

# The Evolution of Estate Properties in South Ulster 1600-1900

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## *Introduction*

The estate system of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, by which the country was divided up among a relatively small number of landowners, has been of special interest to historical geographers. In spite of what Jones Hughes calls these 'elusive territorial entities'<sup>1</sup> there has traditionally been a fairly stereotyped view of the system in which most aspects of life and landscape were seen to be controlled by the dominant landowning class living in the Big House and owning extensive tracts of land. Latterly, historians and historical geographers have demonstrated by means of numerous case studies of management strategies on individual estates that the estate system was extremely complex in its operation, that its territorial and tenurial framework was extremely varied and that the agents of social and economic change were quite diffuse.<sup>2</sup> The variety in the territorial impact of estates is missed because the great majority of properties cannot possibly be studied in any detail. The absence of estate records for many, especially smaller, estates and the sheer impossibility of studying all of them, should not blind us to the opportunities offered by some of the major land surveys of the past three hundred years. These contain a limited but regionally comprehensive range of data which has been most successfully mined by historical geographers. Jones Hughes has made considerable use of the Griffith Valuation as a source for studying post-Famine landholding conditions. In general, however, relatively little attention has been paid to the usefulness of the Griffiths Valuation in a study of the territorial extent of the estate system in the mid nineteenth century. The other major sources which have been highly regarded by geographers are the great surveys of the seventeenth century which accompanied the plantations. These offer an opportunity to examine the emergence of the estate system from a poorly-understood medieval property framework.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the following study is to use some of these sources to examine firstly, the variety, extent and territorial structure of landed estates in the mid nineteenth century in the south Ulster counties of Cavan and Monaghan and secondly, to outline the origins and territorial evolution of these structures from the seventeenth century. South Ulster has little to tell us about the medieval precedents of estate holdings such as those

in Leinster or other Anglo-Norman colonised regions, but Cavan and Monaghan both offer the opportunity to study the transitions in landownership and the emergence of new structures in one of the last Gaelic regions in Ireland. Monaghan particularly has the advantage of exhibiting a variety of economic and colonisation experiences which were independent of any plantation scheme, experiences which characterised the greater part of Ireland in the seventeenth century.

### *Nineteenth Century estates in Cavan and Monaghan*

Estates exceeding 2000 acres have been mapped from the Griffith Valuation (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2). Two-thousand acres was chosen as the break-off point in order to isolate the pattern of larger estates in the region and, by excluding the smaller estates, to go some way towards eliminating the effect of principal tenants or middle men on the valuation lists. As Jones Hughes points out, this region represented the westernmost extent of Ireland's most complicated network of great landed properties.<sup>4</sup> In Monaghan and Cavan, the ten most valuable estates in each county averaged £12,000 and £8,000 respectively. Although there was nothing in south Ulster to compare with the Downshire or Duke of Leinster estates or the extensive properties of the Earl of Bantry or the Earl of Lucan — all of which exceeded 70,000 acres — the estates of south Ulster in general were larger than the average estates in counties Louth, Meath or Tipperary, for example. The Farnham (29,500 acres), Shirley (26,300 acres), Annesley (24,000 acres) and Bath (23,000 acres) estates were important properties by Irish standards in the mid nineteenth century.

Most of the principal estates in Monaghan were located in the lowland, most favoured regions of the county. The Leslie, Anketell, Rossmore, Lennard and part of the Lucas estates were located on the limestone lowland extending south-westward from north Armagh. The Madden, Ker, Dawson, Verner, Leslie, Hope, and Templetown estates were located in the drumlin lowland extending across the middle of the county. Although the Bath and Shirley estates encompassed most of the extensive barony of Farney, their cores were located in the southern well-drained lowland of the county abutting on counties Meath and Louth. In general in Co. Monaghan, all those estates over 2000 acres were located below the 300 foot contour on the better drained and highest-valued land. This cursory description does not take account of the many fragments of large estates which lay in hilly, poorer regions. The major territorial components of the estates, however, were most favourably located with the outlying fragments probably reflecting a process of secondary land acquisition by the landowning family (Fig. 5.1).

The pattern of estates in Cavan (Fig. 5.2) did not have such a clear cut relationship with topographical conditions. Although the Farnham, Lanesboro and Saunderson estates were mainly concentrated in the richer lowlands of the barony of Loughtee, the most significant groups of large estates were found in the hilly country of the east of Cavan and in the mountainous terrain of Tullyhaw in the north-west. The lower land of the mid county was dominated by smaller and extremely fragmented estates. This pattern presumably reflects the peculiar origins of most of the Cavan properties.

In addition to mapping estate boundaries, Figures 5.1 and 5.2 also show the location of houses and demesnes as recorded in the first edition of the six inch Ordnance Survey

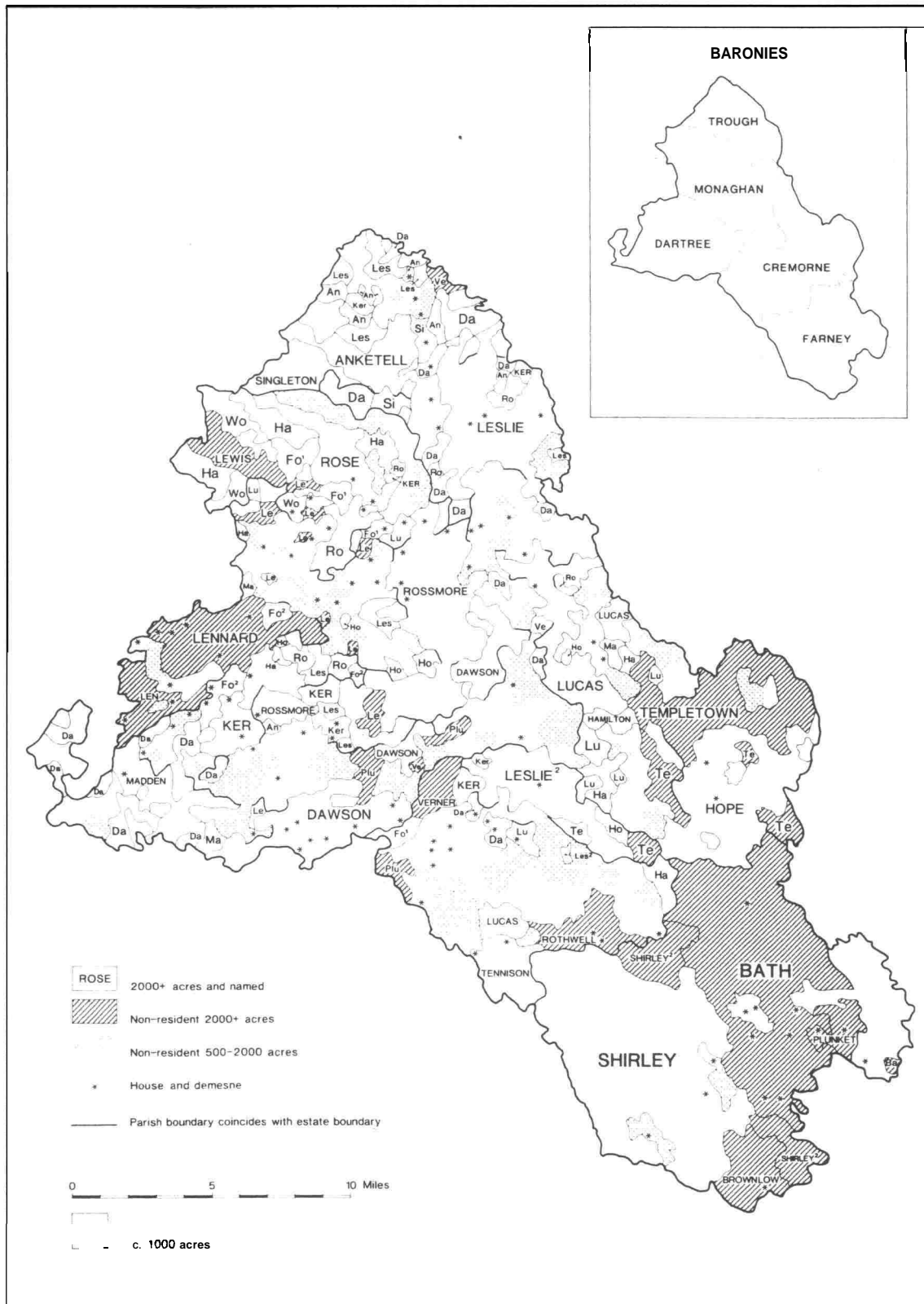
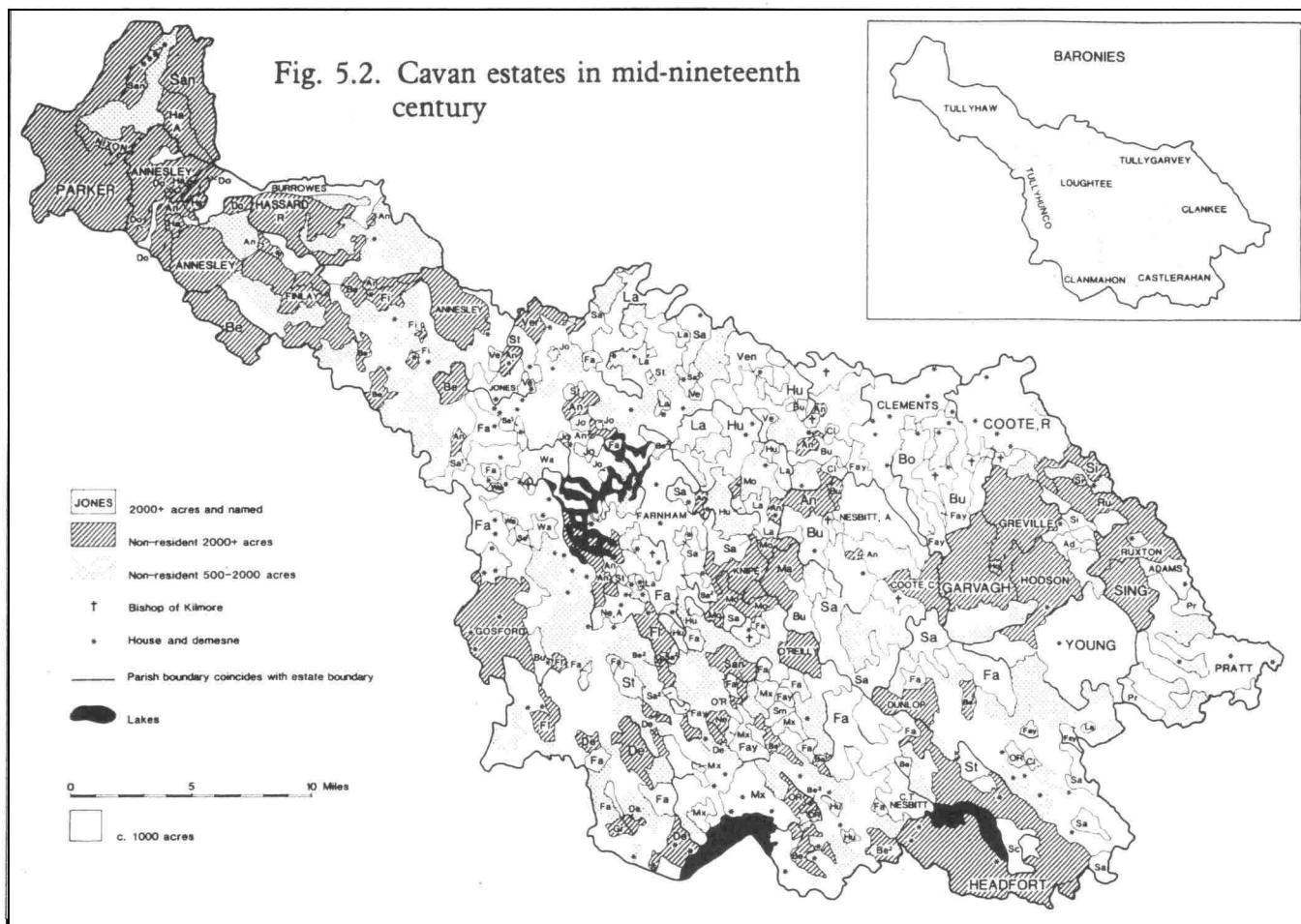


