



Gaelic lordly Settlement in 13th and 14th Century Ireland

Introduction

The arrival of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland in 1169 and over the subsequent decades was not like the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. Large areas of Ireland remained under the control of indigenous Irish lords and princes throughout the high medieval period right down to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These areas of indigenous Irish or Gaelic-Irish control included not only regions of the island unsuitable for intensive arable cultivation, but also agriculturally-fertile districts that were controlled by strong rulers able to withstand the military advances of the Anglo-Normans. This is in direct contrast to England, where the native Saxon aristocracy was more or less completely replaced as a landowning and governing class by the conquering Normans. Ireland’s experience during this period bears close similarity to that of Wales, a country which also saw the large-scale survival of native Welsh princedoms alongside Norman lordships.

Certain historians have argued in the past that anything up to three-quarters of the island of Ireland was under direct Anglo-Norman control by *ca.* 1250. Theoretically this would have left only one quarter of the country under the direct rule of native Irish princes and lords, although, technically, even these men owed allegiance to the English king as lord of Ireland. The regions of Ireland that saw undisputed Irish princely and lordly survival included most of the province of Ulster west of the River Bann, much of eastern and north-east Connacht and large parts of west Munster (O’Conor 1998:73).

It is now becoming clear, however, that actual Anglo-Norman settlement on the ground in many of the areas that they did control, as opposed to just political overlordship, seems to have been far less intensive than many historians have argued for in the past. Many Irish lords within areas conquered and controlled by the Anglo-Normans, such as much of Connacht, Munster and the bogland and mountain zones of the Anglo-Norman lordships of Meath and Leinster, were not dispossessed of their lands, or at least were left with a substantial proportion of their old possessions

(O'Conor 1998:73). Alternatively, segments of aristocratic Irish lineage groups were in certain places removed from their traditional pre-1169 territories and were allocated lands in agriculturally marginal areas by their Anglo-Norman overlords. These removals to less prosperous areas may not have been popular but at least these groups retained their lordly status, albeit in a diminished way (e.g. Nicholls 1982:373-374; Orpen 1909:315-316).

The landholding history of what is now the modern county of Sligo perfectly illustrates the point that many Irish dynasties remained in place at a local level within Anglo-Norman lordships during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The Sligo area was mostly part of the Anglo-Norman lordship of Connacht granted to Richard de Burgh by Henry III in 1227. This grant, which really only became effective after 1235, included much of the province of Connacht – bar most of modern Roscommon and Leitrim, along with parts of modern east Galway and east Sligo. De Burgh kept some land in demesne but granted out substantial portions of his new lands to fellow Anglo-Normans, especially to those who had supported him in his claims to Connacht. Nevertheless, an actual, detailed analysis of Anglo-Norman settlement across Connacht suggests that it was relatively light and that many pre-existing Gaelic dynasties were left in possession of their old territories, or at least a portion of them, or instead took over new lands in more peripheral parts of the province. The de Burghs and their chief Anglo-Norman vassals acted often merely as overlords accepting tribute, rents and military service from the Irish lords on their lands. For example, it is clear that by *ca.* 1260 the Anglo-Norman Fitzgerald family dominated much of what was to become the later county of Sligo (Orpen 1911-20:iii, 194-199; O'Conor 2002a:184). Other Anglo-Norman knights at this time controlled the rest of the later county bar the cantred of Tirerrill (Orpen 1911-20:iii, 194-201). This latter cantred was in theory kept in royal hands but was in reality granted, along with other lands, to the Irish O'Conor kings of Connacht as part compensation for their loss of much of the latter province in 1227 (Orpen 1911-20:iii, 173-174, 225-251). By *ca.* 1300 or so, the Gaelic Irish MacDonagh family came to prominence in this part of Sligo (O'Dowd 1991:156). The main point here is that, apart from Tirerrill, most of present Co. Sligo was under the control of Anglo-Norman lords by the mid thirteenth century or so. Castles, boroughs and settlements were founded by the Anglo-Normans across the later county. For example, Maurice fitz Gerald Fitzgerald built Sligo Castle in 1245 and founded a town there around the same time in an estuarine location beside a ford over the Garavogue River. This river lay on an important routeway linking Connacht to western Ulster (O'Conor 2002a:184). In 1252, Fitzgerald founded a Dominican priory within the town (Gwynn and Hadcock 1970:220, 229-230). For the most part, Sligo Town owes its origins to the Anglo-Normans and became a prosperous settlement under their rule. Yet, despite this Anglo-Norman control at a regional level, it is also apparent that the pre-existing Irish lordly families of the Sligo area, in particular the O'Haras, O'Dowds and O'Garas, remained in occupation of some of their old lands (O'Dowd

