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Contents

The people of Kells: Tracing 5000 years of settlement in the Blackwater landscape, Co. Meath

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The construction of the Navan to Kells section of the M3 motorway revealed a wealth of prehistoric archaeological sites. The prehistory of the wider landscape is well documented and includes some of the most significant and spectacular prehistoric sites in Ireland like *Brú na Bóinne* and Loughcrew. Until the recent advanced archaeological works for the M3 comparatively little was known of the prehistory of the Blackwater landscape in the present day hinterlands of Kells.

The earliest evidence for occupation in this area dates back to the centuries preceding 4000 BC when a small campsite was established on a raised gravel ridge overlooking the River Blackwater, just north of Kells (site Cakestown Glebe 2). A hearth, a few other small features and a butt-trimmed flake (knife) were all that remained of this site.

Following this the 'Neolithic Revolution' saw major changes to the landscape as farming communities moved in, cleared woodlands and built permanent farmsteads. At least eight Early Neolithic houses (Plate 1) with associated structures, features and artefacts (mainly pottery) were found here, all within 3 km of each other just south of present-day Kells. As the Neolithic progressed the population expansion witnessed in the Early Neolithic was checked—whether for socio-economic reasons or environmental constraints—and the Middle Neolithic saw only sporadic activity in this landscape and comprised only a few isolated pits and occasional finds of the period such as hollow scrapers. This was, however, the period which saw the construction of the passage tomb complexes at Loughcrew and *Brú na Bóinne*, so perhaps the people of this region were drawn to these 'centralised' areas.

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Plate 1: Neolithic House at Town Parks 5 during excavation (photo: Hawkeye)

The Late Neolithic (*c.* 2800 BC) saw a re-emergence of significant activity in this landscape dominated by the Timber Circle complex at Kilmainham (Plate 2). This was a place of ceremony and celebration for the wider community of the region during this period. Unfortunately we have little evidence of contemporary domestic settlements—with the exception of one site on this scheme at Phoenixtown—however the distinctive Grooved Ware pottery dating to this period was found on more than one site.

Plate 2: Timber circle at Kilmainham 3 (photo: Hawkeye)

The subsequent millennium saw a steady increase in population as the centuries progressed, evident not just by an increased body of archaeological material and settlement but also in the environmental data for this area, which had clear signals of increasingly intensive woodland clearance. In the Chalcolithic (Beaker) to Early Bronze Age period the evidence for settlement (houses) is fragmentary—with the exception of a well-defined Beaker building at Kilmainham. By the Middle Bronze Age, however, people were building large, imposing roundhouses—like those discovered at Grange, Kilmainham and Phoenixtown (Plate 3). The site at Grange also included a large barrow which was in use through the Middle–Late Bronze Age. There is also clear archaeological evidence of land management in the form of field boundaries around the Bronze Age settlements. Like the preceding periods plenty of domestic material was recovered (mainly pottery and stone/lithic objects). Numerous burnt mounds were also discovered along this stretch of the motorway, the majority of which were in use during the Bronze Age.

In stark contrast to the Bronze Age, there was a relative paucity of settlement evidence in this region in the Iron Age, especially from the eight to the first centuries BC. By the early first millennia AD there is evidence of an increase in activity in the Kells area, characterised by burial, cereal processing and metalworking industries. This included a concentration of cereal drying kilns in the Kilmainham and Grange areas, and interestingly a possible sanctuary enclosure—an obvious influence of the Roman world—also at Kilmainham. This all suggests that there was a core Late Iron Age settlement in the area. This could have been at Kells, prior to the establishment of the monastery here in the 9th century AD.

Plate 3: Bronze Age house at Phoenixtown 3 (photo: Ed Lyne)

'Stories from far and wide': the contribution of environmental archaeology to people - environment interaction. Environmental Archaeology and Hinterland studies: an example from Russia.

Michael Monk[1]

Environmental remains of plants, insects and bones found on archaeological sites, whether they were brought their intentionally by past people for use/consumption or inadvertently, are largely present because of human actions. Studying these remains provide insights into those activities, the interaction between past people and their environment as well as the impact of this interaction.

Hinterland studies and environmental archaeology

In recent times archaeologists have increasingly focused on interaction between early urban sites like Middle Saxon Southampton and their hinterlands. The role of environmental archaeology has come to the fore in this research.

This approach has been alluded to in reports on urban excavations from Ireland, (e.g. Geraghty 1996; Tierney and Hannon 1997; McClatchie 2003). While there has long been an awareness that urban settlements grow out of and into the countryside around them, environmental research aside, the primary focus of archaeologists has been the trade connections of these sites. My contention is that there is need for a specific holistic (cultural/environmental) hinterland approach from the outset and that this will bring unity of purpose for studies of all excavated materials.

There is already much excavated evidence from within and without these early urban places – including Limerick – that could provide the basis for developing a hinterland frame of reference to orientate future developer-led excavations.

To illustrate the crucial contribution of environmental archaeology to hinterland studies this paper will outline the results of a multi-institutional project the author was involved with in the late 90s and early 2000s in Novgorod Russia (Monk, Johnston and Reilly 2012).

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Novgorod and the environmental archaeological project

Novgorod lies *c*. 160 miles south of St. Petersburg on the river Volkhov, which flows from Lake Ilmen into Lake Ladodga and hence into the Baltic. The city developed from a trading settlement in the mid-10th century AD and it, with Kiev to the south, was formative in the beginnings of the state of the Rus.

The Rus were an amalgam of pre-existing Slavic peoples and Scandinavians (known as Varangians) who came south along the river systems in the 9th century to trade/raid their way to Constantinople for silver. Tradition has it that Novgorod was founded *c*. 862 but to date excavations have not produced any pre-10th century evidence (Thompson 1967; Brisbane, Makarov and Nosov 2012).

Novgorod is particularly well-known for its archaeological preservation and the longevity of excavations*.* There are 200 hectares of waterlogged deposits up to 7 metres deep under the present city and seasonal excavations have run from 1932 to the present (pausing during World War II). The excavation method involved digging in 20cm spits and planning within a 2m grid. Stratification was noted but not excavated in sequence.

The aims of Russian archaeologists excavating in Novgorod over the years have been to unearth the layout and key features of the Medieval city; roads, property boundaries and buildings and changes of these features through time. Another key aim has also been to date and discover life-ways of the city's inhabitants via artefact assemblages (including birch bark documents in Cyrillic script) and dendrochronological dating.

The Environmental Study

Only limited environmental archaeological work had been carried out prior to the 1990s (Hellqvist and Lemdahl 1999). The partner institutions in this project were University College Cork, Institute of Archaeology University College London, Keil University, Bournemouth University along with Institute of Archaeology, Moscow, The Institute of Material Culture St. Petersburg, Novgorod State Museum and Moscow State University (Brisbane 2001).

The primary focus of our environmental project was the on-going excavations at Troisky (Trinity) End in the southwest corner of the old city and particularly Site XI. Samples were

taken from defined context complexes, both within and outside the identified buildings; within cavity walls, from thresholds and oven rake out debris. Samples were also taken from defined external locations; in yard areas, along fence lines and road sides.

Three to six litre samples were water sieved, with one to two litres set aside for micro-sieving (and paraffin flotation) and scanning microscopically for plant remains/insects (Monk and Johnston 2001).

Results – Cultural Plants
Overall cereal remains were few, though there were some charred collections of mostly barley (*Hordeum* sp) but also rye (*Secale cereale*) with, interestingly, some waterlogged 'chaff' of wheat (emmer -*Triticum dicoccum*) and oats (*Avena sativa*). These remains were from crop processing and probably represented remains of fodder (Monk and Johnston 2001; 2014).

A similar range of cereal remains were identified from three sites in the immediate hinterland southwest of Novgorod but these would have only have been contemporary with the earliest phase of occupation at Novgorod (Kiryanov 1959; 1967; Alsleben 2001; 2012).

The most frequently found cultural plant remains in the samples were seeds and husks of millet- *Panicum miliaceum.* It is curious that there are no references to millet in the birch bark documents of the time. All the other cereals are mentioned, usually in terms of tribute or rent. It is possible that millet was a key source of nutrition but that it had no status in terms of meeting payment obligations (Rybina 2001).

