

pca

european journal of
postclassicalarchaeologies

volume 9/2019

SAP Società Archeologica s.r.l.

Mantova 2019

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PCA is published once a year in May, starting in 2011. Manuscripts should be submitted to editor@postclassical.it in accordance to the guidelines for contributors in the webpage <http://www.postclassical.it>

Post-Classical Archaeologies's manuscript **review process** is rigorous and is intended to identify the strengths and weaknesses in each submitted manuscript, to determine which manuscripts are suitable for publication, and to work with the authors to improve their manuscript prior to publication.

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How to **quote**: please use "PCA" as abbreviation and "European Journal of Post-Classical Archaeologies" as full title.

Cover image: statue of Mont'e Prama (from F. Pinna with modifications).

"Post-Classical Archaeologies" is indexed in Scopus. It was approved on 2015-05-13 according to ERIH PLUS criteria for inclusion and indexed in Carhus+2018. Classified A by ANVUR (Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del sistema Universitario e della Ricerca).

DESIGN

Paolo Vedovetto

PUBLISHER

SAP Società Archeologica s.r.l.
Strada Fienili 39/a, 46020 Quingentole, Mantova
www.archeologica.it

Authorised by Mantua court no. 4/2011 of April 8, 2011

For subscription and all other information visit the web site www.postclassical.it

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EDITORIAL

*In this ninth volume of the European Journal of Post-Classical Archaeologies we publish the contributions of the Spring School held in Tenno (Trentino, Italy) in April 2018, which was devoted to the methods of "Participatory Research in Archaeology. Archaeology for the future? Legal issues and good practices". The event was generously funded by the University of Padova (call Winter-Summerschool 2017) and brought together researchers and PhD students interested in discussing the legal framework and constraints that this kind of participatory approach involves and how good practice in community projects could represent a turning point for the immediate future of archaeology. Participatory Archaeology has a similar meaning to "Community Archaeology" and both are included in the wider label of "Public Archaeology", although the terms are not at all synonymous. Community and Participatory Archaeology should not be confused with communication or education strategies, although these are also of great importance, but it takes collaboration between "professionals" and "the public" or the "audience" to a very different level. Community or Participatory Archaeology follows the now popular formulation by Gabriel Moshenska of "archaeologists working with the public" (Moshenska 2017, p. 6; reflected in this volume by Suzie Thomas at p. 149), but we would add an extra dimension in the form of a final objective of "working also **for** the public".*

An important question emerges here: what public? Does this refer to "non-professional (in the sense of archaeology) groups and individuals" who intend to be involved in research "with the goal of finding out more about archaeological heritage through participatory practices" (as suggested by Thomas)? Or should we include under this label the indifferent and those who reject the past and its heritage? This inevitably leads us to reflect on the various meanings today of communities and on which "participatory practices" are appropriate for their involvement.

These problems, in turn, lead us to reflect on the cultural policy guidelines proposed, after Second World War, by institutions on the world (UNESCO, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Bank), European (Council of Europe, European Union) and national (between principles included in the Constitutions or issued with specific acts) level. Guidelines, summarized in the contributions of Adrian Olivier and Lara Delgado Anés with José María Martín Civantos, reveal contradictory or incomplete ideas. This is not only because they have different aims – “the management of landscapes and uses of land are represented by a combination of different demands and interests linked to agriculture, forestry, livestock, conservation of nature, conservation of cultural heritage, archaeology and local populations” (Delgado Anés, Martín Civantos) – but also because they fluctuate between proposed identities (local, national or European), legislation linked to professionalism and protection from above (see the Valletta Convention) and openness to public participation (Conventions of Florence and Faro). These contradictions are reflected in the great variability of national and/or regional norms regarding the possibility of public participation in Cultural Heritage in Europe (discussed in the contributions of Francesca Benetti, Clemente Pio Santacroce for Italy, Katharina Möller for Germany, Raimund Karl for Austria, Mia Rizner for Croatia, Lara Delgado Anés, José María Martín Civantos for Andalusia in Spain). This ranges from the harshest exclusion (in Italy and Austria) to various modes of involvement, more or less open, that confirm that Europe is today a sum of states, each of which is attentive to its particular interests, even though they superficially refer to the search for a common heritage identity. Research into historical identities, pursued in the past, does not fall within the objectives of community archaeology, which highlights the multiplicity of stories that can be drawn from the infinite information we can document in a region.

Most of the contributions focus on the variegated “participatory practices” adopted in concrete projects, noting limits, methods, successes and difficulties. Projects above all try to involve public participation in all stages of the project: starting from the planning stage, continuing with real research and concluding in publication and management of the results. Different positions are, however, taken by the authors on who has or should coordinate and lead the projects so as to achieve the difficult equilibrium between bottom up and top down approaches. The result often does not reflect the “ordinary perception and needs of the communities” (Alicia Castillo Mena), which can emerge only through reflection and comparison: people need the past ... but not “our concept” (academic) of the past and the value that we as academics attribute to it”. Most papers consider the possibility of assessing the impact or results of the

projects in the territories involved, a subject to which most discussions were devoted during our week in Tenno. The importance of the subject led us to contact Brendon Wilkins to delve more deeply into the problem of evaluation. Best practice and the actual degree of satisfaction and success of a project can be assessed in relation to the effects on “archaeology and heritage, individuals, community/society” (a gradation in three levels). However, this judgment cannot be reserved for experts, but must be extended to the various components of local communities. The social impact assessment is also linked to the collection of resources, through crowd-funding and crowd sourcing, discussed by Wilkins using the example of the Bronze Age site excavation at Flag Fen, near Peterborough (UK).

The actual role assigned to the communities finally leads us to reflect on the themes, strategies and aims of the projects. Lara Band, in the Project section, offers us a good example with the well-known project CITIZAN, which from 2015-2018 involved 1000 people in the recording of coastal and intertidal sites in England which were threatened by climate change. This project, which had a notable social and media impact, was re-proposed for 2019-2021, including, in addition to recording, multiple collateral initiatives (training sessions, public presentations, websites and media activation) as are typical of participatory archaeological projects.

A systemic approach that proposes a reunification of knowledge offers a scientific justification for the “holistic” protection of heritage, and suggests an archaeology of sustainability in the context of possible economic and social uses of results, has been tested in a dozen projects in northern Italy (Gian Pietro Brogiolo, Alexandra Chavarría Arnau). Concrete objectives are able to avoid the construction of political identities, such as that described by Fabio Pinna for Sardinia, where archaeology is well-funded by the region with the political objective of creating an identity linked to the Nuragic civilization of the Iron Age.

It is also undeniable that community projects very often drag archaeologists in complex social and political environments or ethical issues linked to the kind of conflictual heritage which is involved in the project (as in Thomas’ paper). Participatory projects take specialists out of the ivory tower that academia represents into a wider, in some cases unknown world, and, in the same way as stratigraphic excavation or GIS managements require specific innate qualities of the archaeologist, participatory research also requires particular skills such as being “open, friendly and effective communicators, adaptable, good listeners, able to accept varied opinions, efficient record keepers and evaluators, team workers” (Gemma Tully).

The concluding paper by K. Anne Pyburn, and which is more than a conclusion, summarizes and discusses the topics addressed in the seminar, ordering them into eight key subjects or themes: Experts versus expertise, Agents versus agency, Discovery versus interpretation, Democracy versus sovereignty, Public versus community, Education versus collaboration, Legal versus ethical, Protection versus appropriation.

The three papers of the Beyond the Theme sections are linked, in a different way, to research perspectives on past local communities. Enrico Zanini, in relation to the research conducted in Vignale (Grosseto), hopes for a "form of dialogue with the landscape" that recomposes the "wear", produced by excavation, through diachronic routes able to connect activities that are repeated over time: the "warp", understood as anthropic activity (the road, the furnaces, the vineyards), compared to the "landscape weft", dictated by the earth and water. Carlo Citter compares road networks documented in the cadastral maps of 1823 and predictive analyses using GIS (in particular cost surfaces and attractors), emphasizing continuity, starting from the Bronze Age, of the network of local connections through which peasants, merchants and owners moved in relation to a central place (and also, it should be added, in relation to places and resources). Francesca Sogliani and Dimitris Roubis present a systemic and multidisciplinary research model applied to the settlement at San Giovanni in Fiore, Calabria, including written sources, ethnoarchaeological data, photo-interpretations, geological and geopedological research based on excavations, surveys, remote sensing, geophysical surveys, pollen and botanic analysis.

Finally, in the Retrospect section dedicated this time to Ireland, Tadhg O'Keeffe not only draws the history of medieval archaeology in that country, but also addresses some issues: "identity and cultural essentialism, the concept of continuity and change, the relationship of pattern to process, the meanings of words", that emerge above all in the relationship between the native, "Gaelic-Irish" population with respect to the "colonial" castle-owning Anglo-Norman class.