1991:15). Furthermore, the de Burghs and the Fitzgeralds seem to have encouraged a minor branch of the royal O'Conor line to settle in the Carbury area of north Sligo at some stage in the late 13th century (O'Dowd 1991:15-16; Orpen 1911-20:iii, 226). The main body of evidence suggests that even in the second half of the 13th century when Anglo-Norman power was at its height in the Sligo region, large parts of this later county remained in the hands of Gaelic Irish lords. These men seem to have been happy for the time being to pay rent or render tribute and military service to their Anglo-Norman overlords.

The overall conclusion from this discussion is that there was widespread Gaelic Irish lordly survival, not just in the parts of the island that lay outside the direct control of the Anglo-Normans, but also within the bounds of the colony itself. This particular point has not been emphasised enough by scholars in the past. Two aristocracies, therefore, separated by language, laws, dress and customs, existed right across high medieval Ireland, often living peaceably side by side and interacting on a daily basis (O'Conor 1998:74-75). The actual cultural differences between the Irish and many of the Anglo-Norman colonists began to break down over the course of the late thirteenth and particularly the fourteenth century. This was as a result of close contact and intermarriage; initially Anglo-Norman men marrying Irish noblewomen, but this changed in the mid 14th century as women from prominent Anglo-Norman families began to wed Irishmen. It has long been realised that the adoption of many Irish cultural traits by the Anglo-Normans was one of the main features of fourteenth-century Ireland. This movement saw the spread of Irish customs, speech, pastoralism, laws, literature and dress amongst many Anglo-Norman families in Ireland, particularly those living in peripheral, frontier locations (e.g. Frame 1981:132-135; Lydon 1973:57-61). Cultural change, however, was not just one way and certain Anglo-Norman traits were adopted by the Irish during this whole period (O'Conor 1998:103-104). It might also be added that Irish lords reconquered large parts of the country from the Anglo-Normans during the course of the 14th century. This was especially the case in marginal areas of the colony that had seen little in-depth settlement by the latter during the course of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For example, there was a complete collapse of Anglo-Norman settlement in the Sligo region during the course of the fourteenth century. The early part of the latter century saw a massive decrease in de Burgh power across north-west Ireland. Gaelic Irish dynasties in the Sligo area, mentioned above, such as the O'Conor Sligos, the O'Haras, the O'Dowds, the MacDonaghs and the O'Garas, benefited greatly from this drop in Anglo-Norman power and were able to carve out individual lordships for themselves over the course of the 14th century (O'Dowd 1991:15-19; O'Conor 2002a:183-184; Orpen 1911-20:iii, 200-201). By *ca.* 1350, most of the present county of Sligo was firmly in Irish hands. The last Anglo-Norman settlers in the Sligo region were pushed out of the Tireragh area by *c.* 1370 (O'Dowd 1991; Orpen 1911-20:iii, 201). In all, the Anglo-Norman presence in the Sligo area had lasted at most about one hundred and thirty years. This whole process of Irish reconquest and cultural change among

many Anglo-Norman families, especially ones living in frontier areas, is known as the Gaelic Resurgence.

This all shows that Gaelic Irish lords, in various ways, remained in control of large parts of Ireland after 1169, even within the bounds of great Anglo-Norman lordships. Yet, very little detailed research has been carried out over the years on the archaeology and history of these Gaelic-dominated parts of high medieval Ireland (Duffy, Edwards and FitzPatrick 2001; O'Connor 1998:73, 104-107, 144; 2001:329-331). Conversely, Anglo-Norman Ireland has been the subject of far more sustained academic research over the whole twentieth century (O'Connor 2001:330-331). Over the last few years, however, this situation has begun to change with various publications dealing with the nature of Gaelic Irish lordly settlement during the high medieval period (e.g. Finan and O'Connor 2002; FitzPatrick 2004; McNeill 2001; O'Connor 1998:73-101; 2000; 2001; 2002b; O'Sullivan 1998:152-157; Simms 2001). The main discussion in this paper, whilst utilising this new research, is concerned with examining lordly settlement in Gaelic Irish-dominated parts of Ireland during the late twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (i.e. the high medieval period) and comparing that which occurred there to the situation in Anglo-Norman controlled parts of Ireland.