Fig. 5.1. Monaghan estates in mid-nineteenth century



INDEX TO FIGURES 5.1 AND 5.2

Except where indicated in brackets below, the first two letters of the landowner's name are printed on the map where the property is too small to include the whole name.

CAVAN:

- Adams, Benjamin
- Annesley, Earl of
- Beresford, Lord (Be)
- Beresford, John (Be 1)
- Beresford, J.D. (Be 2)
- Boyle, Maxwell
- Burrowes
- Clements, Theophilus
- Coote, Richard
- Coote, Charles
- Dease, Gerald
- Dobbs, Leonard
- Dunlop, Mrs
- Farnham, Lord
- Fay, James
- Finlay
- Fleming, Major General

MONAGHAN:

- Anketell, William
- Bath, Marquis of
- Brownlow, William
- Dawson (Lord Cremourne)
- Forster, Sir George (Fo 1)
- Forster, William (Fo 2)
- Hope, Ann Adile
- Hamilton, James
- Ker, Andrew

- Garvagh, Lady
- Gosford, Earl of
- Greville, Col.
- Hassard, Alexander
- Hassard, Richard
- Headfort, Marquis of
- Hodson, Sir George
- Humphreys, William
- Jones, John C
- Knipe, John
- Lanesboro, Earl of
- Marley, Louisa
- Maxwell, Somerset
- Moore, Samuel
- Nesbitt, C T
- Nesbitt, A

- Lennard, Sir T.B.
- Leslie, Sir John
- Leslie, Emily (Les 2)
- Lewis, Henry
- Lucas, Edward
- Madden, John
- Plunket, Rt Hon
- Rose, Gertrude
- Rossmore, Lord

- Nixon
- Parker
- Pratt, Col.
- O'Reilly, Anthony
- Ruxton, William
- Saunders, Richard (San)
- Saunderson, Col. Alex (Sa)
- Saunderson, Mrs Mary (Sa 2)
- Scott
- Smith, William
- Singleton, Henry
- Storey, Jane
- Venables, Rev E B
- Verner, John
- Young, Sir John (Lord Lisgar)
- Wallace

- Rothwell
- Shirley, Evelyn P
- Shirley, Horatio (Shirley 2)
- Singleton, Thos Crawford
- Templetown, Viscount
- Tennison, William
- Verner, Sir William
- Woodwright, William



maps and the distribution of properties whose owners resided outside either county. Absentee ownership of properties of 500-2000 acres are also included in the maps. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 therefore, attempt to show the territorial pattern of larger estates, their degree of fragmentation, the landscape impact of the estate system as reflected in *desmesnes* and houses and the territorial pattern of absenteeism among landowners. Absenteeism has been seen to be important by historians in studying the management of estates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> Figures 5.1 and 5.2, however, only partially reflect the problem of absenteeism in that they do not take account of the persistence of absenteeism over the preceding century. Although in some cases absentee landowners lived quite close to their Cavan properties, as with the *Headford* estate with its headquarters near Kells, Co. Meath or the *Dease* estate based in Westmeath, in general the maps probably understate the extent of absenteeism in that having a Cavan or Monaghan address was no guarantee of residency. The earl of Dartrey, for example, with a mansion near Rockcorry in Co. Monaghan lived much of the time in London. Shirley with a house outside Carrickmacross, also had estates in Warwickshire and only built his Monaghan house in the early nineteenth century. Nesbitt had a house in both Cavan and London.

As in Ireland as a whole, the rate of absenteeism was higher among the smaller estates, reflecting the fact that small properties often represented the scattered fragments of a bigger estate. Almost half the properties of 500-2000 acres in Cavan were held by owners living outside the counties neighbouring on Cavan, or outside Ireland. Thirty of them lived in Dublin and twenty-four outside the country. Strictly speaking, residency within Cavan or Monaghan (the criterion used in Table 5.1) may not have been a valid reflection of active interest in his property by the owner. Given the highly fragmented nature of properties, especially in Co. Cavan, many tenants must have found themselves far removed from their landlord. The Earl of Dartrey, for example, had land all over Co.

TABLE 5.1  
RESIDENT/NON-RESIDENT PROPERTIES (1876)

<i>Estate Size</i>	<i>Cavan</i>	<i>Monaghan</i>
2,000 + acres		
Resident	20	18
Non resident	22	8
500-2,000 acres		
Resident	34	21
Non resident	84	40
100-500 acres		
Resident	94	66
Non resident	153	88

Source: Return of owners of land 1876

Monaghan; some of the lands in north Monaghan were more than twenty miles from the home estate. The estates of Farnham and Saunderson showed even more extensive dispersal within Cavan. However, the Annesley and Garvagh estates were much worse off, with their owners resident in Counties Down and Londonderry respectively.

The maps for Cavan and Monaghan illustrate the reality of landownership in an extensive part of Ireland at the mid nineteenth century. The pattern is quite different from the stereotyped image of an extensive, consolidated and well-ordered estate landscape. Significant numbers of estates were fragmented, nonresident bits and pieces. Undoubtedly, the combination of fragmented properties and high rates of absenteeism resulted in wide variations in leasing arrangements, rental valuations and general management of estates, all of which had important landscape repercussions which would have contrasted with a greater territorial, tenurial and managerial uniformity on the bigger, consolidated properties.

Cavan in particular exhibited extensive fragmentation, with large areas also characterised by high rates of absenteeism. The Annesley, Beresford, Farnham, Saunderson and Burrowes properties especially were scattered through much of the county. The Saunderson estate of 12,000 acres was divided into a dozen fragments. In addition, extensive areas of the county had no resident owner within the county. The barony of Tullyhaw, characterised by poor mountainy land was largely comprised of large absentee properties. Monaghan exhibited less fragmentation and less extensive absenteeism, which combined with the comparatively smaller size of the county would suggest closer links between tenants and landowners.

In south Ulster, the settlement contribution of the bigger, residential estates was significant and when one considers that the major landscape repercussion of rental incomes was expressed in the form of houses and demesnes, then the regional implications of even occasional residency were significant. The plantation villages of Bailieboro, Cootehill, Virginia and Butlersbridge reflect in their very names the role of powerful colonial land ownership structures. In Monaghan the same pattern was repeated in the creation of Rockcorry, Newbliss, Glasslough, Scotstown and Smithboro. More extensively, housebuilding and the creation of gardens and demesnes in the eighteenth century has been seen as a hallmark of a vibrant local landowning class.<sup>6</sup> The distribution of demesnes in Cavan and Monaghan reflects the differential impact of estates in that the bigger properties with residential owners were more actively involved in a variety of aspects of colonisation and settlement of their properties. Thus in Cavan, houses and demesnes were notably absent in the eastern and southern parts of the county with the exception of two concentrations in the extreme south around the Headford estate which had a history of large-scale landlord improvements. Areas of absentee properties or areas of small, and thus more often absentee estates, had little evidence of demesnes. The particularly high rate of fragmentation of estates in Cavan accounts for the dearth of demesnes. The Farnham estate had some notable demesnes at the estate core around Cavan town but all its other fragments in the south county area have few if any demesnes. The same was true of the Saunderson, Burrowes, Humphries and Storey estates. The Annesley estate and other large non-residential properties in the east and north-west of the county were notable for the paucity of demesnes. In Monaghan, the link between larger estates and more favourable land is clearly expressed in the pattern

of demesnes. Non-residential estates, especially those below 2,000 acres, are widely dispersed through the centre of the county and contain very few demesnes. Though the Bath estate was a most extensive absentee property in south Ulster, its southern portions contained a number of demesnes representing the large farms of favoured tenants of this important English landowner.