Tadhg O'Keeffe*

The archaeology of Ireland's long middle ages: retrospective and prospective

This paper is divided into two parts. The first outlines the development of the discipline of medieval archaeology on the island of Ireland since the 1950s, highlighting some of the key research outputs produced by archaeologists. The second focuses on research into the archaeology of the period from AD 900 to 1300, which is the period which surrounds the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169, and the argument is made that a better understanding of the archaeological evidence requires a paradigm shift.

Keywords: Early Christian Ireland, Medieval Ireland, christianity, Vikings, invasion, paradigm shift

Questo articolo è diviso in due parti. La prima traccia lo sviluppo della disciplina dell'archeologia medievale sull'isola irlandese dagli anni '50, evidenziando alcuni dei risultati chiave della ricerca archeologica. La seconda parte si focalizza invece sulla ricerca archeologica riguardante il periodo dal 900 al 1300 d.C., ovvero il periodo che circonda l'invasione anglo-normanna del 1169. L'autore propone un cambio di paradigma per una migliore comprensione dei dati archeologici.

Parole chiave: Irlanda paleocristiana, Irlanda medievale, cristianità, Vichinghi, invasione, cambio di paradigma

1. Introduction

Other than Britain, no European island features as prominently as Ireland in the general scholarly literature on medieval Europe (fig. 1). Its early medieval Christian monuments and *objets d'art* – sculptured crosses, illuminated manuscripts, liturgical metalwork, and so on – are celebrated among the greatest achievements of medieval Christian communities anywhere and at any time in Europe. The island's central place in the Viking world is similarly acknowledged, with Dublin recognised as having been one of the great urban centres of that period. Later, in the second millennium AD, Ireland's culture and history were entwined, often in conflict, with England's culture and history from the

* University College Dublin, UCD School of Archaeology, Belfield, Dublin, Ireland tadhg.okeeffe@ucd.ie.



Fig. 1. Ireland as depicted on the map of Europe by Abraham Ortelius (1595).

period of its first Angevin monarch (Henry II) to that of its last Tudor monarch (Elizabeth I).

Both the intrinsic and contextual interest of Ireland and its archaeology during this long medieval period (AD 400-1600) are captured in a scholarly literature that is large and generally accessible. In the first part of this paper, I present a general summary of the history and archaeology of Ireland during those centuries, followed by a review of the development of the study of the archaeology, highlighting for the reader both seminal and representative contributions to that literature. The second part of the paper is concerned with the future. I make an argument for new paradigms, informed by a greater imaginative engagement with the evidence which we possess and a greater awareness of the range of evidence which is beyond our reach. I focus in particular on the need for archaeologists to rethink their impressions and explanations of cultural activity on the island from the 10th to the 13th centuries.

2. Introduction: a snap-shot of Ireland's long middle ages

Although it was never a Roman province, Ireland was not detached from the empire. Roman merchants from Britain and Gaul were active on the island in the early centuries AD, especially in the Irish Sea region. Christianity, the official religion of the empire from the early 4th century, was probably first brought to the island by such merchants in the later 4th century. Formalised missionary activity is attested to in the 5th century, ironically at the very time that 'pagan' Germanic religious beliefs were being introduced into England. Monasticism arrived in Ireland from the eastern Mediterranean via early post-Roman Europe in the 5th and 6th centuries. The same sea routes brought material culture – African-made *terra sigillata* and some Gaulish wares, for example – to Ireland.

Christianity became the dominant belief-system in Ireland in the middle centuries of the first millennium, as many aspects of 'pagan' practice fell redundant. It was the conduit by which literacy came to Ireland, and it provided the context for the creation of extraordinary works of art, liturgical and devotional, in a range of media, starting mainly in the 7th century and continuing with ebbs and flows of production and indeed accomplishment into the early second millennium (fig. 2). By comparison, the ecclesiastical buildings of the same period were, with the exception of the famous Round Towers built between the 10th and 12th centuries, small and structurally modest, with architectural embellishment rare before the 12th century.

The Christian church in early medieval Ireland was an entirely rural institution, reflecting the island's lack of urban settlements of the types that (re-)emerged in post-Roman Europe. Churches

Fig. 2. The 'tall cross' at Monasterboice, Co. Louth, probably of early 10th-century date. In the background is the lower part of the 11th-century Round Tower.



often had settlements alongside them, however, and in the third quarter of the first millennium those settlements associated with the better-endowed monastic churches possessed the types of secondary and tertiary industries which are commonly taken to define urbanism. There has been much debate about whether such settlements should be described as towns, but even if such a label is justified – and I prefer to think that it is not – it does not change the characterisation of early medieval Ireland as essentially rural. The first incontestable horizon of town-foundation in Ireland is early 10th century and is associated with small collectives of Vikings in coastal locations.

The early medieval economy was agricultural. It was always mixed, although shifts in the relative proportions of pastoral and arable, and indeed in the intensity of food-producing and processing practices, are attested to in the archaeological record. Contemporary settlements were both enclosed and unenclosed, with most of those in the former category being circular earthen-banked enclosures, known to modern scholarship as ringforts or *raths* (fig. 3 left). Enclosed or unenclosed, the settlements were spatially quite small and had small numbers of habitable structures. Larger, multi-ramparted, enclosures appear always to have associated with those dynasties which, according to the historical

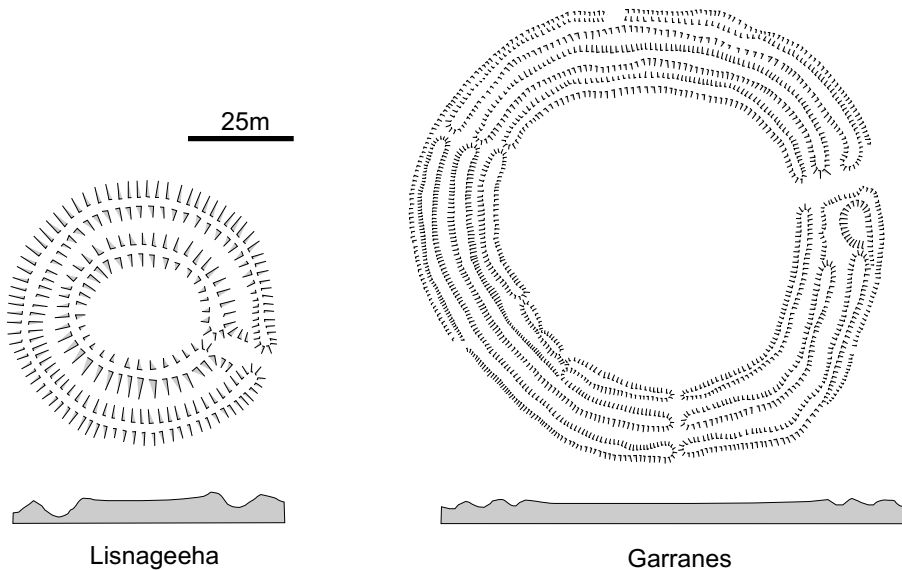


Fig. 3. A classic univallate ringfort at Lisnageeha, Co. Tipperary (left), and a large multi-vallate ringfort at Garranes, Co. Cork (right).



Fig. 4. The early 12th-century sarcophagus in Cormac's Chapel, Cashel, Co. Tipperary.

record, held power within the many small kingdoms of which early medieval Ireland was comprised (fig. 3 right).

The Vikings first appeared as hit-and-run raiders in the late 8th century, but established permanent coastal settlements – towns, by any reasonable definition – in the early 10th century, including Dublin. By the turn of the millennium these settlements had significant numbers of native-born (non-Scandinavian) residents, and they had cultural and economic tentacles reaching into native rural Ireland. Viking motifs appear in 'Romanesque' art-work (fig. 4) and architectural sculpture produced by the Irish church in the 12th century, the period in which native religious institutions embraced Gregorian reform.

Hired by a deposed and exiled Irish king, an army of mercenaries from Angevin south Wales landed in south-east Ireland in 1169. This precipitated the process of conquest and colonisation identified as the 'Anglo-Norman' invasion; the label, 'Anglo-Norman', an invention of modern scholarship, reflects the fact that many of leading invaders were born in the kingdom of England but were of Norman descent. Two years later, Henry II, who was not involved in the events of 1169, imposed the authority of the crown on the embryonic colony. It was a fateful intervention, entangling Ireland in English, later British, affairs for the following seven-and-a-half centuries. Through castle-building (fig. 5) and town-foundation in subsequent decades, land was grabbed and settled by the



Fig. 5. Castleroché, Co. Louth, built in the mid-1230s.

