The shape of the parish

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The territorial history of the parish in Ireland raises a number of issues. Not only is there the importance of territoriality and spatial coherence, as manifested in the parish, but also the implications for a territorial community, territorial allegiance and identity. In England, for instance, deeply-rooted parochialism and allegiance to the parish church are opposed to any kind of alteration in the boundaries or geographies of parishes.[1] In Ireland too modern changes in parishes are also resented and seldom fully implemented. The idea of the parish also raises issues about location, distance and accessibility. Pastoral care is the principal distinguishing feature of parochial organisation – what might be characterised in modern terms as the delivery of religious rites such as baptism, marriage, communion or burial. The relative frequency, or infrequency, of these services in the medieval period might be expected to have some bearing on territorial morphology, especially as it relates to early medieval Ireland, and later medieval Gaelic and English Ireland. Thus the geography of parishes and questions of relative centrality should relate to patterns of settlement and population. Up until the nineteenth century, people lived in a world where matters of distance and location were determined largely by walking ranges. The historical geography of the parish is further connected with processes of territorialisation or the spatial delineation of parishes and the evolution of boundaries. One could start with an assumption that geography (in the senses implied above) probably mattered as much a millennium and more ago as it does today. Questions of distance, space, belonging to place and territorial boundaries are enduring realities of life and landscape.

There is a growing consensus about the evolution over time of pastoral care and the management of the business of the Church, the distribution of revenues, property and personnel, though there remains an amount of ambiguity about the early medieval period. Considerable progress has been made in understanding the significance of churches and the evolution of their accompanying territories in medieval Ireland.[2] Many local historical studies,

1 S. Seymour and C. Watkins, 'The decline of the country parish: sixty years of parochial change in the dioceses of Lincoln and Southwell' in *The East Midland Geographer*, 17 (1994), 12–21; S. Seymour and C. Watkins, 'Church landscape and community: rural life and the Church of England' in *Landscape Research*, 20 (1995), 30–44. 2 See R. Sharpe, 'Churches and communities

however, tend to overstate the fluidity and flexibility of the medieval units, without paying more attention to topographical and territorial continuities.

GENEALOGY AND GENESIS OF THE PARISH

In examining the genealogy of the parish in Ireland, three main strands must be recognised. The first is the historic parish which emerged from the middle ages and the second and third are the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland parishes of today that evolved from that older structure. In order to understand the genetic morphology of the parish, it is helpful to look initially at the geographies of parishes administered by both these Churches. The most immediate influence on the geography of parishes would be the requirements of pastoral care and the accompanying incomes from revenues and property accruing to ecclesiastical authorities in parochial territories. Changes in the patterns and size of population and settlement, in the numbers of pastors and in the jurisdictional authority of the Church might be expected to have some bearing on parish structure, as well as the conservative force of popular allegiance to the parochial territory and its church. The countervailing force in the management and arrangement of parishes, which acted as a brake on any radical modification of their geographies, was the revenue generated by tithes and other dues and fees. For much of the medieval period it is likely that there was more emphasis on property as a defining factor of the parish than on pastoral duties, which would tend to underline the endurance of territories and boundaries as priority considerations. For centuries, asserted Otway Ruthven, it was tithes which gave 'fixity and permanence' to parish boundaries, and which tended to cement for perpetuity the relationship between income from lands attached to particular churches which invariably became part of the parish and property of that church.[3] Others suggest that dues and renders predating tithes had a similar role in territorial consolidation.[4] The most common process of parish formation in recent centuries consisted of unions of historic parishes in response to some of these factors. For the Catholic Church, generally, unions took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a consequence of problems with the supply of clergy. For the Church of Ireland

in early medieval Ireland: towards a pastoral model' in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds), *Pastoral care before the parish* (Leicester, 1992), 81–109; A. Empey, 'The layperson in the parish: the medieval inheritance, 1169–1536' in R. Gillespie and W.G. Neely (eds), *The laity and the Church of Ireland, 1000–2000* (Dublin, 2000), 7–48; S. Ní Ghabhláin, 'The origin of medieval parishes in Gaelic Ireland: the evidence from Kilfenora' in *JRSAI*, 126 (1996), 37–61; E. FitzPatrick and C. O'Brien, *The medieval churches of county Offaly* (Dublin 1998). 3 A.J. Otway-Ruthven, 'Parochial development in the rural deanery of Skreen' in *JRSAI*, 94 (1964), 111–22: 112. S. Ní Ghabhláin, 'Origins of medieval parishes', 37–61, looks at the continuities of tithes from the taxation of the early fourteenth century to the tithe applotment books of the early nineteenth century. 4 Sharpe, 'Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland', 104–5.

it was the size of congregation which largely dictated change, though revenue and preferment in appointments to benefices were also important.

CHURCH OF IRELAND PARISHES

The established Church of Ireland in the sixteenth century inherited the property and territorial structures of the pre-Reformation Church. In many regions the small Protestant congregations necessitated changes, and the buildings and burial grounds of the late medieval church were sometimes abandoned.[5] However, alterations to Church of Ireland parishes were complicated to implement, although the Cromwellian administration attempted some radical rearrangements in 1657.[6] From 1660, changes such as unions or divisions, or local exchanges of individual townlands, could only be made by order of the privy council in Dublin. Other statutory requirements throughout the eighteenth century inhibited alterations to parish boundaries, so that the possibility of radical change was limited even though there were serious problems with churches frequently being 'incommodiously' situated and some parishes described as 'ill-formed and ill-distributed.' The Church of Ireland maintained the historic extent, legal rights and especially ownership of tithes of existing diocesan and parochial structures. Indeed the researches and visitations of seventeenth-century bishops, such as Bishop Montgomery in Ulster, are important in establishing the extent of parochial properties and boundaries in many places. Early seventeenth-century inquisitions in Clogher diocese, for instance, carefully recorded the range of rents, refections and cosheries (during visitations), duties and proxies to which the bishop was entitled, as well as the share of tithe with vicars and pastors and obligations to maintain the fabric of the church.

In Ulster dioceses, where there was a substantial Protestant population, the old parish legacy generally continued to have demographic viability and social meaning locally. The operation of parish vestries by the Church of Ireland as a minimal form of local government in areas with significant Protestant populations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, also kept alive a local awareness of the older parish framework. In Clogher diocese, for instance,

5 See W.J. Smyth, 'Ireland a colony: settlement implications of the revolution in military-administrative, urban and ecclesiastical structures, *c.*1550 to *c.*1730' in T.B. Barry (ed.), *History of settlement in Ireland* (London, 2000), 158–86. 6 See T.C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English government and reform in Ireland 1649–1660* (Oxford, 1975), 160–6; P.J. Duffy, *Landscapes of south Ulster: a parish atlas of the diocese of Clogher* (Belfast, 1993), 5–6. According to the Church of Ireland bishop of Clogher in 1622, Drumully parish church 'standeth inconveniently' (J.E. McKenna, *Diocese of Clogher: parochial records*, 2 vols (Enniskillen, 1920), ii, 117). Sir William Petty, among his many interesting projects, had several proposals to rearrange parish boundaries in order to improve parishioners' access to churches. See J.H. Andrews, 'The making of Irish geography, 1: William Petty' in *Irish Geography*, 9 (1976), 100–3.

outlines of the older parish geography continued with a small number of new units created in the eighteenth century, and by the nineteenth century there were 50 parishes (with 29 perpetual curacies) compared with 47 older (civil) parishes. In much of Leinster and Munster, however, where the older parishes were too small for the pastoral needs of sparse Church of Ireland congregations, the crown facilitated parochial unions which usually respected earlier entities by aggregating complete older units. The circumstances of the Church of Ireland's ministry outside Ulster were well summarised for Kilkenny by a witness in 1802: '147 parishes are distributed at present into 55 benefices; some of which consist of parishes dispersed in various parts: that thirteen incumbents reside within their parishes in this county ... Some clergymen reside near, though not in their parishes; some attend their parishes on Sundays from Kilkenny and other places; and it is not uncommon for incumbents in one parish to be curates in another.'[7] The result was that while the Ordnance Survey recorded 2,428 civil parishes in Ireland in the 1830s, the Church of Ireland had 1,518 parishes when it was disestablished in 1870 and this number was further reduced in the following decades.

CATHOLIC PARISHES

Over much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Catholic Church was frequently an underground, and even a missionary, church where bishops had considerable freedom to make ad hoc changes within their dioceses to meet pastoral needs. Individual priests were often fairly independent within their own parishes – with friars often assisting at local ministry and laity accustomed to little outside interference in their parish. By the late eighteenth century, in parts of Meath, Clogher and other dioceses, bishops often had to re-assert their authority over recalcitrant local clergy and congregations. Stations (sometimes a response to penal conditions in the eighteenth century where masses took place in private houses) were adopted as a mandatory practice which helped to consolidate the coherence of parish identity.[8]

It has been suggested that following the loss of its parochial inheritance after the Reformation, and especially after the 1640s, Catholic Church administrative structures had collapsed, requiring it to set about reconstructing the 'shattered parish system' in the late seventeenth century, with little reference to the medieval legacy.[9] There is an assumption of dissonance between the

7 William Tighe, *Statistical observations relative to the county of Kilkenny made in the years 1800 and 1801*, (facsimile edition, Kilkenny 1998), 618. 8 See P. Mulligan, 'The life and times of Bishop Edward Kernan' in *Clogher Record* (1981), 323–48; T. O'Connor, 'Thomas Messingham (*c.*1575–1638?) and the seventeenth-century Church,' in *Riocht na Midhe*, 11 (2000), 86–102: 88, 95, 99. 9 P.J. Corish, *The Catholic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin, 1981), 58–9.

