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Surveys, Maps and the Study of Rural Settlement Development

Patrick O'Flanagan

It is clear that in spite of advances in various techniques of identification, analysis and interpretation, both in the field and in the laboratory, we are not any nearer in our efforts to solve some of the major problems of Irish settlement studies. The ring-fort has remained one of the hardest nuts to crack. A considerable array of questions touching ring-forts requires concise answers. Among these problems are the explanation of their distribution and diffusion, the identification and analysis of regional differences in their morphology, the economy of those responsible for their construction and occupation, the relationship (if any) between ring-forts and other contemporary 'forms' of settlement — and these other 'forms' of settlement have yet to be unmistakably recognised. There is also the question of establishing the processes which were responsible for the abandonment of the ring-fort and its replacement by other 'forms' of settlement. Finally, there are the problems of whether ring-forts can be regarded as an isolated or nucleated type of rural settlement and of significance can be attached to them as expressions of the prevailing socio-economic organisation of society.

This paper is not a direct attempt to solve any of these questions, many of which require considerable additional sustained research, but rather its purpose is to sound a note of caution concerning some of the basic premises upon which solutions to some of these problems have been sought in the past. To arrive at any deductions the evidence available must be as comprehensive and complete as possible; in the case of ring-forts the corollary is that date and distribution data should be considerable. Regrettably, this is seldom the case, as the traditional sources for building up such a 'total' picture are invariably seriously inadequate with the obvious repercussions for the findings of the research.

A combination of field survey and careful scrutiny of the 6 inch map (1:63,560), supplemented by information from air-photographs (where available), Ordnance Survey Letters and Name Books and any seminal local topographical accounts, constitutes the basis of any real survey of settlement. The intention of this paper is to demonstrate that reliance on these sources is simply not adequate, especially where extra vital information is available, particularly when the central direction of the research is to build up a picture of sequent occupation in any area.

The 6 inch map was basically designed to fulfil land-registry requirements. Such maps also selectively depict the disposition of a range of critical elements in the cultural landscape, particularly field-size and shape, townlands and their location

in relation to settlements, roads, railways and canals and major physical elements such as hills, slopes and water masses. Demesnes, parklands, fox-coverts, woods, plantations and areas occupied by bog and wet ground are the leading biotic elements portrayed. Antiquities are also shown selectively since the early surveyors' categorisation of what exactly constitutes an antiquity is diffuse and not satisfactory. Their inclusion is not obviously related to the primary purpose of such maps and their depiction in some cases may be simply due to the fact that they serve as convenient points of reference.

There is also the question of map edition; the first edition generally shows more antiquities than later editions — particularly those of this century: there was after all no twentieth-century O'Donovan! The reduction in the number of antiquities shown is notably marked in those areas where landlord control on landscape modification was strong and in areas which notched up massive population increase during the nineteenth-century. Both resulted in the intensification of land use and the subsequent obliteration of field remains. The process of the dismemberment of one system of land-holding and its replacement by another later on in the same century brought about a similar outcome. Additional confusion is apparent when later editions show antiquities not included in earlier ones. This, however, is not a frequent occurrence. The surveyors responsible for later editions of the maps were more anxious to include the results of the processes mentioned above than to portray ploughed-out or even extant antiquities. On these grounds, as well as the selectivity element, the 6-inch map in whatever edition cannot be regarded as providing a secure basis for retrogressively reconstructing the pre-Ordnance Survey settlement pattern of any area. Furthermore, the same reservations also apply to other smaller scale maps, most especially to the 25 inch (1:2,500) maps the first editions of which appeared later than the 6 inch map and for certain parts of the country revisions were based on subsequent editions of the 6 inch map (Andrews, 1974).