Anglo-Normans. Monasteries which had been founded by Gaelic-Irish lords in the 12th century for communities of Cistercian monks and Augustinian canons regular continued to prosper under Anglo-Norman patronage, while many new monastic houses were founded by the settler-lords, especially mendicant houses from the middle of the 13th century. The Gothic style was introduced into eastern Ireland in the 1190s by the Anglo-Normans, and knowledge of it penetrated lands in native Irish ownership as early as the first decade of the 13th century.

The area of Anglo-Norman lordship was larger than the area of colonisation (fig. 6). Large parts of the island were nominally under Anglo-Norman control in the 13th century, but settlements of newcomers were most common in eastern Ireland. The native population was not removed from areas of Anglo-Norman settlement.

A combination of factors contributed to the spatial contraction of the lordship and the erosion of its power in the 14th century. War and famine were the principal factors, but cultural change also diluted the coherence of the idea of an English lordship in Ireland: the descendants of the original settlers had, by that stage, few connections with their places of origin across the Irish Sea.

The 15th and 16th centuries were largely peaceful and prosperous on the island. Conflicts between dynasties were rarely agents of long-term destabilisation on the national stage. The prosperity of the Atlantic seaboard, especially its main population centre, Galway, comes into view at this time. The wealth was not evenly shared on the island. On the one hand, many of the monasteries dissolved around 1540 by order of Henry

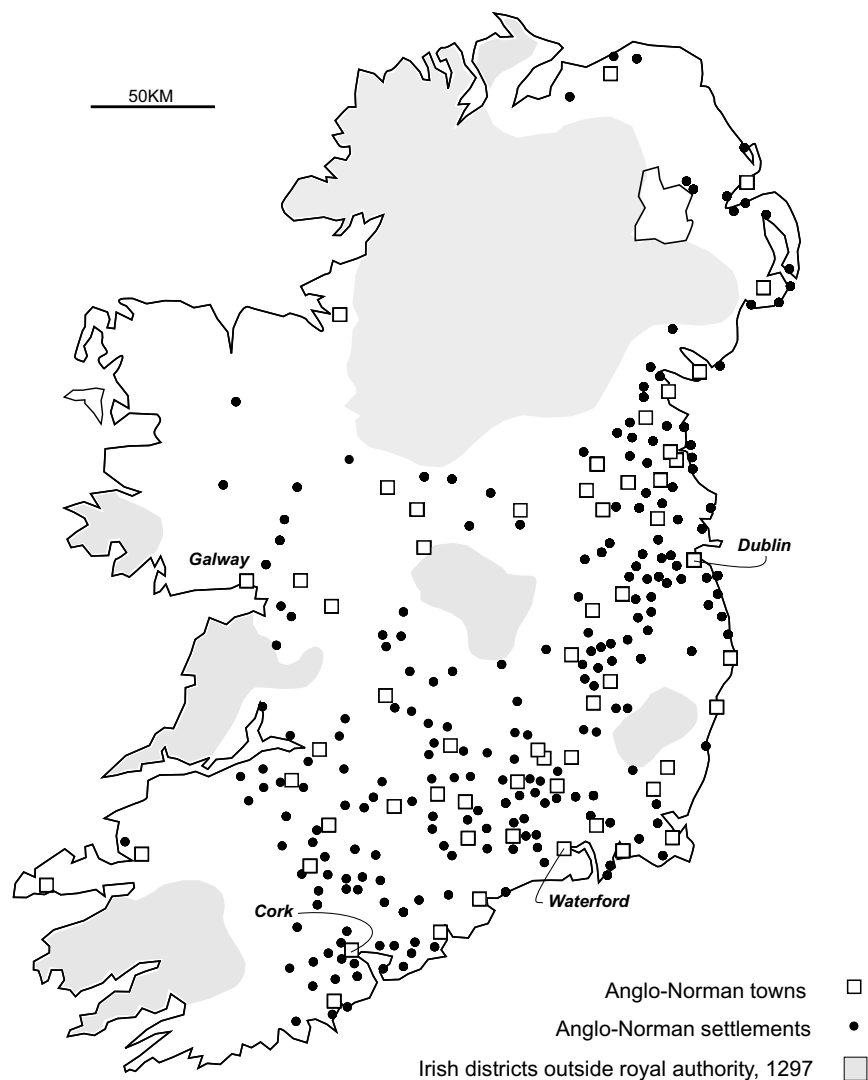


Fig. 6. Map of the areas not under royal authority in 1297 (after Nicholls 1984, map 43), and of the distribution of colonial towns and market settlements (after Clarke 2000, fig. 62).



Fig. 7. Athassel Augustinian priory, Co. Tipperary, founded c.1200. In 1484, almost sixty years before it was dissolved, it was noted that the canons of the priory 'live in private habitations, and not in the monastery, and that divine worship is almost extinct in the church of the monastery, the buildings of which are in need of no little repair'.



Fig. 8. The castle of the Purcell family at Loughmoe, Co. Tipperary. The tower on the right-hand-side is late medieval in date; in the early 17th century the house was added to one side, and a projecting wing (on the left-hand-side) was built to imitate the original tower.

VIII were understaffed and had been struggling to stay buoyant (fig. 7). On the other hand, scions of families of different ethnic-political origin invested heavily in building, and many managed to continue their investment well into the early 17th century (fig. 8).

3. Periodisation and nomenclature

Conventional wisdom now holds that the medieval period in Ireland lasted some twelve centuries, from AD 400 to AD 1600. The start-date aligns well with the general European chronology of the middle ages. The end-date is less exactly defined. Historical events point to the 16th century as the period in which one might select a date, should one desire to be so specific, and the most appropriate date within that century might be 1540, the year most associated with Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries, an act which ruptured an institution which had been at the heart of Irish Christianity almost since the start. But medieval cultural practices, insofar as we define them with any accuracy, did not start to peter out until the close of the 16th century, so AD 1600 is the date generally favoured by archaeologists. Tom McNeill has even argued that Ireland has no 'distinctively post-medieval archaeology' before the end of the 17th century (McNeill 2007, p. 12).

The historical event which has traditionally been used by historians and archaeologists to bisect Ireland's middle ages for the purpose of nomenclature is the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169. Until recent years, indeed, the post-1169 period alone was described as 'medieval' in the archaeological literature (e.g. Barry 1987). Similarly, the preceding period, almost eight centuries long, was invariably labelled 'Early Christian' by Irish scholars (e.g. de Paor, de Paor 1964); Lloyd Laing's 'late Celtic' label for the period remains aberrant more than forty years later (Laing 1975). Some specialists have in the past restricted the phrase 'Early Christian' to the earliest medieval centuries (Mytum 1992; Charles-Edwards 2000) and have chosen to characterise the later stages of the pre-invasion period as 'Viking-age' (c. 800-c.1020) and 'Romanesque' (c.1020-c.1169) (e.g. Henry 1967; 1970). Anecdotally, the phrase 'Early Christian Period' was almost defunct in archaeological circles by the end of the 1990s (an exception is G. Eogan 2010). In recognition of the fact that the Anglo-Norman invasion was one of a number of transformative events in the 12th century, the date of bisection of Ireland's long middle ages is now regarded as c.1100, with the entire period before that now described as 'early medieval' (O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr, Harney, 2014).

Terminology for the period after 1100 remains inconsistent. The period should perhaps be labelled 'late medieval' to mirror that of the pre-1100 period. Instead, the period from 1169 to the 14th century is generally described as the Anglo-Norman period, reflecting the importance of the late 12th-century invaders in shaping the island's subsequent history, while the 15th and 16th centuries are described as the late medieval centuries. One rarely encounters the phrases 'high medieval' or 'central medieval' in Irish literature.

4. Historiography: beginnings

A recognised benchmark-event in the historiography of medieval archaeology in Europe was the launch in 1957 of "Medieval Archaeology", the journal of the newly founded Society for Medieval Archaeology. The third volume carried a report of the excavation of a motte at Lismahon, Co. Down, by Dudley Waterman, and the fifth carried a study of the economy of the Irish ringfort by Bruce Proudfoot (Waterman 1959; Proudfoot 1961). Although neither paper could be regarded as especially influential, one could argue that much of the essence of the early history of the *systematic* study of medieval archaeology in Ireland is captured in their authorship and subject-matters.