Fruit stones and nut fragments of mostly gathered plants identified from the samples included sour cherry stones, wild apple pips and hazel nuts. These plants would have mostly grown in around the margins of deciduous woodland a few kilometers to the southwest of the city in the Poozerie district, which had well-drained alluvial soils. In addition, nutlet fragments of Hops *(Humulus lupulus)* and Hemp (*Cannabis sativa*), of the Cannabaceae family, that would have also grown in deciduous woodland to the south, were found in the samples. It is not clear whether the hops represented the remains of brewing waste. The fragments of Cannabis nutlets could indicate oil extraction for use in cooking, since there are well-attested references for cooking with the oil (Smith and Christian 1984). There were also bilberry (*Vaccinium* sp.)

seeds from berries that would have been gathered from heath-land a few kilometers to the north of Novgorod.

Evidence for plants indicative of the local plant environment

Seeds from a range of plants indicative of disturbed ground and cultivation were identified in the samples, including Hemp nettle (*Galeopsis tetrahit*), Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*) and members of the Caryophyllaceae, Polygonaceae and Chenopodiaceae families. The most common examples of the Caryophyllaceae family were Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) and cf Nottingham Catchfly (cf *Silene nutans*).

However, the most frequent seeds in the samples were from damp-land plants, in particular those preferring standing water like ponds and stagnant areas along stream edges. Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Spike Rush *(Eleocharis palustris)* and Celery-leaved crowfoot (*Ranunculus scleratus*). Also included in this group were meadowland species, especially common Meadow Rue, *Thalictrum flavum* (Monk and Johnston 2001; 2014).

Natural water meadows in the immediate locality arose around the margins of the river Volkov during early Spring when the snow melts. Hay from this vigorous re-growth was cut in June/July and used to over-winter the animals (especially cattle) when the ground can be covered with snow and ice.

The plant-based evidence suggests that a large proportion of organic deposits in Novgorod were residues from saved hay or byre waste. The latter interpretation was confirmed by insect studies which identified a high incidence of beetle species found in foul decomposing matter and animal dung, including *Carpelimus bilineatus* and *Trox scabe*. These were found in samples from both inside and outside buildings, indicating mixing of debris when occupants levelled-up the site for rebuilding (Reilly 2012).

Evidence from the lower strata on sites IX and X indicated that there was cross-ploughing upslope of the site. Downslope meadows were identified from the roots of typical meadow grasses; Crested Dog's-tail, Meadow Oat grass and Cocksfoot (Aleksandrovskaya *et al*., 2001).

The majority of animal remains from Troisky were identified as cattle (64%) followed by pig (20%) and sheep/goat (9%). Domesticates made up 99% of the collection, with horse, cat and dog represented (Maltby and Hamilton-Dyer 2001; Maltby 2012). However, the archaeozoologists noted that a systematic sampling and sieving programme would have recovered far more bones of small mammals and of fish. Both cattle and pigs were raised in the immediate hinterland of the city as indicated from the plant remains and insect study.

Conclusion

Despite the historical and archaeological evidence that Novgorod was a major political and trading centre from its inception, with jurisdiction over a huge region and trading contacts with distant places in every direction, the environmental evidence studied so far overwhelmingly indicates subsistence dependent on its immediate hinterland. The environmental analyses of samples taken from the Troisky sites excavated in Novgorod between 1994 and 2003 demonstrate the importance of the immediate hinterland of the medieval city. Novgorod grew out of, and was sustained by the agriculture of the surrounding countryside.

It has only been possible to come to this conclusion by taking a hinterland approach from the inception of the project and, as part of this, recognising the fundamental contribution of environmental archaeology in contributing to a project framed in this way.

This is not the end of the story of Novgorod as excavations continue and many research questions remain to be answered, especially from the environmental evidence. At the very least the results of our work have provided a foundation on which to build this area of research.

Hambleton, Jon Hather, Martin Comey and particularly our archaeobotanical colleague from Keil, Almuth Alsleben.

The project would not have been possible without the funding application abilities and people co-ordinating skill of Mark Brisbane who facilitated and encouraged us every step of the way.

We also very much appreciate the generosity and interest of our Russian colleagues – especially Evegenij Nosov, Peter Gaidukov, the late Alexander Khoroshev, Lyuba Smirnova, Valentin Yanin, Gena Dubrovin, Misha Petrov, Elena Rybina and Sasha Sorokin.

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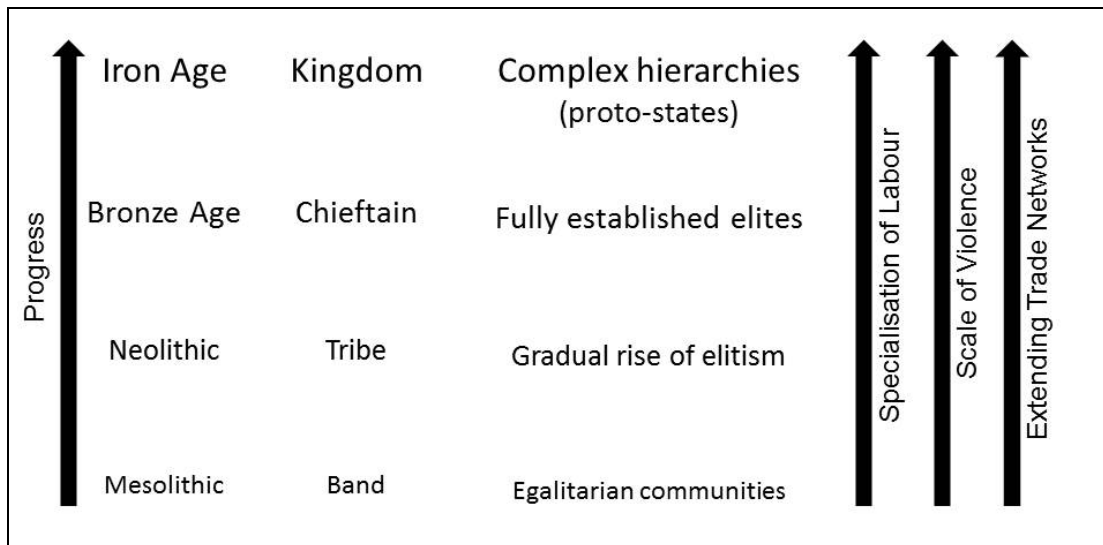**It's all gone Pear Shaped. Urbanism, active resistance and the early settlement pattern of Ireland**
Stuart Rathbone[1]

The idea of social evolution, of a progression from simple unstratified societies to complex hierarchical societies, under writes much of our current understanding of Irish prehistory. The succession of archaeological periods from the Mesolithic through to the Iron Age is often portrayed as involving a gradual increase in group size, complexity and centralisation of power, closely following the evolutionary models produced by the likes of Gordon Childe and Elman Service (Pluciennik 2005, 70–6). The appearance of new types of political elites is repeatedly invoked to explain changes at key points in the archaeological record. Other unilinear processes that are regularly mentioned include specialisation of labour, scales of violence, expansion of trade networks and developments towards market economies (Figure 1). Models used to investigate settlement patterns are also hierarchical in nature, such as Central Place Theory, and the idea that settlements may transform over time from farms and hamlets, to villages and eventually into towns or cities.

These social evolutionary models do not necessarily fit neatly with the newly abundant archaeological data. Whilst researching the Bronze Age settlement pattern, specifically in response to questions raised by the identification of small numbers of possible Bronze Age village sites, the author became curious about different approaches that move beyond these perspectives (Rathbone 2013). Anthropologists have had a long standing interest in anarchic societies, those without state or government and which are not organised hierarchically, and aspects of that work seemed to be of potential use.

Figure 1: Examples of progressive and evolutionary models of social development prevalent in archaeological and anthropological discussions.

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Elie Reclus was an early pioneer in this area and is unique in having been an active anarchist revolutionary during the late 19th century, before distancing himself from politics to concentrate on his anthropological work (Reclus 1903; Morris 2005, 1–2). In the first half of the 20th century a slew of anthropologists examined societies that functioned without governments and most of these authors exhibited no particular interest in or sympathy with political anarchism (Mauss 1925; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Fortes 1945; Geddes 1957; Dole 1966). Later in the 20th century two authors with obvious affinities for political anarchism greatly developed this area of research, Pierre Clastres and Harold Barclay (Clastres 1977; 2010; Barclay 1982; 1989; 1997). More recently David Graeber, Brian Morris and Charles Macdonald have all made important contributions (Graeber 2004; Morris 2005; Macdonald 2009). Combining this work it is possible to identify a general model of stateless non-hierarchical social organisation which might be widely applicable to hunter-gatherer, horticultural and early agricultural societies.