Catholic parish and the older medieval parish, with suggestions of 'massive transformation' into 'radically new', 'roughly circular' parishes which maximised accessibility in response to local needs.[10] Parish administration was certainly seriously interrupted in the sixteenth and seventeenth century upheavals and new arrangements in parochial management had to be made. However, the eventual territorial organisation of parishes undertaken by the Catholic Church seems more conservative than radical for much of Ireland.[11] At the latter end of the eighteenth century, attachment to the older medieval structures had survived, ancient ecclesiastical sites and burial grounds continued to be revered, and local popular allegiance to and memory of the earlier entities had endured. Where the older parishes were comparatively extensive (as in Ulster) continuance of parish spaces into the modern period made geographical and social sense. Additionally, parochial tithes paid to the Established Church, though obviously unpopular with Catholics, probably helped maintain the continuity of older units in collective consciousness.

In Ulster, the Catholic parishes and the older parishes showed a high level of congruity. In Clogher diocese, for instance, the area of the 38 Catholic parishes in the nineteenth century were virtually all co-terminous with the 43 historical parishes.[12] In fact, in many cases the Catholic parishes re-established the older medieval geography in Fermanagh, where it had been departed from somewhat by the established Church of Ireland (fig. 1). In Cos. Donegal and Cavan, there is a similar close correspondence between the older parish boundaries and the Catholic units (fig. 2).[13] Further south, in the archdiocese of Cashel, where the older parishes were considerably smaller than those in Ulster, the correspondence between Catholic and civil parishes continues.[14] Catholic parishes in the main comprised a number of the smaller older units: there are 46 Catholic parishes in the diocese and 130 civil parishes. Approximately 21 Catholic parishes are composed of from one to nine civil parishes, and the boundaries of nearly all the others are coincident with civil parish boundaries. Minor adjustments were made by the Catholic authorities to some of the more unwieldy civil parishes to produce a more rational territorial unit, by re-allocating townlands singly or in small blocs or in a few cases by using the line of roads which post-

10 K. Whelan, 'The Catholic parish, the Catholic chapel and village development in Ireland' in *Irish Geography*, 16 (1983), 1–15: 4. See also Whelan, 'The Catholic church in county Tipperary 1700–1900' in W. Nolan and T. McGrath (eds), *Tipperary: history and society* (Dublin, 1985), 215–55. 11 Power in 1949, based largely on anecdotal personal experience, speculated that 'there is no great reason to think that many rectifications of parish boundaries ever took place': P. Power, 'The bounds and extent of Irish parishes' in S. Pender (ed.) *Féilscríbhinn Torna* (Cork, 1947), 218–24: 221. 12 Duffy, *Landscapes of south Ulster*, 6–8, 25. 13 *County atlas 2001*, Donegal county development board, 2001, map no. 82. In the archdiocese of Armagh, the Louth portion consists of multiple small civil parishes per Catholic parish, while in the Armagh portion Catholic and civil parishes are larger. 14 Based on *Pobal Áilbe: Cashel and Emly Atlas*, [1970]. Though Smyth, 'Ireland a colony', 175–6 refers to 'significant re-structuring' and 'massive trauma' in relation to the Catholic parishes.

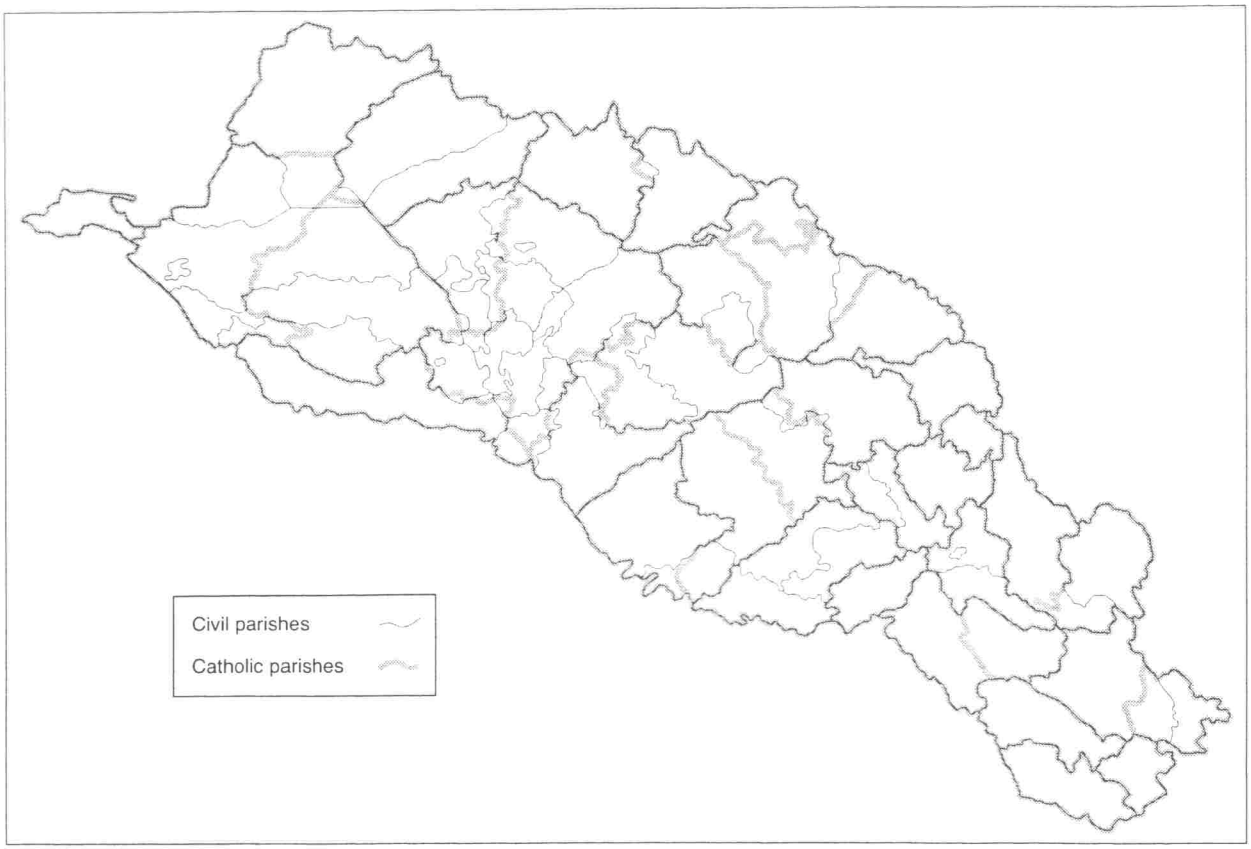

Fig. 1: Civil and Catholic parishes in Clogher diocese

Fig. 2: Civil and Catholic parishes in Co. Cavan

dated the civil parishes as boundaries. In Co. Meath there is a very close correspondence between both civil parishes and Catholic parishes.[15] As can be seen in fig. 3, the 46 Catholic parishes are effectively unions composed of 144 civil parishes. The older civil parish boundaries in the overwhelming majority of cases make up the boundaries of the Catholic unions which were emerging in the late eighteenth century. This process of re-arrangement is well exemplified in Meath where the objective was to provide pastoral care to large congregations with limited numbers of clergy in flexible unions of the smaller medieval parishes.[16] For example, Ardsallagh was an early church which was constituted as a parish after the Anglo-Norman colonisation. In 1690 a parish priest was appointed to the parishes of Ardsallagh and Navan. In 1704 the priest was registered as parish priest of the historic parishes of Ardsallagh, Navan, Bective and Donaghmore. Later the Franciscan friars of Flower Hill in Navan were in charge of Donaghmore and Dunmoe. Donaghmore was later permanently united to Navan. In the early eighteenth century, Franciscans were also given jurisdiction over the parishes of Clonmacduff, Bective, Rataine, Churchtown, Moymet, Tullaghenoge and Kilcooly, which ultimately became the Catholic parish union of Dunderry. The early Christian church of Kilmoon was created a parish in the twelfth century and was united with Kilbrew under one parish priest in 1690. In the 1704 registration of priests it was administered with Kilbrew, Crickstown and Trevet, called the Curraha union in the eighteenth century. Trevet was united to Skyrne parish in 1823 and Curraha union was allotted the parishes of Kilmoon, Kilbrew, Crickstown, Primatestown, Donaghmore and Greenoge.

In the midst of the disorder imposed on the Catholic Church in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the older historic parishes may have represented units of stability, places with a sense of allegiance and community solidarity, as in Co. Limerick – although it has been suggested that in the early modern Catholic Church the idea of the parish was more signficant as a community than a precisely-defined territorial entity.[17] Indeed there was some local friction within some of the ad hoc unions. The ninteenth century historian Cogan's use of the term 'united to' instead of 'united with' may suggest the maintenance of the integrity of the older units in Meath. In Kilkenny, the term 'annexe' was used for these Catholic unions of contiguous older parishes, which were flexible enough to allow for change as the population and clergy increased in numbers.[18] Over time, as a result of settlement and

15 P.J. Duffy, 'Habitat and history: exploring landscape and place in Co. Meath' in *Riocht na Midhe*, 11 (2000), 187–218. 16 Based on A. Cogan, *The diocese of Meath, ancient and modern*, 3 vols (Dublin, 1867). 17 T. Jones Hughes, 'The large farm in nineteenth century Ireland' in A. Gailey and D. Ó hOgáin (eds), *Gold under the furze: studies in folk tradition* (Dublin, 1982), 93–100. 18 Tighe, *Statistical observations of Kilkenny*, 619–20. See also F. O Fearghail, 'The Catholic Church in county Kilkenny 1600–1800' in W. Nolan and K. Whelan (eds), *Kilkenny: history and society* (Dublin, 1990), 197–250: 202.