The Intellectual Background

One school of historical thought in the last century clearly saw Gaelic Ireland both before and after 1169 as archaic and backward in comparison with the Anglo-Norman world and the rest of Western Europe. These scholars, who were often Unionist in politics and Anglo-Irish in culture, clearly saw the arrival of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland in 1169 as a positive event, as they were seen to have brought with them such things as common law, centralised government and a better infrastructure in their train (e.g. Orpen 1911-20; Otway-Ruthven 1968). Another school, dominant since the 1970s, believes that the differences between high medieval Gaelic Ireland and the Anglo-Normans, England and Western Europe have been heavily exaggerated. These scholars would argue that pre-1169 Ireland was developing along broadly similar lines to England and Western Europe. For example, they would suggest that many of the trends seen elsewhere in Europe after 1000 or so, such as the growth in lordly or royal power, and a rise in urbanism and increased trade, were also seen in Ireland. These scholars sincerely believe that Gaelic Ireland was not a stagnant place during the high medieval period and was similar in many respects to contemporary England and, also, to Anglo-Norman dominated parts of Ireland (e.g. Doherty 1980; 1985; Duffy 1997:7-56; Flanagan 1989; Ó Corrain 1972; 1989:47-52; Ó Croinin 1995:291-292). The important point for this paper is that as a corollary of this, historians and, to a certain extent, archaeologists of this latter school of thought have suggested that the settlement forms, material culture and landscape of high medieval Gaelic Ireland were little different from the contemporary Anglo-Norman world (Graham 1988a:20-21; 1988b:111-118, 125-126; O'Keeffe 2000:26-29). This is

despite the fact that little sustained archaeological work has been undertaken to date on indigenous settlement during the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as mentioned above.

Gaelic Irish lordly settlement in high medieval Ireland

In reality, however, research in recent years has suggested that the fortifications and settlement forms used by Gaelic Irish lords during the late twelfth, thirteenth and much of the fourteenth centuries were substantially different from those lived in by the Anglo-Normans. This new research strongly suggests that there were in fact strong differences between Gaelic and Anglo-Norman society during the high medieval period.

Over the years, it has been continually emphasised by scholars over the years that the great symbol of both high and late medieval lordly power and status across Europe was the castle in its various forms. Clearly, castles were used for defence against attack but it must be remembered they also functioned as lordly residences and as the centres of their owners' estates. Furthermore, recent work from England has suggested that many important castles there (including those of earthworks) were originally surrounded by deliberately-created, designed landscapes (which included deer parks) from as early as a few decades after the Norman Conquest. These designed or elite landscapes were created to further emphasise the power and status of the castles' owners (e.g. Creighton 2002; Liddiard 2000). The historical sources suggest that many of the elements associated with elite landscapes in England seem to have occurred around many high medieval castles in Ireland (O'Connor 2004:231-239). This strongly hints that designed landscapes occurred around castles in Ireland during the latter period, much like the situation in England. Castles having such specifically-created landscapes around them must have been extremely impressive to their visitors, as well as to ordinary travellers passing them by.

What evidence supports the suggestion that Gaelic Irish lords and princes built castles during the high medieval period? The surviving historical sources indicate that at times there was much warfare in late twelfth-, thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Ireland, particularly in areas dominated or controlled by Gaelic Irish lords. Succession disputes between Gaelic dynasts and encroachments on their territories by Anglo-Norman lords led to much insecurity across many parts of Ireland during this whole period. Theoretically, castles would have been needed in this relatively unstable environment. Furthermore, given the now widely-held view, mentioned above, that the high medieval lordly class across Western Europe and further afield built castles as much for reasons of prestige and aristocratic display as for defense, it would seem reasonable to presume at first glance that the Gaelic Irish elite of this period constructed such fortresses on a regular basis.

