 1 showing detail of opening to recess/passage

Figure 8: (Middle) Rotary quern re-used as one of the roof lintels

Figure 9: (Bottom) Mid-excavation view of creep-way facing east

Figure 10: Souterrain, Chamber 2

Chamber 2

The second chamber had recorded dimensions of 2.2m long by 1.7m wide, but extended beyond the northern site boundary. It was stone faced on all three of the recorded sides but used smaller limestone blocks than those recorded in Chamber 1. The floor, again, consisted of a metalled surface, more in keeping with the creep-way than the larger chamber (Figure 10). Further backfilled deposits containing late 12th and 13th century pottery were encountered within this chamber.

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL MONASTERY AT LUSK

The original monastery at Lusk was founded sometime in the 5th century AD. The death of Cuinnid mac Cathmugh, otherwise known as MacCullin, Bishop and founder saint of Lusk, is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* in 496 or 498 (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970). 'Cuinnid' may be of British derivation, as might Petrán (one of MacCullin's successors; d. 616), which may indicate that Lusk was a British foundation (MacSamhráin 2004). From the early 7th century onwards, the obituaries of bishops, abbots, a vice-abbot, scribes and priors are all recorded in contemporary annals (Walsh 1888). The recording of positions other than bishop and abbot is noteworthy as these would usually only be chronicled at the most prominent monastic establishments (Charles-Edwards 2005). Of further note is the fact that St Adamnán of Iona held a synod at Lusk in 695 or 696, assisted by Bishop Colga (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970). It would, therefore, appear that Lusk was one of the most important church sites in north County Dublin from an early period (Bradley 1998).

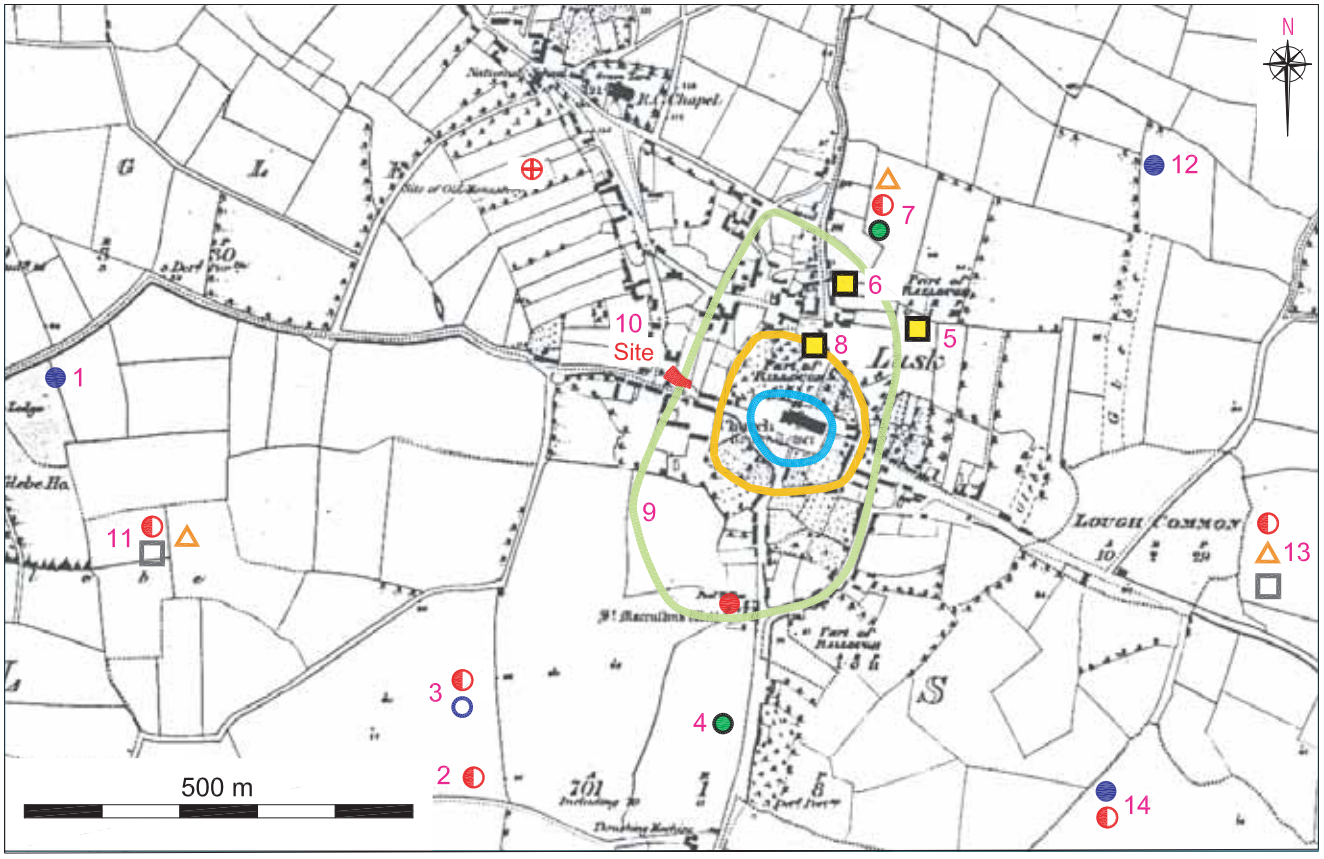
The abbacy at Lusk was dominated between the late 7th and early 9th centuries by a branch of the *Ciannachta* dynasty (Ó Corráin 1981) when a series of at least four hereditary abbots was recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* (AU). Additionally, Lusk had connections with the church at Duleek, County Meath, in North Brega, through the *Gailenga*, a client dynasty of the *Ciannachta.* In 907, the obituary of Colmán, who was scribe and Bishop of both Lusk and Duleek, was recorded in the *Annals* (AU; Charles-Edwards 2005). The power base of the Ciannachta Breg extended across a coastal territory stretching from the River Dee to the River Delvin (MacSamhráin 2004). However, the kingdom of South Brega (within which Lusk was located) was ruled by the Uí

Chernaig branch of the dynasty known as Síl nÁedo Sláine (Connon 2008; Charles-Edwards 2005) who appropriated control of the secular Ciannachta territory in the early 8th century (Ó'Corráin 1981). The monastery at Lusk, therefore, represented an opportunity for clerical members of the Ciannachta to obtain a measure of power and influence outside the control of the Síl nÁeda Sláine and Clann Chernaig. The abbots in this period controlled all aspects of the monastery and its landholdings, and would have had considerable wealth and influence. It is, therefore, not surprising that Clann Chernaig sought to obtain hegemony over the ecclesiastical foundation. The death of a member of the ruling family of South Brega (i.e. Clann Chernaig) was recorded at Lusk in 800 when Ailill, son of Fergus and lord of South Brega, was thrown from his horse around the feast of MacCullin of *Lusca* (AU; Walsh 1888). This indicates that clan Chernaig were associating themselves with Lusk in this period. By the middle of the 9th century, a new ecclesiastical lineage, acceptable to the kings of South Brega appears to have been installed at the site (MacSamhráin 2004).

Lusk was the site of an *óenach* from at least the early 9th century when reference was made to the death of Ailill during the feast of MacCullin in AD 800 (Doherty 1980). Consequently, the thriving economy of a monastic market town like Lusk would have attracted and supported a variety of craft workers (Edwards 1990). It would also have acted as a conduit for agricultural commodities produced in the immediate hinterland of the monastery and perhaps under the direct control of the ruling abbot. As a result of its prestige, Lusk was targeted, plundered and burned on several occasions. It was sacked in 827 and 856 by the Norsemen (AU) but survived these raids and later prospered under Scandanavian control in the 11th and 12th centuries (Bradley 1998; Bradley and King 1988). However in 1053, many prisoners were taken from the stone church, and in 1069 it was once again burnt (AU). In 1089, Lusk was again sacked and 180 people were burned in its *Daimhliag* (stone church) by the men of Munster (AU and *Annals of the Four Masters* [AFM]). Finally, in 1133 when the church at Lusk was full of people and relics, it was burned by the men of Meath (AFM).

Currently, all that remains of the Early Christian monastery is the round tower (DU008-1003) dating to the 10th/11th centuries. It has eight internal floors as well as a basement, and stands 26.56m high. The original roof is all that is missing from the structure. This was replaced in the 19th century by a cement-coated timber roof. The level of the ground has grown considerably so that the flat-headed doorway is no longer significantly raised from the modern ground level (Lalor 1999; Lennox-Barrow 1979). However, references to Lusk in the annals provide us with some indication of the structure of additional ecclesiastical buildings. The reference to the Norse sacking of Lusk in 856 relates how the *dairthech* or wooden church was burned (Manning 2000). Subsequent raids on Lusk refer, in 1053 and 1089, to the *daimhliag* or stone church and in 1153 to the *teampall* which again refers to a stone church (Manning 2000). Therefore, while the early church buildings were built of wood, a stone church was in existence at the site from at least the mid-11th century.

The outline of the early monastic enclosure can be traced on early maps and aerial photographs. Swan (1985) traced the line of two enclosure ditches, with evidence now for a third enclosing ditch apparent from the results of the Church Road excavation and previous archaeological assessments to the south-west of the town (Moore 2001; Baker 2002 and 2004; see below). Additional early medieval remains in the area include two enclosed settlements at the east (Arch-Tech 2007) and west (Giacometti 2006) of the town, both of which were associated with cereal-drying kilns. A further cereal-drying kiln, with the characteristic figure-of-eight shape, has been recorded to the north of the town (McCabe 2004) and is also thought to date to this period (Figure 11). These secular settlements, in close proximity to the monastic site, but outside the ecclesiastical enclosures, may have been occupied by *manaig* or lay workers who paid tribute to the early monastery in the form of food



Previous excavations in the Lusk area

1 03E1113
2 03E1251
3 02E1029
4 02E1031
5 04E903
6 01E384
7 02E1398
8 98E0116
9 02E0871
10 C010
11 05E848
12 02E1399
13 02E1529
14 02E1560

Key:

- Inner enclosure (after Swan, 1985)
- Middle enclosure
- Outer enclosure
- Burnt mound activity
- Prehistoric settlement activity
- Cremation burial
- Ringditch
- Medieval settlement activity
- Medieval enclosure
- Site of convent
- Corn drying kiln
- Holy well

Figure 11: Map of Lusk showing monastic precincts and surrounding archaeological sites

render (Edwards 1990). Further evidence for secular settlement associated with the ecclesiastical site comes in the form of three stick pins found in the garden of a cottage in the village and recorded in the Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland (Bradley 1998).

THE ECCLESIASTICAL ENCLOSURE

The excavations at Church Road have greatly broadened our knowledge of the nature of the early monastic precincts at Lusk. It is generally held that the concept of enclosure around early ecclesiastical sites has its origin in the 7th century after members of the laity had settled on church

lands containing burials. Secular settlement was thus seen to have defiled sacred monastic grounds. The solution to this problem was to segregate the monastic precinct by defining internal areas of sanctity (Edwards 1990; Doherty 1985). A 7th-century manuscript from the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* (CCH; Irish Collection of Canon Law) relates how this was achieved:

> There ought to be two to three *termini* around a holy place: the first in which we allow no one at all to enter except priests, because laymen do not come near it, nor women unless they are clerics; the second, into which its streets the crowds of common people, not much given to wickedness, we allow to enter; the third, in which men who have been guilty of homicide, adulterers and prostitutes, with permission and according to custom, we do not prevent from going within. Whence they are called, the first *sanctissimus,* the second *sanctior,* the third *sanctus,* bearing honour according to their differences. (Doherty 1985)

By examining the curvilinear street patterns and property boundaries in Lusk, Swan (1985) was able to propose a double enclosure around the early monastery. However, a third (outer) enclosure is now evident from the current excavations at Church Road (the suggested ecclesiastical enclosure is depicted on Figure 11).

The inner enclosure was located immediately around the area defined by the sub-rectangular churchyard, and the curving portion of Church Road to the south.

The middle enclosure (Swan's outer enclosure) is indicated by the curving street pattern to the east of the church and round tower. At the west, it is preserved in a number of property boundaries evident on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the town. Interestingly, a number of additional property boundaries appear to radiate between the putative inner and middle enclosures, suggesting they are contemporary with the early ecclesiastical foundation.

The outer enclosure is indicated to the west by the partial excavation of the enclosure ditch at the east of the Church Road excavations. This would appear to continue southwards in broad alignment with similar ditch features recorded in a previous archaeological assessment at the south-west of the town (Moore 2001; Baker 2002 and 2004). At the south-east of the town, the line of this putative outer enclosure continues in the curving street pattern and to the north-east through extant property boundaries. Further north, the western and south-western returns of the enclosure are preserved in the existing street pattern. The outer monastic precinct would have enclosed an area of roughly 515m north–south by 280m east–west.

The radiocarbon dating evidence from Church Road indicates that the outer enclosure dates from the early 5th through the 6th century (AD 420–600; SUERC 17878). This would suggest that it is contemporary with the early phase of the monastic foundation and certainly earlier than the accepted 7th-century date for the commencement of enclosures around monastic sites (see above). Although only one piece of iron slag was collected from the ditch, it is possible to suggest that some craft working (however small in scale) was being undertaken in the vicinity of the early church site.

A burial ground was situated outside the ecclesiastical enclosure to the west. Evidence for at least eight formal east–west-aligned burials was recorded in the course of the excavations. Furthermore, the relative positioning and layout of the burials would appear to suggest that the burial ground was formally planned. Additional disarticulated human remains were also recorded, perhaps indicating that further burials were in existence at the site and that the burial ground would have been more extensive. However, it is significant that the individuals were interred outside the monastic precincts. The subdivision of the monastic enclosure as outlined above was achieved by defining areas of sanctity. The central sacred core of the site would have remained free of habitation, retaining the principal ecclesiastical buildings (Doherty 1985) as well as the cemetery (O'Sullivan and Harney 2008). It is also probable that burial with-

in this central area would have been confined, in the 5th and 6th centuries, to clerics. Secular burial in this period appears to have been carried out at a variety of site types including settlement/cemeteries, isolated unenclosed burials and at prehistoric barrows and mounds. It is from the 7th and 8th centuries that the practice of burial within formal ecclesiastical grounds was widely promoted by the clergy (O'Sullivan and Harney 2008). However, it is clear that the growth of the monastic foundation at Lusk would have attracted a certain amount of lay settlement activity. It is also apparent that the subdivision of the monastic enclosure would have facilitated this process. Doherty (1985) asserts that such secular expansion on the periphery of monastic lands would have been unlimited. The recorded human remains at Church Road may represent the burial of members of the laity who were lured to settle on the periphery of the monastic enclosure, attracted in part by a thriving economy and opportunities to trade and engage in craft activities. That they may also have settled here to obtain a measure of sanctuary or refuge is a possibility. However, they were not deemed sufficiently important to be buried within the monastic precincts. Furthermore, the burial ground appears to have been disturbed in the course of the souterrain construction. It could, therefore, be viewed as a short-lived unenclosed settlement/cemetery associated with lay settlement on the periphery of the monastic enclosure. The interred individuals may have been members of an underclass, referred to in the passage from the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* quoted above, who were seen to be guilty of homicide, prostitution or adultery and denied access to central and middle monastic precincts. Their relatively harsh lifestyle can be seen in the recording of degenerative spinal disease on all of the adult skeletons. However, of greater note is the double burial containing the two decapitated males. A full specialist report on these burials is pending. It is envisaged that this may reveal whether these individuals were beheaded with a sword or axe which will allow fuller speculation on the context of their interment.