Fig. 3: Civil and Catholic parishes in Co. Meath

demographic change, new names and identities sometimes developed for some of the unions, though the Catholic Church was often anxious to retain the older parish name.

In Wexford, Kerry and elsewhere, the continuity of older boundaries is also evident in the new parochial arrangements of the Catholic Church.[19] Although Jones Hughes refers to 'new territorial frameworks' being developed in the eighteenth century to capitalise on emerging focal points and arterial communications in the landscape, in fact the older parochial entities normally endured and where they were small, as in parts of Munster and Leinster, they were mostly combined into Catholic parish unions. What most often did emerge, however, were new chapel villages located more centrally in these emerging unions. In general, therefore, it is within the medieval framework of parishes that we must look for whatever adjustments were made by the modernising Catholic Church authorities in the nineteenth century.

19 Based on ESB MSS maps of Catholic parishes, Russell Library, Maynooth and maps of civil parishes in B. Mitchell (ed.), *The new genealogical atlas of Ireland* (Baltimore, 1986).

CIVIL PARISHES

The common antecedent of the Catholic and Church of Ireland parishes was the late medieval parish. Seventeenth-century records of confiscation and administration used the barony, parish (and/or townland or its contemporary equivalent) as basic units of record – as, for example, in the Civil Survey, Down Survey, hearth money and poll tax returns of the 1660s. As a result the parish became the earliest convenient adminstrative unit, which eventually came to be called the civil parish. The seventeenth-century parish, therefore, might be taken as a reliable representation of the territorial structure of the late medieval parish. Civil parish linkages back to the thirteenth century can be uncovered in the documents relating to papal taxation of parishes from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[20] In Clogher, for instance, the 1306 list of parishes matches the seventeenth-century lists in broad terms. In some instances there are records of the territorial extent of the parishes incorporating internal details on placenames. Local names and territorial units are listed in considerable detail for the Fermoy district of north Cork for the twelfth century, including the church of each tuath.[21] Complete lists of parishes for Cashel and Emly can be found in papal taxations of 1297 and 1302 and a visitation of 1437, which are virtually identical with the list of civil parishes. In the absence of comprehensive records of the territorial extent of parishes in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, and acknowledging that there were many unions and subdivisions in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,[22] the Ordnance Survey civil parish maps of the 1830s exhibit the broad outline of the medieval parish framework. Maps are an important key to understanding more about medieval parish morphologies. There is a wealth of evidence to be excavated from the maps of civil parishes and townlands in Ireland. The most convenient sources for examining the detail of parish topographies are the indices to the townland survey (in one sheet per county) and townland indices (which detail the townlands in several sheets per county).

Historians have long been aware of the broad regional contrasts in parish geography – from the small parishes of the manorial regions colonised by the Anglo-Normans to larger parishes in Gaelic regions of medieval Ireland. There is an evident relationship between the map of Norman settlement and the distribution of smaller parishes in Ireland.[23] The Pale extending southwards through

20 H.S. Sweetman (ed.), *Calendar of documents relating to Ireland*, 5 vols (London, 1875–86), v, nos 693–729. **21** L. O Buachalla, 'Placenames of north-east Cork' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 54 (1949), 31–4 and 88–91; Sharpe, 'Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland', 96 citing P. Power (ed.), *Crichad an Chaoilli, being the topography of ancient Fermoy* (Cork, 1932). **22** There were also numbers of new parishes created in the eighteenth century, many of them reflecting pre-existing units. **23** See map of Norman settlement in F.H.A. Aalen, K. Whelan and M. Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish rural landscape* (Cork, 1997), 54. I am grateful to W.J. Smyth and the Geography Department, UCC, for permission to reproduce the map of civil parishes in Ireland.

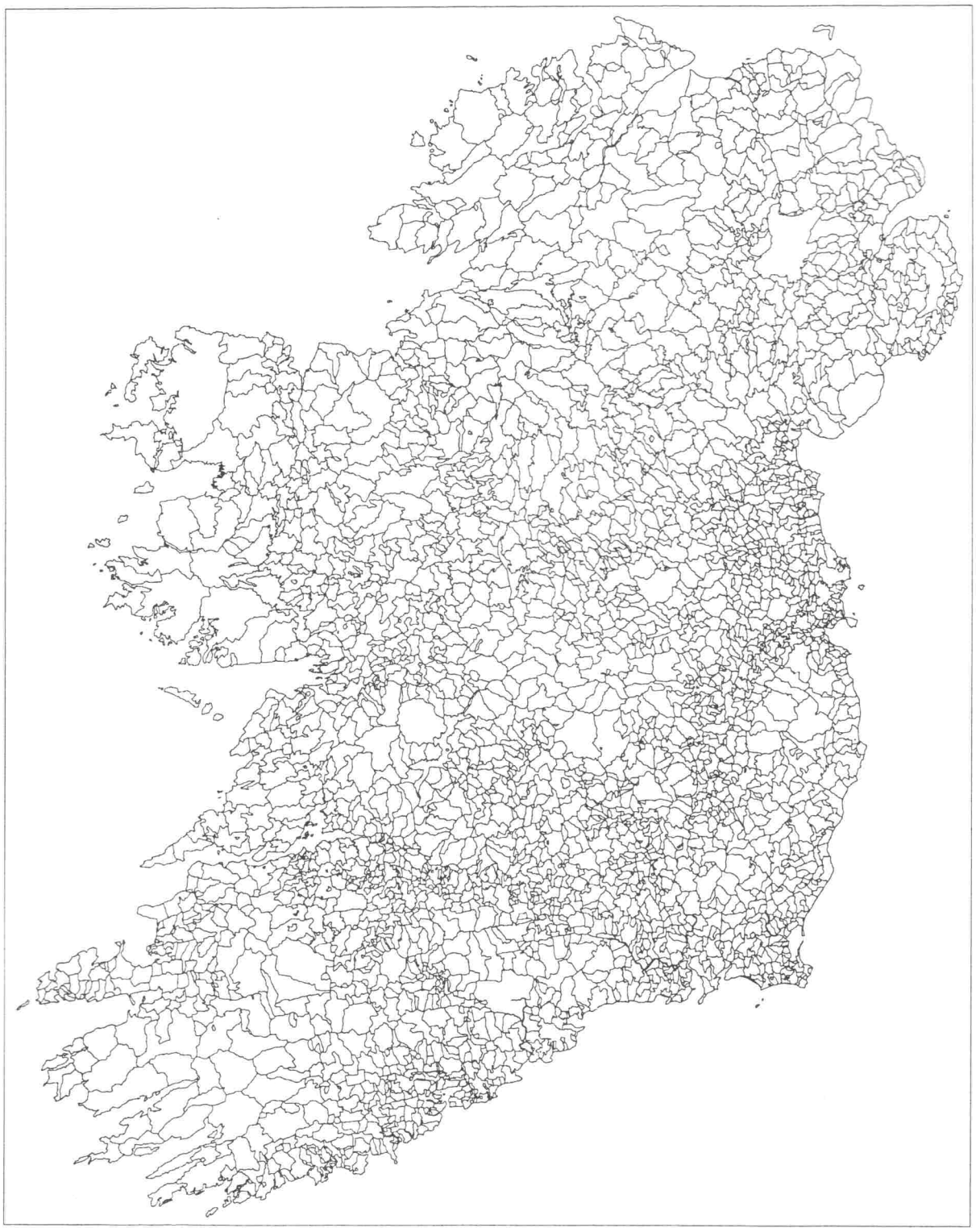

Fig. 4: Ireland: civil parishes

east Kildare, and districts through the Barrow valley to south Wexford, east Waterford, Kilkenny, Tipperary, east Cork, north Kerry, Limerick, east Galway, south Sligo, north Roscommon, Westmeath, Longford and east Down, all intensively or partially colonised landscapes of mottes and moated sites, clearly contain the smallest parishes. These contrast with much larger parish units in

the Gaelic regions of Ulster, as well as the south midlands, Wicklow, south Kerry and much of Connacht. These contrasting patterns are evident across the south Ulster frontier with the Pale, where parishes range from 1,700 to 5,000 acres in Louth and 4,000 acres in Meath as compared with 17,000–30,000 in Armagh and Monaghan. There are clearly colonial connotations evident in the map, reflecting the cultural impact of Anglo-Norman settlement, associated with the topographical influence of favoured soils and better drainage in the rich lowlands and river valleys where small manorial parishes developed along European lines. Areas beyond the influence of the English colony exhibit a much coarser framework of parishes reflecting perhaps a pre-Norman process of territorialisation and a different approach to parish management and ministry. This larger parish matrix sometimes also coincides with thinly populated areas, or marginal undeveloped land, where parish support (via economic productivity of secular lands) called for more extensive districts. While the 'manorial' parishes are considerably smaller than those in the Gaelic regions, they also exhibit greater variations in size – some being very small, others considerably larger. Such wide ranges are much less evident in the Gaelic areas, which show greater uniformity and regularity in size. Indeed if mountain and waste land, as in the western dioceses,[24] are exluded these parishes show more areal uniformity than in the southern and eastern regions of the country.

The contrasting development of local ministry, pastoral care and management of church business across the frontier may also help to explain the contrasts in the geography and genesis of the parish. Empey depicts a vigorous parish church in Anglo-Ireland, especially after the Black Death (1348–50), with actively-involved laity and church building on orthodox European lines. This contrasts with the nature of parish life in Gaelic Ireland where kin branches of ruling families monopolised lands and office at local level and where parish organisation was generally haphazard in the sixteenth century.[25] Parish centres in the feudalised Ireland, usually focussed on church and manor house, were powerful centres of local community life.[26] Coarb and erenagh lands were taken over in Anglo-Norman areas and transferred to bishops or monastic foundations, or absorbed by new settlers. In Gaelic regions, their functions and landholdings continued in the post-reform dioceses in attenuated but still vigorous form which had an important defining role in parish geographies.