A review of the available archaeological and historical evidence shows something different. Certainly the late medieval Gaelic elite built the tower house form of castle in great numbers from about 1400 or so (give or take a decade) onwards,

although far less so in the northern half of Ireland (Barry 1987:188; Cairns 1987:9; O'Connor 1998:25, 102). However, relatively recent research shows that there is really little evidence for high medieval Gaelic Irish lords and princes regularly building and occupying residential fortresses that both contemporary observers and modern scholars would classify as castles (McNeill 1997:72-74, 157-164; O'Connor 1998:75-77). It has been suggested that a few masonry castles across the province of Ulster were, in fact, built by Gaelic lords during the course of the thirteenth century. For example, it has been argued that the polygonal enclosure castles at Doonbought and Connor in modern Co. Antrim were built by indigenous Gaelic Irish lords at this time. The latter castle may even have functioned as the centre of the small Gaelic Irish O'Flynn lordship of Ui Tuirtre. Yet, both these masonry castles lack mural towers, gatehouses or evidence for arrowloops and in places drystone walling was used in their defenses (McNeill 1977; 1980:102-103; 1997:158-160). Another possible example of a relatively simple Gaelic stone castle of high medieval date comes from modern Co. Mayo. Hag's Castle or Caislen na Caillige, possibly built by the O'Conors in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, is built out on a small natural or semi-artificial island just off the eastern shores of Lough Mask. It consists of a more-or-less circular enclosure, about 36.5 metres in diameter, defined by a 5 metre-8 metre high, 3 meter wide, mortared stone wall. Again, there are no remains of mural towers, arrowloops or a gatehouse. In terms of the 13th-century castle architecture and design, Hag's Castle is a remarkably simple structure from defensive and residential points of view (O'Connor 1998:76; 2001:335). Other masonry castles that have been



Figure 1. Ballintober Castle, Co. Roscommon, was built ca. 1300 by the Anglo-Norman magnate Richard de Burgh.

postulated as having been built by the Gaelic Irish turn out, on closer analysis, to have been erected by Anglo-Norman magnates. It was once firmly believed that the large, keepless castle at Ballintober, Co. Roscommon, with its twin-towered gatehouse and polygonal-shaped angle towers, was an O'Connor copy, built around 1300, of nearby Roscommon Castle (figure 1; Leask 1941:69; Glasscock 1987:221). However, the available evidence suggests that Ballintober Castle was in fact built by an Anglo-Norman magnate, Richard de Burgh, in the first years of the fourteenth century and that there are strong similarities between its design and Edward I's great castle at Caernarvon in North Wales (Claffey 1974-5; McNeill 1997:101-103; O'Connor 2002a:189). It must be stated, therefore, that the overall evidence indicates that the overwhelming majority of masonry castles of high medieval date in Ireland were built by Anglo-Norman lords and that the few Gaelic Irish examples that did exist were remarkably simple in their design.

Were any earthwork castles – mottes or ringworks – built by Gaelic Irish lords during the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? Recent work on mottes and ringworks would suggest that many of them carried serious timber defenses, such as mural towers, and had arrow slits cut into their palisades. Furthermore, a plethora of quite complex domestic and administrative wooden or sometimes cob buildings lay either within or around these earthwork castles (Higham and Barker 1992:326-347; O'Connor 2002c). The overall impression is that many of these timber or earthwork castles were visually impressive as were most of the contemporary masonry ones. Presumably at least a good percentage of earthwork castles, with their strong timber defenses and with complex buildings within them or around them, conveyed a message of wealth, power and strength to contemporaries in much the same way that many masonry castles did at this time. About 476 mottes and at least 60 ringworks have been recognised in the Irish countryside to date, with many of the latter occurring as primary fortifications built by the Anglo-Normans at sites that later became masonry castles (O'Connor 1998:18, 20). It might be added that it has been estimated that anywhere between 100 and 150 masonry castles were constructed in Ireland during high medieval times (O'Connor 1998:17). This all shows that mottes were ultimately the most popular form of castle built in Ireland during the latter period. Again, like masonry castles of the same date, the overwhelming historical, distributional and archaeological evidence indicates that the vast majority of recognised mottes in Ireland were erected by Anglo-Norman lords and not native dynasts (McNeill 1997:72-74; O'Connor 1998:75-76). Certainly, there are examples of mottes that seem to have been originally built and then occupied by Gaelic Irish lords but really they are few in number (O'Connor 1998:76). For example, it has been argued that the motte at Managh Beg, Co. Derry, was erected by the Gaelic Irish O'Cahans (McNeill 1997:73, 158; 2001:346-348). Nevertheless, as noted, most mottes were in high medieval Ireland built by Anglo-Norman lords often at their manorial centres.