The first relevant observation is that both papers originated in Northern Ireland, not in the Republic of Ireland. There had been some research on medieval archaeological heritage in the latter jurisdiction by the late 1950s, but it was concentrated in the 1930s and 1940s, and there was relatively little follow-through until the 1970s. Important crannogs (lake settlements) in the Irish midlands were excavated by the Harvard Archaeological Mission between 1932 and 1936, for example (Carew 2018). Early in the following decade, Harold Leask, an architectural historian with the Commissioners of Public Works who had contributed significant surveys of medieval monuments to Irish periodicals, published the first modern scholarly book on Irish castles (Leask 1941; fig. 9). And shortly after, Seán P. Ó Ríordáin, then Professor of Archaeology in University College Cork (UCC), published the first edition of his *Antiquities of the Irish Countryside*, a survey of prehistoric and early medieval field monument-types in which he included strikingly insightful sections on post-invasion motte-and-bailey castles and moated sites (S.P. Ó Ríordáin 1942a). Both Ó Ríordáin and his successor in the Chair of Archaeology in UCC, Michael O'Kelly, also published important research excavations at a number of medieval sites (e.g. S.P. Ó Ríordáin 1942b; S.P. Ó Ríordáin, Hunt 1942; O'Kelly 1953; 1963). Still, notwithstanding

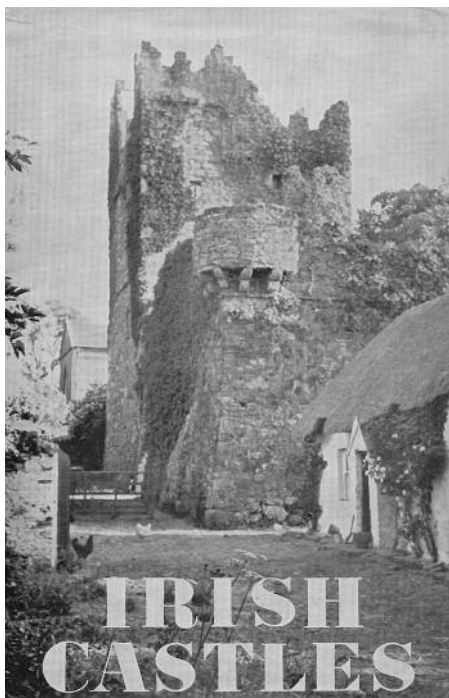


Fig. 9. One of the most famous books on medieval Ireland: Leask's *Irish Castles* (1946 edition, with the original dust jacket).

rescue excavations in Dublin, which started in 1962 and yielded the first paper in "Medieval Archaeology" to address an issue rooted in the Republic of Ireland (A.B. Ó Ríordáin 1971), it really fell to archaeologists in Northern Ireland in the third quarter of the last century to create a properly holistic consciousness of, and to provide formal training in, medieval archaeology on the island, especially that of the post-1169 period.

Dudley Waterman was a key figure in that project. Like Leask in the Republic, he was a gifted surveyor and analyst of medieval buildings. He held the role of principal inspector of ancient monuments in the archaeological survey of Northern Ireland, a ground-breaking initiative which had started in 1950 but which, alas, only produced one volume, albeit the exemplary volume on the archaeology (from prehistory to AD 1780) of Co. Down (Jope 1966). The Lismahon excavation was a research excavation, carried out specifically to inform better the treatment of earthworks in the survey. The general editor of that volume, Martyn Jope, was a correspondingly important figure within the academy: the first lecturer in archaeology in Queens University Belfast (QUB) from 1949, he also became the first specialist in high medieval archaeology to hold a senior professorship in archaeology in Ireland in 1963, thus giving institutional respectability to the study of later archaeology.

Bruce Proudfoot, author of the other "Medieval Archaeology" paper, was a geographer who had trained and taught in QUB before moving to Durham in 1959. His work on ringforts should be understood in the context of a wider enquiry, guided originally by E. Estyn Evans, into early medieval Irish settlement (e.g. Buchanan, Proudfoot 1958). The Department of Geography in QUB became a focus of later medieval settlement research under Robin Glasscock in the later 1960s and 1970s. Author

of a seminal paper on medieval rural settlement in Ireland (Glasscock 1970), he supervised the doctoral research of two key figures of the next generation, Brian Graham and Terry Barry.

The second observation is that both papers were focused on matters of general settlement history, pre- and post-invasion. They signal how the discipline was to develop. To this day, the general character of archaeological research on medieval Ireland remains as it was more than half a century ago, with the study of patterns and monuments of medieval rural and urban settlement remaining disproportionate to that of other aspects of the archaeological record, particularly the material-cultural. One could cite as evidence how the two medieval projects funded in the first tranche of projects of the State-funded Discovery Programme in 1990s had settlement themes (O'Connor 1998; O'Sullivan 1998). This emphasis on settlement history reflects in large part the greater engagement of non-archaeologists with settlement and economy (e.g. Otway-Ruthven 1951; Edwards, Hamond, Simms 1983; Graham 1985; Doherty 2000; Clarke 2015) than with artefacts, traditionally the exclusive domain of archaeologists. Ultimately, the emphasis on settlement reflects how the study of material culture in Irish medieval archaeology has been anchored to the practice of archaeological excavation, with the result that detailed studies of artefact-types, including pottery, are relatively rare outside of excavation reports (e.g. McCutcheon 2006).

5. Historiography: maturation

Archaeology has been taught in the Irish university system since the 19th century. R.A.S. Macalister, appointed to the professorship of Celtic Archaeology in University College Dublin (UCD) in 1909, was the first trained archaeologist (as we would understand that concept today) to hold a university position in Ireland. He held the distinction of the only such archaeologist until 1936 when Seán P. Ó Ríordáin, trained in the National Museum of Ireland, was appointed Professor of Celtic Archaeology in UCC. Ó Ríordáin's appointment signals the start of the modern era of university archaeology in Ireland. He went on to succeed Macalister as Professor of Celtic Archaeology in UCD in 1943. Michael Duignan, another archaeologist who had trained in the National Museum, was appointed to the professorship of Archaeology in University College Galway (UCG) in 1945. Appointments of non-professorial staff were infrequent in Irish universities before the 1970s.

The archaeology of the early middle ages in Ireland featured to some degree in university curricula in Ireland from an early date – Macalister

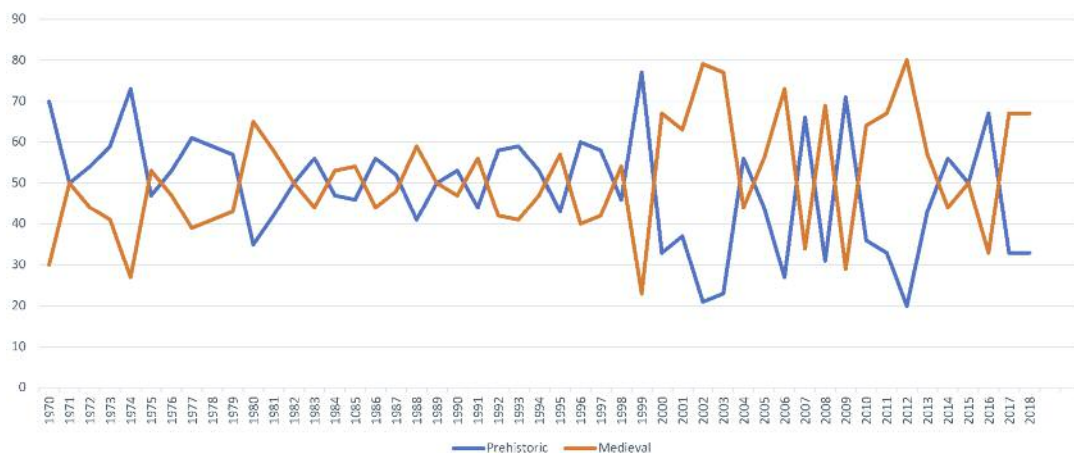


Fig. 10. Percentages of articles on prehistoric (pre-AD 400) and medieval (AD 400-1600) topics published in three leading Irish periodicals (*The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians of Ireland*, *The Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, and *The Ulster Journal of Archaeology*) from 1970 to 2018. N = 673.

himself had proven expertise in aspects of the period – but post-invasion archaeology was barely acknowledged in the university environment before the mid-1980s, except in QUB where Martyn Jope had held the professorship since the 1960s and Tom McNeill had held a lectureship since the 1970s. When I graduated from UCD with my primary degree in 1983, less than 20% of the archaeology to which I had been exposed over the previous three years was medieval archaeology, and less than 10% of that – less than 2% of my entire undergraduate lecture load in archaeology – was post-invasion archaeology; like others of my generation in UCD, I was introduced to post-invasion archaeology and its possibilities in a lecture course delivered by a historian (Professor Howard Clarke) and an historical geographer (Professor Anngret Simms). The first full-time lecturers in the Republic of Ireland with expertise in post-invasion archaeology were appointed in the later 1990s, some three decades after the hiring of prehistorians to lectureships. That was the point at which medieval archaeology in Ireland matured into a discipline concerned with twelve centuries of Irish history (AD 400-1600), not just five (AD 400-1100).