This anarchic model posits limited leadership roles where a nominated or hereditary leader is beholden to the group and must lead through consensus (Barclay 1982). Such a leader has no measure of political power and may live permanently indebted to the group in return for gaining certain privileges and some increase in status (Clastres 1977, 29–47). Limited leaders are unable to enforce their own will on the group and essentially act as spokespersons for collective decisions. As Geddes said in regards to the Dyaks of Borneo, "the nominal headman leads only when the people agree to be led" (Geddes 1957, 21). In the absence of the equivalents of police or military offices sanctions are delivered through complex systems
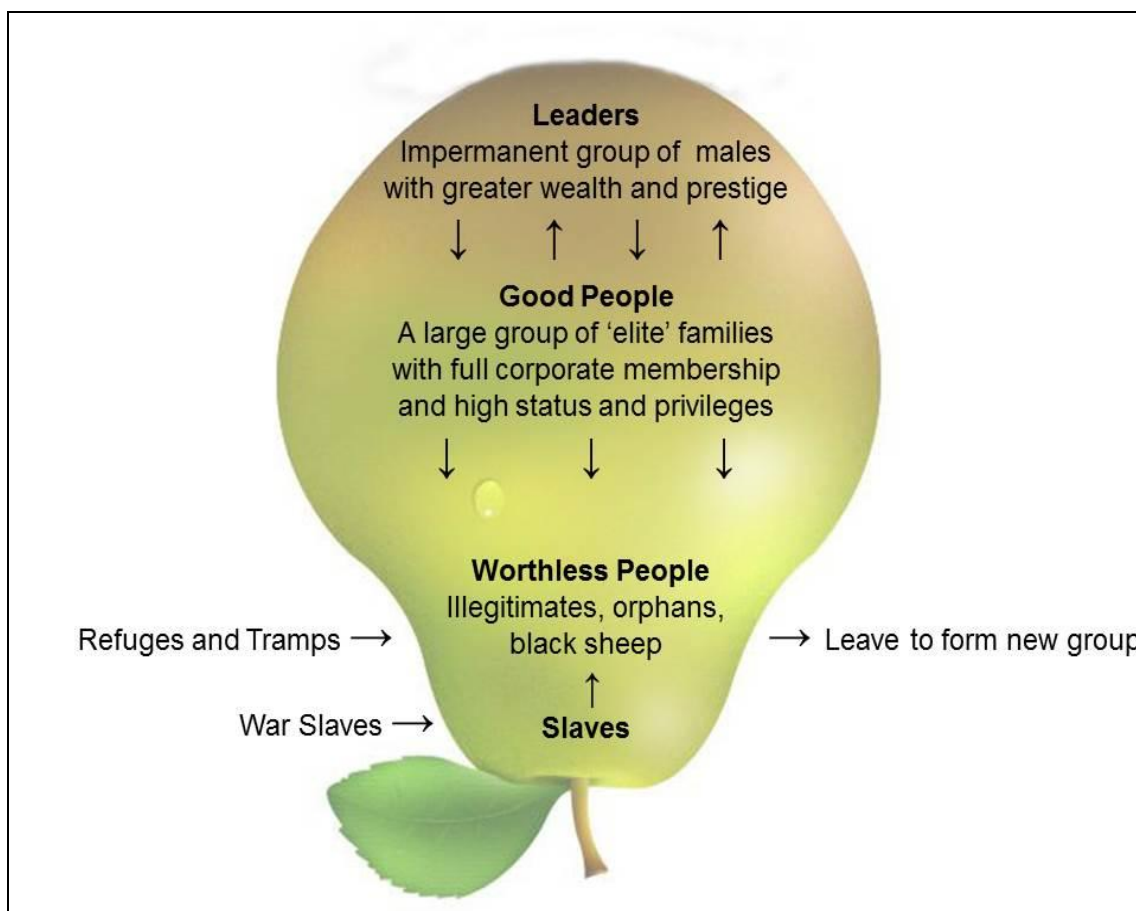
of taboos, superstition, gossip and mockery, in a way that cannot be equated to governance, and which may not directly involve the nominal leader at all (Barclay 1982, 24–30; 1989). Warfare between adjacent groups can function as a method to halt communities acquiring political strength that would ultimately threaten the autonomy of their neighbours. Attempts by a leader to acquire political control over their own group will lead to rejection by the group and either their dismissal, abandonment or death (Barclay 1982, 72–6; Clastres 2010, 280; Metcalf 2010, 106–7). Whilst the likes of Barclay, Clastres and Graeber are clearly empathetic to these anarchic societies they also highlight that sexual inequality, violence, gerontocracy, child labour and slavery are common aspects of these communities which are incompatible with the utopian ideals of political anarchists.

In an important development, Bill Angelbeck and Colin Grier have recently applied some of these anthropological ideas to the archaeological evidence of the Pacific North West Coast of North America (Angelbeck and Grier 2012). The region was occupied by the Coast Salish, famed for their rich cultural heritage, sedentary and bountiful fisher-gatherer lifestyle, extravagant potlatch ceremonies and their counter intuitive 'inverted pear shape' social structure (Figure 2). Reviewing the archaeological record over the last 2,000 years Angelbeck and Grier suggested three periods where social forms in the region were probably anarchic and two periods where more hierarchic social forms seemed to have been present (Table 1). One particularly interesting element of this work is the identification of defensive fortifications, not as a signal of the development of powerful elites, but of warfare associated with their removal (*ibid*., 564–5).

The established narrative of the Irish Bronze Age is firmly rooted in a social evolutionary framework, and can be briefly summarised as follows; during the late Neolithic a priestly elite rose to prominence and was behind the creation of larger and more complex ceremonial landscapes (Jones *et al*. 2010, 50). During the Beaker period a metalworking elite with connections to mainland Europe replaced the indigenous elite of the Late Neolithic, or developed from it (Waddell 1998, 121–3; Harbison 1988, 90–2). The Early Bronze Age saw a further shift towards powerful individuals and male dominated stratified societies (Mount 1995, 111). During the Middle Bronze Age the elite further consolidated their power and social inequality increased (Cooney and Grogan 1994, 133–40). The Late Bronze Age witnessed an increase in violence and inter-group aggression, perhaps caused by environmental changes, and where control over metalwork production areas and trade routes

were hotly contested by competing groups (Raftery 1994, 25–6). The development of hillforts in the Late Bronze Age reflects a further move in the development of stratified societies based on control of the trade in metalwork (Ginn 2013, 54).

Figure 2: The Inverted Pear Shape social structure exhibited by the Coast Salish (after Angelbeck and Grier 2012). [2]

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[2] The majority of the group consist of aristocratic warriors and their families. Leaders are drawn from this group elevation is based on merit and is entirely reversible. The size of the two subordinate classes is never allowed to grow beyond a small number as they are a drain on the resources of the aristocrats who have to support them. If they are not killed or ransomed then slaves may over time become worthless people and eventually that group may splinter off and form their own community.