It is no coincidence that other aspects of social and economic life were influenced by estate size and often the presence or absence of the estate owners. Smaller fragmented or absentee properties, for example, were often characterised by disorderly farmholdings and higher population densities resulting from an influx of land hungry families in the pre-Famine period. In general, management policies tended to be better on larger estates where professional agents might be employed. The smaller properties had higher rates of absenteeism and greater turnover in ownership; tenant witnesses to the Devon Commission agreed that landholding on bigger properties was better than on small estates.' One would tend to find therefore that the big estate regions, especially where the owners had been resident, had above average farm sizes, significant numbers of Protestant farmers and a sprinkling of demesnes with possibly an estate village contiguous to the landlord's mansion.

It is impossible to adequately assess the geography of mid-nineteenth century estates without reference to the origin of the structures which had such an influence, negatively as well as positively, on life and landscape in south Ulster. The patterns depicted in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, therefore, are best explained in terms of confiscation, settlement and sales of land in the preceding three centuries.

#### *Emergence of estates 1600-1641*

Undoubtedly a major portion of the landowning class of the nineteenth century traced its origins to the seventeenth century land confiscations and this was especially true of areas beyond the influence of the medieval English colony. In spite of this social upheaval in landownership, is there any evidence of continuity in territorial landholding structures between the seventeenth and mid nineteenth centuries in these regions? Historical geographers have emphasised that the Irish landscape is fissured by a network of ancient territorial boundaries, especially baronies, parishes and townlands. These structures have been responsible for facilitating far-reaching continuities between land properties in Gaelic and modern Ireland.<sup>8</sup> In the following examination of the evolution of territorial estates in the early seventeenth century, the main sources used are the surveys conducted by the English administration while it was pursuing its various policies in Ireland. In the absence of the Civil Survey for Cavan and Monaghan, the more summary data in the Book of Survey and Distribution (B.S.D.) have been used as well as earlier plantation surveys.' The key to reconstructing the pattern of lands in the seventeenth century is contained in the persistence of the small territorial unit known today as the townland. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 are based on the assumption that the place names from the seventeenth century surveys can be matched fairly reliably with the townlands of the nineteenth century Ordnance Survey. While there may be difficulties with individual matching, the exercise is justified by Andrews's observation that the Ireland of the early seventeenth century possessed a network of small land divisions which were 'too firmly grounded in popular consciousness to be ignored'.<sup>10</sup> The

**townland** unit and occasionally other earlier land holding units such as ballybetaghs formed the bases of all grants and purchases of land. Although the actual boundaries may not have been precisely defined, in general the territorial units have endured and Raven's maps of the tates of Farney in 1634 compare remarkably favourably with the Ordnance Survey in shape and extent."

It is necessary to separate the discussion of Monaghan and Cavan because as a result of rapidly changing English strategies in Ulster in the first few years of the seventeenth century both counties came to epitomise different policy formulations. Throughout the sixteenth century the Cavan and Monaghan areas – the Gaelic lordships of Breifne and Airghialla – pursued a similar borderland strategy between O'Neill of Ulster on the one hand and the Pale on the other. In 1591, the government had succeeded in abolishing the McMahonship and had established some legal semblance of freeholding ownership under English law. Following the Nine Years War, this division of the county was confirmed in 1606 and the Commissioners planned to carry out a similar division of Cavan and Fermanagh. The sudden departure of the Ulster lords in 1607 however, resulted in a change of policy, culminating in the radically different plantation scheme implemented in Cavan and the bulk of Ulster.

MONAGHAN 1606. The pattern of landownership in the 1606 division of Co. Monaghan is summarised in Figure 5.3. Approximately 60 per cent of the county was divided among a dozen major Gaelic families, former lords of the territory of Airghialla and more than three hundred of their former followers, who now had the status of freeholders. The remainder of the county was allocated among a handful of planters. In the main, Gaelic land ownership structures were comparatively unchanged under the 1606 agreement. The ballybetagh formed the basis of the land division and all the chief families held from one to five ballybetaghs, representing a residual reflection of sixteenth century Gaelic structures. As a general rule, most of the better land was held by the chief families. The purpose of the Monaghan agreement, and similar policies elsewhere in Ireland, was to reduce the economic and political power of the chief families by roughly equalising their estates and by detaching them from their subservient families. The *lucht tigh* group in Monaghan barony, who had held the McMahonship throughout much of the sixteenth century, had their lands divided among the main branches of the family represented by Patrick McArt Maol and Ross Bán McMahon. The abolition of the McMahonship allowed the entry of the first substantial planter in the person of Edward Blaney, seneschal of Monaghan, into the former mensal lands of the McMahons. Apart from McKenna in the north of the county, the remaining chief families were McMahons. Brian McHugh Óg held four ballybetaghs in Dartrey, in addition to smaller estates held by McRorys; Ever McColla McMahon was confirmed in three ballybetaghs in Cremourne, soon to be expanded to five when Art McRory was attainted for treason.

The freeholder properties consisted of some thirty ballybetaghs running through the south of Dartrey into Cremourne and Monaghan baronies, representing the less desirable hillier lands of the region. The ballybetaghs were divided in fractions among 317 individuals, 124 of whom were readily identifiable as McMahons. South Cremourne was allocated to O'Cleareanes and O'Duffies as well as McMahons. Dartrey

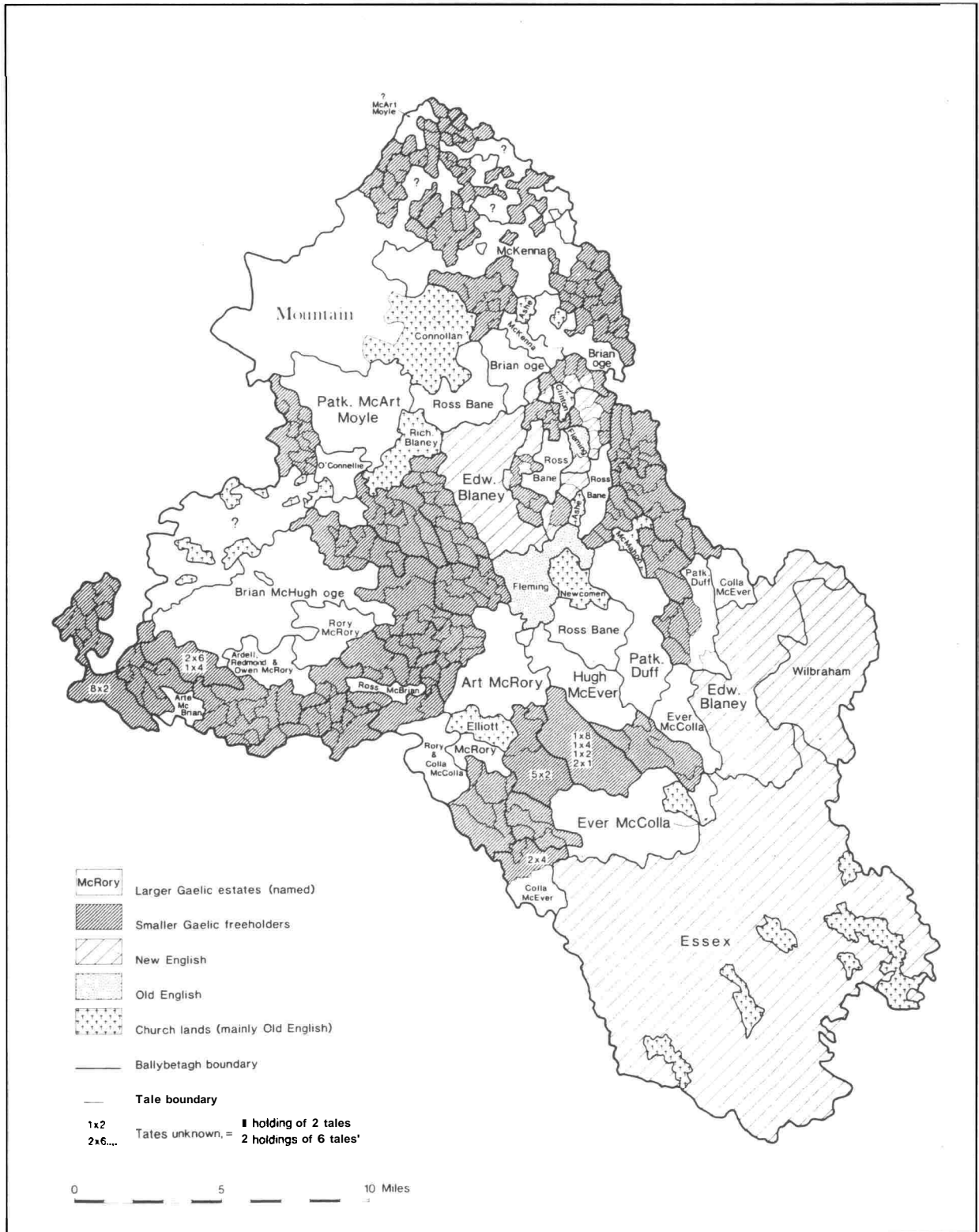


Fig. 5.3. Ownership of land in Monaghan 1606

had **McMelaghlins**, **McDonnells** and **McRorys** as well as the ubiquitous **McMahons**. The sub-ballybetagh properties varied from one-tate units to half ballybetaghs (8 tates) as outlined in Figure 5.3.

The pattern of Gaelic landownership was accompanied by the initial stages of colonial penetration of the area, reflecting a wider process of colonial land acquisition throughout the Gaelic regions of Ireland. Some of these properties were small and had originated in the later sixteenth century. For example, the church and **termon** lands had been given mainly to **palesmen** in 1591. Christopher Fleming, a merchant from the Pale, had acquired two ballybetaghs in Monaghan in the late sixteenth century. In the 1606 division, soldiers of the Monaghan garrison were allotted the tates of Irishmen who had been killed in the Nine Years War. Blaney was given two ballybetaghs in Cremourne in addition to the **mensal** lands of Monaghan. In 1611, he also acquired Wilbraham's grant of the **termon** lands of **Muckno** adjoining his Cremourne lands. Finally, by a grant of 1575, the Earl of Essex had held almost all of the barony of Farney, though he had never attempted to plant or settle it.