There has been no corresponding imbalance in the relative attention paid to the two periods of archaeological time – prehistory and medieval – if only to judge by the relative numbers of papers of direct archaeological interest published in three leading Irish periodicals over the past fifty-odd years (fig. 10). It should be noted, though, that the proportion of pa-

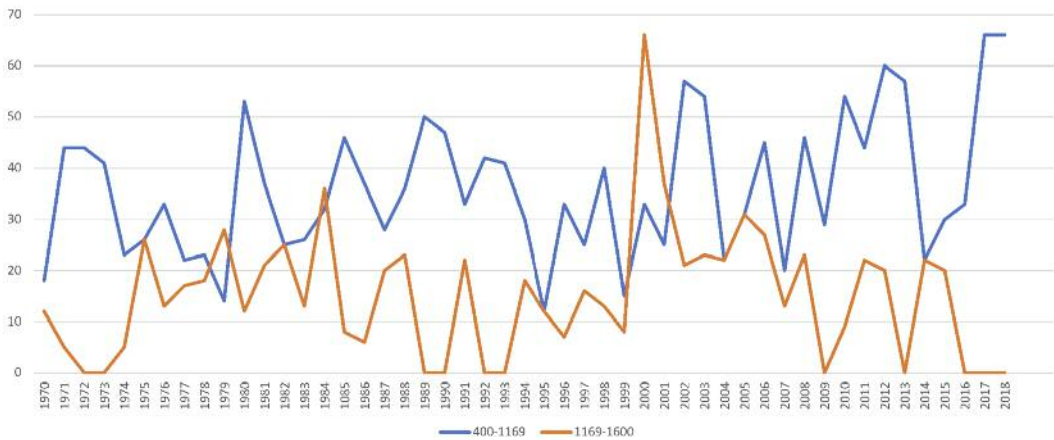


Fig. 11. Percentages of articles on pre-1169 and post-1169 topics published in three leading Irish periodicals (*The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquarians of Ireland*, *The Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, and *The Ulster Journal of Archaeology*) from 1970 to 2018. N = 356.

pers with medieval topics is skewed by a significant number of papers – 39% of a total of 356 – with art-historical or architectural-historical subject-matters. There is a greater imbalance over the same period between papers with pre-1169 and post-1169 themes (fig. 11), and here the figures are skewed slightly by studies of pre-invasion art (stone sculpture, illuminated manuscripts, and so on) on the one hand, and by reports of excavations of ringforts (especially in Ulster) on the other.

5.1. Books and monographs

This survey of periodical literature makes clear that medieval archaeology is no longer (if indeed it ever was) the poor relation of prehistoric archaeology in Ireland. Another trend which reinforces that view is the steady increase over the past quarter-century in the number of archaeology-themed books published, both single-author and edited. These fall into three categories.

First, there are single- or joint-author surveys and analyses of different types of archaeological place, building or thing. Most of the work in this category pertains to settlement and architectural heritage (fig. 12), although there are exceptions (Deevy 1998; Murphy, Potterton 2010). Castle-studies have remained strong among archaeologists in Ireland since the days of Harold Leask (see Barry 2008a). Research entered a new phase in the late 1990s with two substantial books on the subject

(McNeill 1997; Sweetman 1999). Recent years have seen some lively exchanges between archaeologists on a variety of important issues, including the interpretation of pre-invasion Irish castle-building (Barry 2008b; O'Keeffe 2014), and the use of domestic space within castles (Sherlock 2011; O'Keeffe 2013-14). The study of ecclesiastical architecture is similarly strong but has generated less conflict. Harold Leask produced the first modern surveys (Leask 1955-60). Early medieval (Ó Carragáin 2010; O'Keeffe 2004a) and Romanesque (O'Keeffe 2003) ecclesiastical buildings have been the subject of monographs, and there have been detailed studies of the architecture of monastic communities, such as the Cistercians (Stalley 1987) and the Augustinian canons regular (O'Keeffe 1999). More conventional archaeological projects on ecclesiastical sites – projects involving excavation, in other words – have also been published in monograph form (Sally 2014; Stout, Stout 2016). With one exception (O'Keeffe 2015) there has been no systematic, single-volume, survey of all the categories of Ireland's medieval architectural heritage.

Second, there are edited collections of thematic papers, most of them published by two Irish-based academic publishers, Four Courts Press and Wordwell. Some of these collections are explicitly archaeological (Corlett, Potterton 2009) but others are multi-disciplinary and fea-



Fig. 12. The deserted medieval town of Newtown Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny, which was the subject of an historical and archaeological study, and a conservation plan (Munby 2007).

ture substantial contributions from archaeologists (Duffy, Edwards, FitzPatrick 2001; McAlister, Barry 2015; Murphy, Stout 2015). Some edited collections locate Ireland in its wider European context (e.g. Clarke, Ní Mhaonaigh, Ó Floinn, 1998; Ó Carragáin, Turner 2016). The study of medieval Dublin's history and archaeology is well-served by an on-going series of volumes of essays, *Medieval Dublin*, published by Four Courts Press under the editorship of Professor Sean Duffy, a historian in Trinity College Dublin, since 2000.

Third, there are excavation reports. Within this category two groups stand out. One is the set of reports of urban excavations. The major projects in Waterford and Galway (fig. 13) have appeared in large, single-volume compilations (FitzPatrick, O'Brien, Walsh 2004; Hurley, Scully, McCutcheon 1997) whereas excavations in Cork (Cleary, Hurley, Shee Twohig 1997) and especially Dublin (e.g. McMahon 2006) have been published in individual monographs. The project to publish historic excavations in medieval Dublin's core has already delivered more than a dozen volumes (e.g. McCutcheon 2006; Halpin 2008). One large monograph purports to summarise the Viking-age material from the most famous site of excavation, Wood Quay (Wallace 2015). The other category

Fig. 13. The excavated remains of the 'Red Earl's Hall' in Galway, the 13th-century great hall of the castle.



is the group of reports of surveys and excavations carried out by the National Monuments Service (in its various configurations) at medieval monuments (Manning 2009; Hayden 2011; Manning 2013).

5.2. Syntheses and textbooks

For another reliable indicator of the maturation of the discipline in Ireland one might look to works of synthesis, as the appearance of any such work invariably marks a decisive moment in the development of any field of study. The early medieval period has been well served.

Although criticised at the time of its publication on account of its inaccuracies and imbalances, and rarely cited thereafter, Lloyd Laing's *The Archaeology of Celtic Britain and Ireland, c. 400-1200 AD* (Laing 1975) deserves to be remembered as the first modern overview and analysis of earlier medieval Ireland. Fifteen years later, the Ireland-only survey by Nancy Edwards (1990) appeared to a considerably warmer reception. It was more accurate factually than Laing's book, and considerably better organised, with coherent chapters devoted to rural settlement, the Church, the Vikings, and so on. Two years later, Harold Mytum's more adventurous, analysis-heavy, examination of Ireland's earliest medieval centuries (Mytum 1992) met a frostier reception and was almost as marginalised as Laing's work. Whereas Edwards had offered a rather a safely conventional – or normative, by the standards of the traditional cultural-historical approach – compartmentalisation of the evidence, Mytum took the more explicitly theoretical route offered by processualism, by then an increasingly unfashionable theoretical perspective in British archaeology. His work floundered on the rock of Irish archaeology's resistance at the time to any species of explicit theory (O'Keeffe 2018a, p. 101), which is a little ironic given that one of the earliest explorations of the application of New Archaeology to the middle ages in general came from an Irish archaeologist (Jope 1972). Mytum's promised follow-up volume on Viking-age Ireland never materialised; to this day, there is no book devoted specifically to the archaeology of Ireland from c.800 to c.1100.