The genesis of the historic parishes has been traced back to the twelfth-century reform of the Church in Ireland, especially in the decades after the Anglo-Norman colonisation. The original development of parish territorial structures, as elsewhere in mainland Europe, was closely associated with secular

24 See K.W. Nicholls, 'Rectory, vicarage and parish in the western Irish dioceses' in *JRSAI*, 101 (1971), 53–84: 62. 25 C. Lennon, 'The sixteenth century' in R. Ó Muirí (ed.), *Irish church history today* (Armagh, nd [1990]), 27–41: 35. 26 See W.J. Smyth, 'Property, patronage and population: reconstructing the human geography of mid-seventeenth century county Tipperary' in Nolan and McGrath (eds), *Tipperary*, 104–38: 126–7.

territorial structures. From its earliest days the survival of the Christian Church depended on its ability to ally itself with secular authority.[27] The twelfth-century reforms in Ireland aimed at introducing mainstream European standards to the Irish church, by constructing dioceses which were synchronised with political order, and parish formation in colonial Ireland is most clearly associated with the Anglo-Norman manors. Regularisation of the tithing system led to parishes being constructed around tithe-paying tenants on the manor, as in Wexford where thirty-seven manors had the same name as the parishes in which they were situated, and in Skryne barony in Meath where parishes were developed by its military tenants.[28]

But how were these Anglo-Norman manors conjured up? On what territorial precedents were they based? Territorial structures often endure through social and political upheaval, especially, as with parishes, where property and associated revenues are implicated and embedded in a secular matrix of landholding. There was a strong driving force for territorial inertia and continuity within parochial structures which were meshed in a web of legal privilege, entitlement to revenues, perhaps duties of pastoral care, as well as local allegiances, tradition and custom. In England, twelfth-century parish boundaries were often based on those of early Saxon estates, which in turn were frequently based on Roman landholdings.[29] The connection between Anglo-Norman fiefs and pre-conquest territorial frameworks such as tuaths has been demonstrated in a number of places, with parishes being carved out of pre-existing units, as in the Tipperary manors, though Hennessy places most emphasis on the innovatory nature of the Anglo-Norman parish formations.[30] In the east midlands of Kildare and Meath, there are innumerable small parishes whose names are suggestive of an earlier genealogy, such as Kilmore, Kilmeague, Kilmessan, Kilbride or Donaghmore, Donaghcumper, Donaghpatrick, all representing important churches and indicating pre-parish, or proto-parish geographies from pre-Norman times; 78 per cent of the parish names in Meath suggest a pre-Norman origin; Smyth has calculated that 70 per cent of the parish names in Dublin county are early Christian in origin, indicating that the Normans 'were inheritors rather than creators of ecclesiastical structures.'[31]

27 See B. Millet, 'Dioceses in Ireland up to the fifteenth century' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 12 (1986–87), 2–3; P. Corish, *A history of Irish Catholicism* (Dublin, 1972) i, 3–4. 28 B. Colfer, *Arrogant trespass: Anglo-Norman Wexford 1169–1400* (Enniscorthy, 2002), 85–6; Ottway-Ruthven, 'Skyrne', 119–20. See also A. Empey, 'Conquest and settlement: patterns of Anglo-Norman settlement in north Munster and south Leinster' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, 13 (1986), 5–31: 19. 29 Seymour and Watkins, 'The decline of the country parish', 12. C. Taylor, *Village and farmstead: a history of rural settlement in England* (London, 1983), 120. See Blair and Sharpe's note on the fact of eighth-century ecclesiastical *regiones* being based on secular *regiones* in their *Pastoral care before the parish*, 6–7. 30 Empey, 'Conquest and settlement', 12–16, 30; M. Hennessy, 'Parochial organisation in medieval Tipperary' in Nolan and McGrath (eds), *Tipperary:* 60–70: 63; see also Dermot Gleeson (1949) cited in Otway-Ruthven, 'Skyrne', 114. 31 Duffy, 'Landscape and place in Co. Meath', 193–204; W.J. Smyth, 'Exploring the social and

Hereditary and family links of erenaghs and coarbs with associated church lands and pastoral functions lend further credence to the existence of territorial coherence between the more extensive parochial entities and sept lands in Ulster and elsewhere. Erenagh families in later medieval Clogher, for instance, were generally responsible for two-thirds of the cost of repairing the church from the revenues of the erenagh land in the parish (as well as usually paying rent to the diocese)[32] and churches appear to have been commonly sited on erenagh land. Simms has demonstrated the broad regional pattern of Gaelic erenagh and coarb parochial management and ministry from the synod of Kells in 1152, corresponding broadly with the broad regional dichotomy in the geography of civil parishes, especially in Ulster.[33] The relationship between lineage groups and the local church and parochial lands (erenagh and termon lands) extended back to early times when they had a more influential role. In this context it seems logical that parishes and their pre-parochial antecedents, under the control of coarbs and erenagh families (who often also provided the parochial or later diocesan clergy), should coincide with the political and economic extent of the secular authority of lordship.[34] In such a scenario, boundaries should remain comparatively stable. The nature of such an alliance is evident in the late medieval lordship of Airghialla, where the lucht tighe lands of MacMahons comprised a parish and all the ballybetaghs of the various sept branches were closely associated with the parish structure in 1591.[35] Ní Ghabhláin has suggested that the 1591 map of landownership may indicate a correlation between distinctive sept lands and parochial territories which probably endured for several generations.[36] Thus to what extent are the parishes which ultimately emerged as a

cultural topographies of sixteenth and seventeenth-century county Dublin' in F.H.A. Aalen and K. Whelan (eds), *Dublin city and county: from prehistory to present* (Dublin, 1992), 121–79: 150, 152. **32** See for instance, M.A. Costello (ed.), *De annatis Hiberniae, vol. 1, Ulster* (1909): Inishmacsaint parish from Inquisition of Ulster, Sept. 1603. See also Fermanagh Inquisition, 1609, *Inquisitionum in officio rotulorum cancellariae Hiberniae ... Ultoniae* (Dublin, 1829).Erenagh families customarily provided the parochial clergy as well, with duties of hospitality to travellers, wayfarers, and the poor, often involving the maintenance of a house or hostel for such purposes. See the comments in H. Jefferies essay below. **33** K. Simms, 'Frontiers in the Irish Church – regional and cultural' in T. Barry (ed.), *Colony and frontier in medieval Ireland* (London, 1995), 177–200: 182–5. In the plantation Inquisitions in Ulster, erenaghs represented themselves as descendants of original owners of these church lands who had been turned into rent payers after the twelfth-century reforms. See also A. Lynch, 'Religion in late medieval Ireland' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, 26 (1981), 3–15: 4, 7. **34** See, for example, S. Ó Dufaigh, 'The MacCathmhaoils of Clogher' in *Clogher Record*, 2 (1957), 25–46: 36–7 for a politically ascendant family who were ecclesiastically dominant as clerics and erenaghs in the south Tyrone area in the twelfth to sixteenth centuries. **35** P.J. Duffy, 'Social and spatial order in the MacMahon lordship of Airghialla in the late sixteenth century' in P.J. Duffy, D. Edwards and E. FitzPatrick (eds), *Gaelic Ireland, c.1250–c.1650* (Dublin, 2001), 115–37: 134–6; see also Muinterheny and Ballymore parishes in Armagh in C.F. McGleenon, 'The medieval parishes of Ballymore and Mullabrack' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 12 (1987), 46–7. M. Ní Loighnsigh notes that the 1609 Inquisition in Donegal identified parishes in the currency of ballybetaghs: 'An assessment of castles and landownership in late medieval north Donegal', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd series, 57, (1994), 104–150: 145. **36** Ní Ghabhláin, 'Origins of medieval parishes', 51–2, though the association

consequence of the twelfth-century reforms 'related to what existed previously'?[37] Both Sharpe and Empey refer to the reluctance of historians to look across the twelfth-century divide for antecedents of the later medieval parish, in 'proto parishes' or 'pre-parishes' instead of the widely-dispersed monastic federations of an earlier generation of historians.[38] This would represent a much more familiar north European structure perhaps of great and little 'parishes' akin to the minster parishes of England.

At a more global level, Dodgshon's comments on the nature of feudal and pre-feudal space and territory may have a bearing on the evolution of parochial territories in Ireland before and after the Anglo-Norman colonisation. Pre-feudal or tribal forms of territorialisation are ultimately based on kin and sept networks. Feudalism introduced notions of spatial order of land resources by measurement, extent and valuation, as part of a wider articulated world of economic integration.[39] In an Irish context generally one can see how in the Gaelic chiefdoms, space and territorial hierarchies were determined by kinship and lineage: distance from the centre, for instance, was genealogical as well as geographical. *Lucht tighe* lands, usually consisting of the best land at the centre of the territory, belonged to the chief's kin group, and other territorial units to branches of the sept. In the context of parochial development, erenagh and coarbial families were very much part of this local disarticulated world, arranged very much in tandem with secular and kinship-determined space.