Table 1: Angelbeck & Grier's analysis of the archaeological record in the Pacific North West [3]

Period	Date	Level of Warfare	Differential House Size	Elite Cranial Modifications	Hierarchical Society
Early Marpole	0-500AD	Low	Low	High	Yes
Late Marpole	500-1000AD	High	Low	Medium	No
Late Period	1000-1400AD	High	Low	Low	No
Si:yá:m Period	1400-1800AD	Low	High	Low	Yes
Post Contact	1800-1900AD	High	Low	Low	No

However the evidence for increasing stratification is not as clear cut as it has often been portrayed. A recent review of Bronze Age settlement across the country found little evidence to suggest a stratified settlement pattern, either within individual settlements, or across a regional scale (Ginn 2013). Settlements seem to be rather uniform across Ireland in terms of status, and where larger settlements existed, such as at Curraghatoor in Co. Tipperary, Corrstown in Co. Derry or Ballybrowney in Co. Cork, there is little to suggest groups of different status inhabited the settlement (Doody 1987; Ginn and Rathbone 2011; Cotter 2013; O'Driscoll and Cronin 2013). The evidence from Corrstown was particularly ambiguous as despite the exceptional size of the settlement itself, the artefact assemblage was homogenous and utilitarian; there were few high prestige items, and no clear evidence to suggest differential status among the 70 plus buildings (Ginn and Rathbone 2011, 260–1). The distribution of village sites from Bronze Age Ireland is peculiar in the way that villages become established in specific regions, but have neither a long duration of use nor a lasting impact on the regional settlement pattern (Rathbone 2013, 53). The burial record similarly presents little definite evidence of high status individuals, with few grave goods other than decorated ceramic vessels (Cahill and Sikora 2012). Whilst much has been made of the inclusion of bronze razors in some Early and Middle Bronze Age burials, no equivalent to the

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[3] Stratified societies were identified in the Early Marpole period because of the restrictive use of cranial modification and the low level of warfare, and in the Si:yá:m Period because of the presence of larger buildings within settlements and the low level of warfare. In the other periods a high level of warfare and a lack of other indicators of elite behaviour were used to indicate the presence of unstratified societies.

elite warrior burials found in Britain and many other parts of Europe has so far been discovered (Coles and Harding 1979, 253–60; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 231–50; Mount 2013). The evidence for the existence of elites seems largely limited to the metalwork recovered from poorly understood watery contexts and a handful of sites such as Emain Macha, Co. Armagh, and Rathgall, Co. Wicklow, which in some ways appear peculiarly isolated.

Was Bronze Age society organised hierarchically at all, or could the evidence point towards inverted pear shaped models, some other variant on the anarchic theme, or repeated cycling between anarchic and hierarchic arrangements? The settlement pattern indicates small-scale autonomous communities of similar status throughout most of the Bronze Age, 'all Indians and no Chiefs', to borrow Ginn's line (Ginn 2013, 53–4). Could the general absence of villages indicate a process of active resistance to the growth of more centralised power? Could the metal weapons and ornaments have been utilised by warrior societies involving all males, all young males, or some voluntary subset of males, rather than by an actual elite stratum? (Clastres 2010, 279–95). Rather than indicating groups dominating the production and trade of metalwork, could the proliferation of hillforts at the end of the Bronze Age indicate a time of more dedicated and violent resistance to communities that were seeking to establish positions of greater political influence? If that resistance was successful might that be why Ireland diverges so noticeably form Britain during the Iron Age? If urbanism relies upon hierarchical governance, which it surely does, does its absence, or even the absence of regularly occurring villages, simply result from a failure of economics, politics or environment? Alternatively might urbanism and its precursors have been rejected at a fundamental level having been identified as a threat to both individual and group autonomy?

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The Antiquity of Irish hamlets

Barry O'Reilly[1]

In Ireland, medieval and post-medieval settlement studies are largely concentrated on our cities and towns or, in rural areas, deserted settlements. Traces of the latter can be discovered through aerial photography and remote sensing, perhaps prompted by documentary sources. There is another settlement horizon that is little studied: hamlets that largely survive in the landscape today, or until relatively recently. The latter are small settlements, mainly based on agriculture or fishing, and are distinguished by their general lack of services such as schools and public houses. They range in size from the smallest, hardly noticeable, groups of perhaps 10–15 inhabitants, to places such as Menlo, near Galway, which had over 1,000 inhabitants in 1841. The relatively large hamlets of south Kilkenny have received some attention from geographers, such as Burtchaell (1988). Smyth (2006) highlighted the same county and also the Dingle Peninsula as regions with long continuity of settlement from the medieval period.

Recent doctoral research by the author examined some 2,205 hamlets in five widely varied cultural and environmental/economic zones in order, amongst other things, to assess matters of settlement form, origins, chronology and evolution. The antiquity of the settlements was considered, using the Archaeological Survey of Ireland's database and other documentary and cartographic sources. The research also sought to place the Irish settlements in their international context, to search for possible parallels for settlement forms and components. Settlements were identified with reference to the first, third and current Ordnance Survey (OS) maps; they were then plotted in GIS. The database function within GIS facilitated a wide range of analyses.

The basic internationally recognised criteria for defining a grouping as a settlement are firstly, the presence of at least three dwellings or farmyards and secondly that these dwellings or farmyards be within hailing distance (*c*.150m) (Roberts 1996). For Ireland the author reduced this distance to 100m, as longer distances tended to include random roadside buildings on the OS maps that did not appear to form part of a settlement *per se*.

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[1] Archaeologist with the National Monuments Service

Pre-1700 settlements

Early settlements are known from colonial sources, such as Richard Bartlett's military cartography of about 1600. Native settlements are shown as groups of houses that are oval in plan or rectangular with rounded corners, with thatched roofs with, or more often without, chimneys. The Down Survey (1656–58) also depicts houses, albeit small (or token) in number, in association with larger houses, castles or churches. It might be assumed that such settlements have essentially vanished from the landscape. Analysis of the documentary sources, of variable availability, predating the OS maps, suggests that many of the vernacular settlements present today in the Irish landscape may have their origins in at least the mid-17th century, providing a settlement horizon that could substantially change our perspective on both the 17th century and on existing vernacular settlements. *A Census of Ireland circa 1659* (more properly a record of poll tax) (Pender 2002) lists many places that appear to coincide with hamlets recorded on the OS maps. Use of the Census for the purpose of identifying potentially early settlements is subject to the expectation that at least the higher townland populations listed were essentially accommodated in nucleated settlements that contained all or almost all of the inhabitants of these townlands, as suggested by Smyth (2006, xlvi–xlvii). This contention was supported by the considerable overlap between the Census and the presence of medieval structures at many places listed.

Determining whether or not the other buildings of a settlement share the antiquity of the known early structures would require careful survey and, likely, excavation. Either way it would not be unreasonable to suggest that a settlement of some sort has been present at these places for a considerable period. The following discussion summarises the results of research and analysis for three of the five regions – those with the best evidence for antiquities and the best surviving documentary sources.

North County Dublin and adjacent parts of Meath and Louth (Figure 1)

On the first edition OS (1837) a total of 224 hamlets were identified. Some 26 (11.5%) of these had standing or documented evidence for later medieval/post-medieval towerhouses or churches, suggesting early origins. A comparison of the settlements mentioned in the *Civil Survey* (1654–56) (Simington 1945) and *A Census of Ireland circa 1659* (Pender 2002) (henceforth, *Census*) suggested a further 20 settlements (9%) as being present in the 17th century, giving a total of at least 46 (20.5%) early hamlets. It is certainly the case that many settlements did not survive to be recorded on the OS maps – an example being Platin (Figure

2), where evidently the construction of Platin House in about 1700 (Bence-Jones 1988) and the laying out of a small demesne displaced a settlement that had 91 adults in 1659, perhaps 260 people in total (Pender 2002, 480).