The 1606 division ensured that a substantial portion of the **McMahon** territory remained in the hands of Gaelic families, though they were considerably restricted in their economic status by having their estates reduced in size and by losing their freeholders. This experience was shared by other Gaelic regions such as Connaught and north Wexford" which through the 1620s and 30s became the object of growing attention from Old English and New English speculators. The Monaghan area, though it escaped the Ulster Plantation soon found itself surrounded by extensive and active plantation settlements and inevitably came under pressure from enterprising newcomers.

**THE CAVAN PLANTATION.** The shape of the plantation grants in **Cavan** was controlled by the existence of earlier property allocations which could not be overridden by the plantation programme. Church lands had been either reserved for the bishop of the diocese or, in the case of **termon** and monastic lands, had been granted to **palesmen** or New English representatives. To a greater extent than in Monaghan, there was a high level of land purchase in Cavan by the Old English.<sup>13</sup> Gaelic Breifne had maintained fairly strong economic links with the Pale so that by the early seventeenth century, Nugents, Plunketts, Flemings, Talbots and Tyrrells from Westmeath and Meath held estates in Cavan (Fig. 5.4). Some of these, such as Fleming, were allowed to retain their estates in the Ulster Plantation. Others were granted servitors' proportions in lieu of their earlier acquisitions.

The outline proposals for the Ulster Plantation envisaged the establishment of Scottish and English undertakers to plant their lands with settlers, while British servitors (mainly English officers) and native freeholders were to develop and secure their land allocations independently. Undertakers, servitors and native Irish would receive grants of 2,000, 1,500 and 1,000 acres in specifically allocated precincts. Only servitors and Gaelic grantees were allowed in the same precinct. This basic outline shaped the ultimate territorial pattern in Figure 5.4. As **Robinson** points out, the paper proposals had to compromise not only with pre-existing English properties, but also with the geographical reality of well established territorial divisions." Thus the pre-plantation territorial system largely shaped the plantation allocations and Bodley's 1609 survey

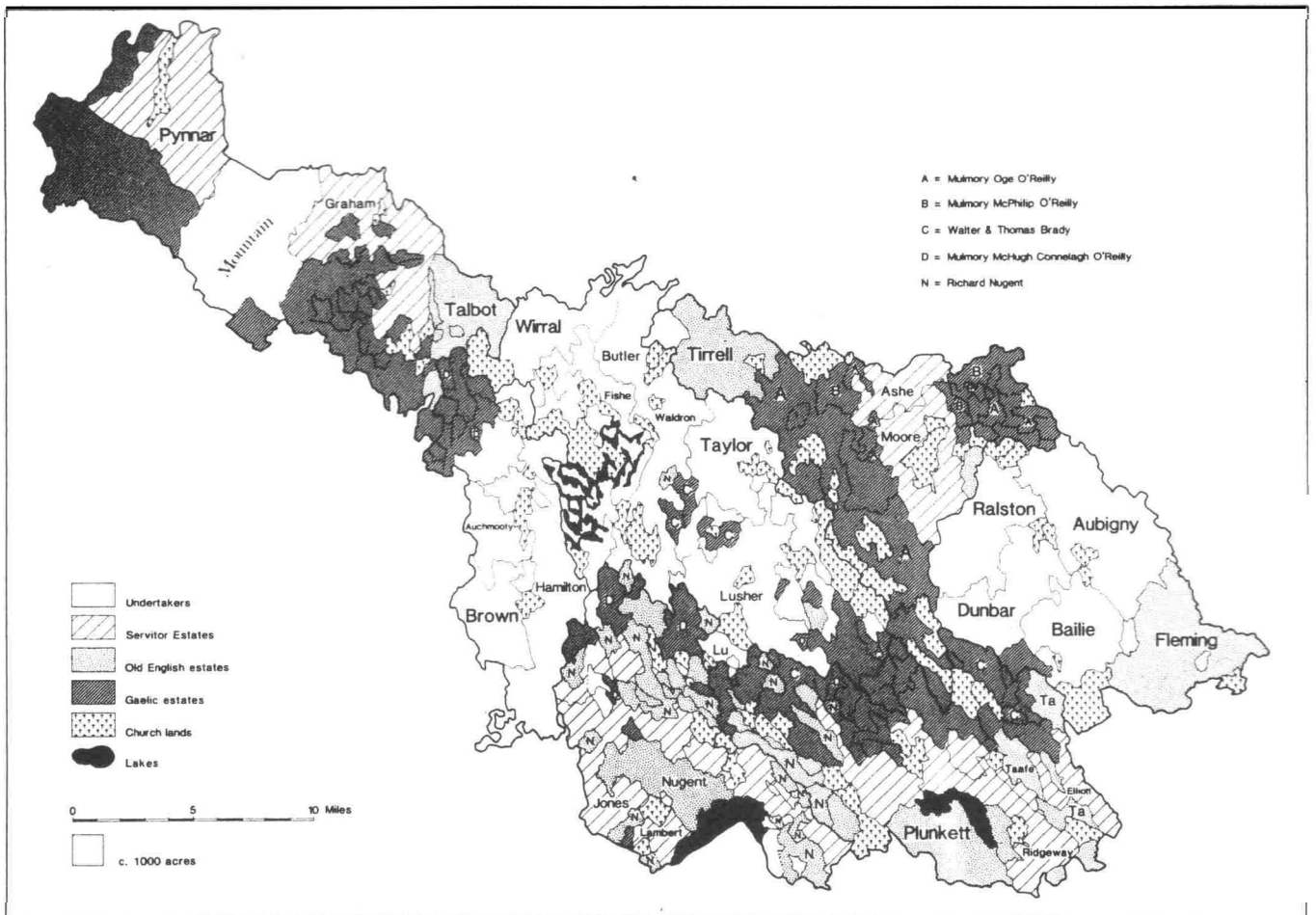


Fig. 5.4. The Ulster Plantation in Cavan 1610-20

with its detailed outlines of contiguous polls helped this transition.<sup>15</sup> 'Precincts' were based on the Gaelic 'territories' (later baronies) of Cavan and the ballybetaghs and polls of Breifne were adopted by the plantation commissioners. The result was that, in spite of the apparently radical upheaval in landownership in Cavan, the ultimate territorial pattern of estates was not radically different from the ballybetagh/tate structure of Monaghan which did not experience such a proprietorial upheaval.

Figure 5.4 shows the pattern of estates which resulted in the establishment of substantial English and Scottish undertakers in the baronies of Loughtee, Tullyhunco and Clankee respectively. The greatest effort was made to carve out compact estates for the undertakers, because of their importance to the overall scheme. Such a prerequisite was not so necessary with the servitors, and was even less so with the Gaelic grantees, and this policy is reflected in the map of their properties. In Loughtee, for example, there were seven English undertakers holding most of the barony, together with six small older Gaelic and Old English estates.<sup>16</sup> The baronies of Tullyhunco and Clankee at either extremity of the county, were allocated to eight substantial Scottish undertakers, together with Fleming's large estate in the south-east of Clankee and some small Gaelic

properties in the north of Tullyhunco. It is not possible to check the truth of Robinson's suggestion that the principal undertakers occupied the demesne ballybetaghs of the chief Gaelic lords, because the proposals for the earlier division of Cavan among its native population have not survived."

There is a similarity between Monaghan and Cavan in the juxtaposition of large estates with extensive areas of smaller, fragmented estates. These are attributable to the mixture of smaller servitor estates with a varied and fragmented series of Old English properties scattered through the south of the county. There was also a belt of generally small, fragmented Gaelic estates which abutted closer to the undertaker estates than was envisaged in the outline plans. In Cavan, many of the servitors were **palesmen** already holding land in Cavan as well as in Meath, Westmeath and Monaghan, who were involved in the English administration — people such as Sir Thomas Ashe, Sir Oliver Lambert, Sir John Elliot and Sir James Dillon. This involvement of Old English Pale interests in Cavan had important implications for the disposal of land in the later seventeenth century. Under the plantation scheme the most loyal Gaelic freeholding families were selected as well as reliable members of the chief families. The latter were given servitors' proportions and the former one or two polls each. As in other planted regions, the majority of smaller Gaelic landowning families were deliberately reduced to tenant level,<sup>18</sup> a fate that contrasted with the smallholders' experience in the unplanted Monaghan area. Fifty-eight native grantees were allocated 22 per cent of the land of Cavan which was a considerable contrast with conditions in Monaghan. Most of these were in small estates, though there were a number of substantial Gaelic properties also. Mulmory Óg O'Reilly for example, obtained a large estate of 3000 acres in Tullygarvey. In a few cases they were given the lands which they had occupied in pre-plantation times, but in general the Gaelic grantees' estates were disjointed, kin groups were separated<sup>19</sup> and it is clear that their land allotments were low in the scale of priorities of the plantation planners. The fragmented nature of Mulmory McHugh's lands in Tullyhunco and Clankee, and Mulmory Óg's estate in Tullygarvey demonstrates this.

#### *Changing landownership structures up to 1641*

The first half of the seventeenth century witnessed a relatively sudden change in the nature of landownership and in attitudes to the management and disposal of land in regions of former Gaelic hegemony. Although the Gaelic system was enormously varied and complex in its regional manifestations, the imposition of much more individualised and commercial concepts of landownership represented a great change. Plantation regions especially experienced a sudden jolt, not only in the confiscation of large swathes of land, but in the intrusion of a new and energetic ethnic group in the midst of the native population. The lands which continued in Gaelic occupation in both Monaghan and Cavan were subjected to unprecedented pressures which affected their survival as land entities and which emanated from the presence of English adventurers in the new economic conditions that developed with the elimination of the endemic raiding and warring which characterised the sixteenth century. The principal actors in all this were the New English who could generally be characterised as Protestant, opportunistic, office-laden and often corrupt in their endeavours to advance their careers, the Old English who were Catholic, loyalist and opportunistic and the Gaelic Irish who



were Catholic and defensive in outlook. Although some of the latter saw opportunities in the new situation, the majority were increasingly baffled by the developing trends in the 1620s. Gillespie introduces a fourth group: English merchants with venture capital who came to Ireland during the Wentworth **administration**.<sup>20</sup> Of these groups, the Gaelic Irish lost out persistently and this is well reflected in the experience of many Monaghan properties which had the initial advantage of fairly large compact home estates.