THE SOUTERRAIN

Perhaps the most striking feature recorded in the course of the Church Road excavations was the souterrain. It was a drystone structure consisting of at least two rectangular chambers joined by a short creep-way. The structure at Church Road would have been entered from ground level. However, the composition of the entrance was not recorded, owing to the restricted area of the excavation. Similarly, the partial recording of a single, incomplete creep-way means that the nature of any associated passages and whether they had any inbuilt structural and/or defensive features cannot be expanded upon. Both chambers were sub-rectangular in plan. Chamber 1 would appear to fall into Clinton's (2001) class of oblong chambers (i.e. where the length is greater than three times the width). Oblong chambers have a predominantly north-western distribution and are most prominent in the Clare/Galway and south Mayo area. At Ballinaphuil, County Galway, the second souterrain chamber has dimensions of 11.28m by 2.13m by 1.83m high (ibid.) which is comparable with Chamber 1 at Church Road. Perhaps of greater relevance is Souterrain B at Donoughmore, County Louth, which featured an end chamber with dimensions of 10.7m long by 1.7m by 1.7m (ibid.). The positive identification of an oblong chamber requires a formal junction between passage and chamber (ibid.). It therefore should be borne in mind that it was not possible to examine this critical junction in the course of the Church Road excavations.

Other noteworthy structural components of the Lusk souterrain were the cobbled floors and the recess/passage located at the south of Chamber 1. The use of cobblestones and paving in souterrains is rare. Cobblestones, when they are recorded, would appear to be confined to specific areas within the souterrain structure. For example, at Smithstown, County Meath, cobbling was recorded at the entrance, while at Guilford, County Westmeath, it was located in the chamber (Clinton 2001). By comparison, the cobbling at Lusk appears to have been used across the entire structure.

The recess/passage extended from floor level at the southern end of the large chamber through a small 0.4m by 0.4m opening. This would have been extremely awkward for an adult to negotiate and may have been designed to offer added refuge or protection to a child (Clinton 2001). However, the space within this part of the souterrain would have been extremely restricted, even for a child, and terminated abruptly at a dead-end. It is, therefore, quite difficult to adequately explain this feature.

The place name Lusk is widely regarded as being derived from *Lusca*, a cave, underground chamber or vault, which was presumed to refer to the tomb or shrine of Lusk's founding saint (Joyce 1995; Bradley and King 1988; Walsh 1888). Clinton (1998) speculated that reference to an underground chamber preserved in the place name of Lusk pointed to the possible presence of a souterrain, based on the relatively common association between souterrains and early church sites. Although this supposition has been confirmed by the current excavations, the association between the souterrain and the ecclesiastical foundation is less than certain. This is due to the fact that it is located outside of the known monastic precincts. The souterrain could, therefore, have been associated with secular settlement on the periphery of the ecclesiastical enclosure. It could be further stated that if such a structure was built for and used by the medieval Lusk clerics, it probably would have had a more central and accessible location within the monastic enclosure.

The precise dating of the souterrain is unknown. Due to the presence of substantial later medieval backfill deposits within the dismantled structure, it was not possible to isolate secure primary deposits with sufficient datable material. Clinton (2001) proposes a floruit for souterrains between AD 750 and 1250. This may indicate that the souterrain was built as a place of refuge in response to the Viking attacks on Lusk in the early and mid-9th century. However, it should be noted that between the mid-11th and mid-12th centuries, references in the annals would appear to indicate that the *Daimhliag* or stone church was used as a place of refuge (albeit unsuccessfully) in the face of Irish attacks (see above).

The lack of any burial evidence from the area occupied by the souterrain may suggest that the burial ground was disturbed by the construction of the souterrain.

THE LATER MEDIEVAL PERIOD

By the 12th century AD, the monastic lands of Lusk formed part of the estate of the archbishops of Dublin, and this presumably indicates that a parish church had come into being by the time of the Norman invasion (Bradley 1998). It was at this time that the dedication of the church was changed from St MacCullin to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the parish and tithes were bestowed to St Mary's Abbey, Dublin. However, as a *plebania* or mother church, Lusk was in possession of the parochial chapelries at Baldungan, Rush, Knightstown, Kenure, Holmpatrick and Balrothery (including Bremore) (Walsh 1888). The tithes were assigned by the prior and monks of St Mary's to John Comyn (Archbishop of Dublin) in 1188 before the church was assigned as part of the provision for the precentor of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin in 1219 (D'Alton 1838). The church was rebuilt in this period and incorporated a bell tower into the round tower. A *sheela-na-gig* associated with the later medieval church most likely dates to this period, but was subsequently buried in the church grounds (Walsh 1888). In common with many of the other Diocesan manors, a borough was founded by the archbishops of Dublin, probably in the 13th century. It is first referred to in an extent of 1326 which records that 36 burgages were held for an annual rent of 37s. In 1395, the Archbishop of Dublin was granted a Thursday market at his manor of Lusk (Bradley 1998).

A convent of the Augustinian order was founded at Lusk early in the 12th century (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970). It was transferred, about 1195, to Grace Dieu near Swords by Archbishop John Comyn and placed under the rule of the Canoness of St Austin. It was endowed with the tithes of many parishes and with a flagon of ale from every brew in Lusk (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970, Walsh 1888). At the time of the suppression of the reli-

gious orders, the convent of Grace Dieu still held 102 acres and some cottages here. The exact location of the convent in Lusk is not recorded but it is likely the place marked as '*site of old monastery*' in Figure 11.

Some later medieval activity has been recorded at the north of the town including a possible medieval settlement at Ballough (Baker 2003) and a series of ditches and pits on the Skerries Road (Halliday 2007). Additionally, a layer of probable medieval date was recorded in the vicinity of the central ecclesiastical enclosure (Murphy 1998). At Church Road, the later medieval activity was confined to the dismantling and backfilling of the souterrain. It is tempting to speculate that the stone lining removed from the souterrain structure was reused in the construction of the later medieval ecclesiastical buildings.

The subsequent history of the borough is unknown and by the 16th century it was simply a village (Bradley 1998). However, Lusk remains a village with a rich and varied past which continues to provide insights into the archaeology and ecclesiastical history of Fingal.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS ON MOUNT GAMBLE HILL: STORIES FROM THE FIRST CHRISTIANS IN SWORDS

EDMOND O'DONOVAN MA, DIP BUS MGT, MIAI AND JONNY GEBER MA, MA MIAI

INTRODUCTION

Swords is best known historically as the resting place of Brian Boru following his death at the battle of Clontarf in AD 1014. His body lay overnight in the church at Swords, and later processed to Armagh where the High King was buried. A round tower and medieval church survive at the site of the Early Christian monastery, and a substantial medieval archiepiscopal castle (Swords Castle) is located at the top of the main street. The medieval village of Swords has grown around these early sites.

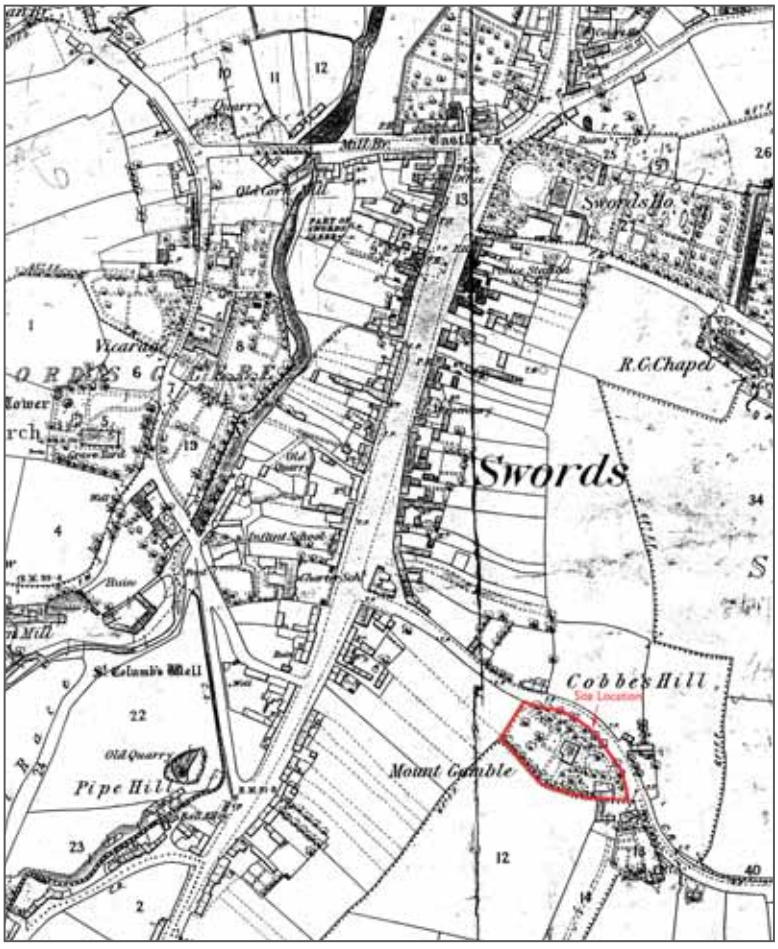

Figure 1: Map of Swords indicating the location of the cemetery at Mount Gamble

The discovery, in 2003, of a previously unknown cemetery at Mount Gamble on the outskirts of Swords has shed new light on about 300 ancient inhabitants of Swords (Figures 1 and 2). The cemetery was in use between AD 550 and 1150, from the end of the Iron Age to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans (the early medieval period). The site was located on a low hillock overlooking Swords, on the southern suburban fringes of the village. This prominent position was later utilised for the site of a previously unknown windmill in the later medieval period. The windmill was a simple timber post-mill built upon a timber frame. The foundations of the mill survived as two intercutting foundation trenches in a simple cross shape. The timber windmill pivoted on the centre point of the intercutting cross-shaped foundation trenches.

The name of the site, Mount Gamble, derives from a house built in the 18th century, which was finally demolished in the 1980s when a supermarket car park was constructed. Mount Gamble House is reputed to have been built in 1701 by Sir Robert Molesworth. There was no known record of a cemetery or folk tradition relating to burial at Mount Gamble prior to its discovery during investigative archaeological work, in advance of the development of a cinema at the site.

IRELAND ON THE EDGE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The origin of Christianity in Ireland was fuelled by changes in the late Roman world (c.AD 400). Contacts with Britain at the time led to the introduction of new objects, such as the zoomorphic penannular brooch, but also brought Ireland into contact with Christianity. Pope Celestine ordained

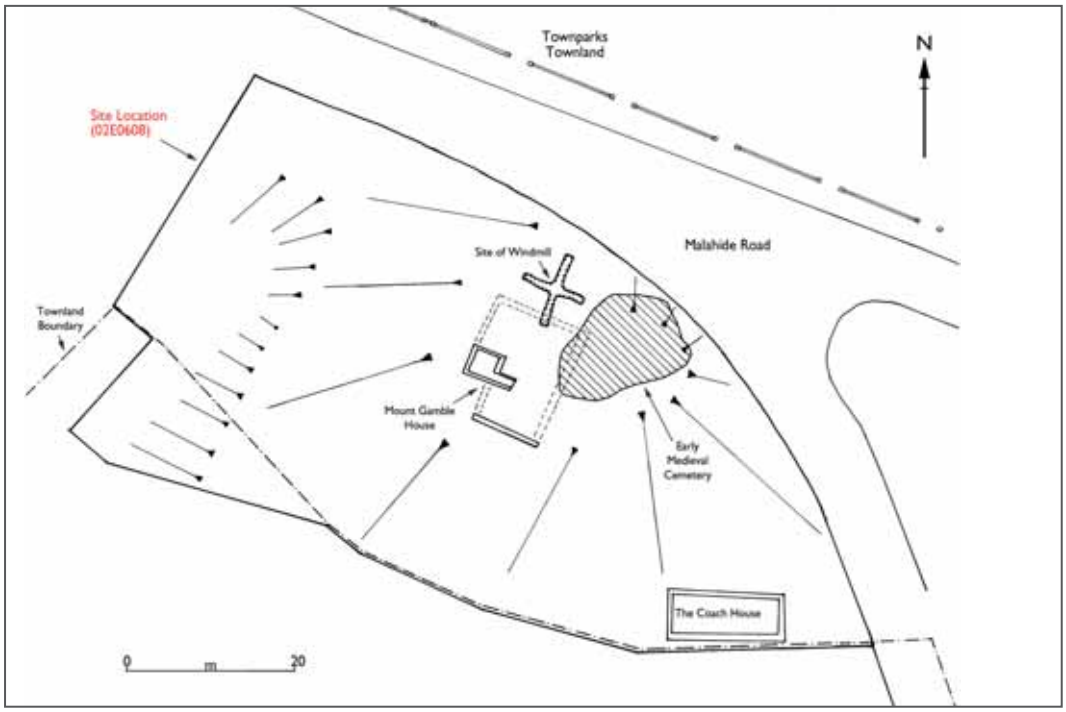

Figure 2: Site plan of Mount Gamble Hill

his first Bishop of the Irish, Palladius, whose mission to Ireland began in 431. The Romans may never have invaded our shores, but the origins of the early Church in Ireland is evidence for Rome's ambition of godly dominion extending beyond its waning western empire. Saint Patrick, and other missionaries in Ireland, led to the changes described by Prosper of Aquitaine that made that 'barbarian island Christian'.

The treatment of the dead through burial was important in both pre-Christian and Christian cultures in Ireland. The typical early Irish Christian burial type was derived from the sub-Roman Christian burial rite of 'supine extended inhumation' (Figure 3). This involved placing the body in a grave orientated west–east. The head was placed at the western end of the grave looking east over the body, so that the deceased could rise on the Day of Judgement and face God in the east (Parker Pearson 2003, 6). This burial form, laying the body in a grave flat on its back, with the arms either by the side or crossed over the torso and with straight legs (supine extended inhumation), was the predominant rite uncovered at Mount Gamble. The principal difference between Christian burial 1,000 years ago and burial today, relates to the current tradition of placing the body in a coffin. Early Christian burials were usually placed in a grave, wrapped in a shroud. A small number of graves at Mount Gamble had unusual burial positions (crouched and flexed burial, Figure 4). These burials have been interpreted as pagan, and relate to pre-Christian burial practices that survived and continued in tandem with 'Christian' burial.

Figure 3: A typical burial at Mount Gamble (supine extended inhumation of a young adult male around 20 years of age)

Figure 4: A 'pagan' crouched burial at Mount Gamble (an approximately nine-year-old child)

THE DATING OF THE CEMETERY

Fifteen burials were radiocarbon dated from the site (Table 1). The dating programme sought to establish the foundation date, using history and terminal date for burial at the site. The cemetery has been interpreted as a natural hillock (Mount Gamble) used as a burial ground for a local family or tribal group between c.AD 550 and 1150. Burial commenced at the site after the introduction of Christianity. There is good evidence that 'pagan' burial practices were in use on the site contemporary with Christian burial. This is reflected in the character of the burial rite, either crouched/flexed inhumation, or extended supine inhumation. However, within these types, a great variation of body positions at burial was observed, and any interpretation may overlook the complexity and variety of burial types within both the 'Christian' and 'pagan' burials revealed at Mount Gamble. The range of grave types (simple unlined graves, stone-lined graves and lintel graves) and body positions (hands, legs, head) changed throughout the use of the site.