Figure 1: Map showing apparently early (red) and likely (blue) hamlets in part of North Leinster.
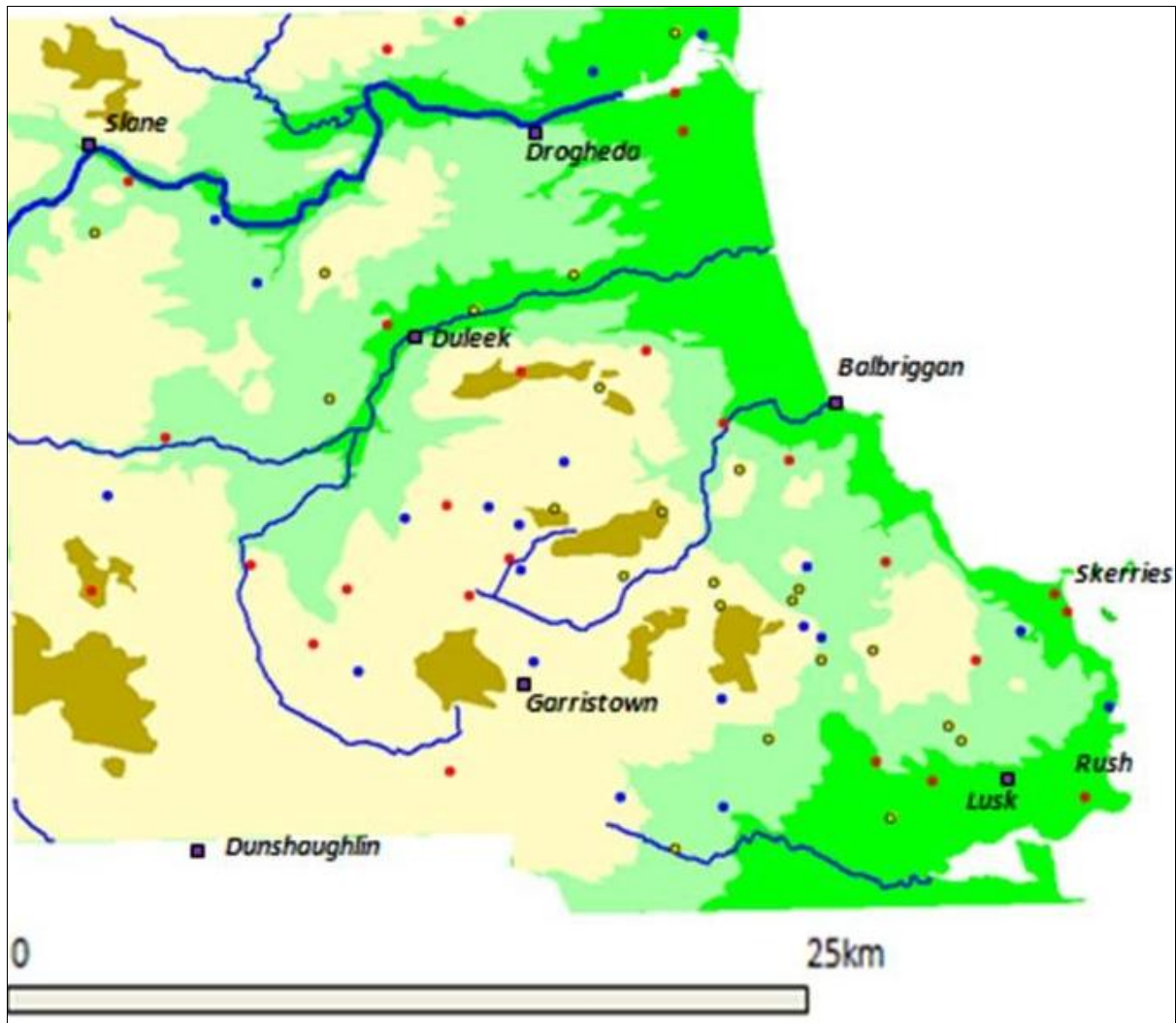
Figure 2: Platin, Co. Meath: the displacement of an earlier settlement by the setting of a country house and its demesne.

South Kilkenny and adjacent parts of east Wexford and north Waterford (Figure 3)

This south-eastern landscape had a much greater density of hamlets (445). Settlements with known medieval/post-medieval structures amounted to 32 (7%), comprising towerhouse/castle alone (4), church and graveyard alone (10), combinations of settlement elements (10), ecclesiastical sites (5), earthworks (2). Another contained a medieval field system. A further 20 (4.5%) are likely; 15 based on the *Census* and five more on an inventory taken in 1653 of lands in the ownership of the Countess of Ormond (Manning 1999). This gives a figure of 52 (11.5%). At least 30 more settlements appeared to have relict strip fields associated with them on the OS (1842). The large settlements in the bend of the River Suir are well-known and preserve many thatched buildings. There are consistent morphological characteristics in many of those settlements with antiquities that lead one to accept as early other hamlets of similar form but lacking the obvious antiquities.

Figure 3: Map showing apparently early (red), likely (blue) and possible (yellow) pre-AD1700 hamlets in part of south-eastern Ireland. The south-western bias is related to the Countess of Ormond's inventory of 1653.
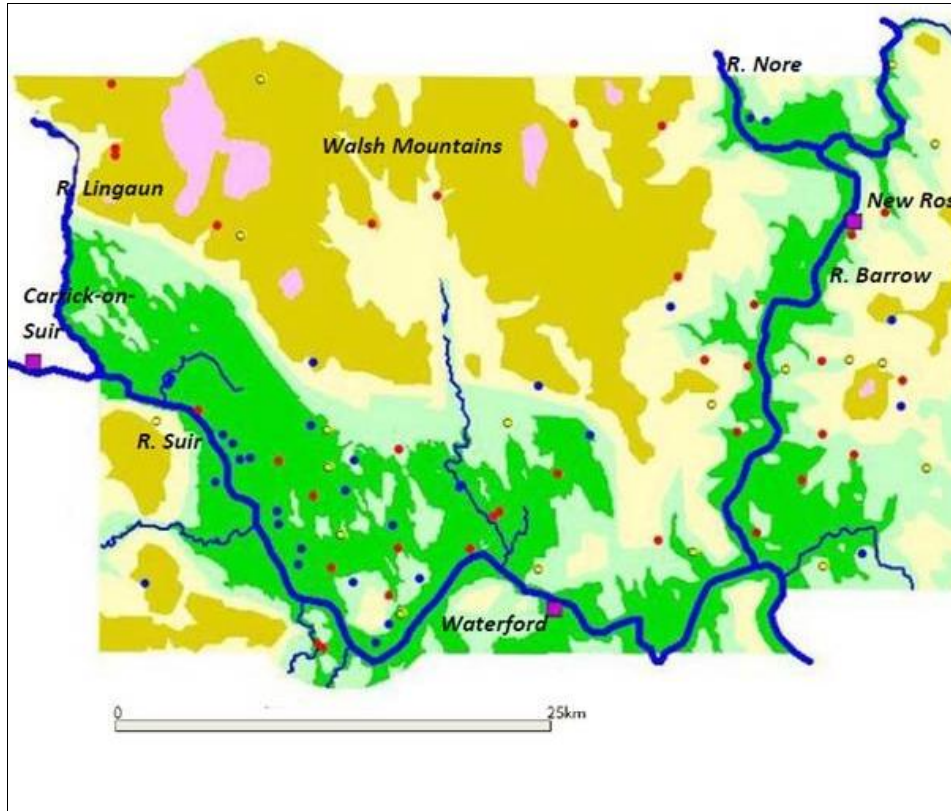

Figure 4: Ballytarsney, Co. Kilkenny.

At Ballytarsney is a dense parallel arrangement of buildings (Figure 4). This type of formation often appears in likely early settlements in the region. In addition to the Ballytarsney-type form there are variations based on enclosed square courtyards. At Boolyglass, Co. Kilkenny (Figure 5), it is possible to detect morphological development, involving the insertion of a green, perhaps of 18th century date, into the pre-existing scheme of somewhat offset courtyards that clearly relate to a rare still-surviving system of strip fields; further development has occurred to the southwest over the following two centuries. It is interesting to note that at least two of the strip fields are in the ownership of the same families as held them at the time of Griffith's Valuation (1849–50).

Figure 5: Boolyglass, Co. Kilkenny. The large triangular green is a later insertion into a likely medieval settlement.

Corca Dhuibhne (**Dingle Peninsula**; Figure 6)

Corca Dhuibhne's 299 settlements respond to the peninsula's strongly marked physical form, being concentrated in the low-lying western third, the district between *An Daingean* and Inch, and along the narrow coastal strips. Some 24 hamlets (8%) have known medieval/post-medieval structures within them or within 50 metres: eleven with ecclesiastical remains, two of these also having a towerhouse/castle and one having a settlement cluster; four with a church and graveyard alone; five burial grounds; and four with a castle/towerhouse alone. The emphasis on the ecclesiastical is not surprising for *Corca Dhuibhne* and the overall figure for suggested early settlements is not far below those for Leinster, illustrating the well settled nature of the peninsula. A further nine settlements (3%) are likely listed in the *Census*,

giving a total of at least 11.5% likely early settlements. Kilmalkedar (Figure 7), best known for the important early ecclesiastical site, had a distinctive hamlet (now largely disappeared) ranged around the edge of the central graveyard. The orientation of buildings, with gables facing southwest and against the Atlantic rain-laden winds, reflects the general trend in the region. Five settlements had 80–90 persons in 1659.