The changed social and economic environment of the 1620s opened up possibilities of property accumulation for some Gaelic **families**.<sup>21</sup> The bigger landowners especially benefited at the expense of the smaller freeholders in Sligo, Wexford and Galway. In Monaghan, **Coll McBryan McMahan**, grandson of Ever **McColla**, amassed extensive estates in Cremourne at the expense of the smaller freeholders (Fig. 5.5). In Cavan, **Philip McMulumory O'Reilly** had bought extensive lands by 1641 and **Philip McHugh O'Reilly** had accumulated a large estate in Tullygarvey (Fig. 5.6). In general, however, Gaelic landowners, large and small, were characterised by an apparent inability to cope with the new demands of landownership. The crown rents and their poorer farming techniques meant that they were in constant **difficulties**. In 1624, Blaney, now Governor of Monaghan, was complaining of the **McMahons'** unwillingness or inability to pay rent and of the waste which characterised the whole country.<sup>22</sup> Sales of land or more commonly mortgages which were not redeemed before 1641 represented the most significant change in the map of estates. Many Gaelic landowners were hampered by their tradition-bound, loyal but inefficient tenants who would not or could not pay rents and who could not easily be replaced by new settlers. The **tenants** of Captain Hugh O'Reilly of Tullygarvey were reported to be ploughing by the tail in Pynnar's survey (1619), though in spite of this technical drawback, his son Philip managed to assemble a large property by 1641. Gaelic pastoral practices, with widely dispersed cattle herds, were incompatible with the new strictly-defined territorialisation of landownership. The kin-linked ballybetaghs within a broad framework of territories owned largely by septs had been adaptable to such a cattle economy. The Ulster Plantation structures, which introduced new owners and often dispersed the kin-related Gaelic landholders, had a disruptive impact on the Gaelic community in Cavan. In Monaghan, which retained a substantial part of the traditional structure, the effect was probably less traumatic. Finally, though many Gaelic families adopted the English inheritance practice of primogeniture, many continued to fragment their properties up to 1641 through partible inheritance. **Patrick McKenna**, for example, dispersed his 1606 estate among his sons, as well as selling large parts of it to English planters. **Mulumory McHugh Connelagh's** estate in Cavan was divided among his three sons and two grandsons by 1641.

Overall, Gaelic-held land dropped to less than 40 per cent of the total in Monaghan by 1641, and from 22 per cent to 16 per cent in Cavan. The major development in Monaghan was the sharp reduction in the small freeholder properties, giving way principally to planter estates of either Old English or New English origin. **McKenna** sold large parts of his lands to several English buyers. **Patrick McArt Maol** sold to Edward Blaney while **Ross Bán** sold to Christopher Fleming. In Cavan, **Brian Coggie O'Reilly** sold to Henry Hickfield. **McKiernans** sold to Craig. By 1622, John Burnett, an Aberdeen Catholic who had come to Monaghan early in the seventeenth century, had made