Some of the leading questions concerning the evolution of rural settlement in Ireland centre upon the ring-fort and the farm clusters sometimes labelled *clachans* (Buchanan, 1970). The extensive literature on the subject is notorious for its dissension and disagreement (Barrett and Graham, 1976). Ring-forts were also constructed and in use for a very considerable length of time, at least for a thousand years, but the evidence is stridently elusive regarding when they were first built and when they ceased to be used. Some appear to have been occupied as late as the eighteenth century, most likely as secondary or much later occupation. Moreover, it appears that paradoxically some ring-forts were never occupied or inhabited and therefore must have performed more than domestic functions. The settlement pattern of rural Ireland as depicted upon the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps, consisting, as it did, of a mosaic of farm clusters or a scattered habitat of isolated dwellings, has been regarded by some as the unilineal descendant of the

ring-fort. The relationship between these two forms of land occupation, symbolised by their respective settlement forms, has been based on flimsy evidence and is not justifiable or sustainable except as a working hypothesis. These kinds of uncertainties have deterred most geographers, amongst others in the past decade, from attempting to pursue the reconstruction of the settlement geography in any area from the medieval period to the present day. It is indeed curious that most of the studies undertaken in this field have clung tenaciously to landscape evidence alone in spite of there being rich and diverse archival material available. In this regard, paradoxical as it may seem, we appear to have (with some exceptions) a clearer picture of early Christian and nineteenth-century settlement patterns than of those of the extended intervening period.

Estate maps have been given far less attention than they merit in grappling with some of the intricacies of the development of rural settlement in Ireland. There are, of course, several obvious reasons for such neglect. Only certain areas of the country were mapped in this way and the best endowed areas were mapped most accurately and most frequently. The quality of such maps varies enormously in regard to accuracy; early land surveyors, like those attached to the Ordnance Survey were selective in what they included. For example, the surveyor often excluded '. . . anything that was not of immediate interest to his customers' (Andrews, 1969). It is important to remember that only the surveyors who have a known and proven reputation for accuracy to detail are worthy of our serious attention when we attempt to reconstruct the minutiae of landscape change and formal landscape design. It is curious to recall that some eighteenth-century land-surveyors should include ring-forts in their townland surveys when as against cabins and other types of settlement, ring-forts seem to have had no economic significance.

Only some large landowners in Ireland were able to afford the services of a major land surveyor. The Duke of Devonshire was one of these and he commissioned Bernard Scalé to make a survey of his Waterford and East Cork estates during the years 1774-5 (National Library of Ireland, MSS 7216-7218). This survey on a townland basis shows all the inhabited settlements, the field boundaries and roads and depicts accurately all the 'Danish forts' — a contemporary term for ring-forts. An accompanying memoir yields details of land-use, land-holding and field size. The Danish forts are the only relict feature included apart from 'ruined' castles, churches and lime-kilns. Rivers, streams, bogs, marshes, and woods are the only topographic elements recorded.

A further dimension is added to this paper by also incorporating an earlier survey of 1616-17 of part of the same estate, but concerned only with the lands south of the Bride. This survey was expedited by Josias Bateman, a tenant of the estate, resident in the town of Tallow, (N.L.I. MSS 6148-49). Bateman's survey was executed with the same objectives as that of Scalé. Once again there is a separate map for each holding, covering usually an entire townland but sometimes several townlands, as well as an additional memoir providing data on land tenure and

rent. It also shows 'Danes' forts'.

Scalé's survey clearly depicts the shape and size of each ring-fort whether square, round or otherwise. Bateman shows them only with a symbol and regrettably this symbol is similar to the one being used for lime-kilns. Scalé also shows several 'ancient fortifications', notably a bartizan in the townland of Garybrittas close to Lismore and several very early roads.

A tabular comparison on a townland basis of the incidence or non-occurrence of ring-forts in both of these surveys, as well as the first edition sheets of the Ordnance Survey maps and the early twentieth-century revisions of these maps will, it is hoped, indicate a salutary message concerning the dangers of relying slavishly upon the first edition of the Ordnance Survey to construct a 'total' picture of settlement development within an area.

The areas covered by the two surveys while not always coincident are quite

RINGFORTS NUMBER PER TOWNLAND

Area No.	*No. of townlands*	*No. on Bateman*	*No. on Scalé*	*No. 1st Edition of O.S.*	*No. 2nd Edition of O.S. (1937)*
1	17	2(2 townlands only)	4 on 2 townlands	1 on 1 townland	None
2	41	Not shown	6 on 3 townlands	6 on 2 townlands	None
3	78	5 on 3 townlands	Not shown	2 on 2 townlands	2 on 2 townlands
4	10	10 on 4 townlands	9 on 6 townlands	10 on 5 townlands	4 on 4 townlands
5	24	29 on 12 townlands	54 on 19 townlands	23 on 12 townlands	14 on 7 townlands
Total	170	46 on 21	73 on 30	42 on 22	20 on 13 townlands

Area 1 includes a handful of townlands on both sides of the River Bride focused upon the former medieval manors of Tallow and Lisfinny, Co. Waterford.