Figure 6: Map showing apparently early (red) and likely (blue) hamlets in *Corca Dhuibhne*.
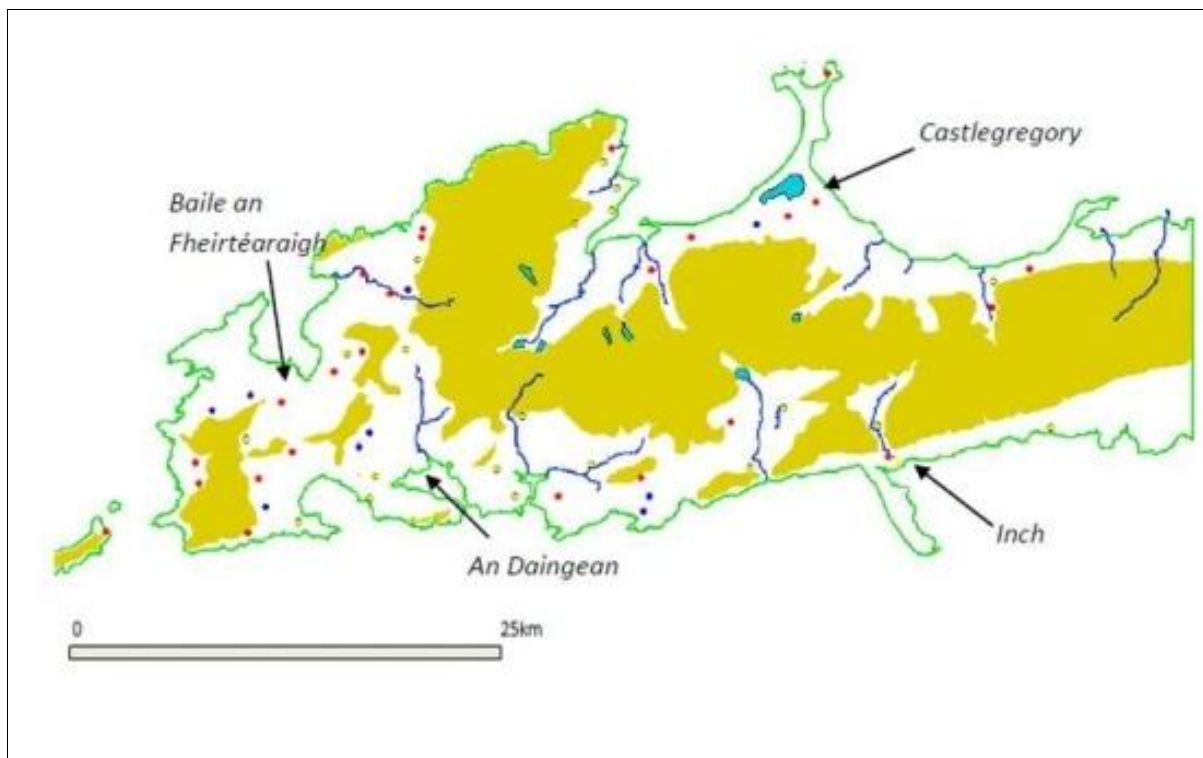
Figure 7: Kilmalkedar on the first edition map of 1842, showing a hamlet spread around the early ecclesiastical site.

Conclusions

The average minimum percentage of settlements that are likely to have their origins before 1700 (Horner and Loeber 2011) across these three study areas is 13.5% (188 settlements) from a total of 968 hamlets (Figure 8). Whether or not the standing houses and outbuildings overlie earlier foundations or contain early fabric is difficult to assess.

Thomas Raven's maps (1634) of south Monaghan (Duffy 1983, fig. 2), Henry Pratt's maps (1697) of North Kerry (Smyth 2006, 381) and John Rocque's maps (1760) of Dublin indicate consistently denser distributions of hamlets; in north Kerry these accounted for about a third of all settlement. Horner and Loeber (2011) observed the same for Meath about 1700. The transition from tillage to pasture in many Leinster counties presents the possibility that large numbers of hamlets have disappeared from view. Emparkment has also helped to diminish

the former distribution of hamlets. The identification of hamlet forms which might be early in origin is thus important for filling in blanks in our knowledge of the settlement landscape. Archaeological excavation has uncovered evidence for some pre-OS settlements and given an insight into some marked on the OS maps.[2] It is also important to note that the settlement forms and types observed in the research areas, for the most part, not unique to Ireland but rather part of the European cultural mainstream, with parallels in both the Atlantic fringe and the heart of the Continent.

Figure 8: Map showing the likely proportions of early hamlets in Ireland: definite (red), probable (orange), possible (yellow). Grey areas of the pie charts partly reflect a dearth of documentary and cartographic sources.

[2] For example, 'Moyveela 3 (E3907) – pre-Famine clachan', in Delaney, F. and Tierney, J. 2011. *In the Lowlands of South Galway: archaeological excavations on the N18 Oranmore to Gort National Road Scheme*, National Roads Authority, Dublin: 162–6.

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From craneland to ghost town: approaching contemporary archaeology

Joe Cully[1]

Contemporary archaeology approaches

Although continuously evolving the discipline of archaeology is carried out in the present; current political, philosophical and social trends shape our interpretation of the past. As a conduit between past and present, archaeology has contemporary relevance (Tilley 1989, 106). It can be said that by studying remains of the past in and of the present (Harrison 2011) archaeology is contemporary. Of interest here is the archaeology of living memory; the contemporary past, which moves with us into the future (Harrison and Schofield 2010, 4–5). Applied to the recent economic downturn in Ireland, what might the archaeology of the recent past reveal?

There are many ways to tackle this topic. Recent research has demonstrated how an ecological, economical, philosophical, technological or anthropological approach might best be employed (Graves-Brown *et al*. 2013). Fieldwork or the collection of oral testimonies may also be worthwhile (McAtackney 2014).

Material remains and ruins

One method involves considering the visible material culture in its present context. An obvious starting point is the vacant and underused buildings constructed during the boom, which can be interpreted as recent ruins. These ruins possess many of the same properties as those of the conventional archaeological record (Lucas 2013, 193).

By the second decade of the 21st century, Ireland had undergone a rapid transition from accelerated construction to the sudden decimation of that industry. Linked to banking failure, a public finance deficit and an international financial crisis, the overly inflated property bubble collapsed (European Commission 2012) and the ensuing economic downturn resulted in a large number of liquidation sales of unsold stock by bankrupt builders (Kelly 2009). The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) was established in 2009 as a repository for the failed development finance sector (Williams and Doyle 2012, 11). The sudden halt in construction activity, and the collapse of the housing market (Whelan 2013, 10) ultimately

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led to mass abandonment of building sites across the country. Ghost estates were created and by the second quarter of 2014 the vacancy rate of commercial buildings was 12.6% (Irish Construction 2014).

One of the many places impacted by the current recession is Tallaght, where many residential apartment and office blocks were constructed in the planned town centre. Whether occupied or not, the built heritage of Tallaght constitutes upstanding archaeology; those buildings that have become vacant or have remained so are vestiges of what once was and what might have been. The planning process, and the various acts that supported it, served to create not only the conditions for development, but also the vision of what Tallaght might become. Invariably, they are as much a part of this story as the structures themselves.

Towards an urban Tallaght

A small rural village in the 1950s, Tallaght was transformed into a large suburban environment between the late 1960s and early 1980s to cater for a projected population increase in the Dublin Metropolitan Area from 906,000 to over 1,200,000 by 1985 (Rourke and Tansey 1993, 7). Despite action plans which aimed to incorporate private housing estates and commercial and industrial developments, Dublin County Council and Dublin Corporation instituted a policy of housing first, with provision for social housing far outstripping that of facilities (*ibid*., 8).

This paper will discuss the urbanised landscape of Tallaght town centre. In the late 1980s this town began to form around the nucleus of the Square Shopping Centre. In 1994 South Dublin County was created with Tallaght designated as the county town and the new administrative buildings of the council were constructed there. The establishment of the Third Level Institute of Technology, followed by the relocation of what is now called Tallaght Hospital, completed the first major phase of the town's expansion. Infrastructure in the town centre developed rapidly during the construction boom years.

A lack of public finances in the 1980s had led to tax breaks becoming the primary means of incentivising property development (Williams and Doyle 2012, 7) and this model, revitalised by the Urban Renewal Act (1998), tax incentive scheme and by Section 23 relief incentives

(Taxes Consolidation Act 1997) were instrumental in the construction of the new town centre. These drove the development of key facilities including a library, a theatre and an arts centre, as well as a range of industrial and office buildings constructed nearby to provide additional local employment.