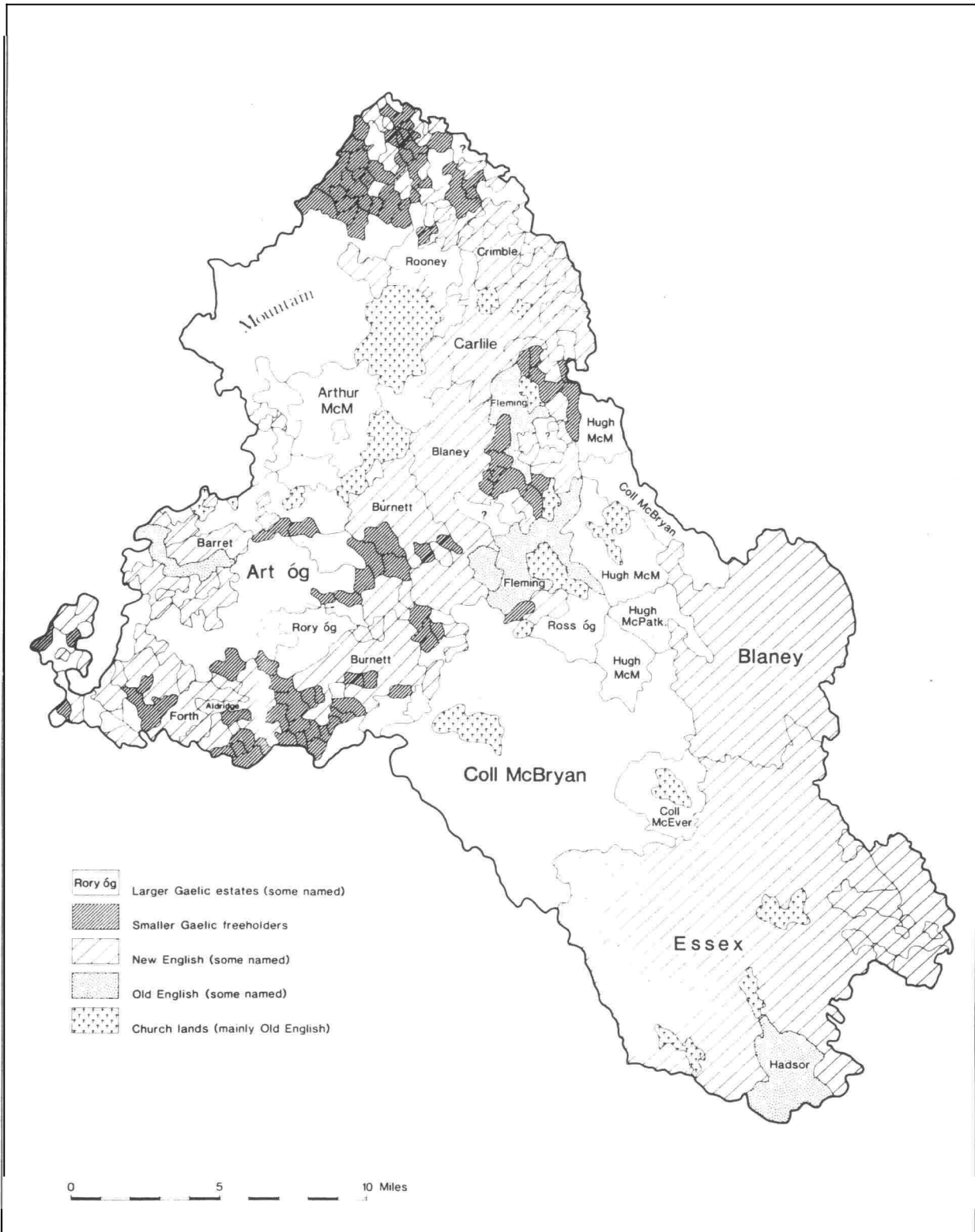


Fig. 5.5. Principal Monaghan estates 1641

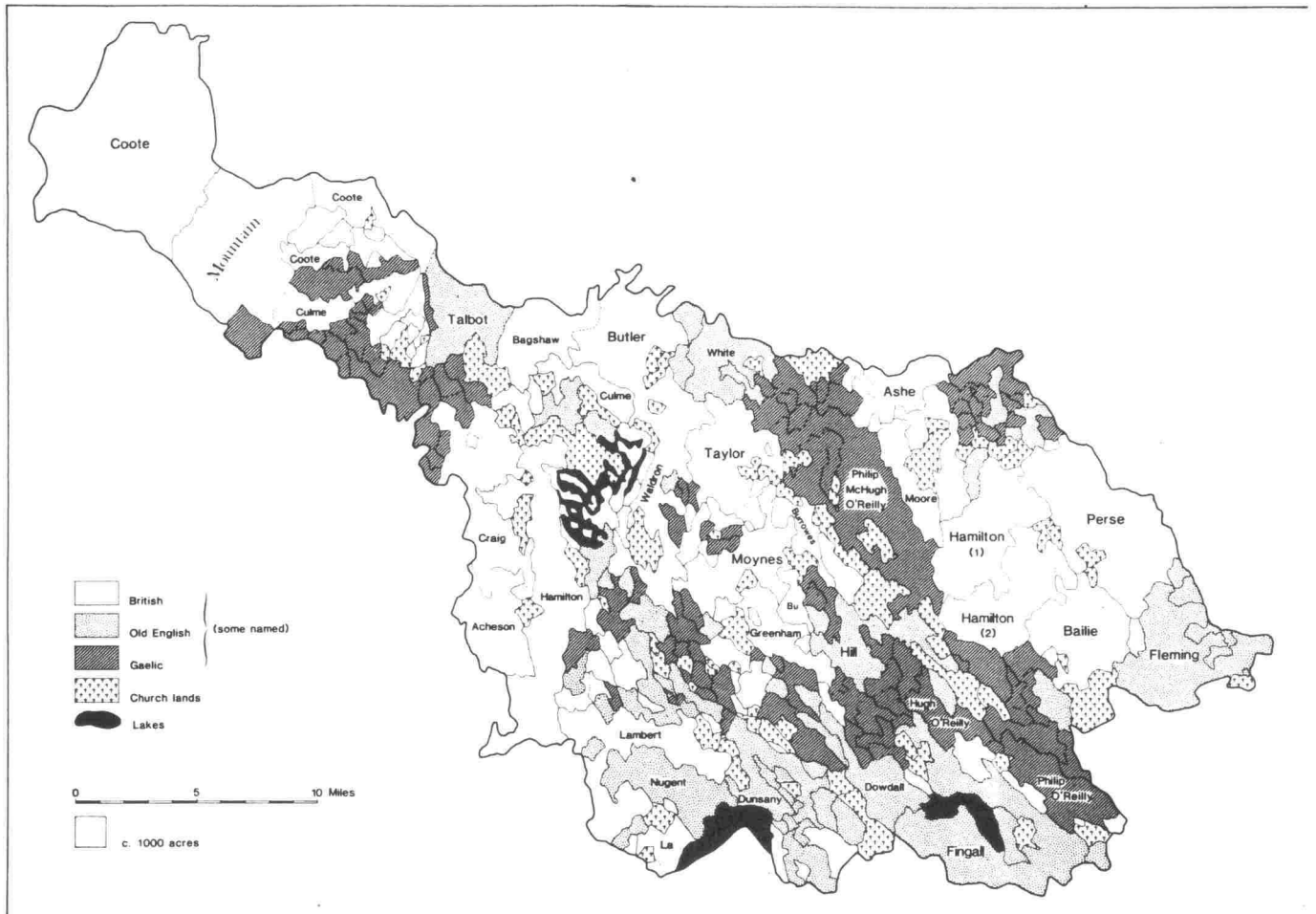


Fig. 5.6. Principal Cavan estates 1641

up to thirty-six land purchases from Irish and English alike.<sup>23</sup>

The planter estates were not immune to change either and during the early seventeenth century a great many alterations took place in the lay-out of properties and in the personnel involved. A majority of the planters were unable to cope with the extent and the frontierlike conditions of their estates. Many of the English undertakers in the barony of Loughtee, for example, came from not especially wealthy county families in the south of England.<sup>24</sup> Even more of the servitors were in difficulties, holding government offices that were expensive to maintain.<sup>25</sup> Their problems were exacerbated by overreaching themselves in acquiring too much land or, as a result of inaccurate surveying, ending up with estates vastly bigger than they could handle. Although many undertakers were only interested in asset-stripping their properties, those who tried to develop their lands found it difficult to attract desirable tenants and often lost effective control of their estates by granting away much of it in fee farm grants. The Earl of Essex's huge estate did not particularly enrich him and his 1634 survey of the estate was probably carried out with a view to selling it. Although he never actually sold it, he did lease it out in large sections usually to palesmen like Robert Talbot of Carton, Co. Kildare.<sup>26</sup>

Gillespie's survey of the problems of the planters of east Ulster<sup>27</sup> could be applied with even greater validity to south Ulster: a shortage of capital, an absence of merchant capital in towns and difficulties in getting tenants of substance represented big stumbling blocks to developing a marginal and underdeveloped countryside.

By 1622, only three of the seven original undertakers were resident in Loughtee in Cavan (Fig 5.6). The tradition of absenteeism resulting from land speculation began early among the undertakers and servitors of Cavan. Bagshaw, who bought Wirral's estate in Loughtee in 1622, was a civil servant living in Dublin. Perse, who bought Hamilton's estate in Clankee, was the Lord Deputy's secretary and also possessed land in Westmeath. Chichester, the Lord Deputy, was a notable speculator in Ulster estates. As Canny has pointed out, speculation in forest land or grazing land with little or no residency requirements was rife in the 1630s.<sup>28</sup> Sir Charles Coote, with 38,000 acres in Cavan, was vice-President of Connaught and held extensive lands there. The Earl of Annesley, though not holding lands in Cavan at this stage, was involved in land deals throughout east Ulster and Wexford and was involved in the assembly of Edward Dowdall's property in Cavan.

Servitors were particularly active in land deals in Cavan and adjoining areas. Hugh Culme bought lands in Tullyhaw from Gaelic owners. Arthur Colme also with an estate in Tullygarvey, had land interests in Monaghan. Sir James Craig brought 2,000 acres from the McKiernans. In the 1630s, John Chapman, with land in Longford, and Henry Crofton, with land in Leitrim had bought into Tullyhaw. Sir William Hill of Allentown in Co. Meath bought about 9,000 acres from O'Reillys and Bradys in Loughtee and Tullygarvey. The result was fragmentation and, particularly among servitors, consolidation of properties initially laid out by the Ulster Plantation. What began on paper as a uniformly blocked-out territorial system was altered throughout the 1620s and 1630s and the conditions of the plantation settlement could not be fulfilled.

By 1641, there were little more than a dozen significant Gaelic estates in Monaghan (Fig. 5.5). Apart from an exceptional concentration of approximately 40 McKennas in the north of the county, there were no more than 50 small estate owners in the rest of the county, a considerable reduction from the 1606 Division. In Cavan, Gaelic landowners declined from about 58 in the Ulster Plantation to about 45 in 1641. While the ambitious plantation schemes of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were significant in their impact on the landholding structures of Ireland, equally important was the process of attrition of Gaelic estates through what was the more common process of property change — land purchase or mortgage by Old English and New English speculators. The change in ownership with its concomitant implications for indigenous society and culture, occurred over a half century along a broad frontier where the receding Gaelic world was penetrated by an increasingly vigorous new world of English and Scottish adventurers.

### *The post-Cromwellian pattern*

What Bottigheimer called the 'monumental transformation' of Irish land between 1653 and 1660 was the last major influence on territorial structures of land ownership in south Ulster.<sup>29</sup> Both Cavan and Monaghan counties were reserved for disposal to the army. Ultimately all Catholic-owned lands were confiscated. The extensive involvement

of Ulster Gaelic families in the 1641 Rising meant the inevitable forfeiture of their estates. Indeed the very survival of Gaelic social and territorial structures in **Monaghan** up to 1641 facilitated the involvement of most of its landowning families in the Rising. Consequently the pattern of new estates emerging after 1641 was based on the distribution of Catholic property at that time. A number of pre-Cromwellian Catholic-owned estates survived, principally those of Old English families in Cavan who either had influential contacts during the Cromwellian Plantation or after the Restoration which resulted in their properties being wholly or partially **reinstated**.<sup>30</sup> In this context, the Restoration had little impact on Monaghan: only Fleming's estate survived until the Williamite confiscations. In Cavan, as in parts of Leinster, the Nugents, Plunketts and Flemings obtained full or part restitution of their lands.

In Figures 5.7 and 5.8, therefore, only the forfeited Gaelic or Old English lands were granted out under the Cromwellian settlement. To facilitate the settlement, denominations in each barony were arranged in files of contiguity and lots were drawn for the appropriate amount of land.)' Thus, unlike land acquired by purchase, where some element of territorial continuity might be expected, the allocation of confiscated land by lots would have resulted in a complete break with the pre-existing order. Only a subsequent discerning purchase of shares would have consolidated an otherwise fragmented property landscape.

The pattern of Cromwellian estates, however, was much more than a simple transfer of Catholic lands to soldiers in lieu of arrears of pay. Many years elapsed between the proposal to use Irish land to finance the military campaign in Ireland and its eventual translation into land grants, and a great many adventurers and soldiers were unable or unwilling to wait. Bottigheimer estimates that only 7500 soldiers (out of 35,000) and 500 adventurers (out of c. 1,500) were confirmed in their estates by 1670.<sup>32</sup> The imposition of a reluctant soldiery on the lands of Ireland established the conditions for considerable speculation. The ultimate map of Cromwellian estates in south Ulster, therefore, represents much more a predatory pattern of Commonwealth and to a lesser extent Restoration speculation in land than it does the draconian plans of the plantation commissioners in Dublin. The emergence of about twenty large estates in both counties is a testimony to the ultimate failure of the plantation.

The impact of speculation on the morphology of these new land units is well illustrated in the case of Monaghan and Cavan. In both counties there was a clear dichotomy between large, fragmented and far-flung properties on the one hand, and very small, individual units on the other. Although the geography of the new grants was influenced to some extent by the method of allotment, there were many local variations in practice, much concealment of lands and a fair amount of disorder on the ground.

The overwhelming majority of the south Ulster grantees were **officers**. Of the 49 new names in Monaghan after 1641, 42 were enrolled as soldiers and one — Lord Massereene (John Clotworthy) — appears in the adventurers' list. Of approximately 70 new names in Cavan, 60 were **soldiers**.<sup>33</sup> In southern parts of Cavan, a patchwork of properties representing new Cromwellian owners such as Massereene, Beresford, Lewis, Cooch, Coote, Clements and Burton were intermixed with remnants of the restored pre-Cromwellian estates of Lambert, Nugent, Dease and Plunkett. The extensive Gaelic lands of 1641 stretching northwards through the centre of Cavan were taken over