Empey and others have highlighted the importance of tithe as markers of a parochial system, with possession of a baptismal font, for example, being a sign of parochial status.[40] The absence of disputes about ownership of tithes after the Anglo-Norman colonisation suggests the absence of a proper parish system in place in the twelfth century, though Katherine Simms considers that the newly-established diocesan bishops did not have the legal power to intervene with the incoming new settlers in the matter of tithes.[41] Richard Sharpe, however, has pointed to the existence of a regulated system of pastoral care in the early medieval period, which could only be administered territorially presumably. He has proposed the notion of a three- or four-tier hierarchy of churches coming into existence approximately by mid-seventh century, with local churches ministering to population groups in return for dues, in subdivisions linked to tuatha, subordinate to mother churches and supervised by a small number of greater churches, which he characterises as one of the most

with particular branches of the septs is not always clearcut in the map: P.J. Duffy, 'The territorial organisation of Gaelic landownership and its transformation in county Monaghan 1591–1640' in *Irish Geography*, 14 (1981), 1–26. **37** Sharpe, 'Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland', 84. **38** In a similar sense to the 'pre-village' of C. Doherty which shows less of the exceptionalism of earlier nationalist medieval histories, resembling much more the rest of Europe. See his 'Settlement in early Ireland: a review' in T.B. Barry (ed.), *A history of settlement in Ireland* (London, 2000), 50–80. **39** R.A. Dodgshon, *The European past: social evolution and spatial order* (London, 1987), 72, 126–130, 139, 166. **40** Empey, 'The layperson in the parish', 12–14. **41** Ibid., 13–14; Simms, 'Frontiers in the Irish Church', 184–5.

comprehensive pastoral organisations in northern Europe. Swan has suggested that the strong coincidence of parish units with early ecclesiastical sites in Westmeath supports the notion of a pre-Norman genesis of these territorial units, as does the clustering of such sites within the parish matrix in the Dingle penisula.[42] Much of the research on parishes derives from studies of ecclesiastical sites and parish centres containing suites of buildings and landscape features such as burial grounds. In most cases it does seem reasonable to assume that sites and centres are broadly indicative of territorial parishes, especially when the medieval church site name (the townland today) is the same as the parish name. One of the main problems in reading the geography of parishes is the contemporaneity of early churches and territorial districts. As in the case of Dingle, where a range of ecclesiastical sites are located in the civil parishes, they may reflect a gradual process of development over a long period of time, with some sites fading while others peaked.

Colmán Etchingham has noted that the payment of pastoral dues was an early practice, though not always necessarily universally observed. He has also emphasised the importance of territory and people in early medieval Ireland, with principal and subordinate churches where authority was spatially delineated in paruchia and episcopal jurisdiction extended over subject churches located in integrated geographical regions.[43] This early allegiance of place and people is reflected in many early church placenames where *domnach* is listed in conjunction with a definite area or people.[44] Many historians of Ireland's territorial structures have used the evidence of the twelfth-century *Crichad an Chaoilli* to emphasise the strong links between communities of kin groups and local churches as far back as the eighth century. Hogan's investigation of tricha céd in 1928 suggested a correspondence between parish and tuatha which has been identified by Ní Ghabhláin, FitzPatrick and comprehensively demonstrated for county Clare by Nugent, with in most cases *túatha* consisting of two or more of the later parishes.[45] Ní Ghabhláin's notion of primary parishes later subdividing into the medieval parishes resembles the process in many other places, with the detached portions of parishes in Kilfenora demonstrating the existence of earlier larger entities with rectorial tithes. This resembles the putative process of parish formation in Clogher diocese discussed in the following section. Recent studies in Cornwall, whose parochial development resembled early Ireland rather than manorial England, support this notion of territorial organisation of parishes being closely bound up with local commu-

42 D.L. Swan, 'The early Christian ecclesiastical sites of County Westmeath' in J. Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1988), 3–32; J. Cuppage et al., *Archaeological survey of the Dingle peninsula* (Ballyferriter, 1986), 363. 43 See C. Etchingham's essay below and his 'The implications of *paruchia*' in *Eriu*, 44 (1993), 147–152. 44 Sharpe, 'Churches and communities in early medieval Ireland', 95, 96–7. See also Doherty, 'Settlement in early Ireland: a review', 57–9. 45 James Hogan, 'The tricha cét and related land-measures' in *PRIA*, C37 (1928–9), 148–235: 184; Ní Ghabhláin, 'Origin of medieval parishes', 56; FitzPatrick and O'Brien, *The medieval churches of Offaly*, 12; See also P. Nugent's essay below.

nities and local identities, reflected especially in a highly developed context of epic tales of hero-saints.[46] Before the twelfth-century reform in Ireland many of the smaller local churches had been abandoned and were in ruins, but it is at the level of these local churches and their pastoral territories that the foundations of the medieval parishes reside. Taken together the ideas discussed above have the potential to shed additional light on the evolution of the modern parish. The next two sections of this essay will attempt to test some of these ideas by applying them to the problem of the shapes of the parishes of south Ulster.

THE PARISHES OF CLOGHER[47]

In the diocesan boundaries agreed at the synod of Rathbreasail in 1111, only the boundaries of the central districts of the eventual diocese of Clogher were agreed, based on early Uí Cremthain territories. The borders of the diocese were rapidly extended south eastwards towards the sea in modern Louth following the expansion of the Ó Cearbhaill kingdom, westwards to the sea at Donegal bay through the dominance of the Fir Manach and briefly northwards to Ardstraw which was traditionally associated with the Airgialla peoples. Much of the Louth lands were lost in face of Anglo-Norman expansion and Ardstraw was returned to Derry. The history of the MacCathmhaoils of Clogher in the twelfth century demonstrates the links between secular power and the diocesan boundary in the modern south Tyrone area.[48]

The obituary of Donnchadh Ó Cearbhaill (king of Airgialla who died 1168) credits him with helping to reform the church in the territory of Airgialla: 'by whom were made ... the chief books of the order of the year, and the chief books of the Mass ... by him the church throughout the land of Oirghiall was reformed ... In his time tithes were received, churches were founded, temples and cloichtheachs [belltowers] were made ...'.[49] Under his influence, his kingdom was made a diocese. From the thirteenth century, the territories of Airgialla and Lough Erne were consolidated by MacMahons and Maguires, with their subterritorial units being quickly organised as parishes. By 1306, the following parishes were listed for taxation purposes in correspondence with Rome[50] and are shown on figure 5.

46 D.C. Harvey, 'Landscape organization, identity and change: territoriality and hagiography in medieval west Cornwall' in *Landscape Research*, 25: 2 (2000), 201–12. 47 Based on H. J.Lawlor, 'The genesis of the diocese of Clogher' in *County Louth Archaeological Journal*, 4 (1916–20), 129–59; McKenna, *Diocese of Clogher*; P. Mulligan, 'The diocese of Clogher in brief' in J. Duffy (ed.), *Clogher Record album: a diocesan history* (Monaghan, 1975), 9–12; K. Simms 'The origins of the diocese of Clogher,' in *Clogher Record*, 10 (1980), 180–98; J. Duffy, 'Parish names and boundaries' in P.J. Duffy, *Landscapes of south Ulster*, 2–4; *Inquisitionum in officio rotulorum cancellariae Hiberniae ... Ultoniae*, appendix vi Fermanagh. 48 Ó Dufaigh, 'The MacCathmhaoils of Clogher', 31–5. 49 Quoted in Lawlor, 'The genesis of the diocese of Clogher', 138. 50 *Calendar of documents relating to Ireland* (1302–7), quoted in McKenna, *Diocese of Clogher*, i,

Fig. 5: Clogher diocese, *c.*1306

Bishop's Mensa: Clogher, Donagh; *Deanery of Lough Erne*: Termon Davog, Cúlmáine, Inis Muighe Samh, Devenish, Botha, Lisgoole, Inniskeen, Cleenish, Derryvullen, Derrybrusk, Aghavea, Aghalurcher; *Deanery of Clones*: Clones, Galloon, Kilmore with the chapel of Drumsnat, Tydavnet, Tyholland; *Deanery of Donaghmoyne*: Donaghmoyne, Ros Cluain, Inniskeen, Killanny, Muckno, Cremorne. Most of these listed parishes correspond with the map of later civil parishes and had roots in the earlier medieval period. Nearly all of them contained churches founded as far back as the sixth and seventh centuries. Individual histories will make this clearer.

Clogher, an extensive area with early associations with kings of the Airgialla in the sixth century, had an important church foundation associated with sixth-century Macartan and became the mensal parish of the newly established bishop of Clogher.

Donagh was another mensal parish of the bishop in 1306 which probably also included Errigle Trough. Domhnach and Aireagal Tríocha suggest a much earlier significance as pre-parochial territories. Errigle was first mentioned as a parish in 1532.[51]

16–17; Ó Dufaigh, 'MacCathmhaoils of Clogher', 47–8 and 'Parish names and boundaries', 2.

51 Hogan, 'The tricha cét', 206 identifies Trough as a remnant of an early *tricha céd*. See S. Ó

Termon Davog (Templecarn civil parish) was an early termon land on the borderland between Fir Manach and Tir Conaill territory which was focussed on the early Christian pilgrimage site at Lough Derg. In the later medieval period it was called Termonmagrath after the local coarbial family.

Cúlmáine (Magheraculmoney civil parish) had an early sixth-century church foundation.

Inis Muighe Samh (Inishmacsaint). Its early territorial morphology is traceable to the Cineal Cairbre territory of Túatha Rátha which by late twelfth century had affiliated to the Fir Manach. The important early Christian site of Domnach Mór Magh Ene at the western ocean point was part of the thirteenth-century parish.

Devenish was an important and extensive territorial parish with a large number of ecclesiastical centres within it, not least the sixth-century foundation of St Molaise on Devenish island which became the principal centre in the area.

Cleenish was an extensive borderland parish with Breifne, running from upper Lough Erne westwards, which had pre-parochial orgins in the sixth-century church foundation of St Sinell.

Lisgool was a monastic centre which was associated with the small surrounding district of Rossory and *Botha* (**Boho**) continued as a comparatively small medieval parish.

Inniskeen (Enniskillen civil parish) was associated with the *lucht tighe* lands of Maguires in the later medieval period. It was called Pubble (Pobal Phádraig) in the sixteenth century.