The *Tallaght Town Centre 2000 Plan* (1996), the *Tallaght Town Centre Urban Design Framework* (1998) and the *Tallaght Urban Renewal Integrated Area Plan* (1999) set out that a modern town centre would be created with a much increased resident population. The planned population of Tallaght was 100,000. The accompanying urban upgrade included new and accessible streets and public spaces with aesthetic and environmental improvements (S.D.C.C. 2006, 15). Within Belgard Square, a number of large sites were selected to become city blocks immediately west and south west of County Hall which would provide both residential apartments and office spaces.

Derelict sites?

At Tallaght Cross and Chamber Square there is a mix of empty and occupied apartments alongside a combination of commercial buildings, only some of which saw a brief period of use (Plates 1 and 2). There are three exceptions to this; an international grocery store, a National Ambulance Service station and a hotel that had closed, but has since reopened (2014). Many of these buildings are inaccessible to the public, having high boarding and security patrols. They are between five and 10 storeys high and a variety of façade claddings are used including brick, stone, pigmented render and zinc (Plate 3). The use of glazing and stonework at ground and first floor levels unifies the look of the commercial units.

The Comer Group has acquired some of the buildings in Chamber Square and Tallaght Cross East and Collen is involved in Tallaght Cross West, while NAMA placed Tallaght Cross Hotel on sale in 2014. Tenants may be found for at least some of these buildings in the future. Many of these buildings were designed with disability access in mind and, along with enhanced public facilities and services, ensured that Tallaght was given special mention at the Access City Awards in 2012 (European Commission 2014).

Plate 1: Chamber Square with an unused building (foreground) and a formally used unit (background)

Plate 2: Tallaght Cross West, unused office building

Plate 3: Tallaght Cross East, directly north of the LUAS Red line terminus

Close to an Architectural Conservation Area with four RMPs[2], south east of the historic core of Tallaght village is New Bancroft (Plate 4). This development includes residential apartments, a crèche, offices and retail units. The buildings range from three to 10 storeys with a buff brick façade and balconies of glass and steel.

Plate 4: New Bancroft development including the tower-block along the N81

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[2] Archaeological monuments are protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930– 2004. The National Monuments Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht maintains a record of all known monuments and this forms the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

Despite a busy looking commercial element, the prominent feature of this development is an unfinished 10 storey tower-block overlooking the N81 at the southern approach to the village. Windows and doors were never fitted and it is entirely exposed to the elements. There is a high risk of alkali-silica reaction in the cement mixture, which induces pressure and subsequent cracking of the aggregate and surrounding paste (Architects Journal 2008). Any metal reinforcements too near to the surface of the concrete may corrode in the presence of water and expand due to migrating carbonic acid (*ibid.*). These processes could potentially lead to degradation of the building rendering it unsuitable for future use. This tower may effectively constitute Tallaght's most enduring recent ruin.

Conclusions

Tallaght is still developing and is one of the largest urban centres in Ireland (Walsh *et al.* 1998, 163), but it also shows signs of abandonment and disintegration. Harrison and Schofield (2010, 129) have shown that the European Landscape Convention (2000) can be applied to urban contexts and Tallaght town centre qualifies as an urban landscape whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors. As Bender (2002, 136) has attested, landscapes are not just views, but intimate encounters and Tallaght's residents encounter these structures daily. Yet the partial and complete vacancy of buildings constitutes a blurring of the distinction between a standing building and a ruin. Ruins continue to be shaped and defined by a mixture of agencies (Lucas 2013, 197). Total abandonment is rarely complete.

It remains to be seen if the tower-block at New Bancroft will be retained and finished, left to stand as a ruin, or be demolished and perhaps replaced. It is the embodiment of untimeliness, echoing a failed attempt to modernise Tallaght; a view of a future that may never be.

These recent ruins provide a recognisable context for archaeologists studying contemporary pasts, but such familiarity requires a separation of what we think is the known past (Tarlow and West 1999, 1). The archaeological method itself provides the necessary distance from attachment to the material world (Buchli and Lucas 2001, 9), but this can incur a sense of otherness, of alterity. Despite this, it is worth noting that most ruins are produced by processes of decline or disruption that escape the worshipping associated with the ruins of antiquity (Gordillo 2013, 335) and their ruined state is often not recognised. Contemporary

archaeology gives recognition to the 'site to be', the place planned for the future (Harrison and Schofield 2010, 184).

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Grassroots Archaeology Season 1 – suburban excavations and community

Paul Duffy[1]

The genesis of the Grassroots project occurred many years back when, as an undergraduate, I discovered that my parent's unassuming suburban house in the Seagrange estate in Baldoyle Dublin 13 had been built on a Registered Monument (DU015-018). When I consulted the then SMR[2] file for the site, the sum total of information relating to the monument consisted of a rectangular cropmark visible from a Cambridge series aerial photograph, taken just prior to the construction of the estate in the 1970s. From that point on, 10 years ago, I have been overcome with curiosity. Could anything of this enclosure survive?

Selling the idea of resurrecting a monument from beneath a modern housing estate was a problematic task. The obvious research question was whether or not anything of archaeological integrity could survive the extensive development of the site and, if indeed archaeological remains existed, could they characterise the enclosure identified in the photo? In a watershed moment for the project, the Archaeology Committee of the Royal Irish Academy, exhibiting no small degree of imagination and forward thinking, took the risk of approving funding for Grassroots in 2013. Fingal County Council also came on board and facilitated the planning of works on council lands.

Given that the excavations were to occur in a very public space, Grassroots from the outset strove to be a true community archaeology project. Internationally, this sub-discipline is very advanced in both practical and theoretical terms but Ireland lags far behind in terms of active community involvement in archaeology (Horning and Brannon 2013). In designing the Grassroots project, I was lucky enough to have garnered some varied, international experience of community archaeology abroad.

In 2009, after finding myself unemployed, like many others, I travelled to Fort Cumberland in Portsmouth to interview for a position with English Heritage. The job was with the East Harptree project, a community initiative involving collaboration between English Heritage and the local history group. The group had approached English Heritage seeking permission

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[1] Founder of Grassroots Archaeology currently working with Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd
[2] SMR: Sites and Monuments Record (now known as RMP: Record of Monuments and Places). The SMR refers to the paper record of the sites recorded by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.

to excavate some medieval house platforms in their village greenspace, surrounding fields and residential gardens[3]. English Heritage had taken the progressive step of accommodating the excavation with the proviso that they would provide a site director and two supervisors to ensure the necessary excavation standard was maintained. Although I did not get the job, the remainder of the day exploring Portsmouth docklands was scored with a soundtrack of innumerable pennies dropping. If it was possible in East Harptree, it was possible in Seagrange. Several years on archaeological projects in Western Australia followed and the real engagement with Aboriginal community groups and their ubiquitous presence in the archaeological process (Guilfoyle and Webb 2008) consolidated thoughts that had been initiated in Portsmouth. It was, however, in the south of France on a season excavating the Roman Site Forum *Voconii*, that I witnessed an impressively consolidated form of community archaeology in practice. The site, discovered during the development of a vineyard to the north of the small town of *Cannet des Maures*, had been saved by a local young archaeology student in the early 1990s. Frederic (Fred) Martos had rallied the local community, had bodily prevented the bulldozing of the site and had then won funding from a consortium of local businesses to conduct an excavation (Martos and Congés 2003). Over the successive Summer excavation seasons, the Minister of Culture came on board and the local authority (the *Mairie*) provided a derelict warehouse in its ownership to serve as a headquarters for the project. Over the following years, the *Mairie* provided full-time office space in the precinct of the local primary school as well as seasonal accommodation for the teams of volunteers. The excavations were directed by Fred and supervised by members of the local community.

In 2012, instructed by these international experiences, I began to formulate the preliminary objectives for a community archaeology project in Seagrange along the lines of Patricia Reid's work in Faversham (2011) and Gadsby and Chidester's work in Hampden (2007). The model for Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) that I wanted to follow, sets out a collaborative, egalitarian approach to project design (Mikler and Wenstein 2008; Atalay 2012; McGhee 2012). One of the core objectives of this model is the democratisation of knowledge in an effort to promote collaboration between academics and communities (Atalay 2012, 79; McGhee 2012). As Heaney states, CBPR advances a preferable, non-exclusive model which allows non-academics/non-industry professionals to participate in the 'grass-

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[3] http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/archaeology/other-projects/east-harptree/

roots production of knowledge' (1993, 41–46). It was this phrase which lent itself to the naming of the project - Grassroots Archaeology.