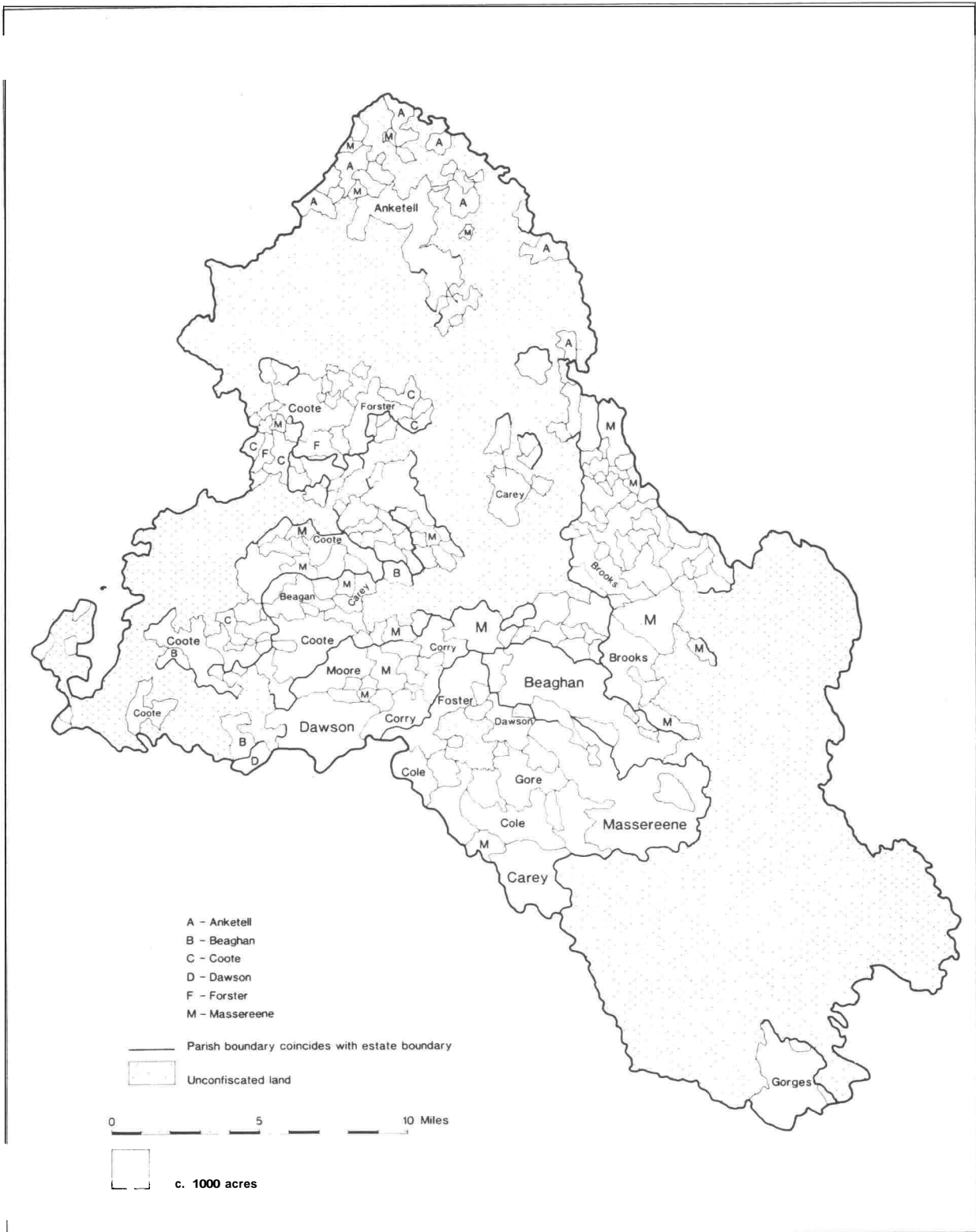


Fig. 5.7. Cromwellian grants in Monaghan

mainly by Saunderson, Annesley, Cosby, Clements, Gunn, Battally and smaller grantees. Thomas Coote also amassed an extensive estate in Tullygarvey in place of several small Gaelic properties. The Gaelic estates in the north-west barony of Tullyhaw were principally taken over by Annesley, Massereene and Beresford. The south-eastern 1641 estate of Garrett Fleming was divided up among Annesley, Coote, Cooch and others with small portions restored to Fleming.

In north Monaghan, the remnants of the McKenna estates were reassembled under the Cromwellian settlement by Mathew Anketell. In the baronies of Monaghan, Dartrey and Cremourne, the extensive Gaelic lands were replaced by large, mainly officer, landholdings — Coote, Beaghan, Carey, Dawson and others including the ubiquitous adventurer Massereene. The pattern in Monaghan was more consolidated than in Cavan, probably reflecting the nature of the baronial allocation of land shares among the soldiers' and the subsequent selective concentration of shares by astute speculators. The delineation of some of the new properties, however, suggests the persistence of estate units from the 1641 period. Thus, for example, Massereene appears to have obtained the ballybetagh of Ballilecke belonging to Hugh McPatrick Duffe McMahan in 1641, while Sir Henry Brookes got the ballybetagh estate of Hugh McMahan. The break up of Coll McBryan's large estate in Cremourne in some cases restored the earlier ballybetagh structures. In Dartrey, Coote obtained the intact ballybetagh estate of Rory Og McMahan. Such continuities cannot be coincidental and suggest the operation of local irregular arrangements, as implied in Prendergast's suggestion that in some cases officers divided up baronies by agreement.<sup>34</sup> Certainly in a period of postwar instability and economic decline, the temptation to hold together older properties complete with their tenantry must have been considerable.

The most dramatic illustration of an extensively dispersed estate is represented by the grants of Lord Massereene, an original investor in the Cromwellian enterprise in Ireland who acquired properties all over the country in the 1650s. As a result of purchasing soldiers shares, his name appears throughout the length and breadth of Monaghan and Cavan. He possessed extensive properties in Cremourne and Dartrey, also had exclusive shares in holdings in a dozen Cavan parishes, with over thirty instances of lands shared with up to three others. Others with extensive and fragmented properties which clearly resulted from the incremental accumulation of soldiers shares were Peter Beaghan in Monaghan and the Earl of Annesley in Cavan. The latter was involved in over twenty shares, with other holdings in a dozen Irish counties. Annesley as a commissioner of the Act of Settlement was alleged to have assisted in expediting patents for land in return for the favour of a proportion of the property. For this reason he found himself in possession of substantial quantities of inferior land in many regions." Thomas Coote, besides acquiring an extensive estate in Tullygarvey was also involved (in many cases with Massereene) in properties throughout Cavan, Monaghan and the midlands. In Monaghan, he had extensive lands in Dartrey, not far from his large Cavan property. Massereene, Annesley and Coote were the biggest speculators, with interests in other regions throughout Ireland. Most of the remaining Cromwellian grantees in south Ulster had their interests confined to Cavan and Monaghan. The most important speculators are named in Figures 5.7 and 5.8.

There was, therefore, a very active market in soldiers' shares in the 1650s and officers

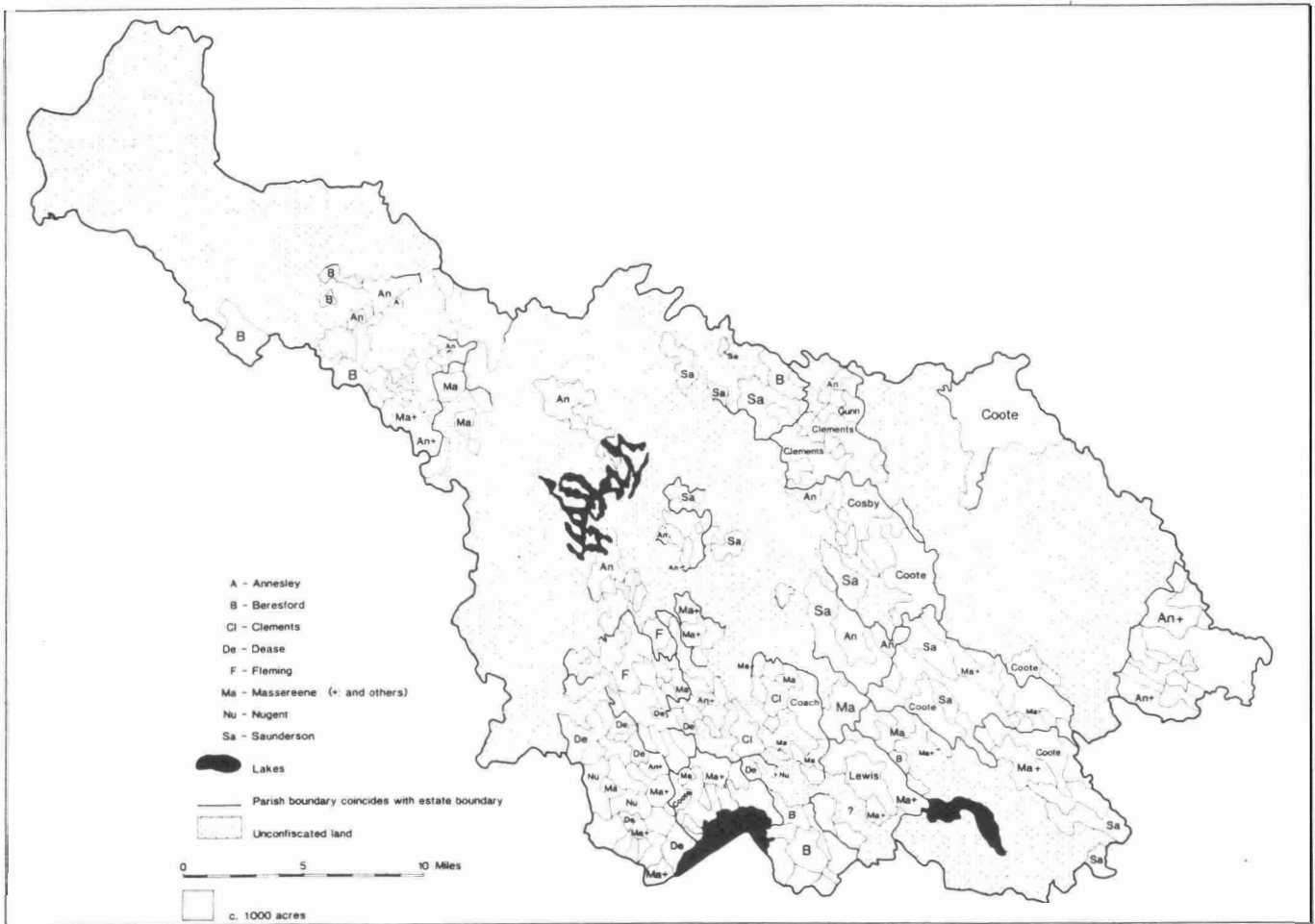


Fig. 5.8. Cromwellian grants in Cavan

obviously had the greatest opportunity to buy up their soldiers shares. Cornet John Mulholland's troupe was assigned lands in Dartrey and though Phelimy McKenna was paying cash for Mulholland's troopers' debentures in 1658/9,<sup>36</sup> it is likely that Mulholland's estate was largely made up of his soldiers' shares. Captains Carey and Anketell, Colonels Saunderson, Coote, Cole and Foster were all officers in a position to speculate in land in selected baronies. Papers relating to the Dawson estate in the 1650s show clear evidence of the acquisition of soldiers' debentures by Cornet Richard Dawson.<sup>37</sup>

The majority of new landowners in south Ulster were distinguished from the preceding group by the comparatively small size of their properties and by being confined mainly to one barony. This group probably reflects the allocation of genuine soldier grants. Cornet Walter Corry may have settled on his due allotment in Monaghan, though it is doubtful if a Cornet would have been owed eighteen tates worth of arrears. He may have added slightly to his original share. Many others had small holdings of one or two tates or polls. They often appear as a group in the 1666 enrollments, like frontiersmen collectively guarding their small acquisitions." Unlike



the large landholders, most of them resided in south Ulster, and the hearth money rolls for Monaghan in 1663 and 1665, for example, list twenty-three of the new names, all of them smallholders. Of the larger grantees, only Anketell, Foster, Mulholland and Pockeridge were resident. Later in the 1688 list of attainted persons by James II, all of these new Cromwellian colonists are conspicuously present.