Why this lack of castles in Gaelic-dominated parts of Ireland during the high medieval period? At first glance, this dearth of castles could be taken as a confirmation of the view, outlined above as being held by Anglo-Irish historians such as Goddard Orpen, that high medieval Gaelic Irish society was economically, socially and politically conservative in comparison with other parts of contemporary Western Europe. Yet extensive relict field-systems studied in parts of modern Roscommon in east Connacht (which may date to as early as the twelfth century) seem to suggest that agriculture in both high and late medieval Gaelic Ireland was in fact efficiently organised and produced a surplus (Herity 1988; O'Connor 1998:139-140). These great field systems which cross the grasslands of eastern Connacht, still renowned today for their grazing potential, were clearly originally created for the large-scale production of cattle (figure 2). The field-banks, which make up these field-systems, represent a considerable investment in labour by the Gaelic Irish of the area. Their regularity hints strongly that they were the product of lordly control, design and direction (O'Keeffe 2000:80-81). Certainly, Gaelic lords in both high and late medieval Ireland possessed large herds of cattle. Cattle hides were the premier export from Gaelic lordships during the whole later medieval (Nicholls 1987:413-414). Agricultural wealth existed in Gaelic Ireland from the twelfth century onwards. Gaelic princes regularly patronised the church as did lords elsewhere and their ability to do so is yet another indication of surplus wealth in their territories. For example, large



Figure 2. A modern-day Kerry cow. Kerrys are regarded as the lineal descendents of high and late medieval Irish cattle.

structurally complex Cistercian and Augustinian abbeys of stone were a common feature of the countryside of Gaelic-dominated parts of high medieval Ireland (e.g. Stalley 1987). Lay masons appear to have worked on the construction of these buildings as well (Stalley 1987:42). There are many references within the surviving historical sources to Gaelic dynasts capturing even the most militarily-complex Anglo-Norman masonry or timber castles. This suggests that if Gaelic princes had the military resources to take these castles, then surely they possessed the ability to build them as well (O'Connor 1998:95). In this regard, there are references to Gaelic leaders aiding Anglo-Norman magnates in the construction of their masonry castles. For example, Felim O'Connor, king of Connacht, helped Maurice Fitzgerald erect his castle at Sligo in 1245 (O'Connor 2002a:183). Presumably, this meant that O'Connor provided masons, labourers and materials for this project. This all seems to show that the necessary wealth and technological ability to build castles existed in high medieval Gaelic Ireland but yet this was not a widespread activity.

A number of valid social, economic and military reasons, rather than economic or technological ones, have been put forward by various scholars to explain why so few castles were built by Gaelic Irish lords during the high medieval period. Firstly, it is felt that a custom known as periodic land redistribution went against the building of complex structures such as castles in Gaelic Ireland during the latter period. In Gaelic Ireland, during both the high and late medieval periods, land was normally the property of the lineage group and not the individual. The lands of any given lineage group were regularly divided and redistributed amongst all its male members. This meant that there was much settlement mobility for individuals and their nuclear families within the lands or estate owned by their lineage group. Periodic land redistribution was a disincentive to the erection of a castle for a high medieval Gaelic lord simply because occupation of it could not be guaranteed for any length of time (Nicholls 1987:431-433; O'Connor 1998:96-97). Obviously, in this situation, Gaelic lords would not want to have invested resources and labour into building castles on lands owned by their lineage or kindred group. Secondly, the whole system of Gaelic inheritance to lordship also seems to have gone against the regular building of castles in their territories, at least until the 15th century (McNeill 1997:168). It seems probable that not all land in any given high or late medieval Gaelic lordship was affected by the custom of periodic land redistribution. Lands attached to the position of lord of any given lordship, often referred to as the chiefry lands, seem to have been excluded from periodic land redistributions (Loeber 2001:276-277). Theoretically, therefore, castles could have been built on such lands during the course of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Yet, it must be remembered that the Gaelic system of inheritance to lordship was not by primogeniture, unlike the situation in Anglo-Norman Ireland. Instead, Gaelic Irish lords were chosen by a system of election within the whole extended family group, a system later referred to as *tanistry* by late sixteenth-century English commentators on Ireland. In effect, this often meant that cousins (even quite distant ones), nephews (including half-nephews)