Area 2 covers the valley sides of the River Blackwater from Macollop to Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, and also comprises an area between the Blackwater and the Bride south of a line between Lismore and Cappoquin.

Area 3 is the largest area and comprises the modern parishes of Templemichael, Kilcoken and Kilwatermoy in south-west Co. Waterford.

Area 4 covers Curriglass and Mogeely and the lower lands on both sides of the River Bride in the barony of Kinatalloon.

Area 5 covers lands in the barony of Kinatalloon, Co. Cork, stretching as far as Clonmult to the south and Aghern to the east. The river Bride is the northern limit.

diverse. The leading topographic elements are reflected clearly in the selected area; these include the valley bottoms of the Bride and Blackwater and their adjacent lowlands, the middlelands from 30 to 300 feet south of the Bride and finally the remnants of the South Irish peneplain north of the Blackwater.

It is quite clear from the table that overall there is a considerable and sometimes very considerable disappearance in the representation of ring-forts from 1774 to 1841, that is, from Scalé's survey to the appearance of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map. The disappearance is markedly more noticeable in some areas and less so in others over the same time period and even more so in the 1937 edition of the Ordnance Survey maps. In the areas where the incidence of ring-forts is light, notably in areas 1 to 4, the decrease is slight in area 1 while there is relatively little change in area 4. In area 2 there is a net gain of one fort but a loss of one townland recording incidence. As there are so few townlands with ring-forts in the first 4 zones, little by way of inference can be drawn from these facts.

In area 5, however, there is a net decrease of thirty-one ring-forts, more than half the total, but only a decrease of 7 townlands which record no ring-forts thus indicating that the general pattern seems to have remained static while significant variations in density occur. These are of extreme importance as far as any local or regional perspective is concerned. Extending the analysis to the 1937 edition, we find that there is a 75% loss of ring-forts and almost a 66% loss of townlands. This situation is most likely the result of farming intensification leading to destruction. The disappearances attributable to the earlier period i.e. 1840 cannot solely be due to the same process; it is more than likely that some ring-forts were not included by the surveyor. Overall, however, there is a total loss of some 50% of recorded sites between 1744 and 1841.

The earlier 1716-17 survey of Bateman is obviously less reliable than that of Scalé; nevertheless, it shows in area 5, six ring-forts more than the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps and in the other zones the tally is the same although the comparison is not entirely valid as not all areas correspond. Thus, the Bateman survey, cruder, less accurate and less complete as it is, cannot be entirely disregarded.

The evidence from the 25 inch maps (1:2500) can be disregarded as these were only published for this area in the twentieth century, being drawn down from existing 6 inch maps.

On the basis of the above rudimentary analysis can general conclusions be drawn? The answer is clearly affirmative. Scalé's maps can be regarded as accurate in representing the distribution of ring-forts in 1774; this indeed is hardly the total picture and they demonstrate that in the lower Bride and Blackwater valleys of counties Cork and Waterford, the first edition 6 inch scale Ordnance Survey maps do not at all depict a clear pattern of total ring-fort settlement when as many as 50% of those shown by Scalé in one area are not shown on the Ordnance Survey maps. Quite apart from the question of the date of these kinds of 'settlements', the implications of the above argument are clear: many local and regional studies of ring-fort incidence based on O.S. map evidence alone are not valid.

How representative is Lismore in this aspect? These river valleys and adjacent lowlands were deeply affected by the Munster plantations and witnessed the early emergence in the area of one of the great estates in Ireland. From the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, estate management varied considerably. From early on the townland was the basic landholding unit and most attention was directed towards improvement and this may have indeed led to the destruction of even more ring-forts. Most of the improvements were however directed towards reclaiming the valley bottoms, hillsides and uplands, areas where ring-forts are conspicuously absent, thus strengthening the view that Scalé's representation is generally authentic. It could be argued, therefore, that the picture for the Lismore area is broadly comparable with that in other parts of Ireland where great estates developed early and only more research into such zones can confirm the thrust of this essay.