The CPBR model therefore requires community input from the earliest stage, particularly with the framing of the research objectives. Active community participation was impeded however by two major factors; Health and Safety constraints and limited resources. The constraints arising from our small insurance policy and the requirement that all participants had to be Safepass accredited, made it difficult to have a large amount of community involvement in the excavations themselves. Our limited facilities in terms of amenities also worked against having active volunteers take part on site.

In an effort to counter these issues, community members came on board to help with sieving and processing of samples and finds while *ad hoc* daily tours of the site were provided, as well as several organised school visits from both primary and secondary classes in the area. These visits were enlivened by experimental and experiential archaeology displays. From the outset, Grassroots utilised information panels on our fencing as well as incorporating replicas of medieval ceramics and lithics (created by Brendan O'Neill) into the site tours.

Despite the successes of the Grassroots project in archaeological terms (for the results of season one see Duffy 2014; www.grassrootsarchaeology.ie), some questions remain as to the nature of the project and where it fits within the sub-discipline of Community Archaeology.

Is Grassroots a Community Project?
Yes. Grassroots is a project designed from within the community. The concept and organisation of the project came from the bottom-up and our second season saw much greater active community participation at every level. Alternate funding models are also under investigation that hopefully will allow an element of self-sustainability to the project which may take us beyond the Seagrange excavations to investigate the archaeology of the parish.

Is Grassroots relevant?
The project has engaged with the concept of Suburban Archaeology in Ireland. The hinterlands of many of our towns and cities were covered with housing estates before strong Heritage Legislation was in place to protect undiscovered sites. Grassroots has, to some

degree, empowered locals to engage with and interact with their own heritage, a heritage which was previously unknown and buried.

Is Grassroots a feasible model for other communities around the country?

Although the spark which ignited the Seagrange excavations and gave the project a foothold in the community came from my own particular set of circumstances, I believe that the Grassroots model could be successfully replicated in suburban areas throughout the country.

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Abstracts Submitted

Re-inhabiting Medieval Urban Spaces:
A Development and Archaeology Strategy for King's Island Limerick
(DASKIL)
Tracy Collins[1]

This paper outlines a recent collaborative study led by Aegis Archaeology for Limerick City Council's Office of Regeneration as the first steps in the physical, social and economic regeneration of Limerick's historic centre on King's Island. The strategy took as its bench mark a similar strategy undertaken in York, England in 1991. The paper sets out the purpose, aims and scope of the King's Island study and its expected outcomes. It is suggested that this is just the beginning of archaeological initiatives in the City as part of its regeneration. This is a methodology that could be replicated elsewhere in Ireland as a proactive way of considering the archaeological resource.

Remotely Effective? How Lidar analysis can help to re-build Ireland's early
medieval landscape.
Susan Curran [2]

Ireland is home to perhaps the richest and best-preserved early medieval settlement archaeology in Europe, but this wealth of existing evidence is only part of the story. The analysis of Lidar data (and other remote sensing techniques) in archaeological research has significant implications for our perception and understanding of Irish settlement in the early medieval period. Using these techniques, it has been possible to identify potential 'new' early medieval sites on a relatively large-scale. During the summer of 2012, a Lidar-based study of early medieval settlement in Roscommon and Leitrim sought to establish a more comprehensive picture of settlement during the period. This paper will present and discuss these findings and their implications, with particular emphasis on the organisation of early medieval settlement and society.

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'Is it (h)all or nothing?' Recent geophysical investigations of 13th century chamber-towers in Ireland.
Karen Dempsey[3]

Although the type of castles traditionally known as 'hall-houses' have belatedly become a topic of interest in castle studies, understandings of these freestanding 13th century buildings remain poor. Recent work, both in England and Ireland, suggests that these castles are chamber-towers which were accompanied by external timber-built halls. This radically alters our understanding of these buildings and how people inhabited these spaces. Furthermore this appears to have been confirmed by new geophysical investigations conducted at four sites, Annaghkeen, Co. Galway, Shrule, and Ballisnahyny, both in Co. Mayo and Lisbunny, Co. Tipperary. The results of the geophysics and their implications will be discussed in this paper.

Na Sean Tithe Roundáilte
Michael Gibbons[4]

Great swathes of the Connaught coast-line have been peeled back by the recent storms, revealing an array of settlements from the Mesolithic to the 19th century. Not since the night of the Big Wind in 1839 has so much archaeological material been uncovered. The significance of these will be assessed and a number of key sites highlighted; including a later Mesolithic camp on the Connemara coast and the probable 17th century port of Inishbofin. Elsewhere a rare group of sunken houses, which now appear to have a wider distribution and age profile, have appeared in eroding dunes. Among the losses are a number of children's burial grounds, whose partial destruction has revealed a hitherto unsuspected dimension to these enigmatic monuments.

Constructing a Venice of the North: Maps, Society and Memory Building in Mid-Eighteenth Century Cork
Kieran McCarthy[5]

In studies of landscape one of the many concerns is the interplay between past and present, between material and symbolic worlds, and the interplay between aspects such as imagined

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realms, lived in places, networks of association or spaces of flow. Hence settlements are not looked upon as individual objects of study but in a broad sense as a text, a multi-layered, full of human intentionality, a culture code, which embodies different levels of meaning. In early 18th century Cork, economic growth as well as political events in late 17th century Ireland, culminating in the destruction of the city's core in 1690, provided the catalyst for large-scale change within the urban area. The walls were allowed to decay and this was to inadvertently alter much of the city's physical, social and economic character in the ensuing century. A new urban text emerged with new bridges, streets, quays, residences and warehouses built to intertwine with the natural riverine and tidal landscape. New communities created new social and cultural landscapes to encounter. The unofficial title of the 'Venice of the North' was also given to Cork. This was a type of branding exercise, a cultural code in a sense, a reference by native and foreign merchants that Cork was part of several cities in northern Europe (Saint Petersburg, Amsterdam, Bruges, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Hamburg, and Manchester) that contained canals, all compared to the enduring connection with water in Venice, Italy over many centuries. Cork and other cities in northern Europe were to be conditioned by ideas of the ideal city tradition. During the post medieval centuries European artists and engineers began to represent political and social ideas and concepts in graphic terms. In truth, this encouraged planners to imagine the ideal port city as a complete unit of which the river, harbour, or canal was an integral part, conceptually and figuratively.

This paper explores these ideas and how they influenced perception, knowledge, and culture in growing 18th century 'Venices of the North', such as Cork, across space and time.

Settlement archaeology in Ireland as abandoned space
T. Rowan McLaughlin[6]

The major achievement of Irish archaeology in recent decades has been the discovery and excavation of a large number of settlements dating to prehistoric and more recent timeframes, illuminating many aspects of past lifeways that were previously unknown. One of the (many) difficulties in translating excavation data into knowledge is the unclear depositional history of archaeological materials. From which phase of site construction, use or abandonment does the data emanate? In this paper, I wish to cast a critical review of the settlement record and argue that much of the data from rural settlements—of all periods—is evidence for abandonment. This hypothesis holds some severe implications for our understanding of

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prehistoric chronology. In a bid to better-understand the archaeology of abandonment, I offer a homespun model of the phenomenon, derived from observations of 18th and 19th century buildings in the contemporary landscape.

Tackling settlement-related questions at Raystown, Co. Meath by phosphate Survey
Fergal Nevin[7]

This presentation will describe the application of phosphate analysis towards understanding spatial organisation at the large early medieval settlement complex at Raystown, Co. Meath. The site had been geophysically surveyed prior to excavation in 2003/04, revealing a high level of resolution on the extent and nature of archaeological features in the unexcavated portion of the site. The excavation director's (Matthew Seaver) suggestion that a number of detected features may represent a zone for the management of animals prompted the author to undertake a targeted phosphate survey as part of an MA research project in 2011. The results are intriguing and show that this rapid, non-intrusive technique can refine interpretations and raise new questions to lead research forward. This research allows us to examine more elusive aspects of early medieval settlements such as the relationships between axes of movement and structures, rather than the traditional focus on external, enclosing features.

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