and brothers (also including half-brothers) could succeed or even usurp a lord and take over the lordship (see Nicholls 1987:423-424). Again, this system seems to have gone against the erection of castles by Gaelic lords during the high medieval period at least, although this changes in later times. Gaelic lords and princes seem not to have wanted to invest valuable economic resources into building castles on chiefly lands simply because long-term occupation of them by their nuclear families, in particular their sons and grandsons, could not be guaranteed in any way.

A number of reasons, therefore, help explain why high medieval Gaelic Irish princes and lords built castles and lords did not build castles. A traditional view amongst scholars of the whole medieval period is that castles of all types were important militarily because they were seen as a major instrument of defence against invasion. It has been held that a castle's main role in a defensive war was to hold and deny territory to an invading force (e.g. Brown 1976:24; King 1988:7). At first glance, therefore, it could be argued that this lack of castles in Gaelic-dominated parts of high medieval Ireland meant that these areas were militarily weak and ripe for conquest. Yet, there was another way to defend territory against attack. This was to harness the defensive qualities of the very landscape itself to help defeat an invading army, particularly ones that included heavily armoured knights. Bogland, woodland and mountain passes, as well as fords over major rivers, were temporarily palisaded and fortified to prevent hostile armies advancing into Gaelic territories (O'Conor 1998:99). Alternatively, an invading army could be attacked and brought to battle while on its line of march through such passes and natural features. The nature of these passes made it difficult for heavy cavalry to deploy and hence rendered them virtually useless (O'Conor 1998:99). Conversely, if such tactics failed, Gaelic dynasts would use the landscape to retreat into and avoid battle with larger, more powerful forces. They would abandon their settlements and would withdraw with their herds and non-combatants into the more inaccessible and wilder parts of their lordships. Guerrilla-style tactics were then used to harass any given invading force until they retreated, not having achieved any of its original political or military goals (O'Conor 1998:99-100).

Obviously, these two forms of military tactics were interchangeable. It would appear that if Gaelic lords and princes failed to stop an invading army advancing into their lands, they then opted for melting into the landscape with their herds and adopting guerrilla-type tactics against their enemies (O'Conor 1998:100). This analysis of Gaelic military tactics during the high medieval period (which clearly suited a pastoral economy with its moveable herds and flocks) indicates that there were alternative ways of protecting people and territory from attack, other than just building and then defending complex masonry or timber castles.

Periodic land redistribution, *tanistry* and Gaelic military tactics all help explain why many of the actual settlement forms lived in by high medieval Gaelic lords (which included crannogs or artificial islands on lakes, various forms of ringfort and moated sites) were small in size and cheap to build or reoccupy (figure 3). The available



Figure 3. *A modern reconstruction of a crannog.*

evidence suggests that crannogs, ringforts and moated sites possessed relatively light defences and internal buildings in comparison with masonry and timber castles (O’Conor 1998:73-107; 2000; 2002b; 2000c; 2004:245-250; Finan and O’Conor 2002). Clearly, Gaelic lords often felt it was a waste to lavish valuable resources and labour on their dwellings and fortifications, the reason being simply that occupation of these places by themselves and their immediate families could not be guaranteed for long periods of time due to the various reasons outlined above (see also Nicholls 1987, 403, 433).