Given these facts, can anything be stated concerning the chronology of settlement in this zone in the last 1000 years? The answer to this question must be tentative. If the ring-forts are accepted as early, then it seems that middlelands particularly on the south of the Bride were first occupied and settled, with one exception, namely, the entire area between Youghal and the confluence of the Bride with the Blackwater which is shown by Bateman and the first edition of the Ordnance Survey as being empty of ring-fort settlement. The early church sites and the Anglo-Norman and Geraldine castles and tower-houses were generally built in the valley bottoms or the not extensive upland areas, for example, Lismore and Tallow, or in the middleland generally south of the Bride. Ballyknock, a townland in area no. 5 shows a cabin in the middle of a ring-fort which appears to have been occupied in 1774. The apparent absence of ring-forts on the middlelands south and east of Lismore is a strange anomaly not easily explained, while the lands north of the Blackwater were not opened up for permanent settlement until the population explosion beginning towards the end of the eighteenth century. The increase in population south of the Blackwater is marked by reclaiming the lowlands and the uplands, a process which still remains to be completed satisfactorily.

One last question also requires attention. Do the ring-forts clearly represent relict features in the eighteenth-century landscape as depicted on the two surveys? One method of confirming this is to establish how incongruous ring-forts were to other functional elements in the landscape, such as townland and field boundaries and the organisation of settlements and roads in the area. This is no easy task. The Bateman survey can be disregarded here as it does not depict field boundaries.

Generally, the majority of the ring-forts are isolated from roads though a half-dozen of them are linked to main roads by smaller paths or trackways. The majority of ring-forts are sited in areas where large fields predominate, areas which were not fully enclosed by 1774. They are rarely located adjacent to small plots or fields

indicating a strong continuity between this kind of settlement and the development of townland-based farm clusters. The evidence is confusing regarding settlements: ring-forts are not always beside clusters or large farmhouses. Finally, ring-forts only in a few instances are bisected by field boundaries, are often parts of townland boundaries or act as boundaries between different fields, thus indicating that they may have retained a symbolic function at least.

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The Early Irish Churches: Some Aspects of Organisation

Donnchadh Ó Corráin

Professor O'Kelly's exemplary excavations at Beginish and Church Island are of central importance to the historian as well as to the archaeologist (O'Kelly, 1956; 1958). Here he has laid bare with the techniques of the archaeologist the historical growth and development of an early Irish church and, if I am not mistaken, he has thrown a great deal of light on the economy of what is very probably its associated out-farm on Beginish. It is, therefore, with great pleasure that I offer him this attempt at a general survey of the typology and development of the early Irish church and, as we shall see, his discoveries fit neatly into one of the categories recorded in the early literature.

The church establishment of the eighth and ninth centuries and before was rich, comfortable and powerful. By now, clerical and lay society had become so intermeshed that any attempt to distinguish the traditional categories of church and state does some violence to the evidence. The self-confidence, not to say arrogance, of the churches is evident from a number of documents. The prologue to the Félire of Ōengus, written about 800, far from being revolutionary or reformist, gives full voice to the Christian triumphalism of the establishment — an attitude perhaps already foreshadowed in Muirchú's work on St Patrick. Significantly, Ōengus's basic metaphor is the kingship of the christian saints, seen here of course as the representatives of their earthly foundations, the great churches and monastic federations (*paruchiae*) of his contemporaries. His is the exultant voice of a powerful and influential church rather than the expression of simple joy at the passing of heathenism (Stokes, 1905, 23-7). It is notable that Ōengus refers not to what historians have considered to be the spiritual power-houses of the *céili Dé* (or culdees) to whom he had traditionally been supposed to belong, but to the church in general and to the older, richer and more powerful establishments. Nor is Ōengus alone in his attitudes.

When we turn to examine the role of the church in society at large and especially in its upper echelons, we see good reason for the triumphalism of Ōengus and his peers. Already, Armagh and the Uí Néill kings were working in tandem, each it would seem content to boost the pretensions of the other. In Leinster, the monastic town of Kildare can quite properly be regarded as a dynastic capital in the ninth century, though of course its connections with the Uí Dúnlainge dynasty which was to dominate Leinster — if we can trust the record — were initimate even in the seventh century, when Cogitosus, the biographer of the foundress, describes