The cemetery of pagans and Christians: united in death

Two hundred and eighty one inhumed burials were revealed during the excavation. The cemetery was unenclosed, and was located on a low prominence radiating six to eight metres around the top of the hillock. The burials were up to seven deep at the centre of the cemetery, and became less dense toward the ill-defined edge of the site. The majority of the burials were stratified (75%). However, a quarter (25%) of the burials were unassociated, and these were located predominately on the fringes of the cemetery. Tradition appears to have denoted the location of the site, as opposed to an enclosure, and low grave mounds may have been the only physical presence on the hill identifying the site. However, a single stone-lined post-hole was recorded on the site's eastern edge. A wooden pillar set in the post-hole may have identified the location of the site, although a timber post would have a limited lifespan. No evidence for a stone or timber church, or other building, was discovered.

Table 1: The results of the radiocarbon dating programme at Mount Gamble

Burial No.	Uncal	Dev	2 sigma date		1 sigma date	
# C	1484	28	533	640	549	610
# CCLXXVI	1484	25	538	633	552	607
# CCXII	1448	28	554	653	596	639
# CCLXXX	1318	25	656	765	664	685
# CLV	1257	28	675	853	687	782
# CCXIII	1243	28	680	873	714	788
# CCLXXI	1231	25	687	881	727	802
# CCXLV	1225	29	687	885	729	856
# LXXXVI	1191	28	772	894	785	885
# CXCI	1140	28	810	975	883	953
# CLXX	1079	52	870	1030	894	1010
# LXXIX	1084	26	892	1009	899	987
# CXXXI	1044	31	953	1024	976	1015
# LXXVII	973	30	1002	1125	1017	1038
# XVI	940	25	1020	1164	1028	1155

Christian burial does not usually involve the deposition of grave goods with the body. The practice of not including artefacts in the grave is a deliberate act, where items of material culture are purposely excluded from the burial. This practice reflects the theological tradition within Christianity where worldly goods cannot be brought into the afterlife. Accordingly, very few artefacts were discovered associated with the burials at Mount Gamble. A small number of exceptions were identified. The discovery of aiglets, or lace chapes, used to protect the end of lace cords to tie a shirt or vest to prevent the thread from fraying, suggests that some of the burials were interred in their clothing. The aiglet associated with Burial CCLXXXV was found near the left shoulder of the body. A single female grave (Burial CXXXI) was identified with a simple bronze finger ring on her left hand, fourth digit (Figure 5). The burial of the individual with the finger ring is in contrast to the other burials, and is likely to have remained on the woman's finger as an omission rather than as a deliberate act.

The grave morphology and body position at burial was not consistent throughout the life of the cemetery. The burials at Mount Gamble were broken down into a number of types which can be subdivided into two categories: firstly, the body position of the burial in the grave (crouched, flexed or extended burial position, see Figure 4) and secondly, the lining and placing of grave furniture around the burial (e.g., stone-lined lintel graves and earmuff stones, see Figures 6 and 7).

The earliest dated burial (Burial C) discovered at the site was the grave of a 'high status' adult male buried within a lintel grave (Figure 7). The burial was dated to between AD 549-610. It is possible that this was the first or primary grave that established the cemetery. The high social status of the grave (Burial C) can be inferred from the elaborate lining with lintel stones. Analysis of the skeletal remains indicates that this individual was c. 40-50 years old when he died. Only two of the burials at the cemetery were buried in lintel graves, which is a further indication of the individual's status. Other early burials included crouched and

Figure 5: (Above) Close-up photograph of the finger ring of burial CXXXI *in situ*

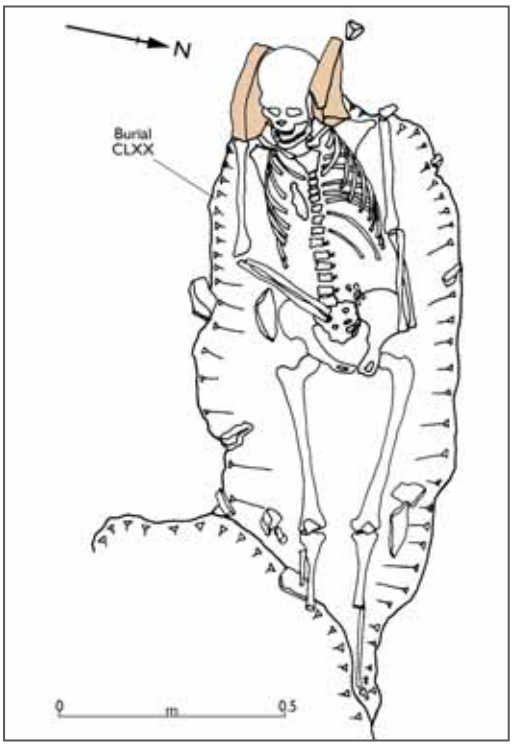

Figure 6: (Left) A burial with earmuff stones at Mount Gamble of a 26-35 year old

Figure 7: (Below) A 'lintel grave' at Mount Gamble, of a male aged over 40 years

Figure 8: Intercutting burials at Mount Gamble. Burial LXXXIII of an approximately six-month-old infant, burial LXXXIV of an seven-year-old child and LXXXVII of an 25-34 year old adult male

flexed burials (Figure 4) representing 6% of the total population. These crouched and flexed burials were identified at the lowest stratigraphic levels contemporary with, and predating, the later extended inhumation burials, representing 50% of the cemetery's total population. It was not possible to establish the definite body position of 44% of the burials; successive interment at the site led to significant disturbance of earlier burials. Inter-cutting burial is a feature of early medieval Irish cemeteries. The practice of interring later burial through, and disturbing, earlier burials was a persistent feature revealed on the Mount Gamble site (Figure 8). This practice is still common in old burial grounds in Ireland in the present day. Again, this practice reflects the Christian perspective that a body is an empty vessels after death: 'for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return' (Genesis 3:19). This perspective would not perceive the disturbance of human remains by subsequent burial in the cemetery at Mount Gamble as disrespectful. The cemetery was important as a place of burial, but the excavated remains would suggest that it was not the nature of the human remains that were important, but the physical space that endured.

Adults dominated the population (61%); juveniles represented about a third (29%) and only a small proportion of the population at the site were infants (10%). The burials in the cemetery appear to be composed from a broad spectrum of the local population, where all ages and sexes were buried on the hillock. No clear divisions were identified within the cemetery, distinguishing between the areas where men or women were buried. However, the eastern quadrant of the site contained a greater proportion of infant burials with adult burials. Clearly, all of the demographic groups were present at the site. The excavated remains were interpreted as a series of successive family grave plots that were reused for 700 years.

The scientific analysis of the skeletons (osteological results)

The excavations at Mount Gamble uncovered the human remains from an entire cemetery. This presented a rare opportunity to fully examine all of the bones of inhabitants of the local and ancient population in Swords. The skeletal remains of a minimum total of 281 individuals were analysed. Of the total number of individuals, 61% were adults, and 39% were juveniles.

The osteological study of the population buried at the cemetery at Mount Gamble displays similar

Figure 9: Burial CCLXXVI. This skeleton of a 30-45 year old female displayed severe spinal degeneration due to several collapsed vertebrae. The condition was likely caused by either trauma or osteoporosis, which had resulted in a curved spine (kyphosis) which was also clearly reflected in the position of the skeleton in the ground

characteristics to other Irish populations where skeletal analysis has been carried out. The average height of the adult females was calculated to 158cm (5 foot 1½ inches), with males measuring up to 168cm (5 foot 5½ inches). The greatest variations were present among the men, with a difference of 32cm between the shortest and the tallest individual. Among the females, the variation was within the range of about 24cm. The male population was, therefore, on average 11cm (4 inches) shorter 1,000 years ago. Females were c. 9cm (3 inches) shorter than males and than late 20th-century Irish females (Garcia and Quintana-Domeque 2007). Differences and change in stature of a population can relate to diet and living conditions.

Osteoarthritic changes in the spine and joints are the most common pathological changes in the skeletons. The females suffered from spinal degeneration to a slightly greater extent than the males (Figure 9). Osteoarthritis usually occurred in the joints of the hands, shoulders, wrists and knees. This suggests a division of labour between men and women, who had different roles, although the effects of multiple pregnancies and other factors may also account for degenerative changes within female skeletons.

Death and disease among the children

Early childhood mortality was high within the population, and one in ten children died within the first year. An example of this was the find of two contemporary neonatal skeletons buried next to each other. Both were aged to the 37th week *in utero*, and are probably the case of prematurely born twins which did not survive. Nevertheless, both were given a formal burial.

The discovery of three skeletons (CCXIX, CCXVIII and CCXX) with deficiency lesions or scurvy, buried together, is another example of potential stresses such as famine that occurred in early medieval times (Figure 10). Scurvy is caused by lack of Vitamin C and B_1 which are found in cabbage, parsley, lettuce, radish, onions, berries, raw meat, milk and other foods (Møller-Christensen 1958, 188). The consequences would be tooth loss, bleeding gums, weakness and eventually death if left untreated.

Skeleton CCXIX was an eight- to nine-year-old child who displayed porotic lesions on the metaphyses of the femora (thigh bone) and also signs of bone infection (proliferated periostitis) on the fibulae (lower leg). A two-year-old child (CCXVIII) was buried on top of and to the left of the eight

Figure 10: (Rght) Burials CCXVIII, CCXIX and CCXX. Possibly all three individuals suffered from scurvy and appear to be interred in a communal grave

to nine year old. The young child had considerable porotic lesions on the internal surface of the skull vault, on the sphenoid bone and the eye sockets (cribra orbitalia).

The third child was a six-month-old infant who displayed fine porotic lesions on the skull vault, the sphenoid bone and the metaphyses of the long bones (CCXX). This infant (CCXX), was buried at the shoulder of skeleton CCXVIII and on top of skeleton CCXIX. These are the only skeletons in the cemetery that displayed pathological lesion patterns consistent with scurvy. Given that all of these burials display similar pathological traits, were interred in the same plot, were buried respecting one another and were all young, could suggest that they were from the same family. This possible familial group appears to have suffered from severe food stress (lack of it) leading to the demise of the most vulnerable individuals, the children. The archaeology of this grave group suggests that these burials were interred in short succession, possibly over the course of a single winter season.

Young adult female deaths and childbirth mortality

There was a higher percentage of females than males in the young adult age category, which is thought to reflect the hazards of pregnancy and childbirth. About five times as many females as males died between the ages of 17 and 25 years. A clear connection between female mortality and pregnancy/childbirth was seen in three cases:

The best preserved case was the complete skeleton of a 20–29-year-old female (CCXLVIII) which had the perfectly articulated skeleton of a fully developed neonatal foetus (CCLIII) in 'birth position' within the pelvis (Figure 11). Osteometric analysis indicated that the neonate was between 38-41 weeks *in utero*. The female probably suffered from complications during the last weeks of her pregnancy or in childbirth, never recovered and died.

An articulated foetus of 30-31 weeks (XXXVIII) was found immediately below the pelvis of an

Figure 11: (Right) Female burial CCXLVIII, with a perfectly articulated foetal skeleton (CCCLIII) in the abdominal region

Table 2. Male skeletons with evidence of interpersonal violence.

Skeleton	Age	Cranial wounds	Postcranial wounds	Decapitation	^{14}C Date
CXCI	18-25 years	1 blade, 1 blunt puncture wound	8 blade, 4 stab wounds	yes	2 sigma Cal AD 810-975
CCLX	25-34 years	2 blade, 1 stab, 4 cut wounds	2 blade, 15 stab wounds	no	
CCLXXVIII	35-44 years	?	3 stab wounds	?	
CCLXXX	25-35 years	Non present	1 stab wound	no	2 sigma Cal AD 656-765
CCLXXXI	25-35 years	2 blade wounds	3 blade, 2 stab wounds	yes	
CCLXXXII	25-35 years	Non present	11 stab wounds	no	

adult woman (XL), which was interpreted as an example of a so-called 'coffin birth'. In the third case, disarticulated foetal remains of 38-40 weeks *in utero* (XXXIX) were found inside the pelvis of an adult female (II) between 18-34 years of age.

Death on the battlefield or around a dark corner

Six young men between the ages of 23 and 44 years showed evidence of weapon-related injuries on their bones, which makes up 11% of all the adults that could be sexed as male (Table 2). A high proportion of the male population died violently. It is possible to speculate on the cause of the weapon injuries which might have been the result of battles and skirmishes or assassinations and murder. All of the skeletons had very masculine traits, and their general stature (174cm: 5 foot 8 ½ inches) was more than 5cm (2 inches) higher than the average for all the males in the population. The tallest individual in the population, 184cm high (6 foot ½ inch), was among the group of skeletons with weapon traumas. The identification of burials with significant weapon traumas, who were robust, tall males suggests that a warrior class elite existed within the population.

The most common injuries were stab wounds, most probably caused by knives, which were present in all individuals with weapon-related injuries. The extent varied greatly, from one individual with a single identified cut in the back (CCLXXX), to another (CCLX) with at least 24 independent cuts, mainly in the back but also in the front and neck.

Figure 12: Burial CXCI, with evidence of multiple perimortem battle trauma

Figure 13: The mandible and first three cervical vertebrae of decapitated burial CXCI, displaying sword cut marks

Figure 14: The left femur of burial CXCI, displaying deep sword-cut marks

Sharp weapon-related cuts, most likely caused by a sword, were present in three individuals. Two individuals, an 18-25 year old (CXCI, Figures 12, 13 and 14) and one 25-35 years old (CCLXXXI, Figure 15), had been decapitated. It was evident in both cases that three attempts had been made before the decapitation was complete, which suggests that both individuals were severely incapacitated at that stage. On both individuals, the blow came from the back and sliced off pieces of the mandible (lower jaw). One of them, (CXCI), had sharp cuts in his left forearm, so it seems probable that he was defending himself with that arm before the fatal blow. He also had cuts on his left femur and knee, and one cut cracked the bone into two pieces, which rendered the individual incapacitated whereupon his head was removed. The other individual (CCLXXXI, Figure 15) had a shallow cut visible on the anterior surface of the body of the twelfth thoracic vertebra, which indicates that a cut penetrated the intestine organs. All these cuts would have needed severe and intense force and they present clear and unambiguous evidence for the violent nature of early medieval society whether originating in battle, through murder, or as punishment. The osteological analysis also revealed evidence for a specific fracture anomaly to the shoulder, known as *os acromiale.* This type of fracture, thought to result from the activity patterns often associated with archery, was present in two of the skeletons with weapon traumas.

It was evident in one individual that his left ear had been cut off (CCLX). Both deep and shallow cuts were identified around the external acoustic meatus on the temporal bone. Only one instance of a double burial was identified at the site: two individuals (CCLXXX and CCLXXXI, both with weapon traumas) were interred in the same grave (Figure 15). The radiocarbon date from the double burial (AD 656-765) indicates that these two burials predated one of the decapitated adult males (CXCI: AD 810-975) by c. 50 years. These dates are significant, since they suggest that the adult males with weapon traumas represent a series of incidents within a broad chronological period rather than a single event.

Figure 15: The double burial CCLXXX and CCLXXXI, both displaying weapon-related injuries which could be determined as the causes of death

CONCLUSIONS

The site at Mount Gamble appears to represent the burial place of a small local population (20 to 30 people). The continuity of burial (one burial every two and a half years) at the site suggests a degree of cultural continuity within the period (AD 550-1150). The period neatly corresponds with the Early Christian period which was characterised at its beginning with the introduction of Christianity and the end of the late pre-historic Iron Age. Burial at the site ends with the coming of the Anglo-Normans. This is unlikely to be coincidental, and clearly reflects two major cultural changes within Ireland at the time.