It was also noted above that modern scholarship is presently emphasizing the role castles played in the display of lordly power, status and prestige. The fact that castles were rare and lordly dwellings, such as crannogs, various forms of ringfort and moated sites, were relatively small in size and flimsily-built throughout high medieval Gaelic Ireland meant that princely and aristocratic status was exhibited in somewhat different ways from those in Anglo-Norman Ireland and elsewhere, although there were similarities. These methods of displaying high status in Gaelic Ireland during the latter period included such things as regular feasting, lavish ceremonial activities at outdoor assembly and inauguration sites (which were often reused and remodelled prehistoric burial mounds and cairns), the keeping of armed retainers, the ownership of large herds of cattle and horses, the possession of long genealogies and the patronage of the Church and the professional learned classes, such as brehons, bards and poets (Finan and O’Conor 2002, 83-86; O’Conor 2002b, 203).

Conclusion

This discussion clearly shows that there was at least one major difference between the landscapes of Gaelic-controlled and Anglo-Norman dominated parts of high medieval Ireland. Castles, whether made of mortared stone or earth and timber, were rare in Gaelic Ireland before the very late fourteenth century, and the ones that did exist before that are remarkably simple in their design. This lack of castles is certainly not due to an inability by Gaelic lords to erect such structures. The wealth and skills to build castles existed in high medieval Gaelic Ireland. Instead, it is a reflection of the way Gaelic society was organised politically, socially, economically and militarily during this period.

The study of lordly settlement in high medieval Gaelic Ireland is a reminder that there were and are ways of displaying high status in any given society other than building large architecturally-complex structures such as castles.

References

- Barry, Terence 1987: *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland*. Methuen, London and New York
- Brown, R. Allen 1976: *English Castles* (3rd edn.). Chancellor Press, London
- Cairns, Conrad 1987: *Irish Tower Houses, a Co. Tipperary Case Study*. Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement, Athlone
- Claffey, John 1974-5: Ballintubber Castle, Co. Roscommon. *Journal of the Old Athlone Society* 1:4, pp. 218-221
- Creighton, Oliver 2002: *Castles and Landscapes*. Continuum, London and New York
- Doherty, Charles 1980: Exchange and Trade in early Medieval Ireland. *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 110, pp. 67-89
- Doherty, Charles 1985: The Monastic Town in early Medieval Ireland. In Clarke, Howard and Simms, Anngret (eds) *The Comparative History of Urban Origins in Non-Roman Europe*. British Archaeological Reports, pp. 45-75. Oxford
- Duffy, Patrick, Edwards, David and FitzPatrick, Elizabeth 2001: Introduction: Recovering Gaelic Ireland c.1250 – c.1650. In Duffy, Patrick, Edwards, David and FitzPatrick, Elizabeth (eds) *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, Lordship and Settlement*. Four Courts Press, pp. 21-73. Dublin
- Duffy, Sean 1997: *Ireland in the Middle Ages*. Gill and Macmillan, Dublin
- Finan, Thomas and O'Conor, Kieran 2002: The moated Site at Cloonfree, Co. Roscommon. *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 54, pp. 72-87, Galway
- FitzPatrick, Elizabeth 2004: *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c. 1100-1600*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge
- Flanagan, Marie-Therese, 1989: *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship*. Clarendon Press, Oxford
- Frame, Robin 1981: *Colonial Ireland, 1169-1369*. Helicon, Dublin
- Glasscock, Robin 1987: Land and People, c. 1300. In Cosgrove, Art (ed.) *A new History of Ireland, Vol. II. Medieval Ireland, 1169-1534*. Clarendon Press, pp. 203-239. Oxford
- Graham, Brian 1988a: Medieval Settlement in Co. Roscommon. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 88c, pp. 19-38
- Graham, Brian 1988b: Timber and Earthwork Fortifications in Western Ireland. *Medieval Archaeology* 32, pp. 110-129
- Gwynn, Aubrey and Hadcock, Richard 1970: *Medieval Religious Houses, Ireland*. Longmans, Dublin
- Herity, Michael 1988: A Survey of the royal Site of Cruachain in Connacht IV. Ancient Field Systems at Rathcroghan and Carnfree. *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 118, pp. 67-84
- Higham, Robert and Barker, Philip 1992: *Timber Castles*. Batsford, London
- King, David Cathcart 1988: *The Castle in England and Wales*. Routledge, London and Sydney
- Leask, Harold 1941: *Irish Castles and Castellated houses*. Dundalgan Press, Dundalk