Derryvullan was an extensive parish comprising detached portions east of Lough Erne containing several church/chapel districts in Kilskeery and portions of Magheracross which emerged as separate parishes by the fifteenth century. Kilskeery however had a sixth-century church founded by St Scíre and a ninth-century church at Trillick (Trelic Mór).

Derrybrusk was a small parish listed in 1306 whose tithes were paid in toto to the erenagh.[52]

Aghavea and **Aghalurcher** had sixth-century foundations.

Clones was a large and important parish with a foundation tradition by St Tighernach in the sixth century.

Galloon (including the civil parishes of Galloon, Drumully, Currin, Killeevan, Aghabog and Ematris) incorporates much of the later barony of Dartree and was sometimes called Dartree parish. Although the later civil parishes were mostly created in the eighteenth century, they had a distinctive earlier existence. Drumully, mentioned in a papal document of 1428, included Currin.[53] Killeevan church had a strong early Christian foundation tradition.

Dufaigh, 'Medieval Monaghan: the evidence of the placenames' in *Clogher Record*, 16 (1999), 19–26 for evidence of Errigle as an early territorial name. **52** McKenna, *Diocese of Clogher*, ii, 195. **53** Ibid., ii, 115

Ematris, created in 1738, was a separate chapel district in the sixteenth century and was recorded as a parish in the mid seventeenth-century Down Survey and Book of Survey and Distribution.[54]

Kilmore & Drumsnat were important early Christian foundations.

Tedavnet was an early church foundation of St Damhnait.

Tehallen. The medieval parish was much bigger than the later small civil parish. In 1306 it included Tullycorbet and Monaghan which evolved from the later medieval lucht tighe lands of MacMahons. In 1428 papal correspondence refers to the rectory of *Teach Calan* (Tehallen) with the vicarage of Lucht tighe[55] which was probably endowed by the lordship as were similar districts in Fermanagh and Cavan. Tullycorbet (which is mentioned as a parish in 1415) had a distinctive earlier pre-parochial existence, as did Rackwallace (later Monaghan).

Donaghmoyne was an early and important church site and a large parish with several medieval church sites.

Ros Cluain. (Magheross, Magheracloone civil parishes). Its subdivision into the two later medieval parishes took place in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Both parishes had many early Christian associations and a number of ecclesiastical sites.

Inniskeen, Iniscaoin Deagha after its founder St Daig, and **Killanny** were parishes on the southern borders of the diocese with small portions in Louth reflecting the remnants of Airgialla expansion in the twelfth century

Muckno comprised three ballybetaghs of termon lands in 1591 on the eastern boundary of the diocese.

Cremorne (Clontibret, Aghnamullen, Ballybay civil parishes). Like Galloon this was a large parish incorporating much of the territory (barony) of Cremorne. It had distinctive sub-districts in Clontibret and Aghnamullen which were formally noted as parishes in 1429 and 1530 respectively. Ballybay was a modern parish created in 1798 to take account of the modern town, similar to Belleek civil parish in the west of the diocese.

In this survey, it is possible to see how the map of civil parishes broadly corresponds with the outline of parochial territories in 1306. An agreement between the bishop of Clogher and Brian MacMahon, king of Airgialla, and his sub-lords in 1297 hints at the context of secular territories in the emerging diocese of Clogher within which the parochial re-organisation was occurring at the time.[56] While a number of changes were made in the later medieval period, mainly subdivisions of very large parishes from the 1306 list, it is also evident that many of these divisions and subdivisions already existed with important early medieval antecedents.

54 E.P. Shirley, *The history of the county of Monaghan* (London, 1879), 564–9. 55 Ó Dufaigh, 'Medieval Monaghan', 11. 56 K.W. Nicholls, 'The register of Clogher' in *Clogher Record*, 7 (1971–72), 413.

PRE-PAROCHIAL TERRITORIES BEFORE RÁITHBREASAIL[57]

Earlier medieval septlands and sub-kingdoms in the south Ulster borderlands suggest linkages with a pre-existing parochial territorialisation. Just as the civil parishes are not precise delineations of the medieval parishes, however, so the baronies are not maps of the actual political geography of medieval Ireland, but are approximate representations of the morphology of medieval territories as they were translated by inquisitions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The territories which emerged from the waxing and waning of the early medieval septs of Airgialla, Uí Cremthainn, Uí Fiachrach, Fir Manach, Uí Méith, Dartraige and Mugdorni were the *túatha* which find echoes in these baronies which were largely in the control of the later medieval septs of Maguires in the kingdom of Lough Erne (Fermanagh) and the MacKennas and MacMahons in Airgialla (Monaghan). The sixteenth-century baronies of Fermanagh had their origin in the seven *túatha* around Lough Erne which were originally carved out by a variety of peoples who were welded together by the Fir Manach in the eleventh century. At the same time the territories of the Uí Méith, Mugdorni and Fir Rois were emerging as the kingdom of Airgialla. From figure 6 it is clear that there was a broad tapestry of *túatha* in the south Ulster region, out of which the diocese of Clogher, and its neighbouring dioceses, were carved by the early thirteenth century. Preliminary analysis would suggest that parochial organisation within these territories reflected secular septlands belonging to various *sliochts*, *clanns* and branches of septs which were translated through the geometry of ballybetaghs in the landscape. The precedents for much of this process of territorial division and control (or territorialisation) can be found in the emerging geographies of the Airgialla and Fir Manach, and before them the Cinéal Cairbre, Cinéal Eoghan, Cinéal Fearadhaigh, Uí Fhearghail, Uí Méith and so on. It appears that these political geographies formed the basis for early pre-parish formations which pre-figured the later medieval parishes. (Fig. 6) Indeed, close examination of the map of baronies and parishes, suggests that in some instances the parishes may in fact reflect the original medieval extent of some of these tuatha territories.

Magheraboy coincides with the early medieval Túatha Rátha, which had been carved out by a Cinéal Cairbre people pushing northwards into south Ulster. The seventeenth-century surveys identified three sub-territories of Magheraboy, Túatha Ratha and Sliocht Redmond within it, which represented early versions of the parish territories of Inishmacsaint, Devenish and Rossorry

57 Based on P. Mulligan, 'Notes on the topography of Fermanagh' in *Clogher Record;* 1 (1954), 24–34; *Inquisitionum in officio rotulorum cancellariae Hiberniae ... Ultoniae*, xxxiv–v. N. O Muraíle, 'The barony names of Fermanagh and Monaghan' in *Clogher Record*, 11 (1984), 387–402; Simms, 'Origins of the diocese of Clogher'; Ó Dufaigh, 'The MacCathmhaoils of Clogher' and 'Medieval Monaghan'; C. Devlin, 'The rise and fall of a dynasty: medieval west Tyrone as reported in the annals' in *Clogher Record*, 16 (1999), 71–85.

Fig. 6: Early pre-parishes of south Ulster

(Lisgool). St Ninnidh was the seventh-century founder of churches in Inis Muigh Samh and at Domhnach Mór in Magh Ene. Magheraboy also extended across to the eastern side of Lough Erne to include Devenish island and a narrow strip of land which later emerged as the civil parish of Trory.

Lurg barony was the territory of Fir Luirg. It was identified with the two 'countries of Lurg and Cooil McKernan' in 1603. Cúil Mhic Thighearnáin was the genesis of the parish of Derryvullan. Cúlmáine parish corresponded with the remainder of Lurg territory. This territory may also have lost a portion of land to the Cenel Eoghain, corresponding to the parish of Kilskeery in the later county of Tyrone.

Knockninny (Cnoc Ninnidh) and Coole (Cúil na nOirear) were territories or countries, equivalent to half baronies in the 1603 commission, lying on either side of upper Lough Erne. Ninnidh was a sixth-century saint founder of a

church in Inis Muigh Samh. The Knockninny territory was absorbed into the lands of Bréifne and the diocese Kilmore in which lies the corresponding parish of Kinawley. Galloon was the parish coinciding with the Coole portion.

Tirkennedy barony contained two countries of Tír Cennfota and Cúil which had early Uí Cremthainn antecedents. These territories show evidence of links with the parishes of Derryvullan (southern portion), Magheracross and Iniskeen (later Enniskillen).

Clankelly corresponds with the territory of Clann Cheallaigh who were another early Uí Cremthain people. By 1603 three sub-territories belonging to Clann Cheallaigh Mac Dhonnchad, Clann MacDomhnaill and Clann MacMaolruanaigh were identified. A portion known as Sliocht Maolruanaigh corresponded with the parish of Clones in 1603. The other territories suggest links with parishes of Galloon and Aghalurcher.

Clanawley is from Clann Amhlaoibh who were connected with the Muinter Pheodachain whose Uí Cremthainn origins can be traced to the seventh century. The boundary of their lands in the medieval period was marked by the Arney river which delineates Cleenish parish and also marks the boundary with Breifne in which the parish of Killesher is located.

Magherastephana, Machaire Stefanach, in the medieval period contained a number of subdivisions which correspond with the parishes of Aghalurcher and Aghavea.[58]

Monaghan and **Trough** baronies originated in early medieval kingdom of the Uí Méith. Tehallan, Tullycorbet, Kilmore, Rackwallace and Tedavnet were early church districts of the Uí Méith in what became the territory of Monaghan which passed to the MacMahons in the twelfth century. Trough was the remnant of a more extensive early *trícha céd* in which the McKennas, Uí Méith descendants, continued through the later medieval period.[59] Donagh and Errigle parishes were ancient subterritories with early ecclesiastical links.

Cremourne, a legacy of the early seventh-century Mugdorni, who with the Fir Rois formed what later became Cremorne and Farney baronies. Críoch Mhughdorn was a large parish territory from the 1306 ecclesiastical taxation until the late sixteenth century which later subdivided. Its subdivision Sliabh Mughdorn, in the medieval period sometimes also called Owenagh, corresponds to the later parish of Aghnamullen, which with the other later parishes seems to coincide with sept branch lands of MacMahons.