Nancy Edwards' book remained the go-to overview of early medieval (including Viking-age) archaeology in Ireland for a quarter of a century. It lost that status in 2014 when the Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP), a well-funded collaborative project between UCD and QUB, published a huge new synthesis based on the evidence from excavations, many of them rescue excavations carried out during Ireland's decade-long 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom which ended in 2008 (O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr, Harney 2014). It is worth noting that the thematic ap-

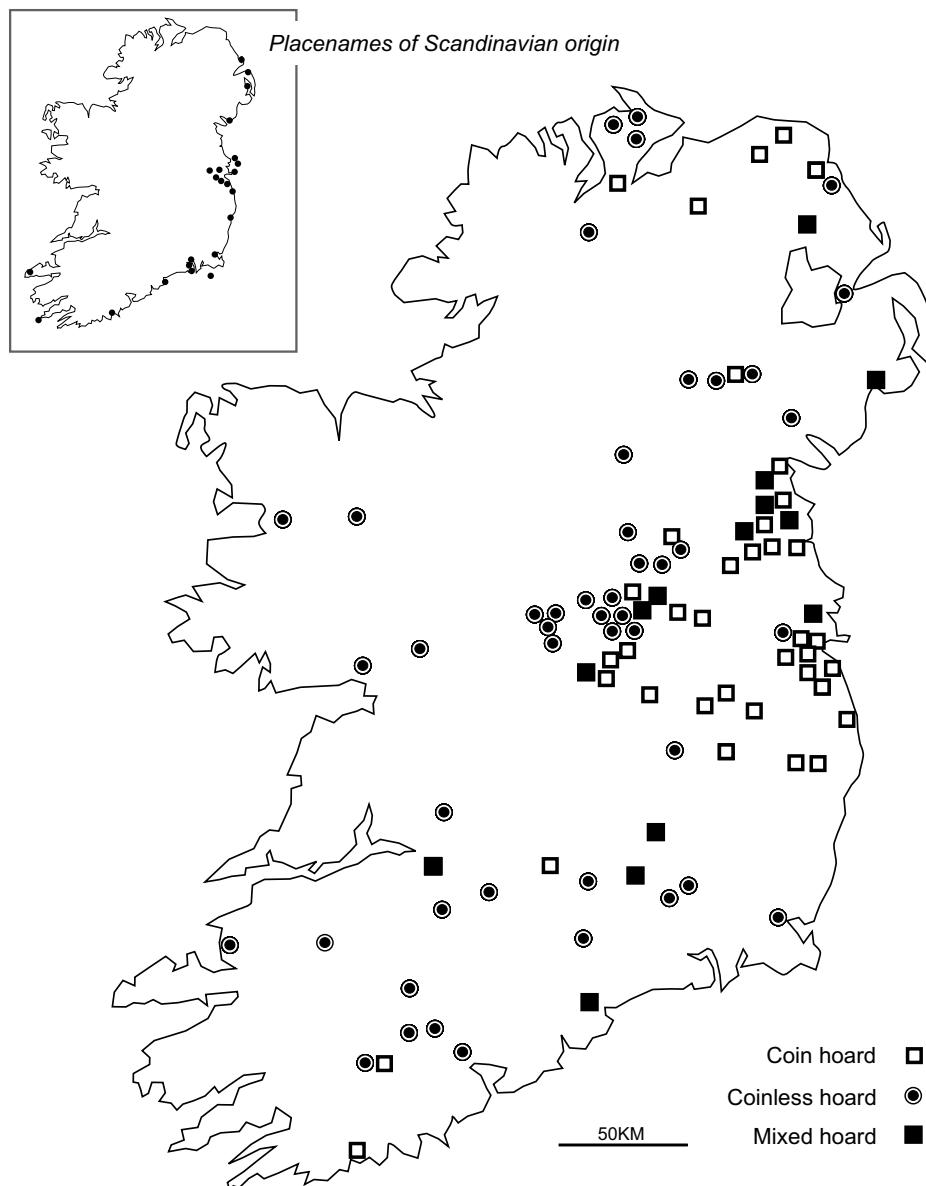


Fig. 14. Find-spots of early Viking-age silver hoards relative to placenames of Scandinavian origin in Ireland (inset) reveal the reach of Scandinavian culture into the world of the native Irish (after Clarke, Dooley, Johnson 2018, pp. 54, 126).

proach adopted for the EMAP volume matches in some regards that of Edwards' book, and so it is reasonable to regard it as the successor to Edwards' book. It certainly cannot be regarded as a successor to Mytum's book: it makes no real concession to archaeological theory, even to that body of postprocessual theory which, more than thirty years ago, began to replace the type of processualism found in Mytum's work.

The EMAP volume is, remarkably, the first substantial modern synthesis of early medieval Ireland produced by Irish-based researchers: Laing, Edwards and Mytum all wrote about Ireland from universities in Great Britain. Although an indispensable resource in many regards, it has one blind spot: Viking/Hiberno-Scandinavian archaeology. Its coverage of this is problematic in its lack of comprehensiveness. The very appearance of that archaeology in the volume suggests to the uninformed reader that the appropriate evidence was reviewed and digested, which is clearly not the case. Scholarship on all aspects of Viking/Hiberno-Scandinavian Ireland is substantial (e.g. Clarke, Ní Mhaonaigh, Ó Floinn, 1998; Harrison, Ó Floinn 2015), but its proper integration by archaeologists of all specialisms into the wider narrative of early medieval Ireland has long been a problem (fig. 14), and the EMAP volume does not resolve it.

Turning to the post-invasion period, from Martyn Jope's stable in Belfast came the first ever study of a medieval Irish region based on archaeological and historical sources: Tom McNeill's account of Anglo-Norman Ulster (McNeill 1980). The first book to be devoted to the post-1169 period in Ireland in its entirety was published seven years later. Its author, Terry Barry, described post-invasion medieval archaeology in Ireland as being in its infancy (Barry 1987, p. 1), repeating a phrase used a decade earlier by Tom Delaney (1977, p. 46). A historian by training but with a PhD in Geography from QUB, Barry had worked for the Office of Public Works as an archaeologist for a number of years before being appointed to a lectureship in medieval archaeology in Trinity College Dublin (TCD), from which position he was a strong advocate for later medieval archaeology. Barry's book was certainly a milestone in the development of the field of later medieval archaeology in Ireland, and it enjoys (even in the absence of a second, revised, edition) an extraordinary citation rate. My own shorter survey of the same field, published thirteen years later, followed a comparably normative approach and covered the same ground, even if it offered some different interpretations (O'Keeffe 2000). Although the volume of data from excavation has increased since the turn of the millennium (e.g. Bolger 2017; O'Connor, Gardiner 2017), the later medieval period in Ireland has not been audited by an EMAP-style undertaking.

To conclude, one might claim that the archaeological study of Ireland's long middle ages, notwithstanding gaps in evidence and in scholarship, is in a reasonably healthy place. It has a refreshed base-line of knowledge of the pre-1100 period thanks to EMAP, and a comparable knowledge of the later period continues to form, albeit in a less systematic manner. Looking to the future, some 'structural' trends might reinforce a positive outlook: each of the university departments or schools of archaeology on the island now has medieval archaeologists on its staff, and the number of doctoral graduates with medieval specialisms now matches that of graduates in prehistoric archaeology.

6. How do we move forward? The example of the archaeology of AD 900-1300

Neither the volume of work which is being produced nor the profile enjoyed by medievalists in the archaeological profession (and more generally in the Irish academy) necessarily signal robust disciplinary health. The measure of the health of the discipline should be the rigour, scientific and philosophical, of the interpretations which we, its practitioners, generate through our contact with the physical remains of medieval date. I recognize fully the inherent problems of using 'scientific' and 'philosophical' as adjectives here, but I use the former in the narrowest and most traditional sense of referring to that which is capable of some degree of objective truth-testing, and I use the latter to refer to interpretations which – remembering that this is archaeology, not history – can be located in and therefore validated by the many traditions of philosophical enquiry which now inform our discipline.

6.1. Res ipsa loquitur? Making sense of a surfeit of data

To assess the health of the discipline it is useful, I think, to cast the mind back to the period just before the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom. The late Professor Peter Woodman of UCC, a prehistorian, wrote in 1992 that 'Irish archaeologists know and understand the nature of the data which forms the archaeological record of the island but, due to the absence of a long-term strategy, there has been little opportunity to evaluate the new information which has been collected – certainly a heavy reliance on contract archaeology will impair the judgement of the profession as a whole' (Woodman 1992, pp. 38-39). The statement should not read as an allegation that 'contract archaeology' – or Cultural Resources

Management (CRM) archaeology as it is known in other contexts (Praetzelis, Praetzelis 2011) – was, or is, a sector which does not evaluate data. It was, if anything, a criticism of other sectors, perhaps principally the university sector, for not ensuring that the process of evaluating data was keeping pace with its actual production. The criticism was probably valid in 1992, three years or so before the start of the economic boom which drove a massive contract archaeology industry in Ireland. And it was certainly valid after 2008, when Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' economy collapsed and a vast body of the archaeological data which was collected during those years of economic prosperity was left unprocessed.