- Liddiard, Robert 2000: *'Landscapes of Lordship': The Castle and the Countryside in Medieval Norfolk, 1066 – 1200*. British Archaeological Reports, Oxford
- Loeber, Rolf 2001: An architectural History of Gaelic Castles and Settlements, 1370-1600. In Duffy, Patrick, Edwards, David and FitzPatrick, Elizabeth (eds) *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, Lordship and Settlement*. Four Courts Press, pp. 271-314. Dublin
- Lydon, James 1973: *Ireland in the later Middle Ages*. Gill and Macmillan, Dublin
- McNeill, Thomas 1977: Excavations at Doonbought Fort, Co. Antrim. *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 40, pp. 63-84
- McNeill, Thomas 1980: *Anglo-Norman Ulster*. John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh
- McNeill, Thomas 2001: The Archaeology of Gaelic Lordship east and west of the Foyle. In Duffy, Patrick, Edwards, David and FitzPatrick, Elizabeth (eds) *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, Lordship and Settlement*. Four Courts Press, pp. 346-356. Dublin
- McNeill, Thomas 1997: *Castles in Ireland – Feudal power in a Gaelic World*. Routledge, London and New York
- Nicholls, Kenneth 1982: Anglo-French Ireland and after. *Peritia* 1, pp. 370-403
- Nicholls, Kenneth 1987: Gaelic Society and Economy in the High Middle Ages. In Cosgrove (ed). *A New History of Ireland, Vol II. Medieval Ireland, 1169–1534*. Clarendon Press, pp. 397–438. Oxford.
- O'Connor, Kieran 1998: *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland. Discovery Programme Monograph 3*. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin
- O'Connor, Kieran 2000: The Ethnicity of Irish moated Sites. *Ruralia* 3, pp. 92-102
- O'Connor, Kieran 2001: The morphology of Gaelic lordly Sites in north Connacht. In Duffy, Patrick, Edwards, David and FitzPatrick, Elizabeth (eds) *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, Lordship and Settlement*. Four Courts Press, pp. 329-345. Dublin
- O'Connor, Kieran 2002a: Sligo Castle. In Timoney, Martin (ed) *A Celebration of Sligo*. Sligo Field Club, pp. 183-192. Sligo
- O'Connor, Kieran 2002b: Housing in later medieval Gaelic Ireland. *Ruralia* 4, pp. 197-206
- O'Connor, Kieran 2002c: Motte Castles in Ireland: Permanent Fortresses, Residences and manorial Centres. *Chateau Gaillard* 20, pp. 173-82
- O'Connor, Kieran 2004: Medieval rural Settlement in Munster. In *Medieval Ireland – The Barryscourt Lectures I-X*. Gandon Editions, pp. 225-256. Kinsale
- Ó Corráin, Donncha 1972: *Ireland before the Normans*. Gill and Macmillan, Dublin
- Ó Corráin, Donncha 1989: Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland. In Foster, Roy (ed) *The Oxford illustrated history of Ireland*. Oxford University Press, pp. 1-52. Oxford
- Ó Cróinín, Dáibhí 1995: *Early medieval Ireland, 400-1200*. Longman, London
- O'Dowd, Mary 1991: *Power, Politics and Land: Early modern Sligo 1568-1688*. Institute of Irish Studies, Belfast
- O'Keefe, Tadhg 2000: *Medieval Ireland – an Archaeology*. Tempus, Stroud
- Orpen, Goddard 1909: Motes and Norman Castles in Ossory. *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 39, pp. 313-342
- Orpen, Goddard 1911-20: *Ireland under the Normans*, 4 vols. Clarendon Press, Oxford
- O'Sullivan, Aidan 1998: *The archaeology of Lake Settlement in Ireland. Discovery Programme Monograph 4*. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin
- Otway-Ruthven, Annette Jocelyn 1968: *A History of medieval Ireland*. Ernest Benn, London
- Simms, Katherine 2001: Native Sources for Gaelic Settlement: The House Poems. In Duffy, Patrick, Edwards, David and FitzPatrick, Elizabeth (eds) *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250 – c. 1650: Land, Lordship and Settlement*. Four Courts Press, pp. 246-267. Dublin
- Stalley, Roger 1987: *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland*. Yale University Press, London and New Haven