Evidence of violence on the skeletal remains reflects the stresses and conflicts within the population at Mount Gamble. The presence of violent weapon traumas on the bones must be viewed in that context. The graves were not the same, and the status of individuals, or their social standing, is revealed by the presence of stones lining the graves and through other archaeological signatures such as body position.

Future analysis of the Mount Gamble site, and other cemeteries in the wider Dublin region, will help to establish a relative chronology for the morphology and body position of graves at the site. This analysis will further inform our understanding of the population in and around Swords in the centuries after the introduction of Christianity, and the nature of that society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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BREMORE, CO. DUBLIN, THE FIELD BY THE CASTLE

FINOLA O'CARROLL MIAI

INTRODUCTION

North of Balbriggan lies the townland of Bremore, (parish of Balrothery, barony of Balrothery East) in Fingal, north County Dublin, (Figure 1). Close to the town is the site of St Molaga's Church and churchyard, and of Bremore Castle, a fortified house possibly of 15th or 16th century date (though it may contain earlier elements). In 2001, testing followed by excavation (licence nos. 01E311 and 01E370) was undertaken by the author for CRDS Ltd, and on behalf of the client, in a pasture field of about 4.5 hectares as a housing development was planned (and has since been built by Gannon Homes). The field lay immediately to the north of the castle, and was separated from it by a laneway running east–west from the main road. The castle is being restored by Fingal County Council and FÁS (Figure 2). Also in Bremore townland and 1.5km north of the castle, is a passage tomb cemetery on a headland overlooking the sea (Figure 3). South of this was the fishing village of Newhaven, which was recorded on Rocque's map of County Dublin (1760). The N1 road bounds the field to the west, and the sea lies approximately 300m to the east.

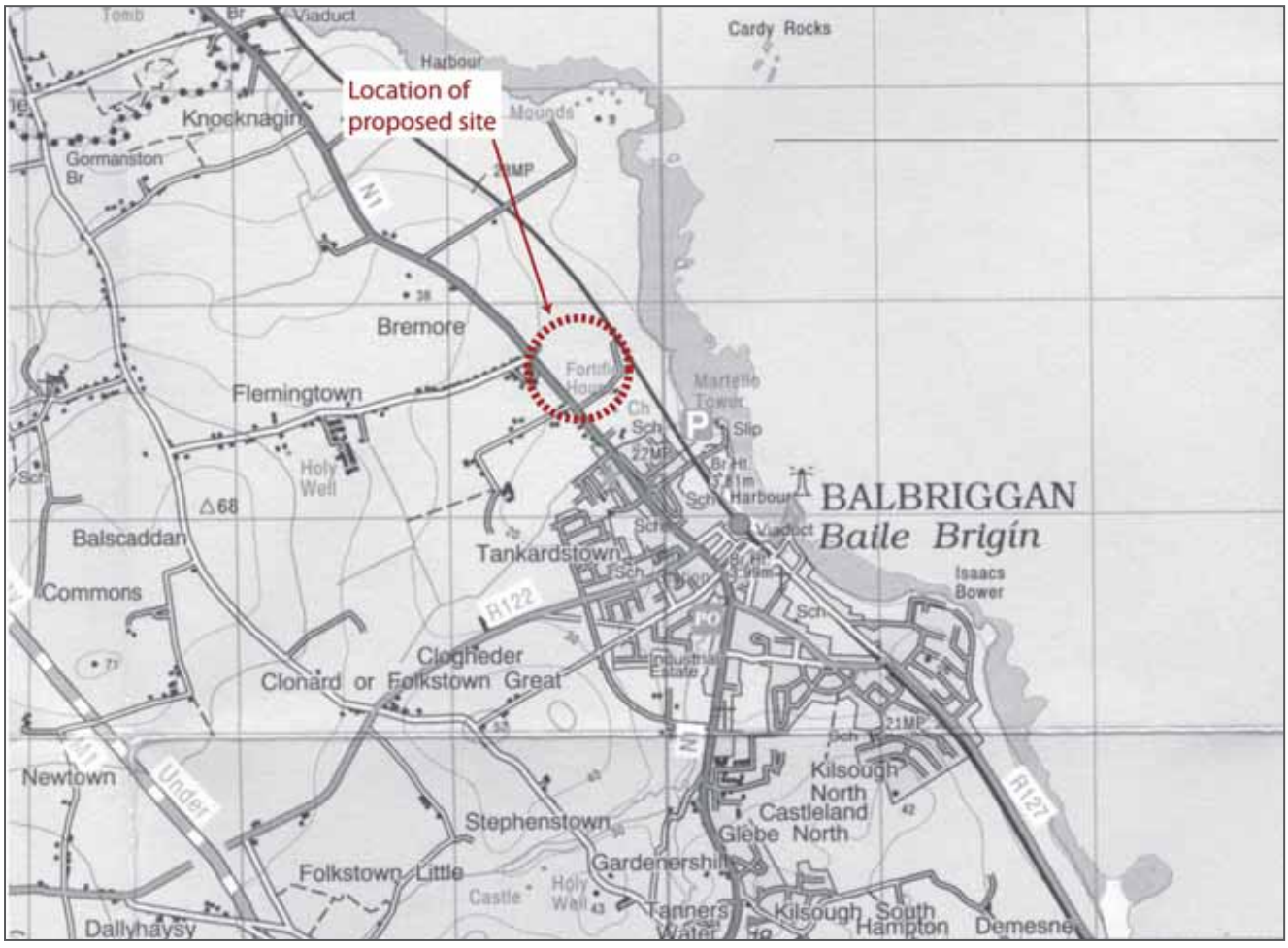

Figure 1: Map showing location of the townland of Bremore.

Figure 2: Bremore Castle which is currently being restored by Fingal County Council and FÁS

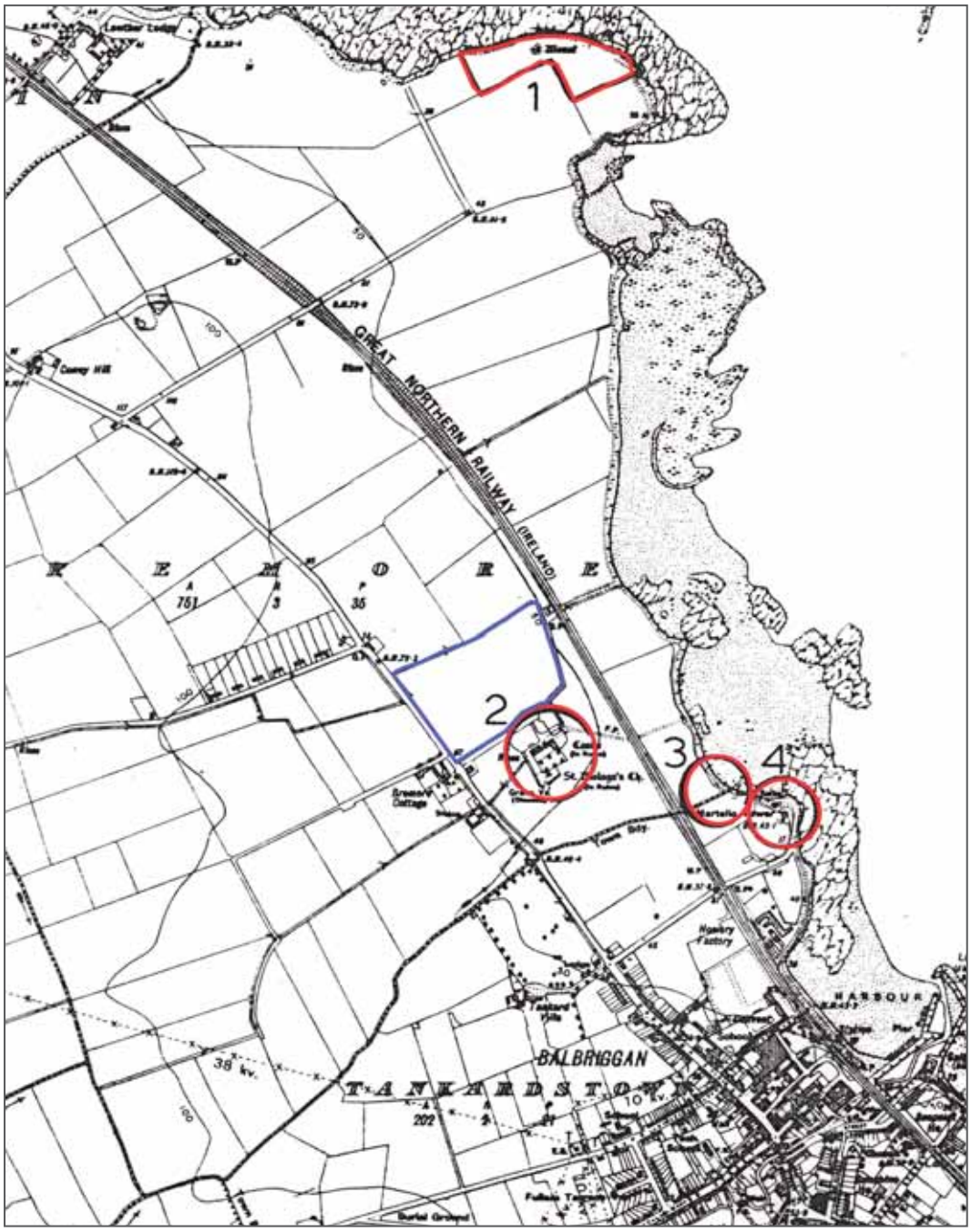

Figure 3: The RMP sites in the vicinity of Bremore

The townland is 742 acres in extent, and to this day it comprises mostly agricultural land, though this is changing rapidly.

The initial testing phase (Figure 4) revealed archaeological features of predominantly medieval and post-medieval date, confirmed by subsequent excavation. As expected, the greatest density of archaeological features across the field was closest to the castle.

Figure 4: Testing in Bremore

BACKGROUND

Prehistory

A palaeochannel, or old stream bed, crossed the field from east to west about 30m from its northern boundary. The stream had been rerouted prior to 1760, into the field boundary and is shown like this on Rocque's map (Figure 5). One possibly prehistoric feature, a hearth with shattered burnt stone and some flint, was found on the northern side of the palaeochannel. Only a small amount of flint was recovered from the whole field during testing and excavation, in contrast to that which has been collected by fieldwalkers working in the vicinity of the Bremore passage tombs. Here, flint is abundant, and finds of medieval ceramics very rare. It would appear that the focus of settlement was near this headland in the prehistoric period, and shifted southwards in the early medieval and medieval periods.

Early medieval

The first historical references to Bremore concern a church which was founded by St Molaga, who was associated with St David of Menevia, in the 7th century. A reference in the *Felire Oengusso Celi De* (*The Martyrology of Oengus*), edited by W. Stokes (Stokes, 1905), is firmly dated to the last

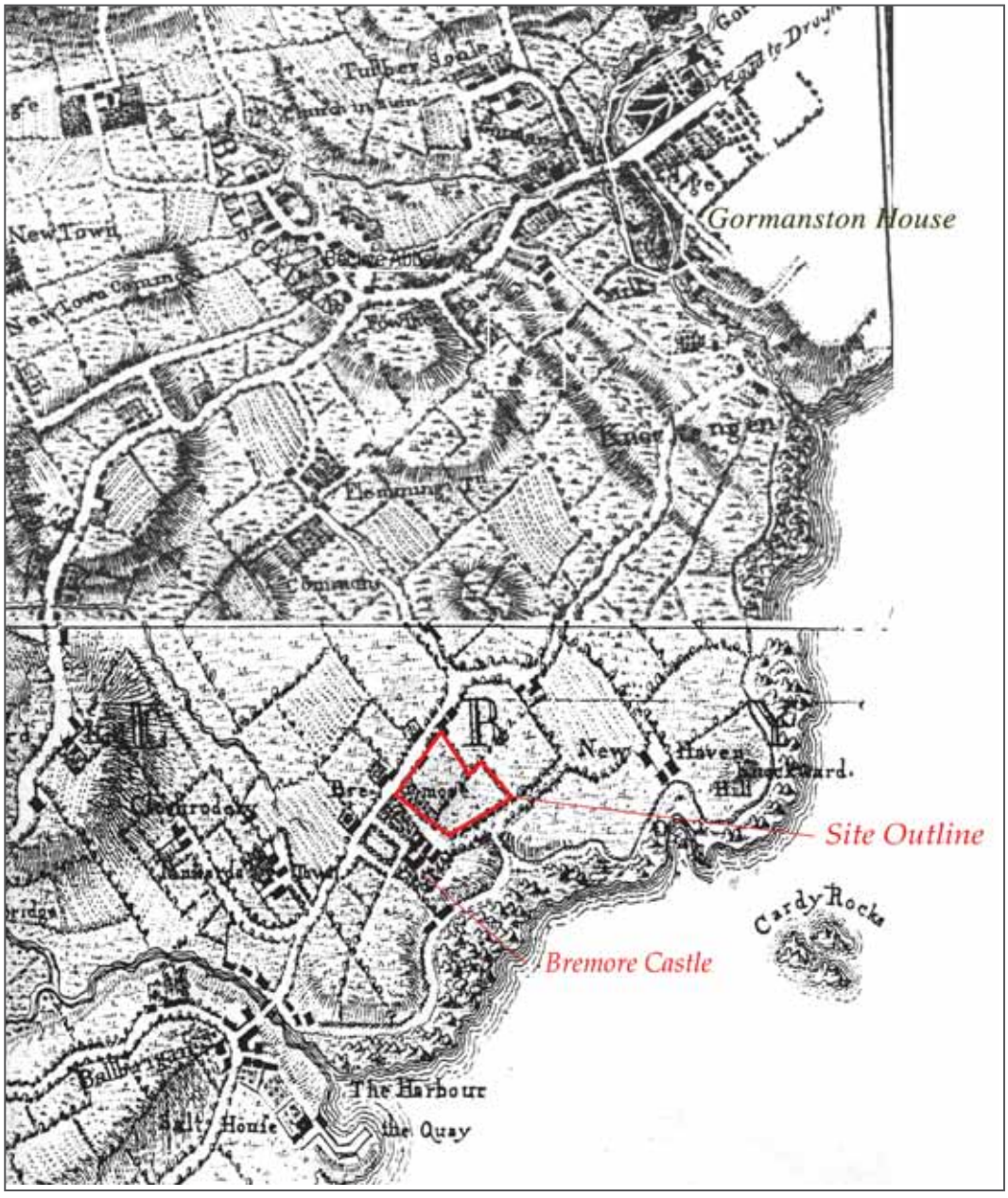

Fig. 5: Rocque's map of 1760, showing the land around Bremore

decade of the 8th century. It lists '*Land bechuir i mBregaib*', or '*the church of the bee-keeper in the territory of Brega*', Brega being the territory or kingdom which, in the 8th century, included most of the land between the Boyne and the Liffey and all of what is now Fingal. The reference is to the 8th century tradition, which links this site to the introduction of beekeeping from Wales by St Molaga in the 7th century. Later sources suggest that it was another pupil of David of Menevia, Mo-Domnóc, who introduced the bees, (MacSamhráin, 2005, 131). The use of the Welsh term for church, '*Llan* or '*Land*' in Irish also suggests a connection with the Welsh church. This tradition is preserved in the local name for the area, *Lambeacher*, which retains references to both the Welsh word for church, and the Irish word for beekeeper, *beachaire*.

The *Annals of Inisfallen* (s.a. 1164) also make reference to the monastery, which came under the control of the Augustinian Priory of Tristernagh in Westmeath shortly afterwards. The existing church remains would appear to represent a manorial chapel attached to the castle. The church continued in use as a local church and burial ground, even after the Reformation.