Coming at the end of a decade of unprecedented information-gathering by contract archaeologists, the collaborative EMAP project, already mentioned, tackled the 'Celtic Tiger' data head-on, stocktaking evidence from the period's archaeological excavations of early medieval sites, as well as from earlier excavations. The end-product – book-length thematic surveys (McCormick, Kerr, McClatchie, O'Sullivan 2014; Kerr, Doyle, Seaver, McCormick O'Sullivan, 2015), and a large single-volume synthesis (O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr, Harney 2015) – is monumental by any definition. One might claim that it addresses for the early middle ages the very issue raised by Peter Woodman, and that it should be viewed as a model of how the study of other periods of Ireland's past might be progressed. We now know with greater clarity, for example, the date-ranges of certain early medieval monument types, and we can now dip into any century and survey what was going on. There is a context into which every new discovery can be fitted and its typicality determined.

Published in a physically substantial volume by no less an institution than the Royal Irish Academy, the EMAP single-volume synthesis carries a considerable weight of authority. Given this, its approach is worth some scrutiny: it will shape how the next generation of archaeologists frames research questions and goes about addressing them. Risking the ire of colleagues and friends in the service of a necessary debate, I want to offer here a cautionary note about where EMAP's approach and the narrative it generates might lead us.

EMAP privileges description over explanation, the search for patterns over the quest for identifying processes, and (notwithstanding some commentary on 'social identity') the safe methods of culture-history over the more challenging interpretative strategies of contemporary archaeological theory. I am not asserting that no explanations are offered of the patterns that are observed, but suggesting, rather, that

in its devotion of individual chapters to individual categories of cultural activity it offers a narrative without an engine, a history without a pulse. The passage of time itself seems to be allowed agency, driving significant changes within those defined categories of culture; it is a problem inherent to syntheses which are thematic rather than chronological in structure. One *could* sense from the EMAP synthesis that Irish society moved with a languid rhythm (as distinct from a series of jolts) from the late Iron Age through the duration of the Christian middle ages, that unbeknownst to itself it followed some European norms but not others along the way, and that it absorbed almost incidentally the shock of Viking attacks before wobbling, finally, into an 11th-century twilight, its doors opened by then to direct European impulses and eventual Anglo-Norman invasion.

To give an example pertinent to what follows below, the decline late in the first millennium AD in the number of ringforts of 'classic' type — those with single ramparts and relatively low-elevation interiors — is observed in the volume and is given a radiocarbon-based quantification. Evidence is also presented to support the thesis (e.g. Kerr 2007) that the relatively small group of ringforts with elevated interiors — 'raised ringforts' — belongs late in the sequence, its number increasing briefly as the decline in the number of other forts set in. So, the evidence in EMAP allows a nuanced but firm response to Elizabeth FitzPatrick's argument that 'the idea that native enclosed settlements were abandoned by c.1000, and that thereafter the population below the level of kings and chiefs became essentially invisible, is no longer tenable' (2009, p. 303). But no conclusions are drawn in EMAP about the drivers of the change.

There is an acknowledgement of the suggestion made more than twenty years ago that the general decline of the ringfort is to be understood in the context of a lordship-driven reorganisation of the landscape, with population relocation to newly created nucleated settlements (see O'Keeffe 1996; Doherty 1998). That model was predicated on an assumption that there was population increase in Ireland in the 10th and 11th centuries, as one would expect to have been the case based on the evidence of contemporary western Europe. Given that the assumption has not been undermined by new evidence, the fact that 'the population below the level of kings and chiefs' is *not* accounted for in the radiocarbon dates for the primary occupation of the ringforts can be taken as evidence of a change in *how*, and more especially *where*, that population lived. But this model, which posits a process of nucleation, is essentially rejected in EMAP, not because there is a better alternative explanation but because no such nucleations have been found *in excavation*. And so no explanation is given for what was evidently (*pace* FitzPatrick 2009) a

remarkable transformation of the Irish settlement pattern. This is not the place for a debate on the issue, but if such nucleations were created, is it not possible that many lie under existing modern nucleations, in the way that planned Anglo-Saxon villages demonstrably survive as modern villages in England today? Is that not the explanation for the failure of 'Celtic Tiger' excavations to find them?

My point here is that archaeologists sometimes need to move from the evidence into the realm of speculation, based on inductive and deductive reasoning rather than guesswork, as John Blair has done for Anglo-Saxon England (Blair 2018). The example of the decline of the ringfort illustrates the problem of building a narrative solely around what is known, or is believed to be known, without the engaging the 'archaeological imagination' to bridge the gaps in testable knowledge (O'Keeffe 2018a). Colin Rynne has recently articulated the same problem in respect of the actual date of the plough coulter in early medieval Ireland:

"The plough coulter has been conspicuous in its absence in the Irish archaeological record, even though its presence has long been implied by the increased use of other crop processing technologies. In Irish archaeological discourse not only has its absence been noted, its *potential* to exist has been denied. When archaeologists are unable to locate an object in a particular place or time they are often too ready to assume that they were absent"

(Rynne 2018, p. 64; his emphasis).

The capacity of the archaeologist to explain the meanings of archaeological evidence from any period of historically-documented time is compromised if excavated evidence is given primacy. That is certainly not to claim that historical records in particular should be allowed to frame every analysis (see Moreland 2006 for a discussion). There are other bodies of evidence which need to be drawn into the conversation. One cannot understand, for example, early medieval agricultural and food-processing change in Ireland – observed diachronically in the excavated evidence – without thinking in parallel about the possible implications of, say, monasteries producing high-quality art in remarkable bursts of activity (and conspicuous consumption?). And one certainly cannot create the space to attempt nuanced understandings of such activities when, in one's writing and therefore in one's thinking, "the terms 'monastery', 'church settlement' and 'ecclesiastical settlement' are used interchangeably and have the same general meaning: a place dating to the early medieval period and containing a church" (O'Sullivan, McCormick, Kerr, Harney 2014, p. 143).

In its defence, one might claim that EMAP's aim was not to write a history of early medieval Ireland through the archaeological evidence, but merely to audit that evidence and reconstruct its sequence. That was, in itself, a reasonable goal. But it is also reasonable to criticise EMAP, the most monumental achievement of Irish medieval archaeologists for decades, for providing no methodological or philosophical roadmaps, explicitly or implicitly, for the next generation of archaeological researchers to move from observation and narrow contextual explanation to *deep*, paradigmatic, explanation.

Following on from these points, I want to consider how, starting with a critique of assumptions in the archaeological literature, one might move towards a new paradigm to explain the archaeological evidence of the period between the 10th and 13th centuries inclusive. In focusing on this period I am not suggesting that it alone needs, or is alone capable of, some rethinking. Rather, by shining a light on how we might rethink this one period I hope that this part of my paper will encourage the next generation of Irish scholars to think 'outside the box' for other periods as well.

6.2. 1169 'and all that'

Current thinking among archaeologists in Ireland characterises the 10th and 11th centuries as constituting a single period in itself (e.g. O'Sullivan, McCormick 2017, pp. 124-129), and it seems to identify, though not explicitly, two connected narratives of change through its duration.

One is a narrative of decline, specifically in the culture that had roots in the pre-Viking age. The process is best represented in the archaeological *literature*, as distinct from the archaeological *record*, by that fall-off by the period's end in the number of newly built (or at least still-occupied) ringforts, and by extension by the unexplained disappearance from archaeological visibility of a significant part of the population at precisely the time when, judging by what we know of contemporary Europe, population was probably growing. The archaeological literature conveys a sense, again implicitly, that the same process is also attested to in other aspects of the archaeological record. For example, archaeologists present no evidence that the supposed proto-urbanism of monastic sites of the preceding period expanded in the way that one might expect to have happened had the economy continued to grow in the 10th and 11th centuries. Indeed, the manner in which the issue of monastic proto-urbanism is elided in discussions of the end of the first millennium leads one to



Fig. 15. The crossing and choir of Monasteranenagh Abbey, Co. Limerick, a mid-12th-century Cistercian foundation.

think that the process of urban expansion slowed, possibly even stopped. This, then, is the narrative of decline, and it feeds the narrative of swift and successful Anglo-Norman takeover after 1169, just as the narrative of the end of Roman Britain has fed a narrative of a rapid takeover of England by Germanic 'invaders' in the early 5th century.

The other narrative, which permits the evidence of history a slightly greater role, is one of transformation or, more properly, *adjustment*. It presents an Ireland that, at an elite social level, was making itself more 'European' through its embrace of feudalism as a form of governance, of ecclesiastical reform as gesture of compliance with Gregorian reform (fig. 15), and of Romanesque as an aesthetic of contemporary Continental modernity.