*The roots of the nineteenth century estates*

The geography of the estate system in south Ulster in the mid nineteenth century can be substantially understood in terms of the major upheavals in land ownership in the seventeenth century. By concentrating on the major estates, it is possible to discern significant links with the seventeenth century and earlier and, while a complete explanation must take account of property changes in the eighteenth century, it is possible in some cases to interpolate the effect of these changes on the ultimate shape of the south Ulster properties.

In Cavan and Monaghan the relationship between parishes and baronies and the territorial structure of estates is shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2. Baronies formed important spatial parameters for both the Ulster plantation and the Cromwellian settlement. The parishes in Monaghan were closely associated with ballybetaghs which survived in fairly complete form until the mid seventeenth century. In Cavan the effect of the barony divisions is evident in the remnants of Ulster plantation estates in Tullyhaw, Tullyhunco and Clankee, while the impact of Cromwellian speculation is evident in the baronies of Clanmahon and Castlerahan. Parish boundaries which have been included in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 where they coincided with the boundaries of estates over 2,000 acres, were not as important in Cavan as in Monaghan. In the latter, the importance of the parish boundary as an estate boundary reflected the continuing influence of early seventeenth century structures, even through the disruptive Cromwellian period. There was often a clear concentration of new estates in specific parishes reflecting the earlier evolution of ballybetagh estates.

Although none of the Gaelic landowning families who were so prominent in the early seventeenth century survived, the territorial legacy of their estates often continued into the nineteenth century. In Monaghan, shades of the ballybetagh properties of 1606 are evident in Figure 5.2, though there was considerable disturbance by piecemeal purchases and Cromwellian grants up to the 1660s. Small, widely-dispersed fragments which are clearly evident in Figure 5.2 represent additions to properties mainly in the eighteenth century. The Shirley and Bath estates of Farney preserve the sixteenth century geography of that barony intact. The late sixteenth century Essex grant was divided in the 1690s between two heiresses. The **Brownlow** estate represents a ballybetagh in Farney which appears to have been leased in perpetuity in the very early stages of the Essex property. The Rossmore estate in Monaghan and the Hope and Templetown properties in Cremourne reflect the original Blaney grant of five ballybetaghs in the early seventeenth century. Though it was acquired by a series of purchases in the late seventeenth century, the Lucas estate is essentially the 1606 property of Hugh **McMahon**. Leslie's estate in north Monaghan consists chiefly of five ballybetaghs which originally belonged to **McKennas** and **McMahons** and were ultimately bought by Leslie in the later seventeenth century. The Lennard estate in Dartrey can be traced

back to the late sixteenth century disposal of the Clones monastic lands. Very few of the large Gaelic estates survived intact and the geography of the estates in the nineteenth century must be explained in terms of the fragmentation of Gaelic property as a result of English purchases and later Cromwellian speculation. Many of the smaller nineteenth century estates, while often corresponding with poorer, hillier parts of Monaghan, also reflected areas where the last Gaelic small landholders held out and where smaller Cromwellian grantees ended up. In these comparatively unattractive districts, estates remained small and were of little interest in the land market. Even where larger Cromwellian estates were assembled in these kinds of regions by Massereene and others, they were subsequently dismantled. Survival of the bigger Cromwellian estates, such as those of Dawson or Anketell, occurred in better, more viable agricultural lands and many of them, particularly exemplified by Dawson's purchase of the Corry and other estates in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, expanded their initial acquisitions. Other estates, such as the Tennison, Rothwell or Madden estates were purchased in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century from the original large Cromwellian grantees. Ker's estate, for example, was built up in 1730 around the core of Nicholson's Cromwellian grant and Leslie's Cremourne estate was bought from Edmond Beaghan of Norfolk in 1720.<sup>39</sup>

In Cavan, the undertaker baronies had a lasting impact. Thus, the Gosforth (Acheson) estate in west Cavan remained unchanged from the original Ulster plantation grant. Similarly the Young estate, around the town of Bailieboro, is the direct descendant of Bailie's Ulster plantation grant. The Garvagh, Greville, Hodson, Ruxton and Singleton estates represent divisions of original Ulster plantation undertaker properties. In all cases, the nineteenth century families had bought or married into them.

Few of the Ulster plantation estates remained as large as they were initially. In many cases, the estates were too extensive and due to reclamation or indebtedness, parts were hived off for sale. As with larger properties in poorer areas of *Monaghan*, a number of the undertaker estates deliberately located in the early seventeenth century on essentially marginal lands were unable to develop. The early absenteeism here is a reflection of the lack of viability of these properties as focal points for new settlers. Burrowes' nineteenth century estate began with part of Fische's undertaker estate in 1629.<sup>40</sup> The core of the extensive Farnham estate was Waldron's Ulster plantation grant. The Lanesborough (Butler) estate is based on a contracted version of the original Ulster plantation grant to Butler. The other significant survivors from the early seventeenth century were the Fleming and Dease estates, attenuated remains of much more extensive properties. The extensive Plunkett estates in south Cavan had been acquired in total by Taylor (later the Marquis of Headfort) in 1660. Lord Fingall (Plunkett) only held 30 acres in Cavan in the mid nineteenth century.

More so than in Monaghan, the Cromwellian grants, had a significant fragmentary impact on the property landscape of Cavan, with a complex mosaic of new landshares established by 1660. Extensive properties like Saunderson's, Beresford's, Annesley's and Coote's originated here. Considerable shuffling of the mosaic in subsequent years resulted in the emergence of many of the nineteenth century estates. Much of the Farnham estate, for example, was built up out of the scattered Massereene shares. Burrowes expanded into part of Clement's lands and incorporated all of Culme's 1641 property.

Pratt's large estate focused on the medieval core of Cabra Castle in the south-east of the county represents the accumulation of Cromwellian grants by the successful in-marriage of a Meath grantee. Others, such as Boyle and Nesbitt, came into the county in the late seventeenth century. Boyle bought up part of Moore's Ulster plantation servitor grant and the Nesbitt family had married into the Cromwellian Cosbys, whose estate formed the base of the Nesbitt property.

The marriage patterns and settlements of landed families in Cavan and Monaghan are important in explaining much of the emerging estate system. While inability to produce sons often resulted in changing the name of the estate, many men marrying in adopted their wife's family name to preserve it on the estate. Marriage settlements occasionally resulted in the division of estates, as with the Essex estate in the later seventeenth century, or in the consolidation of properties as with Pratts in Cavan. In general, fragmentation of estates on marriage was avoided as much as possible and some families went to considerable lengths to preserve the integrity of the estate. The Blaney estates were twice sold in the later seventeenth century and twice recovered by astute marriages of successive lords Blaney to the heiresses of the property.<sup>41</sup>

### *Conclusion*

While there was a considerable level of change in landownership throughout the eighteenth century, the major territorial parameters of the nineteenth century estate system in south Ulster were laid down in the seventeenth century. Comparatively minor modifications to the structure occurred subsequently. The geography of the mid-nineteenth century estates was complex in its origin and in its territorial manifestation. The extensive numbers of small and fragmented properties, many with a long pedigree of speculative and absentee owners indicate that the estate system was not the monolithic and territorially all embracing system that is commonly believed. Large areas of south Ulster, and large sections of the population, existed beyond the walls and windows of a Big House and undoubtedly such a highly varied territorial structure, matched by equally complex tenurial systems must help to explain the variety in social and economic conditions in nineteenth century Ireland. Recent work in Wexford and Tipperary helps to underline the regionally contrasting experiences of landownership in Ireland and especially underscores the contrasts between Ulster on the one hand and Munster/south Leinster on the other.<sup>42</sup>

This extensive but shallow-rooted system was totally dismantled in the late nineteenth century. Its legacy is as varied and elusive in south Ulster as its territorial structure. Few of the family names in Figures 5.1 to 5.8 remain. Exceptions like the Leslies in Glaslough, the Shirleys of Lough Fea or the Maxwells of Farnham continue to live in small demesnes lopped like branches from the trunks of their estates, surrounded by decaying walls and ivy-clad trees, the 'embers of an older order'.<sup>43</sup> A few titles of honour, like the Baronet of Bailieboro, which accompanied formerly extensive estates continue in the pages of *Burke's Peerage* with English addresses and London clubs as meaningless reminders of a vanished ascendancy. The better drained, more fertile regions of Cavan and Monaghan, still reflecting a viable husbandry of two hundred years are dotted with country houses and demesnes, the endowment of a rich and generally resident landed class. In some cases, though the owners were permanently absent, the property was

large and valuable enough to warrant a careful management which is still reflected in the landscape. In these regions around Glaslough, Monaghan, Clones and Cavan towns, and in outlying districts around Bailieborough, Virginia, Kingscourt, Rockcorry and Cootehill are the remains of a Protestant settler population in a network of solid farms. In many hilly and remoter districts, however, even the most assiduous searching reveals little trace of the 'estate system' either in house, farm, field boundary or folk memory.

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by 1876, accounting for nearly one-half of all the landowners, and overwhelmingly concentrated in the under 100 acre category, the trend in south Ulster was much less significant. Examination of the names of landowners in the 1876 list suggests that c. 16 per cent in Cavan (one-third of whom were **O'Reillys** and **Bradys**) and 9 per cent in Monaghan (none of whom were **McMahons**) possessed 'Catholic' names and were principally found in the under 50 acre class.

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