However, nothing of that period was uncovered in the course of these excavations. It is very likely that the monastic settlement was to the south of the castle, on a gentle south-facing slope between two streams

13th to 15th centuries

A few references to Bremore survive from the 14th and 15th centuries. The earliest relate to the Rosselle or Rosel family: a '*Wylliam Rosselle, lord of Dunbegh in Co Derbi in England, and Bremore in Ireland*' is mentioned in the *Gormanston Register* (Mills and McEnery 1916, 16); '*William Rosel de Brimor*' is also referred to in the *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland* in 1299-1300 (Sweetman 1886, 333). These references indicate that a manorial seat, with some associated structure, probably existed here from the end of the 13th century.

The lands of Bremore passed to the Barnewall family during the 14th century. In 1316, the family acquired substantial holdings in north Country Dublin through the marriage of Wolfran de Barnewall to the daughter of Robert de Clahull (Ball, 1906, 127). It seems likely that Bremore was acquired at this time.

In 1395, Wolfran Barnewall's grandson, also named Wolfran, was recorded as holding land in: '*Balyrothery, Balybrydyn, Ballydongan, Brymore, Molanorath & Ballythormot*' (Brewer, 1810, 148). Other references to the Barnewall holdings during the 14th and 15th centuries do not mention Bremore, but a number refer to their manor of Balrothery (Brewer, 1810, 137, 203, 211, 213).

In 1435, Wolfran Barnewall vested his lands, including '*three houses, two mills and a dovecot*' with a trustee, Luke Barnewall (Ball, 1906, 127-128; Brewer, 1810, 211). In 1460, his eldest surviving son, John Barnewall, was living at Drimnagh. His son, Robert Barnewall, was in possession of the manors of Drimnagh, Balrothery, and Ardee in 1535 (Griffith, 1991, No 80).

The absence of specific references to a castle in these early sources should not be construed as meaning none was there. While datable elements within the structure, would suggest construction in the 16th century, it may have incorporated an earlier structure or occupied the same site.

16th to 17th centuries

The Barnewalls of Bremore begin to appear frequently in the surviving sources from the mid-16th century onwards. '*James Barnewall ancestor to family of Brymore*' is described in the family pedigree as the son of the third baron of Trimleston, Lord Chancellor John Barnewall, who died in 1538 (N.L.I. Pos 8304; O' Dowd, 2000, 338).

Though apparently a minor branch of the Barnewall family, the Bremore Barnewalls appear to have rapidly accumulated lands and office. James Barnewall, appointed to the office of Justice of the Liberty of C Wexford in 1550, later served as a commissioner of the peace for County Dublin, and

became Attorney General, (Nicholls, Vol I, 147, Vol II, 23). The castle at Bremore became the primary seat of a wealthy and influential family.

Bremore Castle appears to have been the seat of James Barnewall for most of his life. An inquisition from 1567 gives an impression of the extent his holdings:

> James Barnewall of Bremore, gent., & Margaret St. Laurence his wife were seised of a castle, 8 mes., a dovecot, gardens & 132a. in Brymore & Clonuske, co. Dublin, held from Edward Barnewall of Dromnagh as of his manor of Balrotherie in socage by one red rose p.a. on St. Johns day & suit of court twice a year, 6 mes., a dovecot & 154a in Crucerath, co.Dublin, held of the queen & Patrick Barnewall of Krickston as of the manor of Castelknocke by royal service, 4 ten. in Balrotherie & Balbriggan, held of Edward Barnewall by fealty & suit of court to the manor of Balrotherie (Griffith, 1991, 184-5).

Bremore appears to have been a subordinate manor within Balrothery, held in socage from the primary branch of the Barnewall family at Drimnagh. It may not have merited separate description until the 16th century when it became the seat of a wealthy family.

James Barnewall died on 10 September 1566, leaving his 16-year-old son John as heir (Griffith, 1991, 188). John married Eleanor Dowdall, gaining additional lands. By the time of his death in 1606, the extent of the family estates had increased substantially. An inquisition in 1607 (Griffith, 1991, 352) gives the following description of the properties in and around Bremore:

> John Barnewall of Bremore, esq., was seised of the manor of Brymore, all lands etc in Clonuske, Orde (possibly Newhaven), Flemington, Moylaragh beside Flemingeton & Plunkett's land beside Moylaragh, 600a in all, held from…Barnewall of Dromnaghe by 1 red rose p.a, 1 ten & curtilage in Balbrigen & 8 ten. & 40a called Newman & Persephan's freehold in Bahotherie.

John Barnewall's properties passed on to his eldest son James, who married the heiress of the Barnewalls of Drimnagh, Elizabeth (Griffith 1991, 440). Despite protracted litigation over his Drimnagh inheritance, it appears that James acquired a substantial portion (Ball 1906 129). He died in June 1617, and was succeeded by Matthew Barnewall, (*Calendar of Inquisitions*, James I).

In 1640, Matthew Barnewall of Bremore was one of the major landowners in the county (Aalen & Whelan, 1992, 142). Matthew became involved in the Confederate Wars, and was attainted for treason in 1642 (Griffith, 1991, 415). Contemporary descriptions describe him as a leader of Confederate forces in the area (Borlase, 1680, 62).

The *Civil Survey* of 1654-6 provides an extensive listing of the properties of Matthew Barnewall in Dublin and Meath. It describes '*Breemore & Newhaven*' as a single unit:

> There is upon Breemore one Burnt Castle with a great Barne & eight tenements one orchard & parke with some small young Ashtrees & on Newhaven ten small cottages both valued by the Jury at one hundred & ten poundes (they being both as one).

The holding consisted of 300 plantation acres: 150 acres of arable land, 10 acres of meadow, and 140 of pasture. The Survey describes Newhaven as '*a fishing towne on ye said land*' (Simington 1945, 4).

The census of 1659 lists the populations of Newhaven and Bremore as 34 and 42 respectively (Pender 1939, 384). A loose multiple of three has been applied to figures given in the census to estimate the total population at a parochial or baronial level. This would suggest populations of 102 and 126 for Bremore and Newhaven, indicating the possible presence of a village or hamlet at Bremore.

Matthew Barnewall died in 1668, and his lands passed to his brother, James Barnewall (Simington, 1949). James was one of the signatories of the Roman Catholic Remonstrance in 1661 (D'Alton, Reprint 1997, 7).

18th century to the present day

Eleanor, the daughter and heir of James, married Walter Bagenal in 1706. The couple appear to have lived on Walter's own estates in County Carlow. Walter was forced to sell the entire Barnewall estate for just £7,000 in 1725, to settle accumulated debts. At this time the estates, including Bremore and Drimnagh, had an estimated total worth of £40,000. The estates then entered into the possession of the first Earl of Shelbourne, represented in Ireland by the Marquis of Lansdowne (Bagenal, 1925, 140).

The Lansdowne family appear to have remained the primary landowners until the 19th century. Richard Cadell occupied the castle and the adjacent land before 1736. Austin Cooper visited the castle, which was uninhabited, in 1783. He described an incident at the castle in 1736 when the sheriff of County Dublin, seeking to evict the castle's occupant, Captain McCullough, was forcibly opposed by the Captain and his family (Price, 1942, 83).

The *Tithe Applotment Books* of 1833 give the total property in Bremore townland as 729 acres and list seven tenants, including John King. The *Primary Valuations* shows that John King occupied the land adjacent to the castle with a 'House, Office & Land' on 265 acres. The land was valued at £218 (*Tithe Applotment Books*, County Dublin, Parish of Balrothery; *Primary Valuations)*. The castle appears to have been partially demolished at this stage. The *Dublin Penny Journal* of 1833 notes that:

> Bremore Castle..to the discredit of the present proprietor has been taken down.
> (*Dublin Penny Journal*, 1833, No 28 Vol. I, 1)

The King family remained in possession until 1936. Though the castle was not inhabited in the latter half of the 19th century, the *Valuations* descriptions would suggest that the modern farm buildings originated at this time, and the land directly adjacent to the castle was being farmed (Dix, 1887, 68).

The excavations

The excavations at Bremore confirmed that the area in the vicinity of the castle was in agricultural use from the medieval period to the time of the construction of the modern housing development. They showed how this area was laid out and utilised and documented the changes brought about by the agricultural activities. Changes during the later periods have also been illustrated by Rocque's map of County Dublin, 1760 (Figure 5), and by the first edition of the Ordnance Survey (six inch map, 1837-43) (Figure 6).

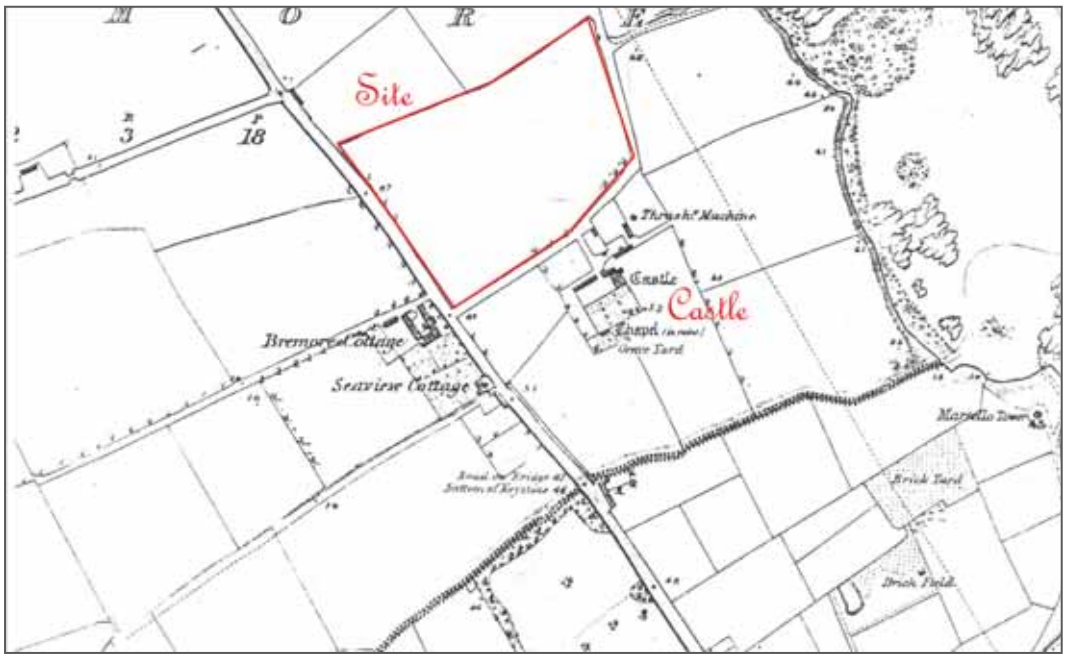

Figure 6: Ordnance Survey map 1837-1843

Figure 7: Test trenches looking south to the castle

The site, which was about 4.5 hectares, was initially tested by digging 14 trenches east–west across it, 15m apart (Figure 7). A number of things were immediately obvious. Firstly, medieval pottery was recovered from all trenches, increasing significantly at the southern end. Secondly, in the northern two-thirds of the site, the features uncovered appeared to be field drains, furrows or ditches/gullies. Thirdly, the colour of the topsoil was noticeably darker in the southern end where unmortared stone, some brick and extensive deposits of organic soils with pottery were predominant. Finds from the topsoil there were principally of medieval pottery, with a small amount of post-medieval pieces.

Thus, the focus of the excavations was on this southern end of the field, in effect a strip 35m wide by 175m long. Some other localised areas were also examined. Excavation was targeted at those areas where the proposed development would result in the complete removal of all archaeological deposits, with no possibility of their preservation *in situ*, and also on the areas with the greatest potential for significant archaeological remains. In all a total of 2,122 square metres was fully investigated.

The medieval field and its wider context

It was quickly realised that this southern area was largely occupied by a field which was defined by two ditches running roughly east–west from the modern western boundary of the site. This field was approximately 40m wide and 150m long. It has been possible to work out phases of activity, from roughly the 13th century to the 19th century, and these are primarily based on the relationship of the various features with the southernmost ditch, and. to a lesser extent, with the northern ditch.

13th to 15th centuries

Prior to the setting out of the field, the area was already used for cultivation, as shown by a number of features which all occurred on the southern side of the site. One was a shallow, flat-bottomed broad feature, which produced Leinster Cooking Ware and 13th- to 14th-century local wares. As it did not have the characteristic features of a rubbish or cesspit, it has been suggested that this feature may have been the remains of a manure heap which had been situated on the spot for many years and had altered the underlying ground (T. Cummins pers. comm. Figure 8, pre-field phase).

The ditches that defined the field were at least two metres wide by one metre deep (Figure 9, field phase). There was evidence for an internal bank, which may have been faced in stone. The shape of the field, a long, narrow rectangle running east–west, suggests that it could have been ploughed along its long axis. However, the presence of north–south running furrows complicates this, as the field would seem to be too narrow to have used a draught team across its width. This criss-cross furrow pattern, together with deeper north–south gullies, indicate that the field was subdivided into a number of plots at some point in its history. Within these were pits which were quite deep, up to two metres in some cases, which had, in general, an expanded mouth. As all of these penetrated the water table, they have been interpreted as wells or cisterns, used to irrigate the crops. Their fills suggest deliberate back-filling rather than gradual silting or use as general rubbish pits, though they all produced a quantity of

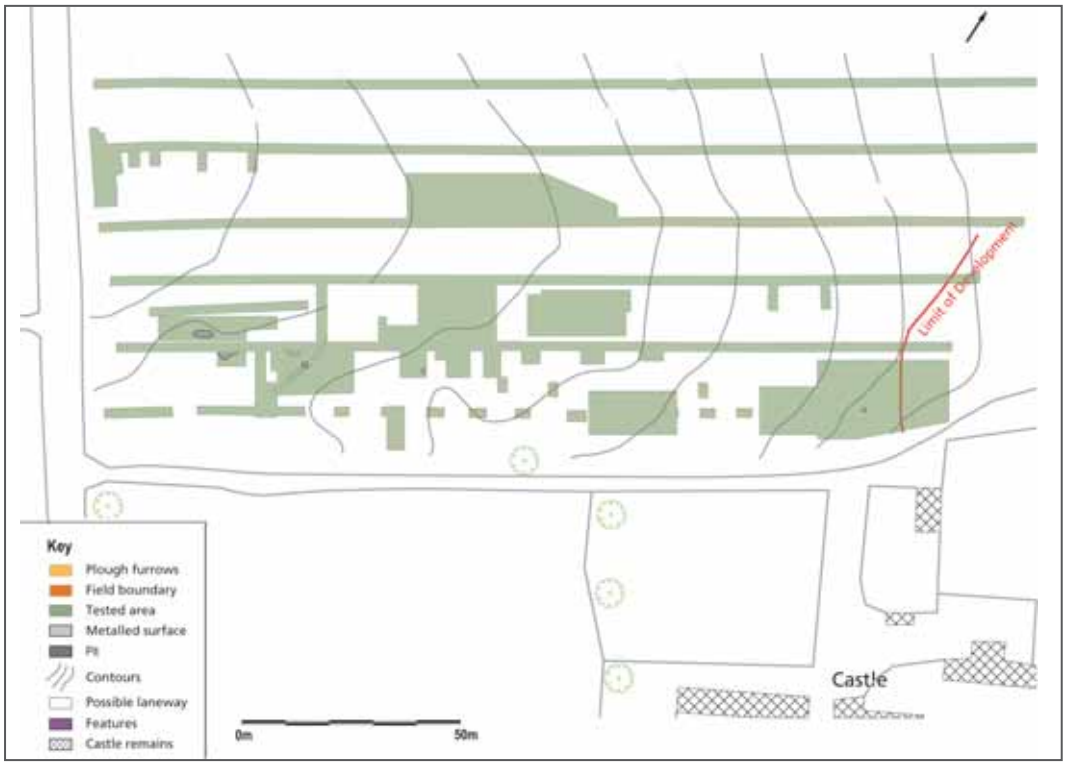

Figure 8: Medieval features, pre-field phase

medieval finds and animal bone. Analysis of charred remains from the furrows yielded evidence for cereal grains, principally wheat, though barley, oats and legumes were also represented (Johnson, 2003). This suggests a pattern of intensive cultivation and crop rotation.