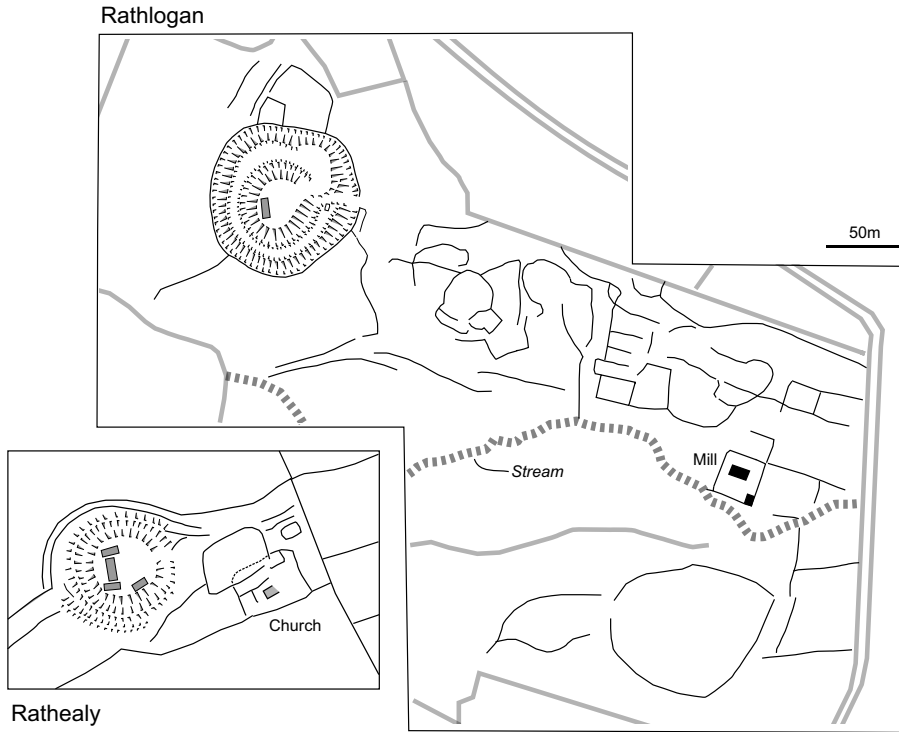


Fig. 16. The earthworks at Rathealy and Rathlogan, Co. Kilkenny (preliminary surveys by the author). The dominant monuments are ringforts, entered (as was customary for early medieval ringforts) from their eastern sides. Both forts have raised interiors, and are more visually prominent on the landscape than plans can indicate. The fort at Rathlogan is two-phased, and its summit has foundations of a building. There are remains of a medieval mill (a rare survival in Ireland) in the settlement. The fort at Rathealy has four building foundations on its summit. There is a record of a souterrain, a classic feature of early medieval ringforts. The settlement – much bigger originally – has foundations of a church and other buildings.

Critically, these two narratives are shaped so as not to contradict each other. Rather, they are made to dovetail. Decline in some realms is counter-balanced by progression in others, even if the dovetailing has chronological imperfections: insofar as the generalisation is valid, decline is an interpretation derived from incomplete evidence over a period of about two centuries before the invasion of 1169, while progression is identified (by archaeologists, it must be remembered) as a phenomenon that started in the later 11th century.

Turning to 1169, that year dominates the historical imagination in Ireland as much as 1066 dominates that in England (Sellar, Yeoman 1930), and it does so with comparable if not greater tyranny (Clarke 2003). Invasion has that impact: were there a contemporary record of 'Anglo-Saxons' first setting foot in an England being vacated by Romans, that date would be imprinted in our minds and dominate the discussion. Such dates belong, to paraphrase David Dumville (1985, p. 66), to dynastic histories rather than to settlement histories. But the archaeological narrative of eastern Ireland after 1169 does not reflect that.

Just as the Anglo-Norman invasion represented in historical fact a takeover of parts of Ireland by an elite, the adjective 'Anglo-Norman' takes over the description of the archaeological record in those parts of Ireland. There is no recorded displacement of the native population in areas settled by the invaders, much less in those areas brought under their lordship. But the native populations in those areas are not allowed any ownership of the archaeological record, *unless* arguments are made for it, in which case the tendency is to imagine that the natives were *betagii*, servile tenants (e.g. J. Eogan 2009). By contrast, the Anglo-Normans are allowed ownership of things which might not have belonged to them, or at least not exclusively, from open-field farming to unglazed cooking wares. The insistence of the State-run Archaeological Survey of Ireland that the large ringfort at Rathealy, Co. Kilkenny, should be classified as an Anglo-Norman castle, and that the similar earthwork at Rathlogan, also in Co. Kilkenny, was a ringfort which was possibly modified by the Anglo-Normans to become a castle, illustrates the point very well (fig. 16). There is a *prima facie* case for identifying these – especially Rathealy – as native, pre-invasion, sites. Both were upgraded and provided with nucleated settlements, but one cannot be sure of the chronology. In the absence of documentation, is it not reasonable to speculate that that these sites were still occupied by the native families which possessed them before the invasion, but as tenants of Anglo-Norman lords in the 13th century?

The topic that dominates the archaeological conversation about Gaelic Ireland beyond the boundaries of the Anglo-Norman settlement-area is the visibility of the native population below the castle-owning class (fig. 17). The issue of 'personifying the gael', the native-Irish inhabitant, is indeed 'something of a challenge for archaeologists', as Niall Brady expressed it (2006). The challenge has generated some debate about, for example, the longevity of the ringfort (compare Lyttleton, Monk 2007 and FitzPatrick 2009), the permanence on the landscape of native settlements in the later middle ages (compare Nicholls 1987 and O'Keeffe 2004b), and the tendency of the natives in the 13th century to emulate



Fig. 17. Ballycarbery Castle, Co. Kerry, of the native McCarthy family.

Anglo-Norman fashions (compare Finan 2016 and O'Keeffe 2018b). But I would suggest that the challenge has been created to a considerable degree by our incomplete understanding of the archaeology of native people before 1169. Can we understand the Irish after 1169 when we still have no agreed positions on the pre-1169 disappearing ringforts, putative villages, and so on?

6.3. A two-step plan for a new paradigm

The commentary above suggests that archaeologists have allowed their understanding of pre-invasion Ireland to shape their understanding of post-invasion Ireland, and *vice versa*, while persisting with the idea that there should be a barrier between them. Moving the barrier back to 1100 from 1169, as is now fashionable, does not change the fact that a barrier is perceived. The first step towards a new understanding of the centuries around AD 1100 might be to remove the barrier entirely from our imaginations, and to allow that 'pre-Norman Ireland' provided the *political* entity that was 'Anglo-Norman Ireland' with a population so large, and a set of cultural traditions so deep, that continuity *must* replace change as the dominant theme. Susan Oosthuizen's rethinking of the relationship between sub-Roman and early 'Anglo-Saxon' England as 'bottom-up' (Oosthuizen 2016) offers a model for the type of paradigm shift which I am suggesting.

Removing the barrier will only have benefit if we change how we approach the archaeological study of both pre- and post-1169 periods. Those narratives reviewed above for native ('Gaelic-Irish') and colonial ('Anglo-Norman') Ireland actually 'work' for what is required of them, but the requirements need to change: the questions we ask of native and colonial Ireland are shaped less by demonstrable lacunae in the evidence than by how we have developed our narratives about those two Irelands (or, following Watt 1970, two nations). The second step, then, is to reject the proposition that by collecting more data some historical truths might jump out at us; the evidence does not speak for itself. In its place, we need to equalise, or to create some likeness between, the narratives about native and colonial Ireland so that we would no longer think that over-arching research questions must be specific to either one of two Irelands. The first casualty of such a strategy would be the very idea itself of 'two Irelands'. The first benefit would be the recognition of the importance of social class (as indicated in the middle ages by, for example, tenurial status) ahead of ethnic identity: we might soon decide that we — archaeologists — can actually live without labels like 'Gaelic-Irish' and 'Anglo-Norman' in the study of medieval Ireland.

7. Conclusion

I hope that this paper has conveyed to the non-Irish reader both the richness of Ireland's medieval archaeological record and the vibrancy of the debates surrounding its interpretations. It would be a good outcome if scholars outside Ireland were persuaded by this review to look to Ireland for comparative evidence for their own purposes. It would be an even better outcome were this review to tempt non-Irish scholars to get involved in debates about medieval Ireland. In the second part of the paper I highlight one particular debate. It is specific to Ireland – there is no conceivable body of evidence outside Ireland which might be the ultimate key to it – but it touches on issues of concern to all medieval archaeologists: identity and cultural essentialism, the concepts of continuity and change, the relationship of pattern to process, the meanings of words, and so on. Irish medieval archaeologists, no more than archaeologists of any period or any place, cannot circumvent these issues. Addressing them head-on is the prerequisite to a better understanding of the material left-overs of Ireland's long middle ages.

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