Dartree, from the Dartraige people in the eighth century, was a large parish in 1306, but with the later medieval parishes corresponding with distinctive older subdivisions.

Farney, which extended into the midlands in the early medieval period, was called Donaghmoyne in the later medieval period. Originally part of the territory of Cremourne, it was called called Mugdorna Maigen, then Domhnach Maigen.

58 Mulligan, 'Topography of Fermanagh', 31–2. 59 Ó Dufaigh, 'Medieval Monaghan', 12–26.

Clogher (Clochar) contained parishes reflecting lands of Cinéal Fearadhaigh, MacCathmhaoils and septlands of O Neills in the fifteenth century. This was the remnant of a much more extensive territory in the early medieval period,

Before the Synod of Ráithbreasail outlined the first boundaries of a diocese for Clogher, figure 6 shows a set of territories and tuatha, which were remarkably equal in territorial extent, in which pre-parochial districts emerged in tandem with septlands and political allegiances and formed the basis for the parochial structure outlined in 1306. At a broad regional level, during the course of the twelfth century this political geography facilitated the emergence of dioceses which coincided with the kingdoms of Airghialla and the Fir Manach and Breifne. At the local territorial level, proto-parochial districts, sprinkled with early churches, were resolving themselves into subdivisions of tuatha that reflected the developing internal geographies of septlands.

Since the term 'parish' carries with it particular connotations of pastoral care and regulated ministry flowing from the twelfth-century reforms, is it possible to envisage a 'pre-parish' territorial entity existing without the seemingly well-ordered tithe system which characterised the post-reform Church? The arrangement of parishes under episcopal jurisdiction followed in the century after diocesan organisation, taking somewhat different directions in Anglo-Norman and Gaelic Ireland, reflecting the contrasting cultural and economic exigencies of feudal and lineage societies. However, the erection of such parishes did not necessarily mean extensive creation of parochial territories *de novo*. The reform of the parochial structures might more properly be seen as a regularisation of pre-existing territorial entities within the new dioceses. In this sense therefore the medieval parishes which are broadly represented in the civil parish boundaries are likely to have been essentially subdivisions (in some cases) of pre-existing territories into proto-parishes, evolving to deliver pastoral services more effectively and to reflect the income-generating capacity of local septlands. This resembled the process Nicholls refers to for the later thirteenth century rectorial subdivisions in which 'the tribal state or territory was taken to constitute a parish ...'[60] In Ulster, for instance, the seven *túatha* around Lough Erne may be seen as providing the primary territorial structures for the parishes which ultimately emerged.

Large districts with one parish church and additional dependent chapels were referred to as 'plebania' in the medieval records: Derryvullen and Galloon were such parochial territories in Clogher in which the pastor was called 'plebanus'.[61] Katharine Simms has noted that on some occasions this title attached to earlier medieval coarbs as ordained rectors of major parish churches with authority over minor churches in the neighbouring districts.[62] Many of

60 Nicholls, 'Rectory, vicarage and parish', 61–2. 61 McKenna, *Diocese of Clogher*, ii, 188.
62 Simms, 'Frontiers in the Irish Church,' 178

these church or chapel districts subsequently emerged as parishes in the later Middle Ages. It seems clear that the post-reform churches were not conjured up out of thin air but were foreshadowed in earlier secular and proto-parochial units whose existence should be the object of a concerted forensic enquiry by collaborating historians, medievalists, geographers, archaeologists and local historians.

MORPHOLOGY, BOUNDARIES AND RURAL CENTRALITY

Townland geographies are important in reading and understanding many of the processes which went into shaping the Irish landscape, in this case in providing clues to early ecclesiastical settlement. There are more than 62,000 of these units recorded by the Ordnance Survey in the 1830s. Understanding the language of townlands and other small territorial units helps to read the geography of larger units like baronies and parishes. These small units were units of landholding, which laced the countrysides of late medieval – early modern Ireland. They had different nomenclatures in separate lordships, either tates, ballyboes, polls, gneeves, quarters, sessiaghs and so on.[63] As elsewhere in Europe, this parcellation of the landscape formed the basis for landholding in medieval Gaelic and English Ireland – in many cases reaching back to the tribal septlands of pre-Norman Ireland. The medieval septlands or estates of kindred were fragmented into fractions (halves, quarters, sixths, sixteenths) of primary units such as ballybetaghs – a territorialisation which in detail and delineation mirrored local topographical diversity in environmental resources. As Hogan expressed it, the (Anglo-Norman) ploughland of 120 acres of arable in the rich land of Waterford, Tipperary or Limerick could support as much stock as perhaps 1,000 acres of poorer lands in west Mayo or Kerry.[64] This parcellation process probably developed within an initial broader framework of larger units which were progressivly subdivided by streams and other physical landmarks to accommodate increasing population, settlement and land clearance.

The ballybetagh units formed sub-territories of *túatha* within the Gaelic lordships. It is within the territorial hierarchy of *túath* and ballybetagh that the parish embedded itself. There may have been some instability of boundaries and territories, but it is more likely that many of the larger entities survived, with landholders, overlords and perhaps placenames simply changing. Historians tend to attribute the same fluidity and change to landscape territorial structures as to its peoples – a parallel expansion and contraction of places and people. In 1929 Hogan wrote about an 'elaborate territorial demarcation [which] connotes a degree of symmetry in the organisation of early Irish

63 T. McErlean, 'The Irish townland system of landscape organisation' in T. Reeves-Smyth and F. Hammond (eds), *Landscape archaeology of Ireland*, BAR 116 (Oxford, 1983), 315–39. 64 Hogan, 'The tricha cét', 189.

society, which is not easy to reconcile with the political instability commonly attributed to Irish institutions'.[65] In many ways, however, such social change (like changes in sept overlords or colonising immigration) was only possible within a framework of territorial continuity – places remain fixed with societies in flux.

All our ideas of territorial continuities are grounded in the significance of boundaries as natural and socially-produced lines in the landscape. It would be folly to suggest, however, that the precise, definitive lines of the civil parishes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are exact replicas of medieval reality. There is a need to divest ourselves of our modern concern with finely-delineated units, like acres, roods and perches – the grammar of territorial order through which we read the landscape. We must go back to a much more loosely-arranged landscape, marked partly by natural features and partly by ill-defined boundary zones running through grazing land, common lands or wastelands – where landownership or control was ambiguous or non-existent.[66] Maps of the earl of Kildare's lands in the 1670s still contained many commons lying on the boundaries of two or more townlands.[67] This ambiguity was eventually to give way to reclamation or clearance which came with agrarian improvements of the early modern period, when land was mapped and measured more precisely.

Parish shapes and boundaries are associated with a secular landholding structure of septs and lordships of pre-modern Ireland which mirror the lie of the land in lowland, highland and watershed. In early seventeenth-century inquisitions, as the spatial order of septlands is dissolved, the parish geography survives. Boundary descriptions relied on selecting a number of well-known points such as hills close to the boundary line, on the basis that more detailed delineation was well-known at local level. The parish of Clonmany in Donegal, for instance, is described in the following terms in the Civil Survey of 1654

> on ye northside with ye greate river of Strabregg running towards the southeast, with a bogg and a ditch upon the quarter of Carne and the quarter of alto Shane, ... and from thence through the mountaine of Drumkuny, on the south with a brooke running to a bogg called Milliverin and from thence to a mountaine called Abbernelorigg, which boundeth us south west from the parish of Disertnegee, and from thence westward through a gutter and a bogg, to the mountaine of Urbellreaugh, and from thence south-ward into a brooke which runeth into the river of Loghswilly, which boundeth us southward while we come to ye river of Strabregg, where we began our bounds.[68]

65 Ibid., 190. 66 J.H. Andrews, 'The mapping of Ireland's cultural landscape, 1550–1630' in Duffy et al. (eds), *Gaelic Ireland*, 178 talks about the ambiguity of boundaries on many sixteenth-century maps. See also Andrews' *Plantation acres: an historical study of the Irish land surveyor and his maps* (Belfast, 1985), chapter one, for discussion of boundaries and small area measurement. 67 A. Horner, 'Thomas Emerson's Kildare estates surveys 1674–1697' in *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society*, 18 (1996–7), 399–429. 68 R.C. Simington (ed.) *The civil survey: counties*

The parish of Kells in Co Meath is described as follows: '... bounded on the east with the river Rorah on the south with Pepperdstowne, Berfordstowne, Boolis, Scoulockstown, Dandelstowne, Redmore, both Ballanagons and Castlekenan, on the west with Dewleene & Knockleess & on the north with the river Rorah'.[69] An inquisition of 1614 outlines the boundaries of the granges of the abbey of SS Peter and Paul in Armagh in classic pre-cartographic terms:

> The said Granges lie within the following meares and bounds viz: From the ford of Altrapoigy near Carnavanaghan and along a small stream to Laeghtdonogh and along another stream to Bealananarine ford and through a marsh to Bealanaskelgach and thence in a valley through the middle of Altatessy ... and then through the bog beside Knockanroe and Belanabaridy and along a river between Foalee and Sigaghan to a small river running between Foalee and Ballymacnab and so through the middle of a great bog and along a stream through the middle of Altfinogeh and thence through the middle of a marsh as far as Barebane ford.[70]

Similarly an inquistion of 1609 outlined the parish of Magheraculmoney as being 'bounded on the north uppon the half barony of Coolemckernan, and from thence to a great rocke of stoane called Ardshanckie in bawagh on the north west, and from thence to the river of Termonmcgragh, which river is the auncient meere and bound of the said parishe, unto a mountaine called Urliewe on the north east, and on the east it is bounded by Mononvarrowe, and on the south by Lougherne.'[71] The boundaries followed streams, ditches, torrents, passing through the middle of bogs and marshes, over mountains, with particular locations registered by an intricate network of ballyboe and sub-ballyboe names. The parishes are based on this detailed template of townland boundaries, some of which in marginal areas only fully materialised in eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but most of which are of long-standing antiquity.