Finds from this phase mostly consisted of pottery of medieval date, which fell into three main groups: 13th- to 14th-century local glazed wares; 14th- to 15th-century glazed wares, and cooking wares, mostly Leinster Cooking Ware, which constituted almost 40% of all medieval pottery recov-

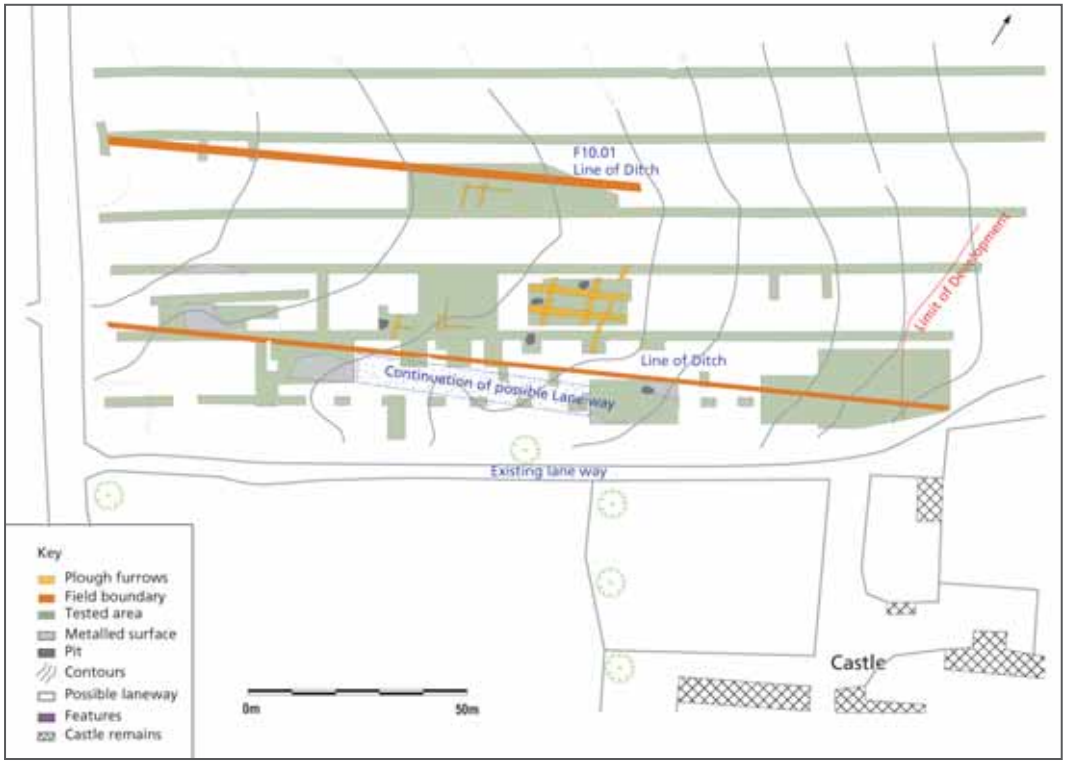

Figure 9: Field phase

Figure 10: Medieval pottery recovered at the site

ered (Figure 10). There was very little imported medieval pottery.

16th to 17th centuries

A metalled surface was found crossing the southern side of the site and flanking the southern ditch of the field. It appeared to have been a laneway extending from the Balbriggan–Drogheda road into the castle, although this could not be confirmed through excavation due to later disruption. This probably formed a second entrance to the castle, as there appears to have been an approach to its southern side also. This lane lies between the ditch and the present laneway to the castle, and has a slightly different orientation to the present lane (Figure 8).

The layout of the field must have been dictated by the local topography, as well as its proximity to the castle. The area of the field is slightly higher than the surrounding ground. To the north, the ground drops gently to the line of the old streambed. To the south, there is a sharper, short drop and the ground dips and rises again very slightly to the modern southern boundary. Presumably, the terrain would have favoured ease of drainage, enhanced by the presence of the ditches and the natural overall fall of the ground to the south-east. A larger pattern can be detected also. The line of the southern ditch continues the line of a laneway to the west of the site across the N1, known locally as Hamlet Lane (see Figures 4 and 8). This strongly suggests that the field was not laid out in isolation, but was part of a larger pattern of fields and associated laneways. It seems also that the line of the main road was altered slightly in the late 18th century (see Figures 3 and 4) meaning that this lane was now no longer perpendicular to the road.

The metalled laneway seemed to extend into wider yard-like areas at both the eastern and western ends of the site. Traces of a structure, possibly a mud-walled cabin, were associated with this surface at the east end. At the west end, there appeared to be some entrance feature across the ditch, possibly indicating access from a yard area to the lane proper. It is likely that there were other cabins along the lane, and that those who worked the lands around the castle lived here, possibly using plots in the field to provide food for themselves as well as for the castle inhabitants.

At a later stage, sometime in the late 16th to early 17th centuries, there were further changes, and a number of shallow bowl-like pits cutting the previous pattern of furrows and gullies, were uncovered (Figure 11). The most likely explanation for these is of tree-planting holes,. This, together with evidence for more generalised landscaping, such as filling in of hollows and the creation of a terrace inside the line of the ditch, suggests the transformation of the field into parkland, or an orchard area.

The metalled areas and lane continued in use. Two finds of Elizabethan coins dating to 1601–1602, one found in association with the metalled yard surface at the eastern end of the site, and one with a sandy deposit associated with the metalled spread, confirm this and suggest phases of renewal.

The post-medieval pottery constituted a small corpus of 296 pieces, and was predominantly 16th to 18th century in date, with very little later materi-

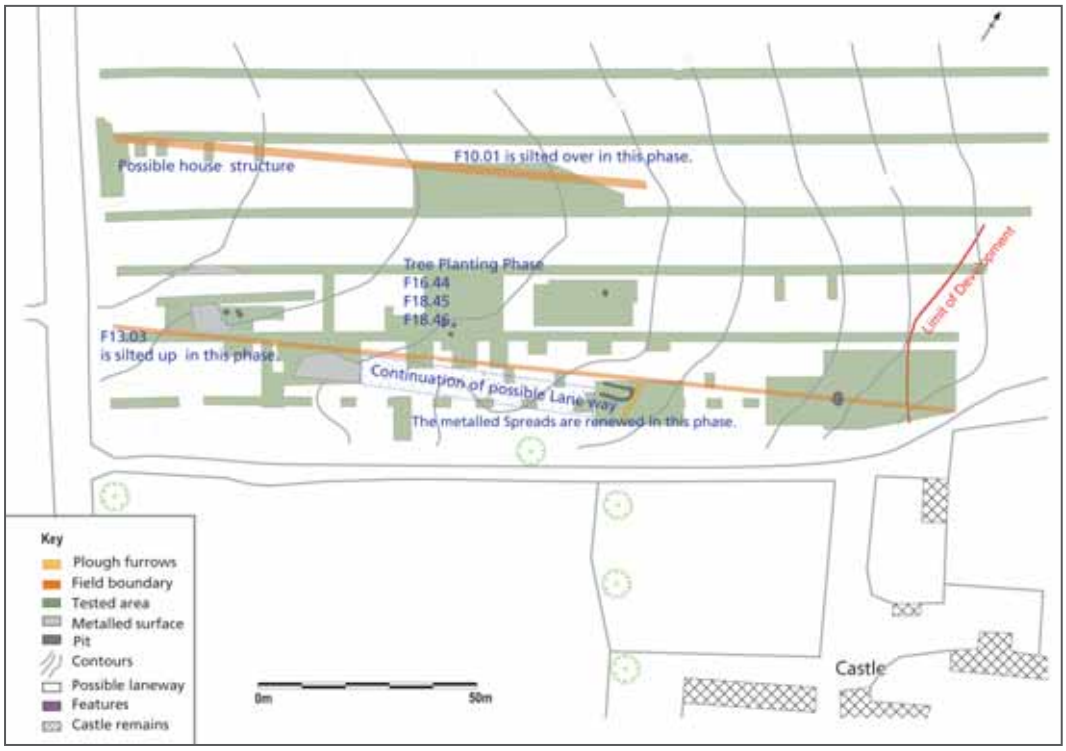

Figure 11: The late medieval and post-medieval features

al. There was a mixture of local and imported wares, from England, France, Germany and the Low Countries. The most unusual finds were a six-pound cannonball and a sundial, of a type known as a mass or scratch dial (Figure 12). The cannonball was found in the spoil from an engineer's test pit, prior to any archaeological work, and was not found under controlled conditions, so its context is unknown. It is presumed that it relates to the attack on the castle during the Confederate Wars (1641).

Keeping time: the Mass Dial

The date of the Mass Dial (Figure 12), recovered from one of the possible cisterns in the field, is unclear. From the associated pottery finds it could be argued to be no later than 15th century. However, given the history of the site, the backfilling of these pits may relate to activities of a slightly later date, Dials of such type are dated anywhere from the 15th to the 17th centuries. It is 12.5cm in diameter, etched onto slate, with equal spacing of all the hour lines. It is damaged, so the numbers, which are etched as roman numerals around the circumference, do not fully survive. As the numbers run clockwise, it is a horizontal dial and this makes it very rare, though it is very closely paralled by one from Nendrum (Arnaldi 2000, fig. 35). There is a dial from Donaghpatrick in County Meath which is similarly laid out, but not numbered. This was studied by Patricia Ryan, who believed it too was a horizontal dial (Ryan 1982). There are records of only three horizontal mass dials in Britain, two on the west coast of Scotland and one in Cambridgeshire (Bowling and Wood 2002). It is likely that the Bremore dial came from the manorial chapel attached to the castle.

Figure 12: The Mass Dial

18th century

Subsequently, the yard areas went through a number of phases of use, continuing into the late 18th or early 19th centuries. At the western end, there was evidence for metal-smithing activities, and at the eastern end, a series of pits containing bricks, which suggests nearby brick manufacture. The field to the south of the castle is known locally as the Brick field (see Figure 4).

While a number of broad phases of use of the site can be determined, it is also possible to suggest a correlation between these and the known history of Bremore Castle, particularly during the time it was in the possession of the Barnewall family.

DISCUSSION

The historical evidence may suggest that the earliest identified phase of medieval activity may tie in with the period when the area was owned by the family of William Rosselle, (p 79). It is unknown what kind of dwelling house may have existed then, or where it might have been, but on the pottery evidence there must have been habitation nearby during this period.

The setting out of the field, and indeed of a wider managed farm, possibly marks the period where Bremore came into the possession of the Barnewall family as their wealth was increasing. Construction or modification of the castle may have started in or around the late 14th or 15th century, and the pottery record suggests that there was some substantial settlement close by from which it, and the bone detritus, was derived.

The transformation of the field into either an orchard or parkland was seen in both the archaeological and historical records. An orchard and young ash trees are mentioned in the description of the castle in the *Civil Survey*. This activity may be owing to the fact that the Bremore Barnewalls had increased their wealth considerably by marriage, especially that of James Barnewall to a cousin, Elizabeth Barnewall, heiress of the Barnewalls of Drimnagh. It is reasonable to suggest that either James, or his son Matthew, embarked on major refurbishments of both the castle and the surrounding property. The mass dial may have been removed from a position near the church at this time.

For the final period of use of the site, we can use the cartographic evidence, especially Rocque's map (Figure 3), and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey six inch sheet (Figure 4), to see the changes taking place. It is clear that the two fields represented in Rocque's map do not relate to the field laid out in the 14th century, though the area of trees to the north of the lane leading to the castle roughly marks its location. We know that the land passed out of the Barnewall family's possession in 1725. The castle continued for some time in occupation, but by 1783 was unoccupied. At some point at the end of the 18th century, or early in the 19th century, the area was remodelled once more. The stream at the northern side of the site was diverted, and the boundary of one field extended northwards. The ditches, which had marked out the medieval field and flanked the laneway forming an extension eastwards from Hamlet Lane (see Figure 8), were completely filled in and a drain inserted. The laneway itself was moved southwards, as was the field boundary, probably because that area of the field, where the lane had been, was low-lying and prone to flooding. The expansion of the eastern end of the lane, shown in Rocque's map, was closed in. At this stage too, the north–south field boundary was removed, and the area became one large open field, and had remained so until the present development. But this is a field with a complex history, illustrating the formation and transformation of a medieval and post-medieval landscape.

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FINGAL'S PAST IN THE PRESENT: AN OVERVIEW

CHRISTINE BAKER MA, MIAI

INTRODUCTION

Stand anywhere in Fingal and the chance is that you are standing on or near archaeology. Sometimes it is visible: a church tower, a castle wall, an old graveyard or grassy mound. More often than not it is invisible, buried beneath the ground, waiting to be discovered. The other papers in this volume have shown just how rich and exciting the unseen legacy in Fingal is of those who have gone before us.

FINGAL'S PAST

Compiled by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland, the 'Record of Monument and Places' records just over 600 archaeological sites and monuments, within the boundaries of Fingal (Figure 1). While at first glance this may seem a substantial number, it is estimated that there are in or around 150,000 archaeological monuments in the country altogether. Added to that, over a quarter of Fingal's monuments have no surface expression: that is the

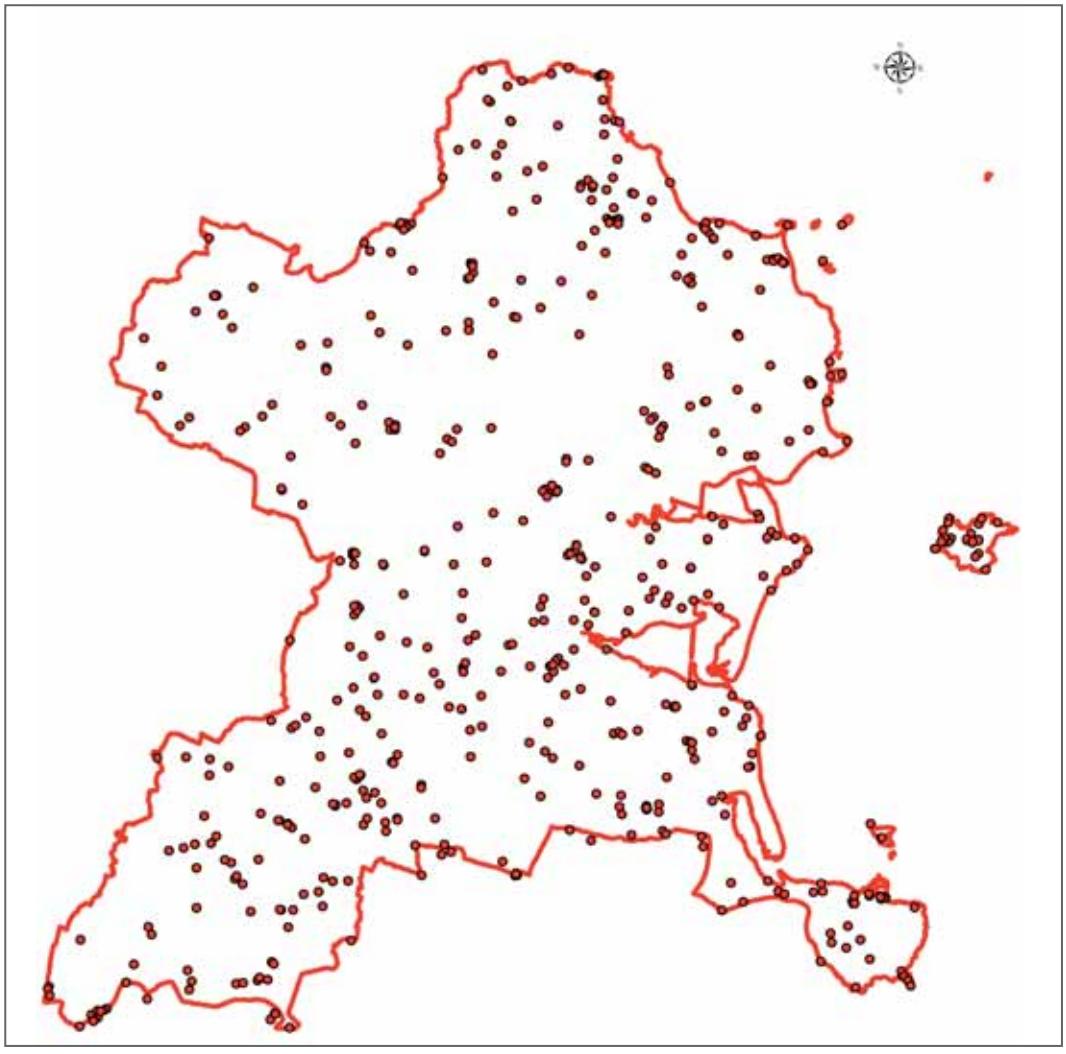

Figure 1: Distribution of archaeological monuments in Fingal

Figure 2: Swords round tower and belfry

Figure 3: Aideen's Grave, portal tomb

remains are sub-surface, hidden under otherwise ordinary looking fields and hills. One of the reasons for this is that the fertile plains of Fingal have always been the subject of settlement and intense agricultural activity. Each generation has swept aside part of the past; farmers have replaced foragers, intensive agriculture has replaced pasture and, most recently, development has replaced open fields.

The earliest evidence for Fingal's past inhabitants is to be found along the coast. Fingal has a lengthy coastline which was utilised to great effect by the first peoples who foraged and fished. Their legacy within the landscape, perhaps like their lifestyle, had a low impact on their surroundings. The evidence for their activities thus far was confined mainly to shell middens (dumps of shells and animal bones sometimes called kitchen middens) and flint tools, found along the coastline from Sutton and Malahide to Balbriggan and on Lambay island.

By contrast, the farmers of the Neolithic (c.4000-2400BC) had a much greater impact on the landscape. Their lifestyle involved the clearance of the land to form fields for the newly introduced animals and crops, the creation of a new landscape. These developments saw changes in the material assemblage used to exploit the natural resources. Again in the coastal area, naturally occurring flint was put to good use and struck into tools and weapons. Evidence for this has been found as extensive flint scatters or the occasional stray find, from Bremore to Lambay Island, and from Feltrim Hill to Backweston. One of the largest scatters was that found at Paddy's Hill, Robwalls, near Malahide where c.3000 flint tools – including axeheads, scrapers, blades, knives and arrowheads – were recovered (D. Keeling 1980-84). Axeheads have been found across Fingal in myriad locations, including back gardens in Skerries and Kellystown and through excavation at Flemington (see Bolger, this volume), indicating their importance not only as a functional tool but also as an indicator of wealth. As can be seen in Gabriel Cooney's paper, axes produced at the axe factory on Lambay Island were of porphyry, a non-functional but highly symbolic rock.

Treatment of the dead was one of the most striking innovations of the Neolithic. This period saw the introduction of the megalithic tomb, which can be divided into court tombs, portal tombs, passage tombs and wedge tombs.

As the name suggests, portal tombs are defined by two large portals and a large capstone. There is a spectacular example surviving just below Muck Rock on Howth Head. Aideen's Grave, as it is known locally, is set high on a hill with extensive views of the coastline (Figure 3).

Similarly, passage tombs are defined by a passage which opens into a chamber constructed of large stones or orthostats. The corbelled roof is covered by a cairn of smaller stones the edge of which is delineated by a kerbstone of large, sometimes decorated, stones. They tend to occur in clusters referred to as cemeteries, the most famous examples of which are in the Boyne Valley and include the passage tombs of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth.

Such tombs are highly visible, owing not only to their monumentality but also to their location on high points or prominences where they dominate the surrounding landscape. It is thought that passage tombs were sited along the borders of territories so any invader would first have to pass through the dead (and all the protection that offered) to access the living. These characteristics can be seen at Bremore, where the passage tomb cemetery consists of five upstanding mounds and is located on a coastal headland that ensures a view of the coastline northwards to Slieve Gullion and the Mourne Mountains. These tombs are part of a much larger distribution of tombs that extends towards Knocknagin to the north, and as far south as the 'Giant's Grave' at Rush. Most importantly, they are located either side of the River Delvin, which not only forms the territorial border of Fingal, but would have served as a routeway from the coast inland. On this basis, it is theorised that the Bremore tombs are early examples of the type, and an entry point for the westward spread of the tombs towards the Boyne Valley (Rynne 1960).

Interest in these tombs is not new. In the mid-19th century, George Hampton of nearby Hampton Hall, opened a tomb at Knocknagin in advance of the Dublin-Drogheda railway construction.

> I had it opened and found it composed of small round stones with shingle from the seashore. The excavations were soon interrupted by a circle of high stones which appear to have been placed around and at some distance from the centre. Within this outer circle I found a crude platform of apparently beaten clay and upon this an immense heap of burned human bones. As far as can be surmised the bones were those of human beings of all ages. In the centre of this circle I discovered a chamber constructed of huge flags, some of them more than 6 feet in height and within this a crude stone basin or rather a large stone of sandstone grit, or burned wood, and a quantity of semi-calcined bones. Amongst these bones were scattered a number of beads, formed of polished stone or a conical shape with a hole through each near the apex of the cone. The mass of bones was very large. The stones I fear have been used in the railway but the remains of the chamber and two or three of the flags may still be seen in the face of the cliff. (Hamilton 1846).

While tombs and tools have been much in evidence, it is only in recent years that any evidence for the settlements of the people of the Neolithic has been uncovered. As can be seen in the accompanying papers, a Neolithic house and pottery was unearthed at Flemington, north-west of Balbriggan and at Barnageeragh, north of Skerries.

The next phase of human activity in Fingal was marked by huge technical advancement, new burial practices, different types of settlement, warfare and bad weather. The Bronze Age (c.2400-500 BC) saw the introduction of metalworking and a slight shift away from coastal areas. Most obvious was the change in burial ritual as the megalithic tombs were replaced by cist burials. These often occurred singly and consisted of a simple stone-lined pit or cist which contained a crouched burial accompanied

Figure 4: Newbarn Mound

by pottery urns and other gravegoods. Some were in tumuli, cairns, or barrows, some were placed into pre-existing burials, and others in flat cemeteries with little indication of their existence (Figure 4). It is the tumuli and cairns that are evident in the landscape today, although many, such as that at Barnageeragh, remain undated. Barrows are by their nature low mounds enclosed by a ditch, easily ploughed out by later agricultural activity. It is perhaps because of this that barrows that survive are on high ground, such as those at Knockbrack, though the majority have been uncovered by chance, or through excavation. In 1939, a cist was uncovered at Courtlough and was reported to the National Museum of Ireland. Found in an area known locally as 'Moat Hill' there was nothing to indicate its presence. 'The workman who made the discovery found an urn at one end of the cist lying on its side: it was a fine perfectly preserved food vessel of an unusually large size' (Morris, H. 1939, 117).

Another feature of this period was the fulacht fiadh. Often described as ancient cooking places, they consist of a water-filled trough or pit into which hot stones were thrown. As the stones cooled and cracked they were removed and mounded in a characteristic kidney-shape. Their exact use hasn't been confirmed, but whether they were used for cooking, dyeing, beer-making or as sweathouses they are generally found near marginal land and next to a water source. Again, as a result of agriculture, there are few fulachta fiadh that survive as mounds but instead can be seen after fresh ploughing as black spreads of fire-cracked stone.

Likewise, Bronze Age settlement is primarily recorded through excavation. In Clonard, Balbriggan, the remains of a round house were discovered. Dated to 1449-1319 cal. BC, it was made of timber posts with a porch to the south-east, a hearth within and a basket-like structure to the exterior (Byrnes 2004).

Standing stones were the monumental markers of the period, either of burials, routeways or territories. While in other counties they may form stone

Figure 5: Balrothery Standing Stone

rows or circles, in Fingal there is a single standing stone surviving at Balrothery. Formerly at the base of Rosepark hill and possibly aligned to the tumulus at Inch, the stone is now within the green space of a housing estate (Figure 5).

Towards the close of the Bronze Age and the opening of the Iron Age (500BC-AD500) the climate became more harsh, the population grew and society became more defensive as competition for resources increased. The hillfort at Knockbrack is evidence of the need for defence at the time as are the promontory forts of Loughshinney, Howth and Lambay Island. Drumanagh promontory fort is an outstanding example of its class. The coastal promontory is defended at the neck by a series of deep ditches and high banks, while the promontory itself has extensive views of the coastline and enough land to sustain a large settlement. Of particular interest were the finds of Roman artefacts at this site indicating a possible trading centre. The rest of the settlement evidence for this period comes from excavation and generally forms one stratum of multi-period sites.

The coming of Christianity coincided with a marked effect on both the society and landscape of Fingal. Inis Patrick, off Skerries, was said to be the first place that St Patrick landed on his return to Ireland after he escaped slavery 'to light the clouds of ignorance' (Swift 2004, 61). He was returning to a society that was primarily 'tribal, rural, hierarchical and familiar' (Binchy 1954). It was based on a kingroup of three and four generation families, kingroups that formed the basis for the co-operative farming processes of ploughing and pasturing (Edwards 1990, 53). Fingal at this time (5th/6th centuries AD) formed part of the territory of southern Brega, although there was ongoing competition for dynastic supremacy throughout the early medieval period, even amongst minor branches. The Uí Cholgan were placed between Lusk and Rush, the Ciannachta between Dublin and the Delvin (Byrnes 2000, 131-136). The local kingship of what would become the Balrothery baronies belonged to the Saithne, although the overkingship of Brega was dominated by the Síl nÁeda Sláine, a dynasty of the southern Uí Néill from the 7th until the 11th century (Byrne 1973, 88; Smyth 1992, 152).

Figur 6: Leastown Ringfort

Figure 7: Newtown cropmarks, 1995 O.S. aerial photograph, © Ordnance Survey Ireland. All rights reserved. Licence number 2008/10/CCMA/ Fingal County Council

The economy and society of the early medieval period was recorded in detail in the law tracts. Cattle were the main currency. As such, ringforts, which were essentially fortified farmsteads, were the primary settlement form across the country (Figure 6). Consisting of a circular enclosure defined by a ditch and bank, the size and complexity of a ringfort may have reflected its owner's wealth and status. Surrounded by distinctive petal-shaped fields, they were often in view of each other, possibly to allow their neighbours to aid them when the inevitable cattle raid took place, or to accommodate growing kingroups. This is exemplified at Newtown (Figure 7), or at Belinstown where four ringforts in close proximity and their surrounding field systems, survive as cropmarks.

As Christianity spread, so too did its visible presence in the landscape, in the form of churches and settlements. Early churches were commonly founded in the 5th-7th centuries and were often associated with, or dedicated to, saints. Lusk, which has been recorded in the annals from the 7th century, was founded by St MacCullin in the 5th century. Swords was dedicated to St Columcille in the 6th century, whereas Santry was said to have been founded by St Pappin in the 6th century.

While approximately 16% of the surviving churches can definitely be ascribed to this period, many more are thought to have early associations (either placename or saint's name) or to have had an earlier foundation. The typical early church was generally a simple rectangular building, probably constructed originally of wood and then of local stone. Surrounded by a graveyard, the church

would have stood in the centre of at least two ditched enclosures. The inner enclosure with its church, burials and often the founding saints grave, was considered the most sacred, and generally measured less than 200m in diameter (Swan, 1983). Settlement, trade and fairs were often located within the outer enclosure (300-500m in diameter). These sites formed a focus for wealth, communication and community, not to mention an opportunity for plunder. For instance, the annals refer to numerous attacks on the church at Lusk by the Vikings between 827 and 865, by the men of Munster in 1089 'when nine score persons perished in the stone church', and even by the men of Meath who, in 1133, burned the church full of people and relics (O'Donovan 1851).

While no examples of early medieval churches have survived in Fingal, other characteristic features still stand, such as the round towers or cloigteach (bell tower) at Lusk and Swords. While the round tower at Lusk, which is eight storeys high, has been incorporated into a later belfry, the tower at Swords is free standing and measures 26m in height (Figure 2, p 89). Other elements that survive are crosses, bullaun stones (stone basins), underground chambers or souterrains (which were recorded at Lusk) and holy wells.

Unsurprisingly, it is generally the churches along with the burial grounds that survive. The surrounding enclosures were more often farmed away, or fossilized as curvilinear streets, (most outstandingly at Lusk) or even in curving field boundaries (Figure 8). However, modern archaeological methods such as geophysical survey are increasingly revealing enclosures that are no longer visible on the ground. For example, a survey of the land surrounding the church and graveyard at Grange (Milverton) has identified several hitherto unrecognised enclosures. The church was dedicated to St Movee and survived as a rectangular stone-built church in the centre of a burial ground with a holy well to the north. The potential for further finds had long been identified in the uncovering of a horizontal mill of probable 8th-9th century origin in 1848 by the local landowner, and by the placename evidence – the adjoining field being known as Church field. Local tradition describes how a farmer, disregarding the significance of the field swore by 'St Movee or St Movoe, I'll plough this field before I go'. In answer, the field opened up and swallowed him whole, together with his horse and plough, a warning which may have served to preserve that which remained. Geophysical survey identified an inner ditched enclosure, 90m in diameter, an outer ditched enclosure, 140m in diameter, and numerous field annexes, including a range of domestic, industrial and structural elements typical of a major early medieval centre (MacSamhráin 2004).

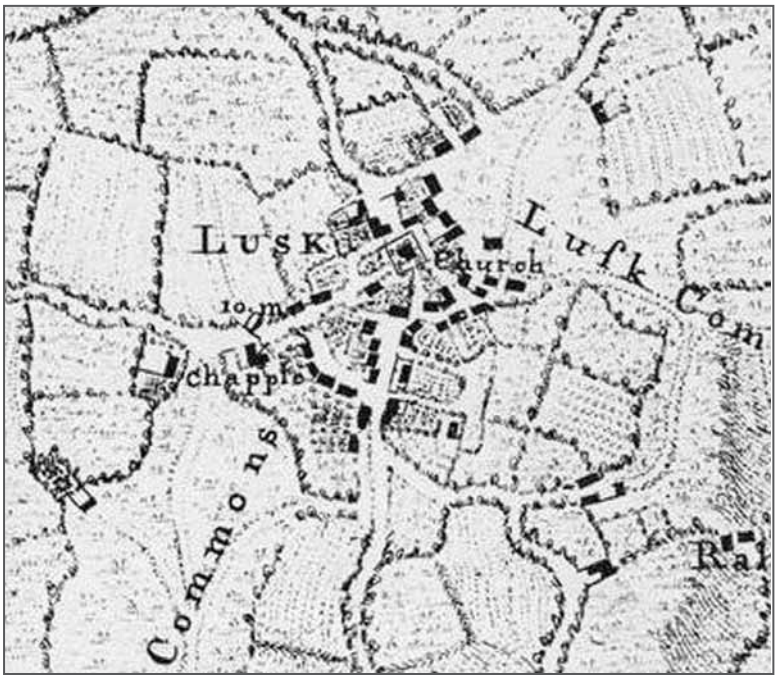

Figure 8: Lusk, Rocque's Map, 1760

The development of the ecclesiastical system within the early medieval period, was closely tied to the secular dynastic system. Ecclesiastical centres were often dependent on the largesse of the dynastic families and subject to the almost constant political turbulence of the time. This goes some way to explain why some large sites may have fallen out of favour and have no records, either physically, historically or through local folklore.