Though many of these boundaries were frequently more zonal than linear, physical topography made it possible to be precise. Raven's maps of Monaghan in 1634 depicted a townland net quite finely delineated and Bodley's early plantation maps in Ulster, while impressionistic in outline, obviously derive from definitive boundaries based on intricate drainage networks.[72] The stream

of Donegal, Londonderry and Tyrone (Dublin, 1937), 3. **69** R.C. Simington (ed.), *The civil survey: county of Meath* (Dublin, 1940), 279. **70** McGleenon, 'The medieval parishes of Ballymore and Mullabrack', 23–24. **71** *Inquisitionum in officio rotulorum cancellariae Hiberniae ... Ultoniae,* appendix vi Fermanagh. See also P. Mulligan, 'Notes on the topography of Fermanagh' in *Clogher Record*, 1 (1954) for comments on various commissions as sources for Co. Fermanagh. **72** P.J. Duffy, 'Farney in 1634: an examination of Thomas Raven's survey of the Essex estate' in *Clogher Record*, 11 (1983), 245–56: 245 and J.H. Andrews, 'The maps of the escheated counties of Ulster, 1609–10' in *PRIA*, 74C (1974), 133–70. For reproductions of Bodley's maps see M. Swift, *Historical maps of Ireland* (London, 1999), 52–63.

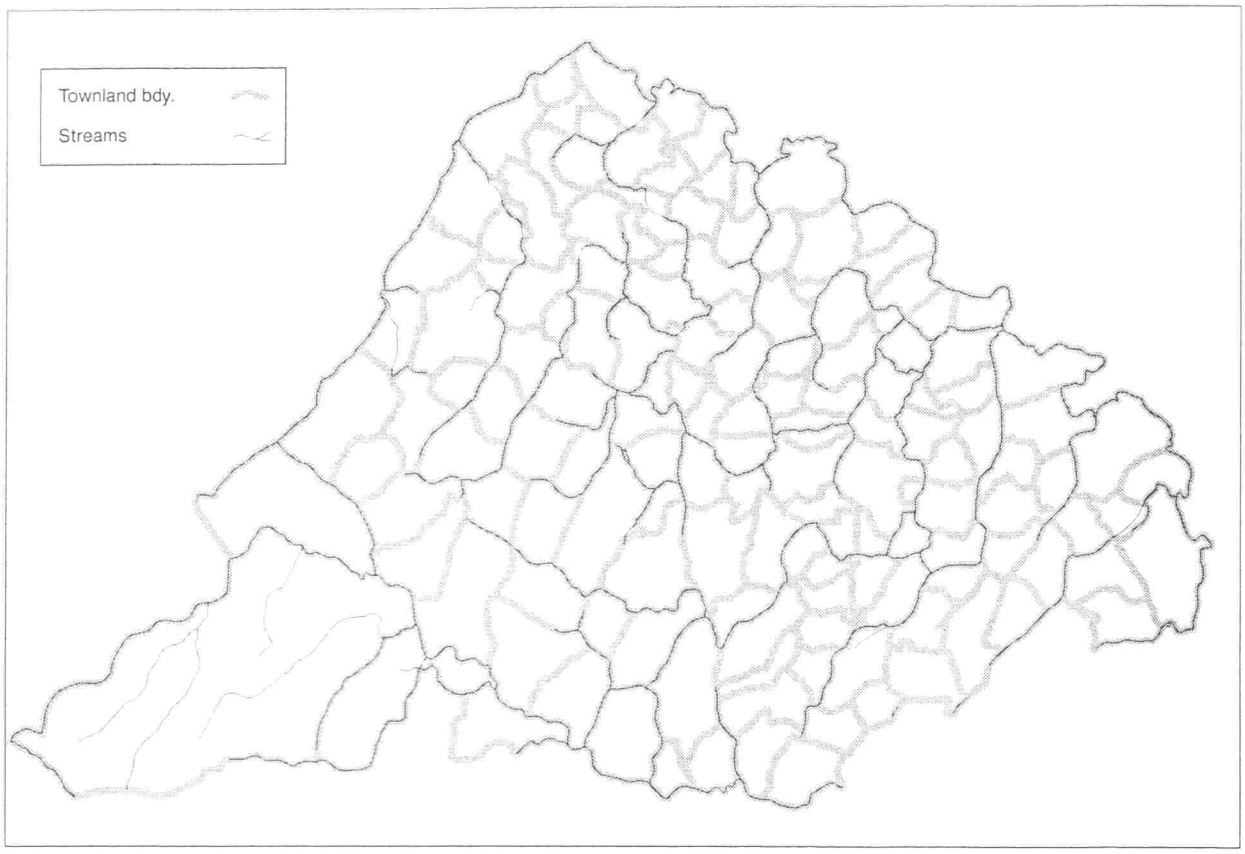

Fig. 7: Townlands of Errigal Truagh parish, Co. Monaghan

network in the Ulster drumlins, for example, afforded a natural template for boundary evolution, where smaller streams echo the townland net and larger streams frequently coincide with ballybetagh or parish boundaries, drumlins forming the core of the small townlands. However, in areas of impeded drainage like south Ulster, boundaries running through marshy low-lying areas, or lakelands as in Fermanagh, were zonal in medieval times. Townlands and parishes in many mountainous parts of the west reflect an upslope-downslope morphology, frequently encompassing a range of land quality from upland to shore, bordered by the template of streams flowing downslope as evidenced on the southern slopes of the Dingle peninsula and in north Mayo. In Kildare and Meath, by contrast, with a much less complex natural drainage network, early socio-economic boundary markers are commemorated in the several names like Blackditch and Blacktrench as boundary townlands. Indeed the more closely-settled and humanised manorial landscapes of the Pale, south Leinster and Munster contained many examples of man-made boundaries: the angularity of townlands in much of Meath and Kildare reflect the presence of early ditch and hedge boundaries.[73] In the late medieval and early modern seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in most parts of the country there was a further layer of

73 Duffy, 'Landscape and place in Co. Meath', 196; P.J. Duffy, 'The territorial identity of county Kildare' forthcoming in T. McGrath and T. O'Keeffe (eds), *Kildare: history and society*.

smaller denominations underneath the townland, many of which survived in local memory into the nineteenth century, but were largely ignored in estate leases and by the first Ordnance Survey maps.

Important boundaries if they are to have significance for the territorial community and future stability need to be marked in some significant way – either by nature or by the community: periodic walking or peregrination supported its memory. Although ecclesiastical boundaries may have been marked by standing stones, burial grounds or crosses, searching for some lasting mark of parish boundaries may be futile since, as has been suggested, parishes were never initiated as independent territorial entities, but developed in tandem with local political and landholding interests supporting the local church. The occupants of ballybetaghs or ballyboes were the clients to whom pastoral care was delivered in return for support for the local and/or mother church and clergy. The parish slotted itself into this landholding–chiefdom–lordship structure. So secular exigencies of landholding or lordship and the wealth or support provided by its population were the important determining influences on geographies of parishes. If and when the secular territorial structures were modified or, as happened with ballybetaghs of Gaelic lordships in the seventeenth century, abandoned, the parishes which had their own ecclesiastical *raison d'être* would endure: the tithe revenues ensured such was the case.

Churches, whether of wood or stone, were among the first significant central places in the Irish landscape – more so than the castles or the houses of lords. In pre-Norman Ireland or later medieval Gaelic Ireland, where towns were largely absent, parish churches possessed what might be characterised as rural centrality – either in larger ecclesiastical settlements, or local churches with burial grounds. Burial grounds, which from the eighth and ninth centuries became mandatory for Christian inhumation, in particular gave parishes and pre-parishes lasting significance more or less as central places for local districts. 'Historically parish centres were powerful settlement foci and community anchors,' says Smyth, who has highlighted the endurance of the centralising function of parish centres after the Reformation in Dublin, Kilkenny and Tipperary counties.[74] Parish centres were also occasional meeting places, often revered sites, places of sanctuary, frequently marking earlier pre-Christian sites. If pastoral care was rudimentary in Gaelic and pre-Norman Ireland, or occasional in its delivery (as with baptism and burial), and Mass-going not a weekly requirement as in the post-Tridentine church, this may have some bearing on parish size and accessibility and may help to explain the large parish territories and subsequent subdivision in some places. The petition of the parish of Ferceall to Rome *c.*1400 complaining about accessibility to their church at eight miles distant, especially during winter rains and times of war,

74 Smyth, 'Property, patronage and population', 126; Smyth, 'Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century county Dublin', 153–8.

resulted in it being elevated to parish status (with font and fenced burial ground) above its surbordinate local churches.[75] During the upheavals of the Tudor period – and periodic disturbances in earlier centuries – parish life and pastoral services were severely disrupted and churches in many places were ruined and abandoned.[76] Do references to the collapse of the parish system[77] mean that the system of pastoral care by properly appointed priests, tithe collection and church repair had failed? The idea of the parish, in contrast to its buildings and possessions, was virtually indestructible: its burial grounds, sites and boundaries were indelible in the landscape and embedded in local memory.

75 FitzPatrick and O'Brien, *The medieval churches of county Offaly*, 123. 76 See Andrews, 'Mapping Ireland's cultural landscape' on roofless ruins, though Andrews also considers that this may have been a stylistic convention by surveyors. 77 FitzPatrick and O'Brien, *Medieval churches of Offaly*, xiv. See also Smyth, 'Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century county Dublin', 153–8 for references to the survival of Catholic pastoral care in Dublin in the first half of the seventeenth century.