The arrival of the Anglo-Normans and medieval consolidation brought about the parish system that survives today. Many existing ecclesiastical centres such as Swords and Lusk flourished, and new population influxes to villages such as at

Figure 9: Swords Castle (Photo: Michael Johnson, Fingal Arts Office)

Balrothery, and familial settlements such as Dunsoghley, saw the foundation or extension of churches. The organisation of medieval churches was as complicated as the dynastic structure of the earlier churches. They were treated as valuable economic centres to be granted as political favours or alliances. For instance, the churches and, more importantly, the profits of Balrothery, Bremore and Baldongan, were granted to the Priory of Kilbixy, near Tristernagh, County Westmeath, despite strenuous objections from their mother church of Lusk. Likewise, those in power could distribute the churches and their wealth as they saw fit. In the early 13th century, the Archbishop of Dublin, Henry de Londres, granted Castleknock to Little Malvern Priory, Worcestershire; gave Ballymadun to the nunnery of Grace Dieu; and moved the community of Augustinian Canons from the island of St Patrick (Inis Patrick or Church Island) to Holmpatrick, Skerries.

There are almost 60 surviving churches and graveyards, the latter of which have been recorded in the Historic Graveyards Project undertaken for Fingal County Council (available on www.fingalcoco.ie). Aside from churches, the Anglo-Norman period saw something of a construction boom. In order to establish a foothold, especially in contentious territories, the motte-and-bailey was employed. Consisting of a flat-topped high mound, on top of which a timber tower was constructed, the motte was surrounded at its base by an embanked or palisaded enclosure which would have contained a range of structures including halls and kitchens. Dating to the late 12th century, a number survive including examples at Mallahow, Dunsoghley, Saint Helens and a fantastic one at Castleknock. Nothing typifies the Middle Ages more that the great stone castles; the prime Fingal example is of course Swords Castle (Figure 9). In 1326, it was described (although a little after its heyday) as:

> a hall, a chamber for the archbishop annexed to it, of which the walls are stone and crenellated like a castle and roof with shingles; and there was a kitchen there with a larder whose walls are stone and roof of shingle, a chapel with stone walls and a shingle roof; there was a chamber for friars with a cloister now thrown down; near the gate is a chamber for the constable and four chambers for knights and squires roofed with shingles; under these a stable and bakehouse; there was a house for a deieria and carpenteria, now thrown down. In the haggard a grane of poles (furcae) thatched, a timber granary roofed with 'bords', a byre for housing nags and kine. (MacNeill, 1950).

Figure 10: Lanestown towerhouse

It has been estimated that between the late 1400s and the 1600s, over 7,000 towerhouses were built countrywide (O'Keefe 2000, 34). These are perhaps the most recognisable form of castle, compactly built, with four turrets (Figure 10). Dunsoghley Castle is a prime example, so much so it is a National Monument. Others have been subject to attack, fallen into disrepair (Stephenstown, the Naul) or have been incorporated into later buildings such as at Seatown and Luttrellstown. Fingal County Council has undertaken the rebuilding of Bremore Castle.

Figure 11: Westown House

The successor to these castles, are the grand houses of Fingal. Many were the seats of the descendants of the Anglo-Norman lords or representatives of the landed gentry. Examples include Turvey House (said to have been built from the stone of the nunnery at Grace Dieu), Westown House (Figure 11) built by Lord Beaulie (Bellew), and Tyrellstown, built by the Bellings family and destroyed during the 1641 rebellion. Demesnes such as Malahide, Ardgillan and Newbridge have been taken into the care of Fingal County Council and are open to the public. The story of the ordinary people can be found in the remains of the vernacular buildings, watermills, windmills, gate piers and fields, as well as in the folklore and tradition. Jack the Bachelor buried at Kenure, Rush, was a renowned 18th-century smuggler. Collier the Robber was a Robin Hood figure, a highwayman on the old coach road between Balrothery and Balscadden, who was sheltered by the poor when on the run from the law. The men of 1798 are remembered in Ballyboughill where a monument stands by the roadside where many lives were lost in battle. The coast is studded with Martello towers, the legacy of the fear of invasion by Napoleon (Figure 12). From prehistory on, Fingal's past is represented through fields, structures, monuments and memories.

Figure 12: Skerries Martello tower

FINGAL'S PAST IN THE PRESENT

The current state of knowledge regarding Fingal's archaeological heritage is being determined under the Field Monument Advisor Scheme, the aim of which is to support landowners in preserving archaeological monuments in private possession. Practically, this translates as visiting and assessing the recorded monuments, often for the first time since the archaeological survey was carried out in the early 1990s. Just over ten years ago, a project entitled 'Archaeological Features at Risk Project' was carried out for the Heritage Council (O'Sullivan, O'Connor and Kennedy 2001) which looked at known field monuments within specific study areas countrywide and examined the rates of destruction of archaeological monuments. For the 140 years up to 1978, the rate of destruction was 2.1% per decade. For the subsequent twenty years it shot up to a notional 10% culminating in 17% for 1998 alone; and this before the apex of the development boom.

Initial research indicates that at least 7% of Fingal's recorded archaeological monuments have been destroyed in the last two decades. The reasons for this are many and varied: quarrying, road building, demolition, vandalism (Figure 13), agriculture and development have all had detrimental impacts despite the fact that all archaeological features, structures and artefacts are protected by legislation (National Monuments Acts 1930-2004). There has also been a fundamental change in attitude. In the past, tradition and superstition played a significant role in protecting monuments. Anyone interfering with a fairy mound, or fairyfort, as monuments were often referred to, would have nothing but bad luck; while pattern days and pilgrimages protected structures such as holy wells. As these traditions and beliefs died with older generations, so did much of the respect and protection for the monuments.

No land remains static, and in the last 20 years has been detrimental on the one hand, development has also expanded our knowledge of hitherto unknown archaeological sites. Again, while figures cannot be definitive, at least 6% of known sites have been subject to archaeological excavation. In the past decade, at the height of the boom, approximately 358 archaeological licences were issued within Fingal. While many of these were to facilitate assessment and others to allow archaeological excavation and yet more were not of significance, it demonstrates the wealth of archaeological possibility. Particular to Fingal is the fact that many (almost 25%) of the known monuments have no surface expression, that is, they survive below ground that has generally been ploughed for centuries, only to be picked up by aerial photography or latterly through geophysical survey (Figure 14). This means that there is an extremely high possibility that many ordinary looking fields may conceal a wealth of archaeology. This has been amply demonstrated in the papers on Barnageeragh, Flemington and Bremore within this volume and by recent projects at Balrothery where evidence from the third century AD to the

Figure 13: Interior of Mulhuddart Church

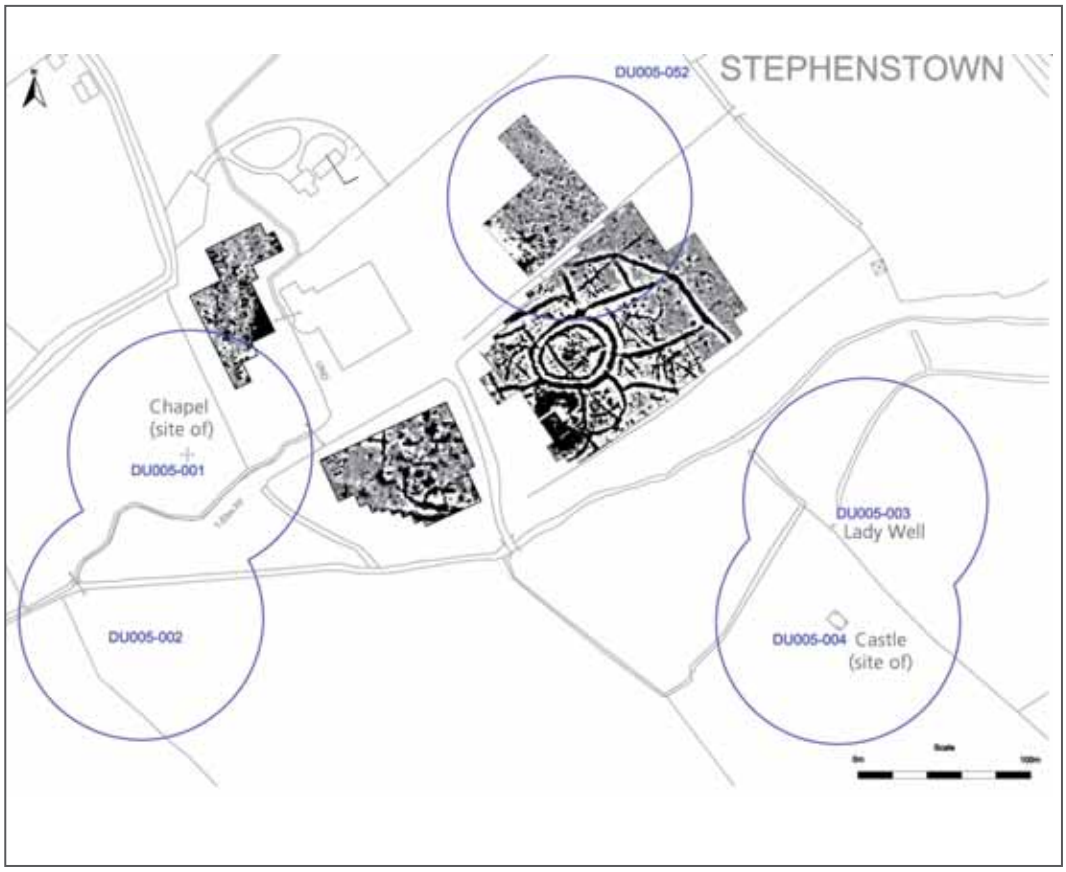

Figure 14: Stephenstown Balbriggan; combined geophysical and RMP information courtesy of Irish Archaeological Consultancy (Geophysical survey by Target archaeological Geophysics)

Normans has been published (Carroll et al. 2008). A combined geophysical survey and archaeological excavation at Folkstown, Balbriggan uncovered evidence from an early medieval ringfort to the later medieval settlement, and at Maynetown, Portmarnock, a hitherto unknown medieval settlement was excavated (C. Moriarty pers. comm.).

In addition to the new knowledge being gathered through survey and excavation, Fingal County Council has commissioned several baseline surveys to assess the current state of knowledge. An Historic Graveyards Project is looking at almost 60 historic graveyards – their context, history, archaeological and architectural features – in order

Figure 15: Mooretown Swords, combined geophysical survey and aerial photography courtesy of Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd

Figure 16:
Garristown Windmill

to allow for their continued conservation and protection. Likewise, the Historic Road Bridges project is assessing the natural and built heritage of a sample of road bridges in order to provide conservation and maintenance recommendations. A third Historic Landscape Characterisation study is also been undertaken. Having covered the Swords, and Donabate-Portraine areas, the Balbriggan area is being examined. These landscape characterisations use historical data and maps, aerial photography, geophysical survey and excavation information combined with GIS technology to produce up-to-date overviews of the landscape and map 'slices through time' of the development of these areas (Figure 15).

FINGAL'S PAST IN THE FUTURE

Fingal's past can be found in the Record of Monument and Places, the topographical files of the National Museum, and the accounts of antiquarians and archives. Fingal's present is evident through the pressure on the surviving monuments and the current excavations. But what of Fingal's future?

Major infrastructural projects are planned, which will not only impact directly on archaeological sites but will change the context and setting of others. Metro North, as currently proposed, will require the excavation of four ringforts and their surrounding field boundaries, plus the site of a castle at Belinstown. Studies in advance of other projects, such as the proposed landfill at Tooman, have uncovered new evidence for settlement, although redesign will allow for its preservation *in situ.* Contrary to popular opinion, archaeologists are not against development but against that which does not take the archaeological and historical landscapes into account. A land cannot be fossilised and part of studying archaeology is to track the changes that have taken place over time. Such impacts can be seen from prehistory when the land clearance of the Neolithic farmers swept away evidence for the Mesolithic hunter-gatherers; from the new agricultural technologies of the Anglo-

Normans that ploughed out earlier settlements, to the railways and roads of the 19th century that drove through tombs and by graveyards. The landscape has always changed, it is just the scale and nature of current development that it is at odds with what has gone before. Residential development in the 19th and 20th centuries was small scale and organic, involving local materials and building traditions, whereas now it takes the form of housing estates often on the outskirts of formerly small villages. The demesnes, parklands and formal gardens favoured in the past have been replaced by a preference for sports pitches and golf courses. It is not a choice between progress and past; it is about taking the past into account when planning the future. Everyone in Fingal lives close to, drives by or regularly sees an archaeological site. Whether it is the round tower at Swords, the windmill at Garristown (Figure 16), the local church, a mound in a field, a holy well by the side of the road: all of these give a sense of past and place to local communities. The archaeological resource is irreplaceable, and, as we have seen, rapidly diminishing. It is part of our history, our folklore, our landscape and our identity. The places where our ancestors lived, worked, raised families and buried their dead are the same places where we now do the same. To remove, build over, destroy and forget not only destroys the past but it destroys what makes our places and communities distinctive. Do we want a future without a past?

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FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL PROJECTS

Historic Road Bridges Project, 2009 by John Cronin & Associates/Atkins for Fingal County Council and The Heritage Council

Historic Graveyards Project, 2009 by CRDS Ltd. For Fingal County Council

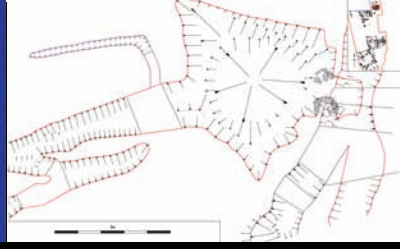
Martello Towers Research Project, 2008 by Jason Bolton for Fingal County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and The Heritage Council

The Historic Landscape Characterisation project-Balbriggan and Environs, 2009 by Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd for Fingal County Council and The Heritage Council

The Historic Landscape Characterisation Project of the General Swords Area 2007 by Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd for Fingal County Council and The Heritage Council

The Historic Landscape Characterisation Project of the Donabate-Portraine Area 2007 by Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd for Fingal County Council and The Heritage Council



Stand anywhere in Fingal and the chance is that you are standing on or near archaeology. Sometimes it is visible: a church tower, a castle wall, an old graveyard or grassy mound. More often than not it is invisible, buried beneath the ground, waiting to be discovered.

In recent years, a large number of archaeological investigations have been undertaken in Fingal as a result of the rapid growth and development of the County. These have ensured that we gather valuable information about past societies and cultures as we go about the important task of providing for the needs of society today. In this way we are building a much more complete picture of life in Fingal in the distant past. This publication brings the results of this work to as wide an audience as possible.

Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall
Fingal County Council